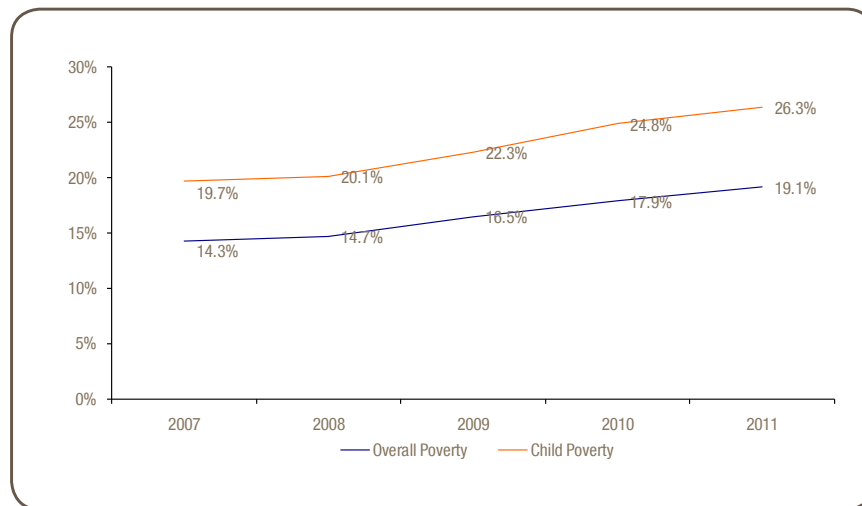


## Georgia Poverty Still on the Rise, With Children Hit Hardest

By Clare S. Richie, Senior Policy Analyst

Nearly one in five Georgians, and one out of four children, live in poverty, according to 2011 U.S. Census data, making Georgia the fifth-poorest state in the nation. Since the recession hit, Georgia's overall poverty rate increased by approximately 5 percentage points and the child poverty rate rose by nearly 7 percentage points. At the same time, state policymakers have cut education and other vital services that help families pull themselves out of poverty.

**Figure 1 Poverty on the Rise Since the Recession**

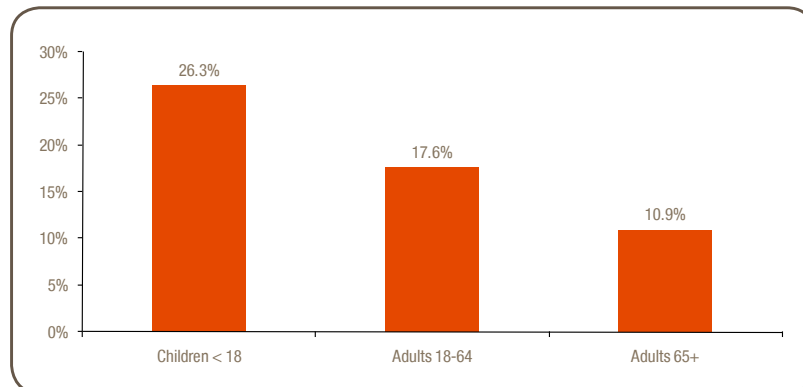


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Data, 2007-2011

## Georgia's Children Hit the Hardest

Georgia children are much more likely to live in poverty than adults and seniors.

**Figure 2 Georgians in Poverty by Age**



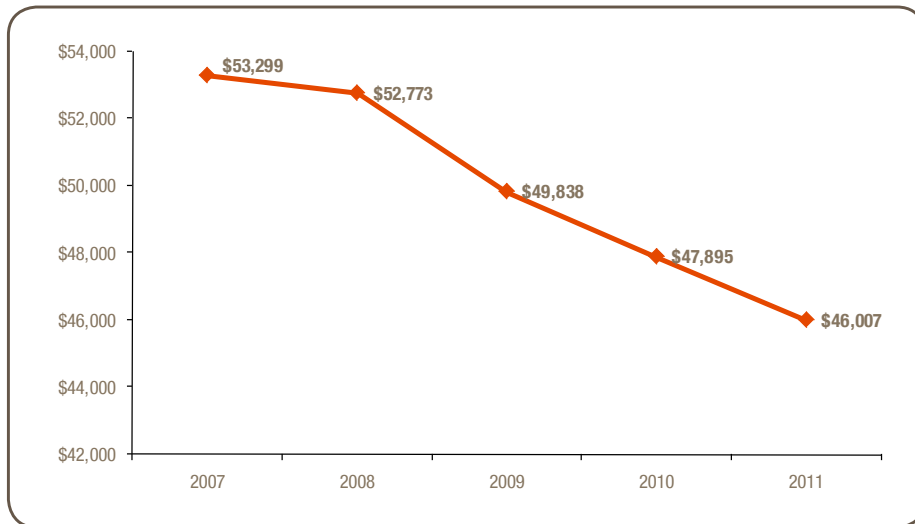
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Data, 2011

Nearly 650,000 children in Georgia are poor, including 39 percent of African American children and 42 percent of Hispanic children. Nine counties – Bartow, Bibb, Chatham, Clarke, Clayton, Dougherty, Lowndes, Richmond, and Troup – have one in three children living in poverty. These children are more likely to have poor health, drop out of school, get caught up in the juvenile justice system, and be unemployed as adults.

### ■ **Hard Working Families Struggle to Make Ends Meet**

Nearly half a million Georgians are out of work, and there is only one job opening for every five laid-off workers seeking employment. For those who are working, median income has been dropping since the recession, reaching a new low of \$46,007 (adjusted for inflation). A family of four is considered to be living below the poverty line if its earnings are \$22,350 a year or less.

**Figure 3 Median Income Still Declining**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Data, 2007-2011  
Note: Median income reported in 2011 dollars.

### ■ **Services Reduced as Need Rises**

Since the recession started, state lawmakers have sharply cut health care, education and other key services that struggling families need, not only to help with their immediate circumstances but to give them hope for a brighter future. For example, at the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) – which assists the elderly, disabled, abused and neglected children, and the poor – staff were cut even though the need for services increased. The number of workers who help families sign up for food stamps dropped by nearly 18 percent, while the number of families enrolling increased by nearly 73 percent.

### ■ **Georgia Should Take a Balanced Approach**

Georgia policymakers should protect vital public services as workers cope with stagnant wages or job loss. This requires an alternative to the current cuts-only approach that threatens Georgia’s economic recovery. Instead we need a balanced approach that includes new revenue so Georgia can invest in the state’s economy and provide help for struggling families.