



# United Way releases new “Basic Living Measure” for region

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United Way  
of Greater St. Louis

ST. LOUIS — United Way of Greater St. Louis today released the “Basic Living Measure,” a comprehensive measure of the number of households in the region challenged to meet basic living expenses. The report, compiled by the Public Policy Research Center at the University of Missouri – St. Louis in partnership with United Way, found that 43 percent, or 489,817, of all St. Louis metropolitan area households do not have the monthly income to meet their basic living expenses. The St. Louis area report can be found [here](#).

“There are many individuals and families whose income is above the official poverty threshold but who still may be living paycheck to paycheck,” said Julie Russell, senior vice president of planning and evaluation for United Way of Greater St. Louis. “In a household when income is unable to meet all basic needs, concessions have to be made. Research shows the impact of these concessions include poor health, insufficient diet and inadequate cognitive and emotional development of children.”

Basic living expenses are defined in the report as food, housing, health care services, transportation, child care, taxes and miscellaneous expenses. Income necessary to meet

these basic needs varies depending on the composition of the household. The findings indicate a family with two adults and two children requires an annual average budget of \$70,774 for basic needs, while the average basic needs budget of a senior couple or single-person household requires \$29,052.

“The average budget of a family household is almost 150 percent larger than that of a senior or single-person household. The cost of child care and medical insurance are the primary factors in the large discrepancy between budgets,” said Mark Tranel, director, Public Policy Research Center – UMSL.

According to the report, which categorizes the data by county, household structure, education level and race, almost 29 percent more African American households than white households in the St. Louis region have an income at or below the threshold. Single income households and minority households are the most disproportionately challenged to meet their basic living expenses, according to Russell.

“Eighty percent or more of single mother households have income that does not meet their family’s basic living needs,” she noted.

Locally, the largest percentage of households with income at or below the threshold for meeting basic living needs is in Franklin County (59.2 percent); the City of St. Louis has 56.5 percent of all households; St. Louis County has 40 percent; and St. Charles County ranked lowest of the seven Missouri counties in the region with 33.8 percent. In Illinois, Macoupin County (52.2 percent) and St. Clair County (49.3 percent) led the number of households with income at or below the threshold, while Jersey County had the lowest percentage of households below the threshold in all 16 counties in the St. Louis region with 17.5 percent.

The report also indicates households below the threshold throughout the states of Missouri and Illinois are 59 and 48 percent, respectively.

The St. Louis region defined in this report consists of 16 counties: Franklin, Jefferson, Lincoln, St. Charles, St. Louis and Warren Counties and the City of St. Louis in Missouri; and Calhoun, Clinton, Greene, Jersey, Macoupin, Madison, Monroe, Randolph and St. Clair Counties in Illinois.

About United Way of Greater St. Louis

United Way of Greater St. Louis mobilizes the community with one goal in mind — helping people live their best possible lives. Located throughout 16 counties in Missouri and Illinois, United Way helps one in three people in the region build a foundation for a good quality of life through basic needs, financial stability, education, health and strong

communities. For more information, contact [314-421-0700](tel:314-421-0700) or visit [www.HelpingPeople.org](http://www.HelpingPeople.org).