

THE GROWTH DILEMMA PROJECT_of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

“...seeking and speaking truth about our economy.”

QUESTIONS, QUERIES, AND GRAPHS

Humanity is facing a profound dilemma. The economies of virtually all nations require growth to provide prosperity. Yet human economies are already larger than earth's commonwealth of life can continue to support, and more growth seems mainly to enrich the rich.

The Growth Dilemma Project asks Friends to examine the nature of our economic system. We identify four ways, among many others, that our nation's economy in its current form is clearly dis-functional. For each, we offer a question and a query as a basis for discussion.

WHAT IS OUR ECONOMY FOR ?

SURELY IT IS NOT TO STEADILY INCREASE THE WEALTH AND POWER THE WEALTHIEST!

Questions: *Why is wealth becoming more concentrated in the hands of fewer people?*

Queries: *What is a morally acceptable basis for “right sharing” of Earth's bounty?*

SURELY IT IS NOT TO CONVINCING US WE NEED THINGS WE ARE BETTER OFF WITHOUT!

Question: *Why does our economy try to induce those with plenty to buy more, and those in debt to borrow more, while many working poor are unable to improve their condition?*

Queries: *How do we distinguish what we need from what we want? How do we balance satisfying our wants with the impacts we have on the commonwealth of life?*

SURELY IT IS NOT TO MAXIMIZE PROFITS BY ELIMINATING JOBS THAT PEOPLE NEED!

Questions: *Why are we not able to provide enough jobs for those who need them?*

Query: *Should everyone in a market economy have a right to a suitable and gainful job?*

SURELY IT IS NOT TO STRIP THE EARTH OF RESOURCES, POLLUTE IT WITH WASTES, AND DIMINISH ITS ABILITY TO SUSTAIN LIFE!

Question: *Why do we seem so unable to protect the commonwealth of life from the destruction caused by our regional and global economies?*

Query: *If we come to understand that many destructive trends are inherent in the way our current economic system functions, how can we be faithful to the Light of Truth?*

The graphs on the pages that follow are illustrative of the societal problems that the growth economy is worsening rather than solving.

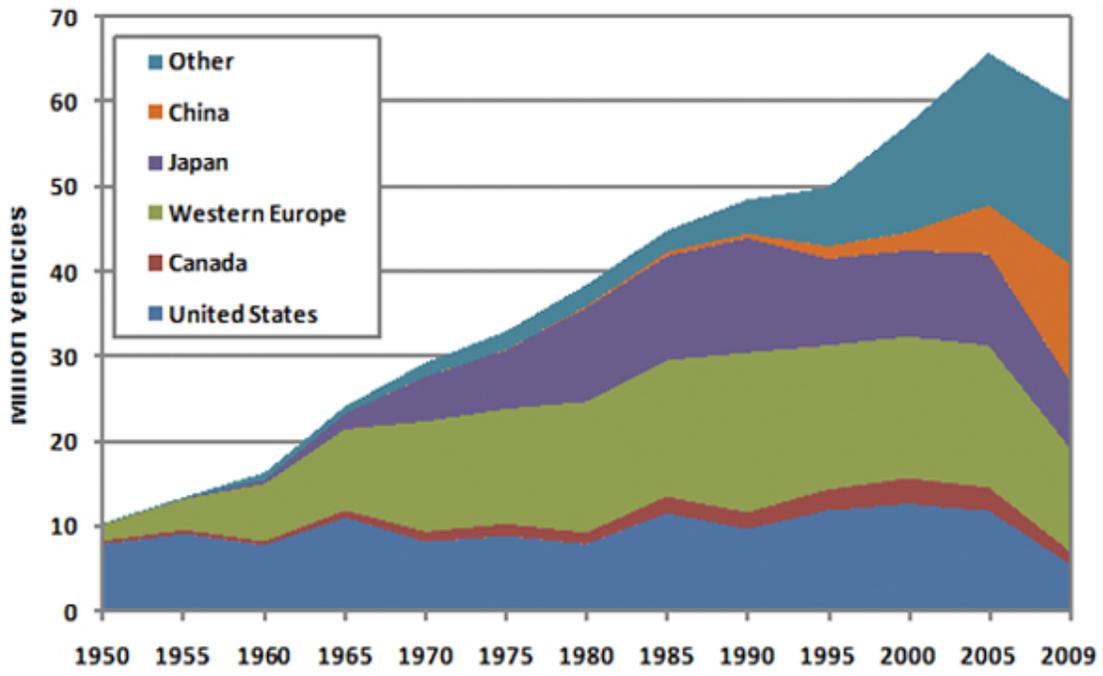
The purpose of the Growth Dilemma Project (GDP) is to nurture understanding about the failures of our current economic system, with respect to Friends testimonies, and to promote new thinking about the design of our economic institutions. The project has two components:

- Asking Friends in our Yearly Meeting to become familiar with a) the societal problems that our growth economy is worsening rather than solving, b) explanations for why this is happening, and c) proposed alternatives. We hope this will unleash new energy among Friends at many levels.
- Developing a wider network of Friends, based on our Core Principles for A Quaker Witness on Ecology and the Economy, to help promote a national dialogue about the failures of our current economic system, and about ways to move toward an economy based on justice and reverence for life.

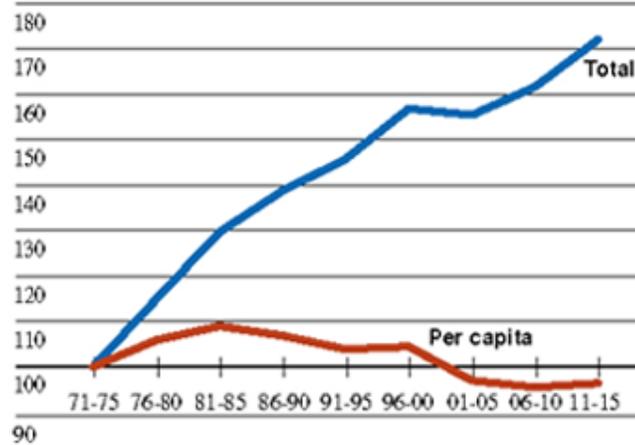
**For more information, please see the GDP webpage at www.pym.org.
or contact GDP care of pama@pym.org**

