



SNAPSHOT

Sept. 18, 2026

Louisiana Trends in Inequality, Life Expectancy

Where Louisiana ranks nationally in poverty, income inequality and life expectancy

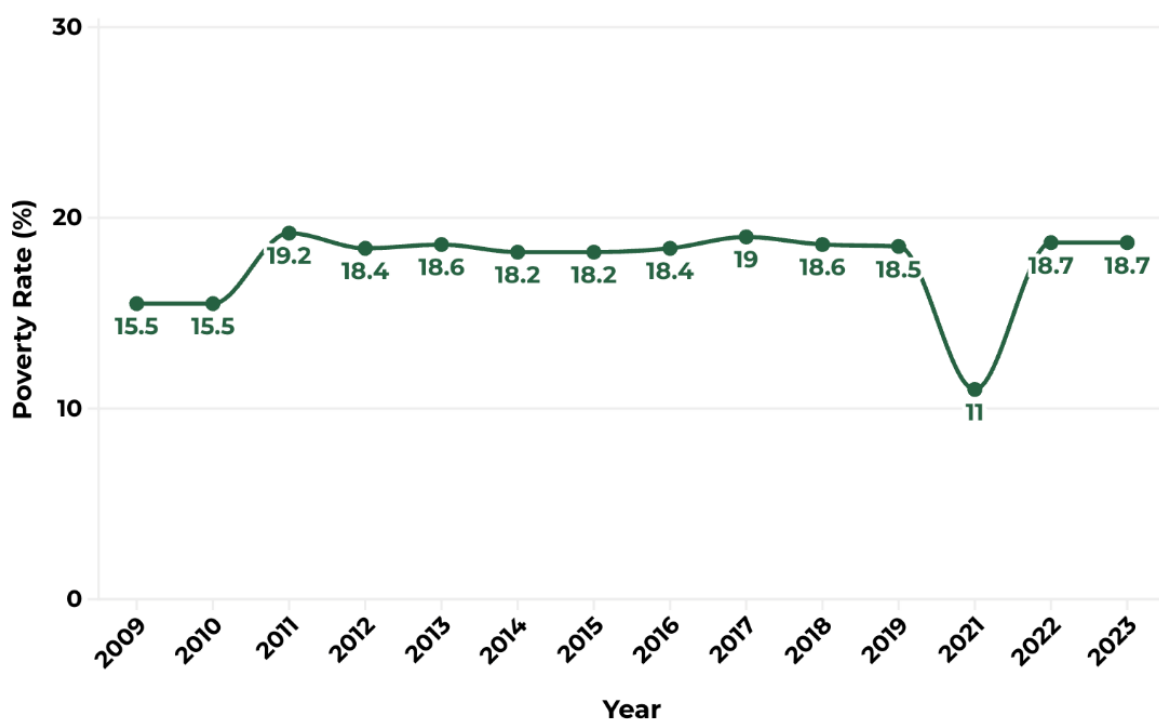
Louisiana consistently ranks in the bottom national percentile of categories like poverty, income inequality and life expectancy. While data shows the state is improving in some categories post-pandemic, others are worsening.

[The State of the Nation Project's](#) annual State of the States Report 2026 uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau to evaluate all 50 states and the District of Columbia across 30 benchmarks, identifying topics like economic output, education and physical health for comparison. The report ranks the states by annual progress on each rating.

Poverty

Louisiana is ranked second to last in the nation for poverty, and the state trend is worsening. In 2023, the state's poverty rate was 18.7%, according to the report.

