

# The link between poverty and health in Kentucky

Since 2008, the **Kentucky Health Issues Poll (KHIP)** has been tracking health opinions and the health status of adults in the state. An important indicator of well-being in the state is overall health status.

KHIP asks “Would you say that, in general, your health is excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?”

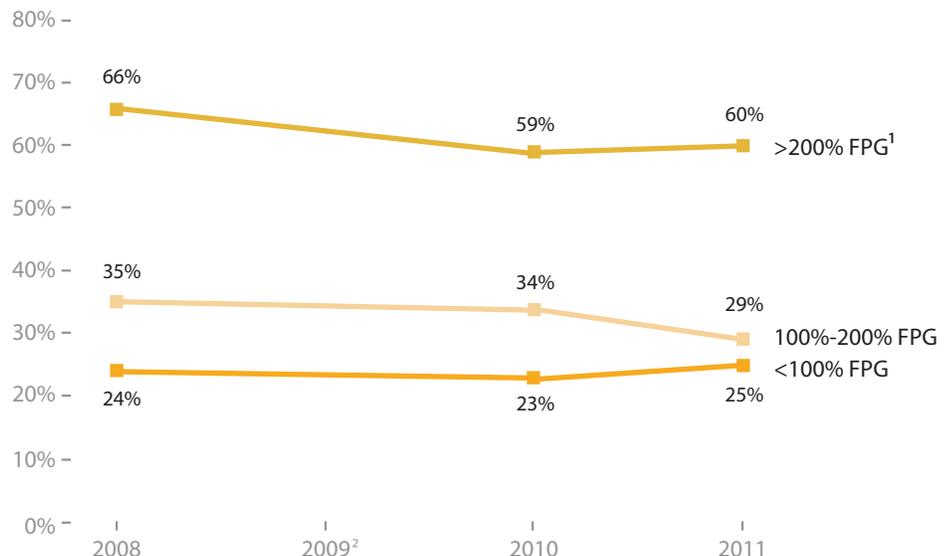
## Kentuckians with higher incomes report better health

Since KHIP began, people with higher incomes have consistently reported better health status. About 6 in 10 Kentuckians living above 200% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG)<sup>1</sup> reported being in “excellent” or “very good” health since 2008. This compares with 2 in 10 Kentuckians living below 100% FPG and about 3 in 10 living between 100% and 200% FPG.

## More people living in poverty

While health status for each income category has remained constant, the number of people in each category has not. Since 2008, the percentage

**Kentucky adults reporting “excellent” or “very good” health, by household income, 2008-2011**



<sup>2</sup> The question “Would you say that in general your health is excellent, very good, fair or poor?” was not asked on the 2009 KHIP.

of adults living below 100% FPG has been steadily increasing from about 1 in 5 (19%) in 2008 to more than 1 in 3 (34%) in 2011. We estimate that since 2008 an additional 637,000 Kentucky adults have fallen below the poverty line.

The increase in poverty is of concern to anyone working to improve the health of Kentuckians. Research has shown a strong link between higher income and better health. As poverty has increased in Kentucky the percentage of adults reporting their health as excellent or very good has dropped from almost half (49%) in 2008 to just more than 4 in 10 (42%) in 2011.

<sup>1</sup> 100% of the federal poverty guidelines (FPG) in 2010 was an annual household income of \$22,050 and 200% FPG was \$44,100, both for a family of 4.

These findings unless otherwise noted are from the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, funded by the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky and The Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati. The Kentucky Health Issues Poll was conducted Sept. 27-Oct. 27, 2011, by the Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati. A random sample of 1,621 adults from throughout Kentucky was interviewed by telephone. This included 1,313 landline interviews and 308 cell phone interviews. In 95 of 100 cases, the statewide estimates will be accurate to  $\pm 2.5\%$ . There are other sources of variation inherent in public opinion studies, such as non-response, question wording or context effects that can introduce error or bias.

For more information about the Kentucky Health Issues Poll, please visit [www.healthy-ky.org](http://www.healthy-ky.org) or [www.healthfoundation.org/khip.html](http://www.healthfoundation.org/khip.html).