

Poverty in Upstate New York Metropolitan Areas – Characteristics and Growth: 1999-2013
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Introduction

This paper examines the incidence of poverty in upstate New York cities, compared to the surrounding suburbs. The data shows that while residents of upstate suburbs enjoy incomes that are substantially higher than the national average, and poverty rates that are substantially lower, upstate cities have higher levels of poverty and lower incomes than the nation, and it shows that the level of poverty in upstate cities is growing more quickly. Compared with other rust belt cities, the economic separation of central cities and suburbs is greater in upstate New York.

- The data shows that poverty levels are particularly high for families with children under 18 – more than 50% in some cases.
- The ratio of families with children living in poverty in upstate cities to those living in poverty in suburbs is greater than the average of rust belt cities outside New York State – as much as twice as great in some cases.
- The residents of upstate cities are becoming increasingly economically segregated from those outside them. While nearly half of families with children in upstate cities are poor, only 5% to 15% of those in suburbs live in poverty.
- Residents living in poverty in upstate central cities are less educated and less likely to work than people not in poverty outside those cities.
- Households in poverty are far more likely to be headed by a single householder – usually a woman.
- Minority group members are greatly over-represented among those living in poverty.

Between 1999 and 2013, most upstate cities lost population, lost significant numbers of residents with incomes above the poverty level, and saw increases in the percentage of families with children headed by single parents. All had a higher percentage of residents, and particularly families with children living in poverty in 2013 than they did in 1999. Each lost large numbers of residents who identified as white, not Hispanic or Latino, who lived above poverty, while seeing increases in minority populations living below poverty level. While suburban areas also saw increases in poverty, more single parent families, and lost white residents not living in poverty, the increases were smaller as a percentage of the population of areas outside central cities than within them.

The deteriorating economic circumstances of upstate city residents point to the need for a targeted approach to reducing upstate urban poverty by New York State, and its localities. While the State has invested substantial resources into regional economic development upstate, it has not developed a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of people in upstate cities who are segregated from the overall wealth of their metropolitan areas by

location, minority racial and ethnic status, lack of access to transportation, family structure and education.

Cities included in this Study

This study examines poverty in eight upstate cities and their suburbs – Albany, Schenectady, Troy, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Binghamton and Buffalo. These cities are in the largest upstate metropolitan areas, and the counties that they are within include more than 2.9 million people. The study compares the levels of poverty in these cities and counties with similar cities and counties in the “rust belt,” that part of the Northeast and Midwest that was home to traditional manufacturing industries, including steel, automobiles, photographic film, appliance and electrical equipment manufacturing and textile mills. Most of the manufacturing companies that existed in the first half of the 20th century no longer operate in Upstate New York. Some have failed. Others have moved operations to other, lower cost production locations throughout the world. As a result, most of the cities in the region have been in decline for more than 50 years.

The Data

Data for this study were derived from the 2013 American Community Survey. Where comparisons were made with 1999, the earlier year data came from the 2000 Census. Upstate cities were compared with a group of 29 rust belt cities in Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The cities included were all the cities in those states whose populations were in the range bounded by Detroit, the city with the largest population, and Binghamton, the city with the smallest population.¹ Note that the 2013 American Community Survey and the 2000 Census data are sample data, and in each case, there is the potential for sampling error in the data. Consequently, small differences between cities and counties or between years may be the result of sampling error, rather than true differences.

Incomes

Incomes in upstate metropolitan areas are not, on average, lower than comparable metropolitan areas in the so-called "rust belt," outside New York State. Compared to other rust belt metros, the residents of the Albany, Syracuse and Rochester metros have higher than average family incomes. Only Utica-Rome and Binghamton are significantly below the average of comparable cities. However, Upstate metropolitan areas (with the exception of Albany-Schenectady-Troy), and the rustbelt average are below the average for the United States.

In Upstate New York, and in the rust belt outside New York, family income differentials between central cities and the suburbs within the county outside the city are substantial. For

¹ Metropolitan areas: Peoria, IL; Rockford, IL; Fort Wayne, IN; Indianapolis, IN; South Bend, IN; Evansville, IN; Springfield, MA; Worcester, MA; Ann Arbor, MI; Detroit, MI; Flint, MI; Kalamazoo, MI; Lansing, MI; Albany-Schenectady-Troy, NY; Binghamton, NY; Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY; Rochester, NY; Syracuse, NY; Akron, OH; Canton, OH; Cleveland, OH; Columbus, OH; Dayton, OH; Toledo, OH; Youngstown, OH; Erie, PA; Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton, PA; Harrisburg, PA; Lancaster, PA; Reading, PA; Scranton, PA; Wilkes-Barre, PA; York, PA.

example, family income in Buffalo averaged \$45,061 in 2013, compared with \$74,363 outside Buffalo in Erie County.² In Monroe County, families outside Rochester averaged \$80,285, compared with \$42,900 for families living in the city. In fact, families in upstate cities averaged \$46,310 compared with \$47,187 for rust belt counties outside New York State, while suburban residents around the upstate cities averaged 76,786 compared with \$73,854 for residents of suburban areas in rust belt counties. Overall, income differentials between Upstate Cities and their suburbs compared with other rust belt cities and their suburbs are slightly greater.

