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As expected, Utah poverty rates rose from 2007 to 2009

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Following a nationwide trend, Utah saw poverty spike from 9.8 percent in 2007 to 11.7 percent in 2009, according to new data released this week by the U.S. Census Bureau.

One of the largest increases came in Washington County, where the rate jumped from 8.9 percent in 2007 to 14.2 percent in 2009.

Ruben Garcia, director of the Dixie Care and Share Food Pantry in St. George, wasn't surprised to hear the numbers.

"A lot of our donors from previous years are now clients," he said. "There's a lot of working poor in Washington County."

The state's most populous county, Salt Lake County, saw its poverty rate rise from 9 percent in 2007 to 10.7 percent two years later. The numbers were worse in Utah County, where poverty grew from 11.4 to 14.2 percent.

Economic recovery has been slow to arrive in Utah, where food pantries continue to report an increase of nearly 40 percent or more in requests for free food.

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