June, 2011

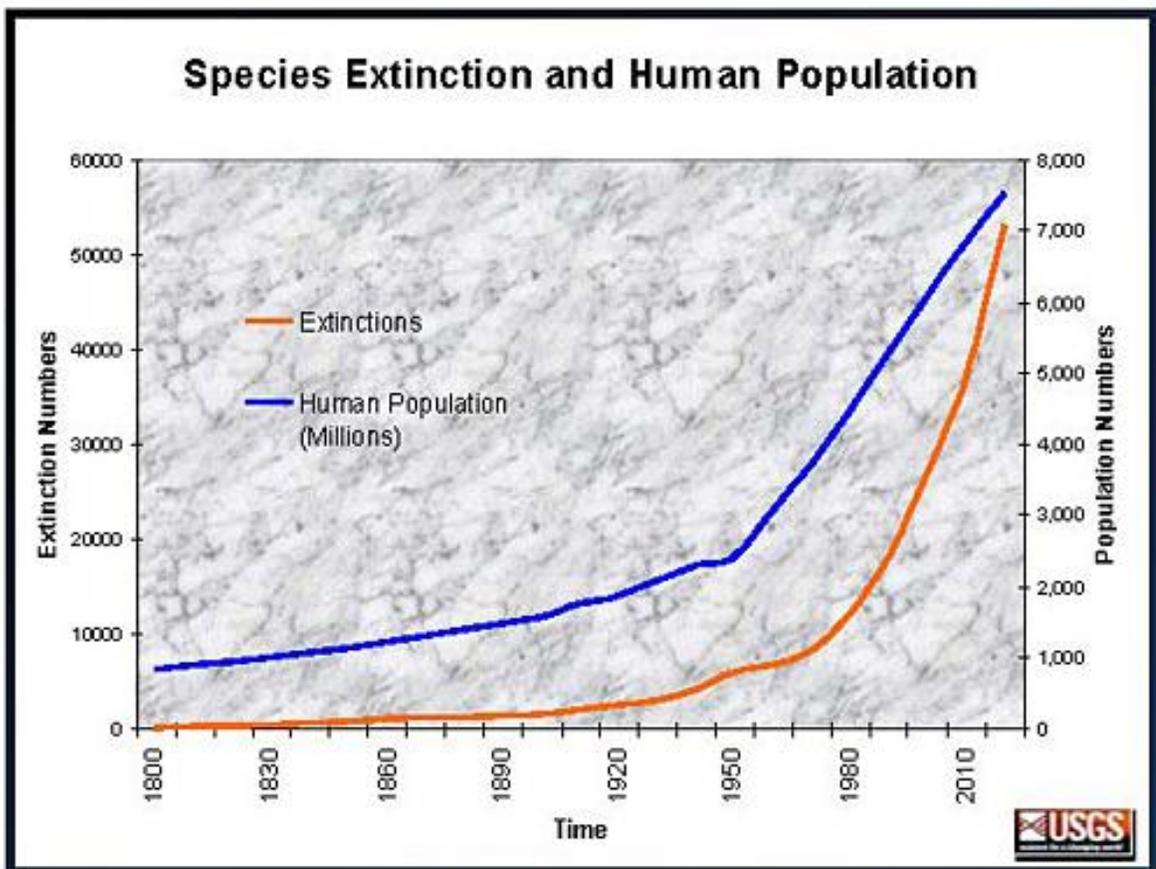