Table 1.

| Percent in Poverty Overall and Children Under 18 - 2013 | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|---------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Upstate and Rust Belt Cities and Counties | | | | | | | | |
| City | County | State | Overall Poverty | | | Children Under 18 Poverty | | |
| | | | City % | Outside City % | Ratio | City % | Outside City % | Ratio |
| Flint city | Genesee County | Michigan | 41.4% | 14.9% | 2.77 | 61.5% | 21.3% | 2.89 |
| Youngstown city | Mahoning County | Ohio | 37.9% | 10.9% | 3.49 | 60.3% | 17.2% | 3.51 |
| Detroit city | Wayne County | Michigan | 41.2% | 15.8% | 2.62 | 58.4% | 23.6% | 2.47 |
| Reading city | Berks County | Pennsylvania | 40.6% | 7.2% | 5.62 | 55.8% | 8.0% | 6.98 |
| York city | York County | Pennsylvania | 39.2% | 7.6% | 5.16 | 55.2% | 10.5% | 5.26 |
| Dayton city | Montgomery | Ohio | 36.1% | 13.0% | 2.77 | 53.9% | 20.0% | 2.69 |
| Cleveland city | Cuyahoga County | Ohio | 35.7% | 11.2% | 3.20 | 53.5% | 15.6% | 3.42 |
| Rochester city | Monroe County | New York | 33.9% | 8.8% | 3.87 | 52.3% | 10.6% | 4.94 |
| Syracuse city | Onondaga County | New York | 36.5% | 7.0% | 5.20 | 51.8% | 9.1% | 5.68 |
| Harrisburg city | Dauphin County | Pennsylvania | 33.2% | 9.1% | 3.66 | 51.1% | 11.0% | 4.63 |
| Canton city | Stark County | Ohio | 32.3% | 11.0% | 2.92 | 50.3% | 15.0% | 3.35 |
| Buffalo city | Erie County | New York | 31.4% | 8.4% | 3.74 | 48.3% | 10.5% | 4.60 |
| Utica city | Oneida County | New York | 31.7% | 11.5% | 2.75 | 48.1% | 15.7% | 3.06 |
| Cincinnati city | Hamilton County | Ohio | 31.8% | 11.7% | 2.72 | 48.0% | 17.4% | 2.76 |
| Wilkes-Barre city | Luzerne County | Pennsylvania | 28.3% | 14.3% | 1.98 | 47.4% | 25.0% | 1.90 |
| Binghamton city | Broome County | New York | 34.1% | 13.0% | 2.64 | 47.2% | 18.5% | 2.55 |
| Troy city | Rensselaer County | New York | 27.3% | 6.7% | 4.10 | 46.7% | 8.4% | 5.59 |
| Schenectady city | Schenectady County | New York | 24.8% | 4.8% | 5.23 | 46.5% | 5.5% | 8.52 |
| Springfield city | Hampden County | Massachusetts | 31.0% | 11.7% | 2.65 | 45.8% | 17.8% | 2.58 |
| South Bend city | St. Joseph County | Indiana | 29.4% | 11.9% | 2.48 | 44.9% | 16.8% | 2.68 |
| Lansing city | Ingham County | Michigan | 32.1% | 17.1% | 1.88 | 44.6% | 11.7% | 3.82 |
| Lancaster city | Lancaster County | Pennsylvania | 31.0% | 8.6% | 3.59 | 44.3% | 12.0% | 3.68 |
| Erie city | Erie County | Pennsylvania | 28.1% | 8.4% | 3.34 | 43.7% | 10.5% | 4.16 |
| Allentown city | Lehigh County | Pennsylvania | 26.9% | 7.2% | 3.72 | 42.8% | 9.5% | 4.51 |
| Toledo city | Lucas County | Ohio | 29.3% | 10.2% | 2.88 | 42.7% | 13.3% | 3.22 |
| Akron city | Summit County | Ohio | 27.8% | 8.6% | 3.23 | 41.3% | 11.8% | 3.50 |
| Rockford city | Winnebago County | Illinois | 25.8% | 8.5% | 3.02 | 39.2% | 11.3% | 3.47 |
| Kalamazoo city | Kalamazoo | Michigan | 33.0% | 12.9% | 2.57 | 37.8% | 14.8% | 2.55 |
| Peoria city | Peoria County | Illinois | 24.9% | 9.1% | 2.73 | 37.7% | 12.0% | 3.14 |
| Worcester city | Worcester County | Massachusetts | 23.3% | 9.0% | 2.58 | 33.9% | 11.5% | 2.95 |
| Columbus city | Franklin County | Ohio | 22.5% | 8.9% | 2.52 | 33.0% | 10.8% | 3.06 |
| Indianapolis city | Marion County | Indiana | 21.6% | 17.1% | 1.26 | 32.4% | 27.5% | 1.18 |
| Pittsburgh city | Allegheny County | Pennsylvania | 22.8% | 10.5% | 2.18 | 31.8% | 15.6% | 2.04 |
| Fort Wayne city | Allen County | Indiana | 20.5% | 8.1% | 2.53 | 31.0% | 12.6% | 2.47 |
| Albany city | Albany County | New York | 25.3% | 8.6% | 2.96 | 30.9% | 11.1% | 2.80 |
| Scranton city | Lackawanna | Pennsylvania | 21.5% | 10.2% | 2.10 | 30.2% | 14.5% | 2.09 |
| Ann Arbor city | Washtenaw County | Michigan | 24.1% | 13.2% | 1.83 | 13.7% | 17.1% | 0.80 |
| Upstate Cities/Counties | | | 31.6% | 8.4% | 3.98 | 47.7% | 10.9% | 5.26 |
| Rust Belt Outside NYS | | | 29.4% | 10.8% | 2.73 | 44.3% | 15.2% | 3.06 |