Louisiana Poverty Rate, 2009-2023

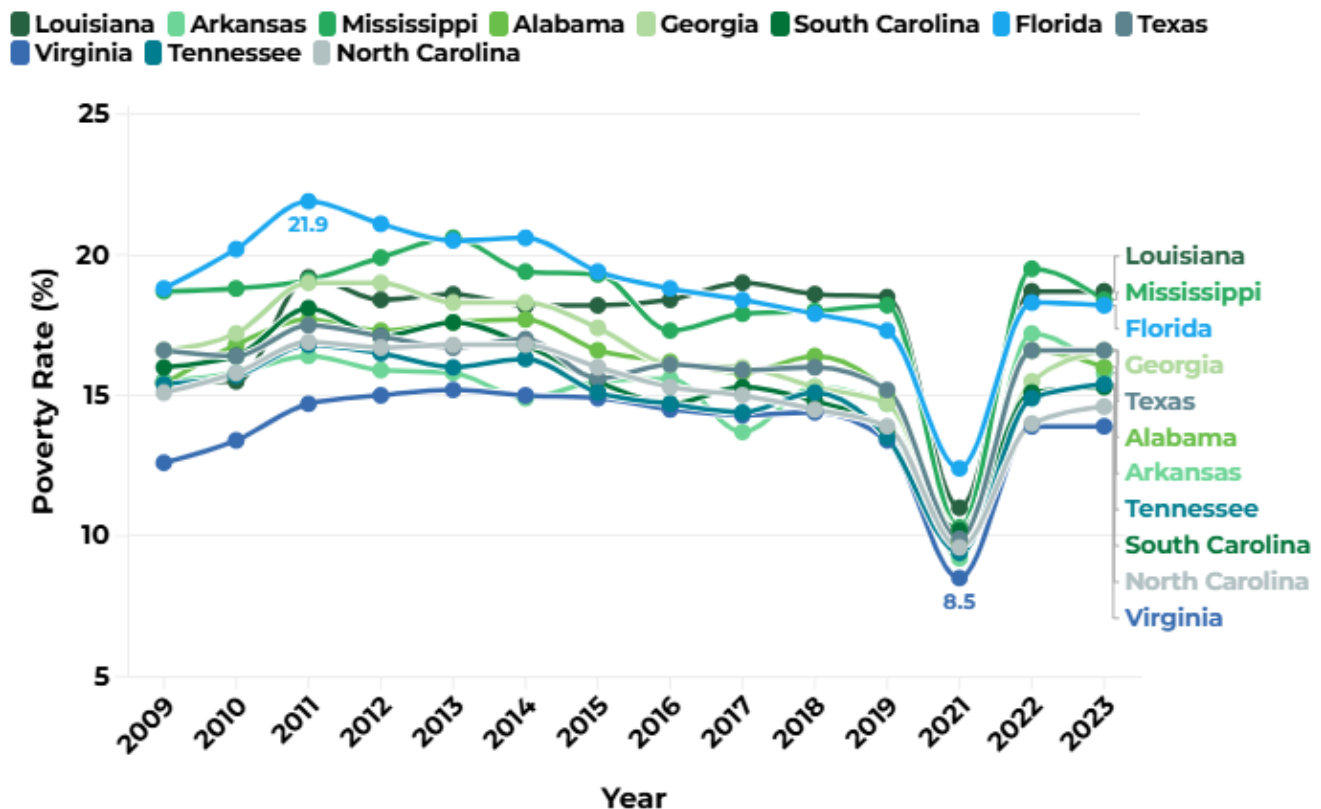


Source: [State of the States, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Louisiana's poverty trend is worsening compared to the rest of the nation, declining by at least two places in rank relative to the other states, according to the project's data.

Louisiana's poverty level was also 18.7% in 2022, a slight increase from its pre-COVID-19 pandemic poverty levels of 18.5% in 2019 and 18.6% in 2018. This data reflects a wider trend occurring across several other Southern states.

Poverty Rate Among Southern States, 2009-2023



Source: [State of the States, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau](#)