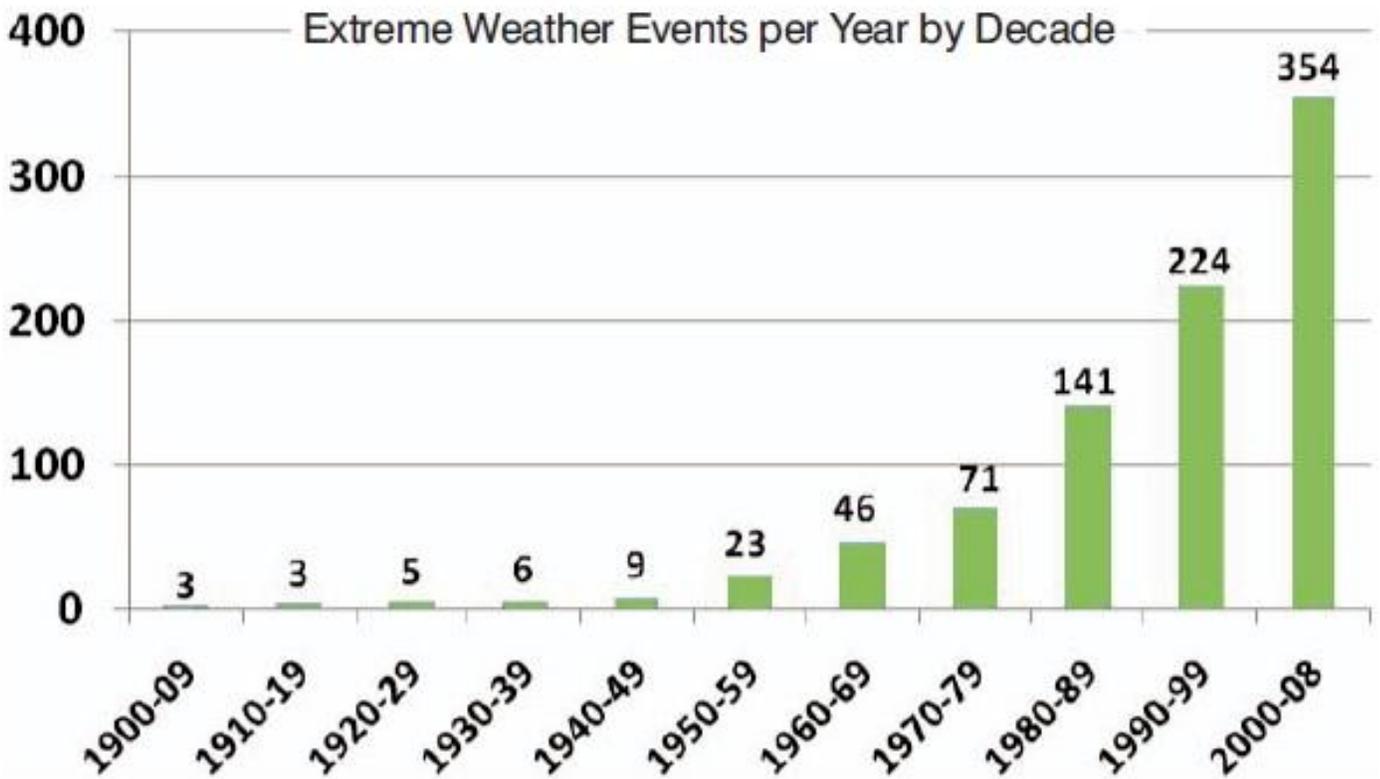
World Automobile Production