Income inequality between cities and suburbs increased overall between 1999 and 2013. In

² Estimate from American Community Survey – 2013- 3-year average, U. S. Census Bureau. 1999 data is from the 2000 U. S. Census.

upstate and rust belt cities and counties in 2013, county residents living outside cities averaged 64% higher incomes than city residents, compared with 48% higher in 1999.

Poverty in Upstate and Rust Belt Metropolitan Areas and the United States

Note that in the following discussion, the federal definition of poverty is used. That definition does not include government non-cash assistance, such as food stamps or public housing, in computing the number of people in poverty³.

Concentrations of poverty in most rust belt cities outside of New York State were relatively high – with medians of 29.6 of all residents, and 44.3% of children under 18 in 2013. Among large upstate New York cities, Rochester, Syracuse, Buffalo and Utica had poverty rates in 2013 that were higher than their peers in upstate New York and the rust belt outside the state. In Syracuse and Rochester, more than half of children under 18 years old live in poverty. On the other hand, the level of poverty in Albany was significantly higher than the national average, but lower than the average for rust belt cities outside New York State.

Suburban communities in the counties where rust belt cities outside New York State were located had much lower poverty levels, with a median of 10.8% of all residents, and 15.2% of children under 18. Suburban communities around upstate New York cities had even lower rates of poverty, with medians of 8.4% of all residents, and 10.9% of children under 18 in 2013.

Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo all had higher concentrations of poverty than average, but the surrounding residents of Onondaga, Monroe and Erie Counties had lower concentrations than average. For example, Syracuse had 51.8% of children under 18 living in poverty compared to 43.7% for rust belt cities outside New York. 9.1% of Children in Onondaga County lived in poverty, compared with an average of 15% in counties outside central cities in the rust belt, not including upstate New York. Only Binghamton and Broome County had a lower ratio of the concentration of poverty between cities and suburbs than the average for the rust belt outside New York State. On the other hand, the ratio of the percentage of residents in poverty between cities and suburbs was nearly twice the rust belt outside New York median in Schenectady and Syracuse. For children under 18, the ratio of children in poverty in cities to their suburbs was more than five to one in Schenectady, Troy and Syracuse. Only Binghamton and Albany had city to suburb poverty ratios that were lower than the median for the rust belt outside New York.

Change in Percentage of Residents and Children Living in Poverty 1999 vs. 2013

Overall, rust belt cities, including those in upstate New York, saw much larger increases in the percentage of residents living in poverty between 1999 and 2013 than did residents of suburban areas. For upstate cities, median poverty levels grew from 24% to 32%, while for their suburbs, poverty grew from 5.5% to 8.5%. Both upstate cities and their suburbs saw slightly less growth of overall poverty than in comparable rust belt locations. Even so, because the growth of the percentage of residents in poverty was greater in upstate cities than it was in

³ <https://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>

areas outside them, the gap between the concentration of poverty in upstate cities and that in the suburbs grew.