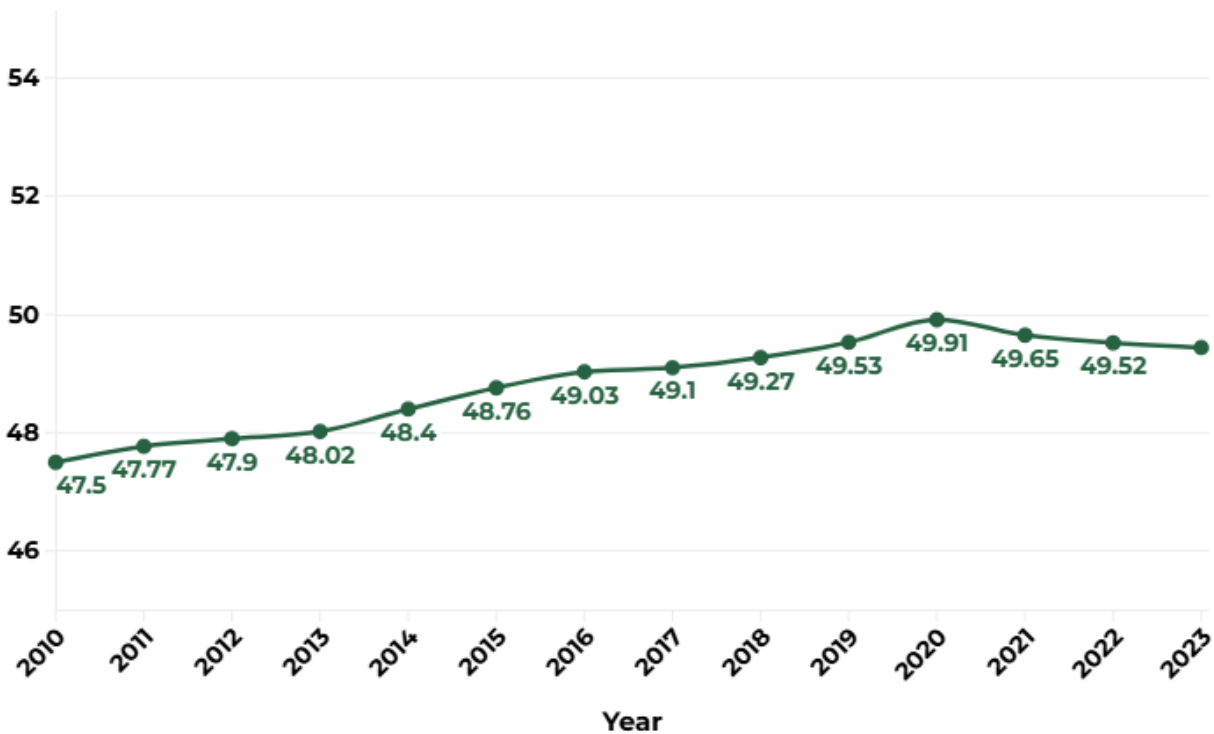
Mississippi fell right behind Louisiana with a ranking of 49 out of 51 and a poverty level of 18.4% in 2023. Florida followed Mississippi with 18.2% of its population considered impoverished in the same year.

Income Inequality

According to the report, Louisiana ranks 48 out of 51 in the nation for income inequality.

Inequality is measured using a range from zero to 100. Zero means every person has equal income, while 100 means one person has all the income. Therefore, higher numbers signal greater inequality, while lower numbers indicate that income levels throughout the population are more equal.

Income Inequality in Louisiana, 2010 – 2023



Source: [State of the States, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau](#)

Income inequality is increasing across the country, and the report primarily attributes this widening gap to a more rapid increase in income for higher earners.

National poverty rates are declining, which means overall income is rising across the U.S. However, since the income inequality rate is also rising, this indicates that income for higher earners is increasing faster than income for lower earners.

Louisiana's income inequality is worsening relative to the rest of the nation and tends to run slightly higher than its neighboring Southern states.

The Southern state with the most similar data to Louisiana is Florida, which ranked 45 out of 51 nationwide for income inequality with a score of 48.5 in 2023. Following Florida is Mississippi, which ranked 44 out of 51 and had a score of 48.4.

Life Expectancy

Louisiana ranks low among states for its life expectancy rates, though it rests similarly among surrounding Southern states.