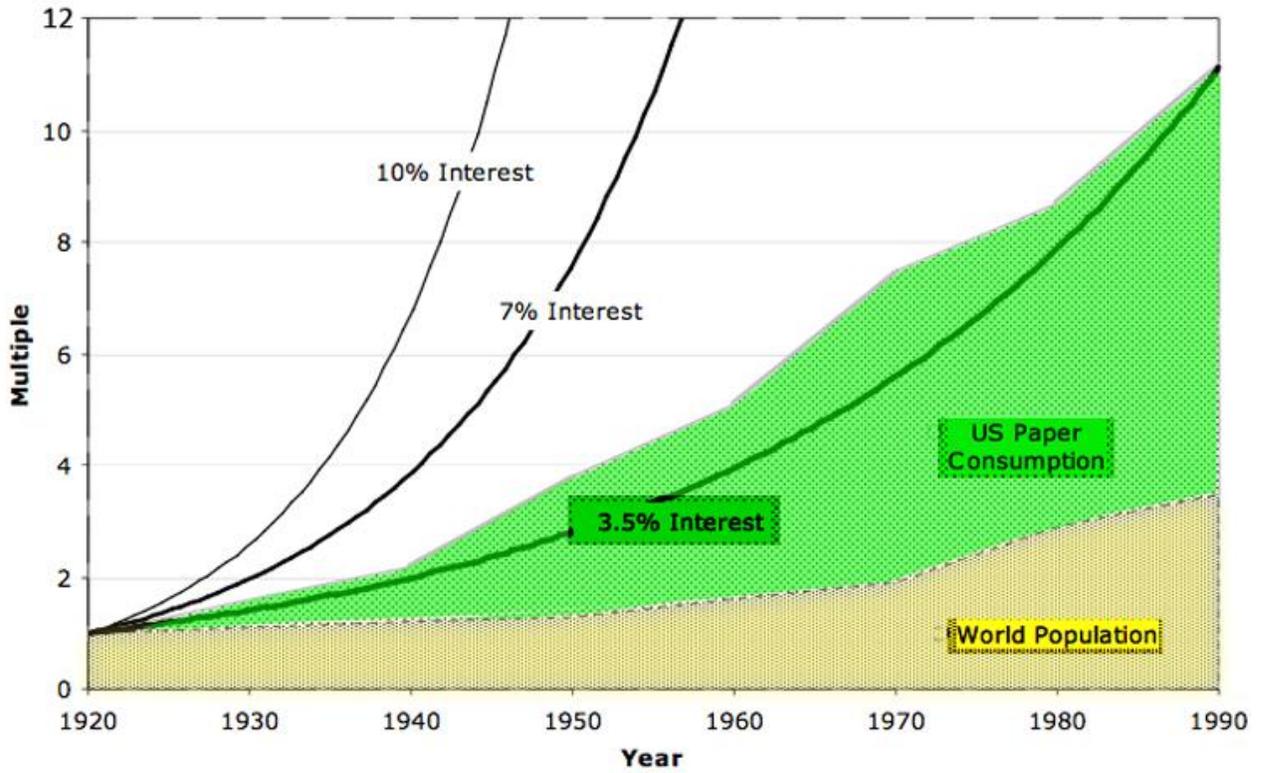
Global Grain Production: 1971-2015



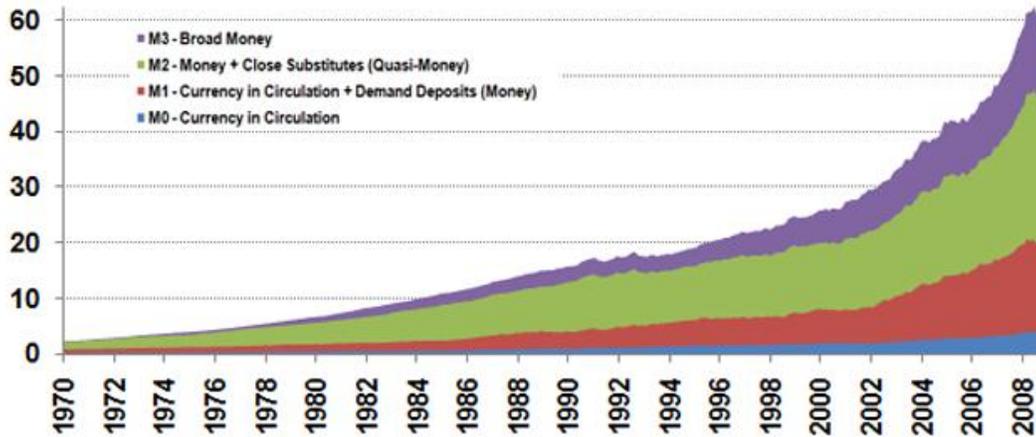
Sources: International Food Policy Research Institute, October 1999, US Bureau of the Census, and CIA.