Table 2.

| Percent in Poverty Overall 1999 vs. 2013 | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Upstate and Rust Belt Cities and Counties | | | | | | | |
| | | Overall Poverty Rate | | | Overall Poverty Rate | | |
| | | Cities | | | Outside Cities | | |
| City | County | 1999 | 2013 | Change | 1999 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany city | Albany County | 21.7% | 25.3% | 3.6% | 5.6% | 8.6% | 2.9% |
| Binghamton city | Broome County | 23.7% | 34.1% | 10.5% | 9.4% | 13.0% | 3.6% |
| Buffalo city | Erie County | 26.6% | 31.4% | 4.8% | 5.8% | 8.4% | 2.6% |
| Rochester city | Monroe County | 25.9% | 33.9% | 8.0% | 4.9% | 8.8% | 3.8% |
| Utica city | Oneida County | 24.5% | 31.7% | 7.2% | 9.0% | 11.5% | 2.6% |
| Syracuse city | Onondaga County | 27.3% | 36.5% | 9.2% | 5.4% | 7.0% | 1.6% |
| Troy city | Rensselaer County | 19.1% | 27.3% | 8.2% | 5.2% | 6.7% | 1.4% |
| Schenectady city | Schenectady County | 20.8% | 24.8% | 4.1% | 4.0% | 4.8% | 0.8% |
| Median- Upstate Cities | | 24.1% | 31.6% | 7.6% | 5.5% | 8.5% | 2.6% |
| Median - Rust Belt | | 18.8% | 29.4% | 9.8% | 6.5% | 10.8% | 3.9% |

The difference between the median percentage of all residents living in poverty in upstate cities and the areas outside the cities in the counties surrounding them increased from 18.6% in 1999 to 23.1% in 2013. For the rust belt, the increase in the difference between cities and areas outside them grew from 12.3% to 18.6%.

In Syracuse, Binghamton and Rochester, more than one-third of all residents lived in poverty in 2013. Binghamton saw the largest growth of residents in poverty among upstate cities between the two years.

Table 3.

| Percent in Poverty - Children Under 18: 1999 vs.2013 | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Upstate and Rust Belt Cities and Counties | | | | | | | |
| City | County | Poverty Rate | | | Poverty Rate | | |
| | | Cities | | | Outside Cities | | |
| | | 1999 | 2013 | Change | 1999 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany city | Albany County | 29.2% | 30.9% | 1.7% | 6.9% | 11.2% | 4.3% |
| Binghamton city | Broome County | 29.1% | 47.2% | 18.1% | 12.9% | 19.4% | 6.6% |
| Buffalo city | Erie County | 38.7% | 48.3% | 9.7% | 7.1% | 10.9% | 3.7% |
| Rochester city | Monroe County | 37.9% | 52.3% | 14.4% | 5.2% | 11.0% | 5.8% |
| Utica city | Oneida County | 38.5% | 48.1% | 9.6% | 12.7% | 16.0% | 3.3% |
| Syracuse city | Onondaga County | 35.4% | 51.8% | 16.3% | 7.0% | 9.4% | 2.4% |
| Troy city | Rensselaer County | 25.5% | 46.7% | 21.2% | 7.1% | 8.7% | 1.6% |
| Schenectady city | Schenectady County | 31.2% | 46.5% | 15.3% | 5.1% | 5.6% | 0.5% |
| Median- Upstate Cities | | 33.3% | 47.7% | 14.9% | 7.0% | 10.9% | 3.5% |
| Median - Rust Belt | | 27.8% | 44.3% | 15.7% | 8.0% | 15.2% | 6.3% |

The percentage of children in poverty living in upstate cities increased by nearly twice as much as did the percentage of overall population living in poverty (14.9% vs. 7.6%). The median level of children living in poverty in upstate cities other than Albany was 48.1% in 2013, compared to 35.4% in 1999. Cities in the rust belt outside New York saw slightly greater increases in the percentage of children living in poverty, with a median increase of 15.7%.

In 1999 and 2013 the percentage of children living in poverty in upstate cities was greater than the median for rust belt cities outside New York State. In two upstate cities, Rochester and Syracuse, more than half of the children under 18 years old lived in poverty. Troy saw the greatest growth of children living in poverty in upstate cities between 1999 and 2013.

The increase for comparable suburban areas upstate was much smaller than that for cities – only 3.5%. Rust belt suburbs outside New York had median increases of 6.3% of children living in poverty.

The difference in median poverty concentrations between cities and suburbs for children under 18 grew from 26.3% in 1999 to 36.8% in 2013 in upstate cities. For the rust belt outside New York State, the difference grew from 19.8% to 29.1%. In both years, there was a greater separation in the percentage of people living in poverty in upstate cities compared with suburbs than there was in the rust belt outside New York State.