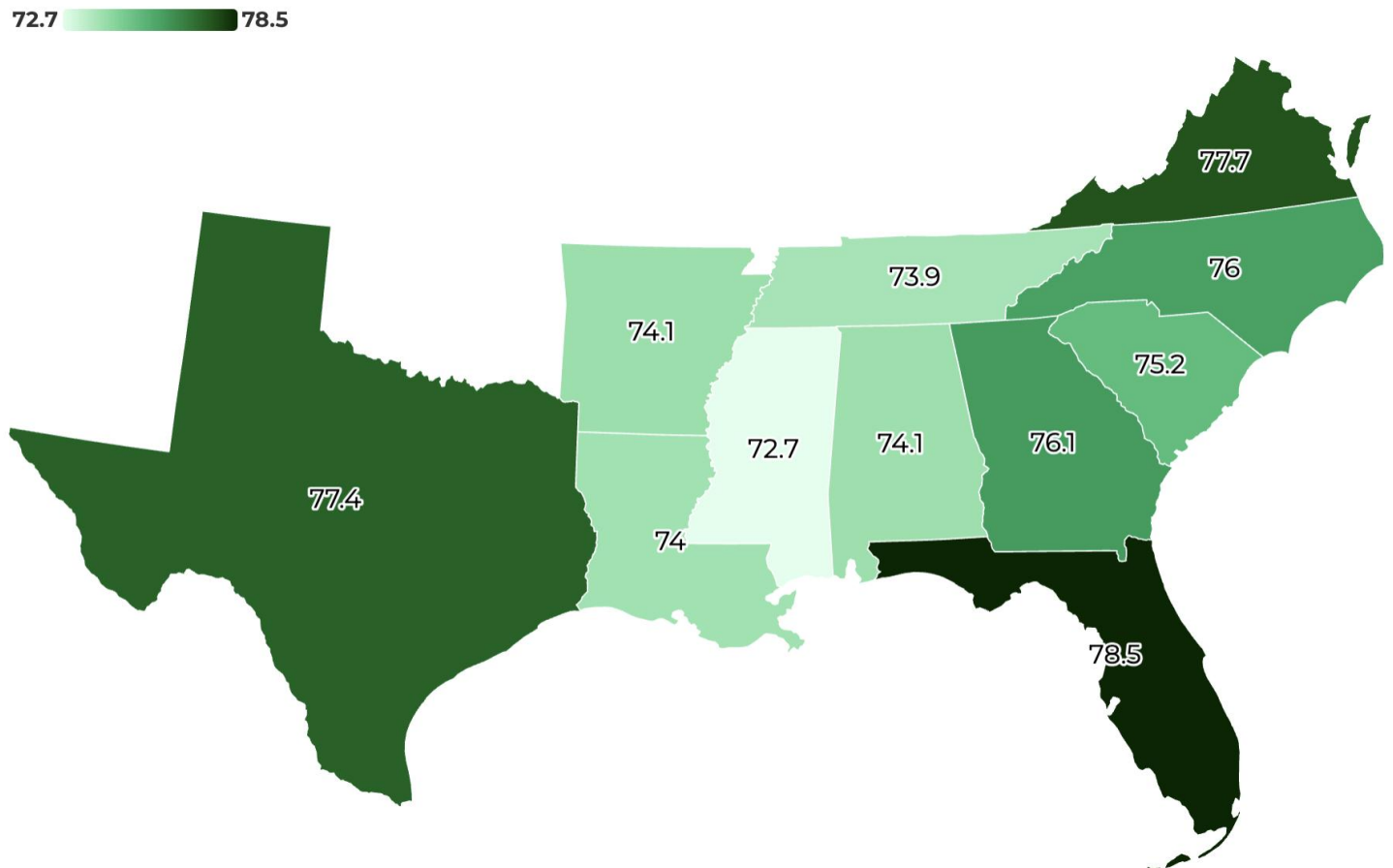
The State of the States Report 2026 evaluated data from the Harvard Dataverse's U.S. State Life Tables from 1941 through 2022 to calculate life expectancy. The report shows Louisiana's average life expectancy at 73.9 years for 2022.

While most states' averages are improving, the data shows all states across the country have yet to recover from the COVID-related drop in 2021 and reach pre-pandemic life expectancy levels.

Louisiana's highest life expectancy average since 1990 was 75.9 in 2011.

Mississippi had the lowest life expectancy among Southern states. But a few Southern states outpace the others, such as Florida ranked at 13. The Sunshine State's life expectancy dropped during the pandemic, but its 2021 average was still higher than Louisiana's peak expectancy in 2011.

Life Expectancy Among Southern States, 1990-2022



Source: [State of the States, using data from Harvard Dataverse's U.S. State Life Tables \(1941 - 2022\)](#)

The national life expectancy is at an all-time high at 79.3 years and is improving, the report says. Still, the country's average is not improving as quickly as other high-income countries with 62% of 117 countries outperforming the United States.