Three Population Explosions: Mouths, Machines, Money

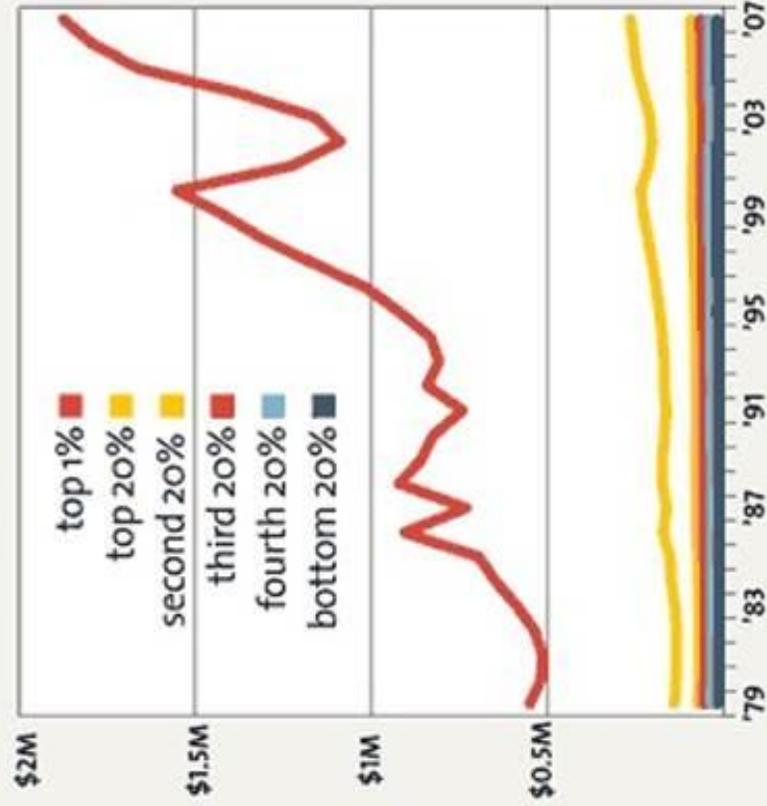


Global Money Supply from Jan 1970 - Oct 2008 Measured in US\$ Trillions

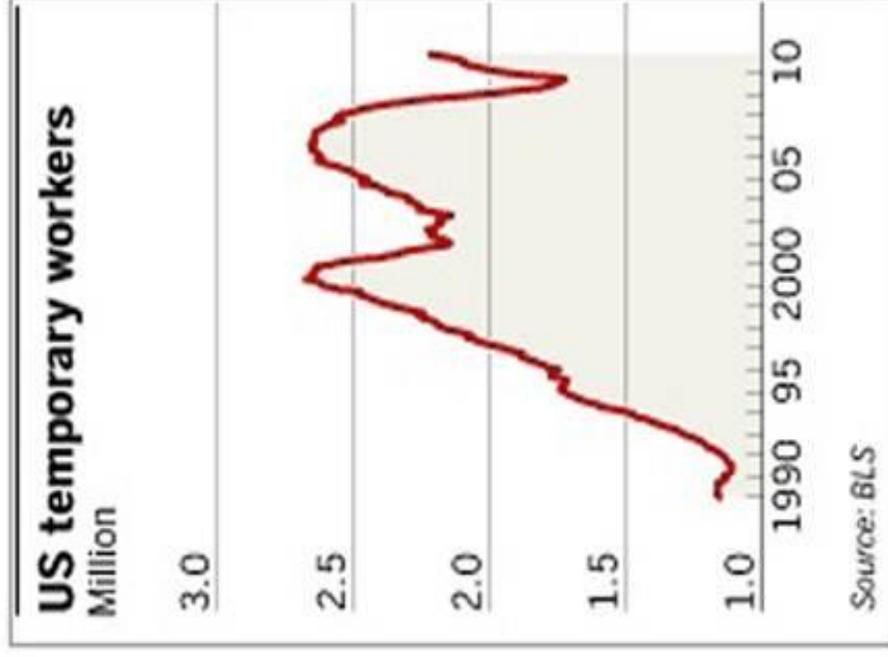


AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME

before taxes

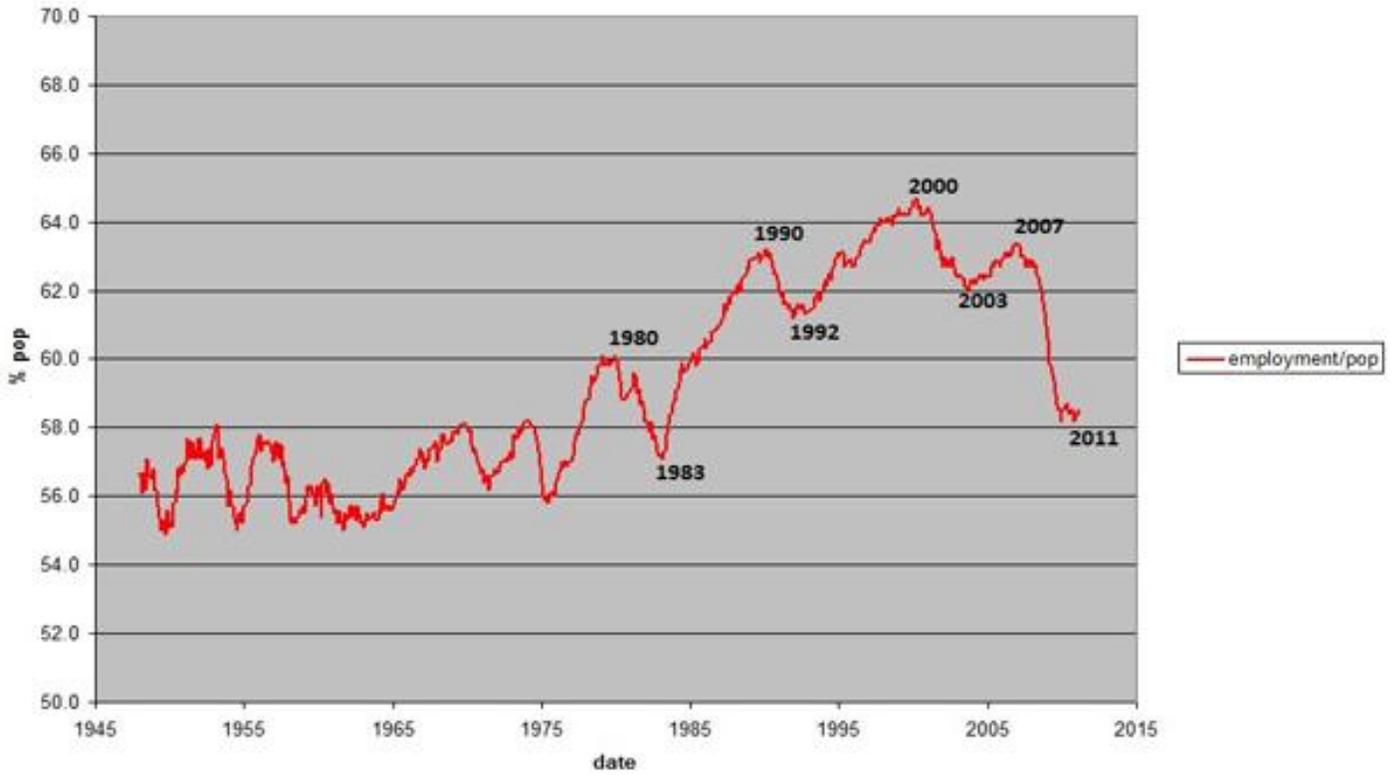


2007 dollars. Source: Congressional Budget Office

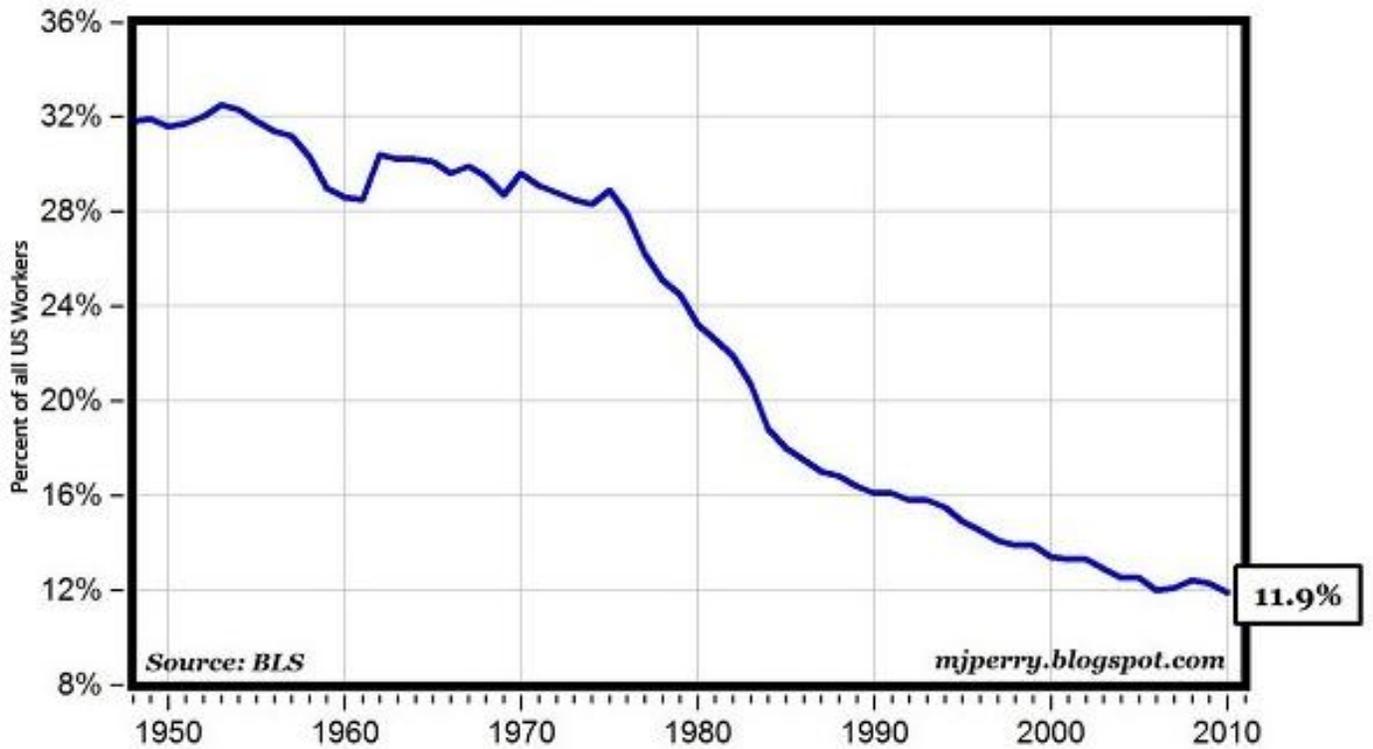