Table 4.

| Change in Percentage of Residents in Poverty - 1999 vs. 2013 | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| White vs. Non-White for Cities and Counties outside Cities | | | | | | | |
| City | Non-White 1999 | Non-White 2013 | Non-White Change | | White 1999 | White 2013 | White Change |
| Albany city | 31.9% | 33.2% | 1.3% | | 15.0% | 17.9% | 2.9% |
| Binghamton city | 47.9% | 48.8% | 0.9% | | 18.2% | 28.5% | 10.3% |
| Buffalo city | 36.4% | 43.2% | 6.8% | | 17.4% | 17.0% | -0.4% |
| Rochester city | 34.5% | 42.2% | 7.7% | | 14.6% | 19.3% | 4.7% |
| Utica city | 45.0% | 50.1% | 5.1% | | 18.1% | 19.7% | 1.6% |
| Syracuse city | 39.5% | 47.1% | 7.6% | | 19.6% | 26.0% | 6.5% |
| Troy city | 36.1% | 41.2% | 5.1% | | 14.7% | 20.7% | 6.0% |
| Schenectady city | 38.0% | 37.1% | -0.9% | | 14.9% | 15.0% | 0.1% |
| Upstate New York | 37.2% | 42.7% | 5.5% | | 16.2% | 19.5% | 3.3% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 31.1% | 40.0% | 8.8% | | 13.8% | 19.9% | 6.2% |
| | | | | | | | |
| County Outside City | Non-White 1999 | Non-White 2013 | Non-White Change | | White 1999 | White 2013 | White Change |
| Albany County | 12.4% | 16.7% | 4.4% | | 5.1% | 7.2% | 2.1% |
| Broome County | 25.9% | 27.9% | 2.0% | | 8.4% | 11.4% | 3.1% |
| Erie County | 18.0% | 20.5% | 2.5% | | 5.1% | 7.1% | 2.0% |
| Monroe County | 11.5% | 18.3% | 6.7% | | 4.3% | 7.2% | 2.9% |
| Oneida County | 19.1% | 19.9% | 0.8% | | 8.5% | 11.0% | 2.5% |
| Onondaga County | 11.5% | 13.4% | 1.9% | | 5.0% | 6.3% | 1.3% |
| Rensselaer County | 11.1% | 11.5% | 0.4% | | 5.0% | 6.3% | 1.3% |
| Schenectady County | 11.1% | 7.1% | -4.0% | | 3.6% | 4.5% | 0.9% |
| Upstate New York | 12.0% | 17.5% | 5.5% | | 5.05% | 7.16% | 2.1% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 14.6% | 20.6% | 5.9% | | 5.48% | 8.38% | 2.9% |

Minority Group Membership and Poverty

This section examines the relationship between people who identify as white (not Hispanic) and those who identify as members of minority groups and the concentration of poverty within the groups. It also looks at the change in the concentration of poverty between 1999 and 2013 in upstate cities and the counties around them compared with rust belt cities and counties outside New York State. Finally, it examines changes in the composition of city and suburban populations between 1999 and 2013.

Overall, people who identified as members of minority groups were more than twice as likely to live in poverty as those who identified as white in both 1999 and 2013. The increase in the percentage of people in poverty between 1999 and 2013 was larger for minority group members than for those identifying as white, not Hispanic. These relationships were true both in upstate cities and in the suburbs surrounding them. But the relatively small changes in the percentage of each group in poverty between 1999 and 2013 – generally between two and six percent – shows that we must look further to discover the cause of the larger overall increase in the percentage of people in poverty that took place between those years.

Residents of cities were two to three times as likely to live in poverty than those living outside them, regardless of whether they identified as white or non-white. City residents saw increases in the percentage of residents living in poverty that were larger than those of those living outside them.

A second source of changes in the percentage of people in poverty in cities and suburbs is changes in the minority and white populations. Because non-white populations have higher percentages of residents in poverty, higher concentrations of non-white residents in cities and counties would be expected to be associated with higher concentrations of poverty in those locations.

