

Poverty worries two of three Americans: 37 million below poverty line

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Nearly two-thirds of Americans fear that poverty will increase, while almost the same proportion of the populace worry that they will find themselves among the lowest economic class, according to a new poll sponsored by Catholic bishops.

Almost five months after the abject poverty of New Orleans was televised across the world in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Washington-based Catholic Campaign for Human Development released a poll tracking people's perception of the poor.

"The numbers are staggering," said Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany, New York, the bishops' CCHD chairman. "Right now, 37 million men, women and children are living below the poverty line. That's one out of every eight Americans."

Before Katrina, New Orleans had a child poverty rate of more than 38 percent, one of the highest in the country.

Hubbard released the survey in New Orleans on January 19 while announcing an additional \$500,000 in grants awarded to groups helping poor victims of hurricanes Katrina and Rita rebuild their lives. *-Religion News Service*