Table 5.

| Percent Change in Residents - 2013 Compared to 1999 | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Total, White and Non White - Central Cities vs Counties Outside Central Cities | | | | | | | |
| | Central Cities | | | | Outside Central Cities | | |
| City | Total | White | Non-White | | Total | White | Non-White |
| | 1999 | 2013 | Change | | 1999 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany city | 2.70% | -7.45% | 10.14% | | 4.11% | -2.86% | 6.97% |
| Binghamton city | -2.06% | -10.79% | 8.73% | | -1.37% | -4.63% | 3.26% |
| Buffalo city | -10.92% | -11.49% | 0.57% | | 0.27% | -3.77% | 4.04% |
| Rochester city | -4.70% | -8.77% | 4.06% | | 4.34% | -1.76% | 6.10% |
| Utica city | 2.71% | -14.20% | 16.91% | | -0.30% | -1.64% | 1.34% |
| Syracuse city | -4.76% | -13.04% | 8.28% | | 3.36% | -0.38% | 3.74% |
| Troy city | 0.27% | -11.46% | 11.73% | | 6.31% | 3.01% | 3.30% |
| Schenectady city | 6.84% | -15.28% | 22.12% | | 5.75% | 1.06% | 4.69% |
| Upstate New York | -0.89% | -11.48% | 9.44% | | 3.74% | -1.70% | 3.89% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | -2.10% | -9.74% | 5.92% | | 4.09% | -0.36% | 6.20% |

The data shows that that is, in fact, the case. Most upstate cities lost more than 10% of the population that identified as white, not Hispanic, while gaining non-white population. Utica lost 14% of it’s white population, while Schenectady lost 15%. Schenectady and Utica also had the largest gains in non-white populations – 22% and 17% respectively. Suburban areas lost less than 2% of their white populations, while seeing increases in minority populations of one to seven percent, with a median of 3.89%. Overall, upstate cities had slightly larger percentage losses of their white populations than comparable rust belt cities, and larger gains in non-white populations. For suburban areas, the pattern was somewhat different. While upstate suburban areas had slightly larger losses of white populations that comparable rust belt areas outside the state, they had smaller increases in minority populations.

The changes in population compositions between 2000 and 2013 increased the separations of cities from their suburbs. Upstate cities lost more than one in ten white residents in most cases, while median losses of white residents for suburban areas were less than one in fifty residents. Similarly, median increases in non-white populations in upstate cities were nearly 10%, while in suburban areas the median increase was less than 4%.

Educational Attainment

Table 6.

| Percentage of Residents with High School Degree or Less - 1999 vs. 2013 | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|--|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Poverty vs. Not in Poverty: Cities and Counties outside Cities | | | | | | | |
| City | Below Poverty | | | | Above Poverty | | |
| | 1999 | 2013 | Change | | 1999 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany city | 61.5% | 61.9% | 0.4% | | 33.6% | 31.2% | -2.4% |
| Binghamton city | 63.2% | 66.1% | 2.9% | | 40.8% | 42.3% | 1.5% |
| Buffalo city | 69.5% | 60.6% | -8.9% | | 40.0% | 40.5% | 0.4% |
| Rochester city | 75.8% | 65.1% | -10.7% | | 40.3% | 40.7% | 0.4% |
| Utica city | 72.5% | 73.2% | 0.7% | | 44.5% | 46.0% | 1.5% |
| Syracuse city | 70.3% | 65.3% | -5.0% | | 38.7% | 41.5% | 2.9% |
| Troy city | 71.5% | 63.6% | -7.9% | | 44.6% | 40.3% | -4.3% |
| Schenectady city | 70.4% | 67.3% | -3.1% | | 43.5% | 47.4% | 3.9% |
| Upstate New York | 70.3% | 65.2% | -5.1% | | 40.6% | 41.1% | 0.5% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 77.0% | 64.4% | -12.6% | | 44.6% | 46.8% | 2.2% |
| | | | | | | | |
| County Outside City | Below Poverty | | | | Above Poverty | | |
| | 1999 | 2013 | Change | | 1999 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany County | 62.1% | 52.8% | -9.2% | | 36.3% | 30.4% | -5.9% |
| Broome County | 70.8% | 57.4% | -13.3% | | 42.4% | 39.8% | -2.7% |
| Erie County | 60.8% | 53.3% | -7.5% | | 40.0% | 33.9% | -6.1% |
| Monroe County | 59.4% | 51.6% | -7.7% | | 33.1% | 28.9% | -4.2% |
| Oneida County | 72.4% | 64.3% | -8.1% | | 44.4% | 39.2% | -5.2% |
| Onondaga County | 63.7% | 55.6% | -8.1% | | 36.6% | 31.3% | -5.3% |
| Rensselaer County | 68.1% | 54.0% | -14.1% | | 41.4% | 34.8% | -6.6% |
| Schenectady County | 63.1% | 64.7% | 1.7% | | 37.7% | 31.6% | -6.1% |
| Upstate New York | 63.4% | 54.8% | -8.6% | | 38.9% | 32.8% | -6.1% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 69.8% | 58.7% | -11.1% | | 43.5% | 38.8% | -4.7% |

Residents of upstate cities whose incomes are below the poverty level are twice as likely to have only a high school education or less than residents living outside the city who are not below the poverty level. Overall, 60% or more of residents of upstate cities have a high school diploma or less, while 30% to 40% of residents whose incomes are above the poverty level, living outside central cities have high school diplomas or less.

Between 2000 and 2013, the percentage of people living in poverty and those not living in poverty having only a high school degree, or less, declined. The largest improvements were among people living in cities in the rust belt outside New York State.

In 2013, the difference in the percentage people with a high school education or less for people living in in poverty in cities and those not living in poverty outside cities was greater in Upstate New York (32.4% more) than in rust belt cities and areas outside cities in counties outside New York State (25.8% of residents).

Table 7.

| Work Experience - 2013 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Central Cities vs. Outside Central Cities | | | | | | |
| City | Below Poverty | | | Above Poverty | | |
| | Worked Full Time | Worked Part Time/Part Year | Did Not Work | Worked Full Time | Worked Part Time/Part Year | Did Not Work |
| Albany city | 8.1% | 37.5% | 54.4% | 50.8% | 22.5% | 26.7% |
| Binghamton city | 2.9% | 35.1% | 62.0% | 40.0% | 26.4% | 33.6% |
| Buffalo city | 5.5% | 32.5% | 62.0% | 43.2% | 24.6% | 32.2% |
| Rochester city | 5.9% | 31.1% | 63.0% | 48.1% | 23.7% | 28.1% |
| Utica city | 4.7% | 30.5% | 64.8% | 39.4% | 26.8% | 33.8% |
| Syracuse city | 6.6% | 31.2% | 62.2% | 46.4% | 22.6% | 31.0% |
| Troy city | 4.6% | 44.1% | 51.3% | 46.9% | 24.3% | 28.9% |
| Schenectady city | 8.4% | 35.6% | 56.1% | 47.4% | 23.6% | 29.0% |
| Upstate New York | 5.7% | 33.8% | 62.0% | 46.6% | 24.0% | 30.0% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 7.0% | 33.9% | 59.8% | 44.6% | 24.2% | 30.4% |
| County Outside City | Below Poverty | | | Above Poverty | | |
| | Worked Full Time | Worked Part Time/Part Year | Did Not Work | Worked Full Time | Worked Part Time/Part Year | Did Not Work |
| Albany County | 6.5% | 37.1% | 56.3% | 49.1% | 23.3% | 27.7% |
| Broome County | 7.6% | 34.5% | 57.9% | 42.4% | 26.1% | 31.5% |
| Erie County | 5.7% | 34.6% | 59.7% | 45.5% | 24.8% | 29.6% |
| Monroe County | 5.6% | 36.6% | 57.8% | 46.3% | 24.8% | 28.9% |
| Oneida County | 7.9% | 27.7% | 64.4% | 45.6% | 23.3% | 31.1% |
| Onondaga County | 6.0% | 32.2% | 61.8% | 47.7% | 23.3% | 28.9% |
| Rensselaer County | 6.4% | 38.7% | 54.8% | 49.7% | 22.7% | 27.6% |
| Schenectady County | 8.8% | 22.8% | 68.4% | 45.7% | 24.3% | 30.0% |
| Upstate New York | 6.5% | 34.5% | 58.8% | 46.0% | 23.8% | 29.3% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 7.6% | 35.6% | 56.0% | 46.2% | 23.9% | 30.0% |

Work Experience

Work experience for those in poverty in cities and suburbs was similar. In upstate cities, for example, only 5.7% of those living in poverty worked full time in 2013. Similarly, only 6.5% of those living in poverty in areas within counties outside cities worked full time. The picture was quite different for people not living in poverty. 46% of residents inside and outside of upstate cities worked full time. Not surprisingly the percentage of people living in poverty in each case who did not work during 2013 was about twice that of people who did not live in poverty in 2013.⁴

Family Structure

One of the strongest differentiations between people in poverty and not in poverty is found in family structure. Single parent families face substantial obstacles to economic security, because of the absence of a parent, the need to rely on a single parent for income, and childcare

⁴ Comparable data for 2000 was not available.

difficulties. In both 1999 and 2013, Outside central cities, only about a quarter of families with children under living above the poverty line were single parent families. In contrast, within central cities, on average more than 80% of families with children living below the poverty line were in single parent families.

Table 8.

| Percentage of Families with Children Under 18 In Single Parent Households | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------|-------|--------|--|---------------|-------|--------|
| Poverty vs. Not in Poverty: Cities and Counties outside Cities | | | | | | | |
| City | Below Poverty | | | | Above Poverty | | |
| | 2000 | 2013 | Change | | 2000 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany city | 87.1% | 84.6% | -2.5% | | 46.0% | 45.3% | -0.8% |
| Binghamton city | 75.0% | 74.4% | -0.6% | | 32.3% | 44.3% | 12.0% |
| Buffalo city | 83.8% | 79.4% | -4.4% | | 45.6% | 57.2% | 11.6% |
| Rochester city | 85.6% | 86.8% | 1.2% | | 50.3% | 57.8% | 7.5% |
| Utica city | 72.8% | 75.8% | 2.9% | | 33.3% | 45.3% | 12.0% |
| Syracuse city | 82.3% | 82.4% | 0.1% | | 44.3% | 50.1% | 5.8% |
| Troy city | 80.6% | 85.4% | 4.7% | | 42.9% | 53.0% | 10.1% |
| Schenectady city | 83.3% | 81.9% | -1.4% | | 37.9% | 37.4% | -0.5% |
| Upstate New York | 82.8% | 82.1% | -0.6% | | 43.6% | 41.6% | -2.0% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 82.2% | 81.4% | -0.8% | | 35.8% | 46.2% | 10.4% |
| | | | | | | | |
| County Outside City | Below Poverty | | | | Above Poverty | | |
| | 2000 | 2013 | Change | | 2000 | 2013 | Change |
| Albany County | 80.6% | 78.4% | -2.2% | | 20.8% | 24.3% | 3.4% |
| Broome County | 67.5% | 70.2% | 2.6% | | 21.7% | 27.0% | 5.3% |
| Erie County | 69.7% | 78.6% | 8.8% | | 17.4% | 24.2% | 6.8% |
| Monroe County | 68.6% | 77.7% | 9.1% | | 18.1% | 24.0% | 5.8% |
| Oneida County | 68.2% | 70.1% | 1.9% | | 21.1% | 30.5% | 9.3% |
| Onondaga County | 73.6% | 75.4% | 1.8% | | 20.2% | 23.5% | 3.3% |
| Rensselaer County | 73.3% | 85.1% | 11.8% | | 19.6% | 22.2% | 2.6% |
| Schenectady County | 62.1% | 92.2% | 30.1% | | 18.5% | 18.4% | -0.1% |
| Upstate New York | 69.2% | 78.0% | 8.9% | | 19.9% | 24.1% | 4.2% |
| Rust Belt outside NY | 71.3% | 75.7% | 4.4% | | 19.0% | 25.1% | 6.1% |

While the difference in family structure for families with children above the poverty line was less strong within cities and suburbs, as opposed to between them, it was still present. Families headed by a single parent were far more likely to live in poverty than those who did not.

The relationship between single parenting and poverty was not significantly different in upstate cities and areas outside them compared with cities and areas outside them in the rust belt outside New York State.

Implications

Although upstate New York has seen slow economic and growth for many years, the residents of most upstate metropolitan areas have higher incomes than the average for rust belt cities. Nor has economic growth upstate differed significantly from comparable rust belt states. But,

upstate central cities, particularly those in central and western New York have poverty levels as high as 50% of central city families with children. Poverty in this group has grown more than twice as fast as in the nation as a whole, and three times as fast as in the suburban communities surrounding the central cities.

While areas outside upstate central cities saw small population gains between 1999 and 2013, the region's largest cities saw population decreases of 5% or more. The region's cities lost residents with incomes above poverty level and gained residents below it. City populations became increasingly non-white, with upstate cities losing more than 10% of their white populations in 14 years, while suburban populations saw little change. Residents living in poverty faced substantial obstacles to attaining economic security because of low levels of education, lack of full time work, and high percentages of single parent families.

Governor Cuomo and the state legislature have devoted significant resources to upstate economic development in recent years. The approach taken by the governor requires the development of regional economic development plans as a prerequisite to funding. While this approach requires the development of strategic plans, and can potentially provide region-wide benefits, it does not focus on the upstate populations in greatest need of state help.

Because the current regional economic development strategies are broadly based, they have focused on a wider set of objectives than a targeted approach focusing on the people and places where the poor are concentrated. Any regional decision-making process, in order to reach consensus, would necessarily distribute benefits widely across the region. Consequently, to address the needs of the most disadvantaged people and places in upstate New York, a set of strategies focused on the objective of reducing poverty in central cities should be developed.

There are known, evidence based strategies to ameliorate poverty that have been implemented in the United States and elsewhere. But despite the fact that New York State has a relatively generous social safety net, it has not made the reduction of upstate central city poverty a high priority. Some local efforts have been made to address this problem, particularly in Rochester, where community leadership has analyzed and developed potential solutions.⁵ But, significant progress in reducing poverty would require initiatives at the state and potentially the Federal level.

⁵ Reducing Poverty: An International Scan of Options to Consider, Prepared for the United Way by Center for Governmental Research, December 2014. <https://www.uwrochester.org/pdf/UnitedWay-ReducingPovertyinRochesterReport.pdf>