Source: BLS

US Employment as Percentage of Population



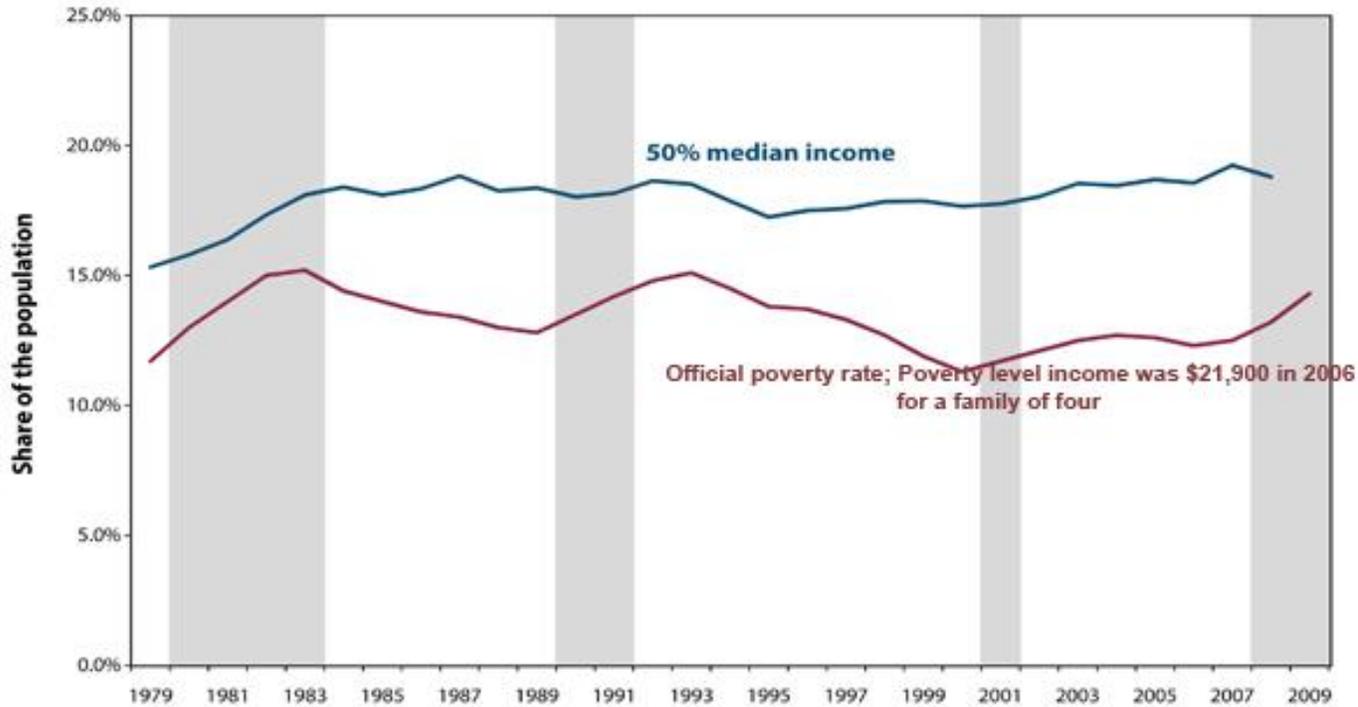
Union Membership



US Percentage of Lower Income Households

Relative poverty persistently high over time:

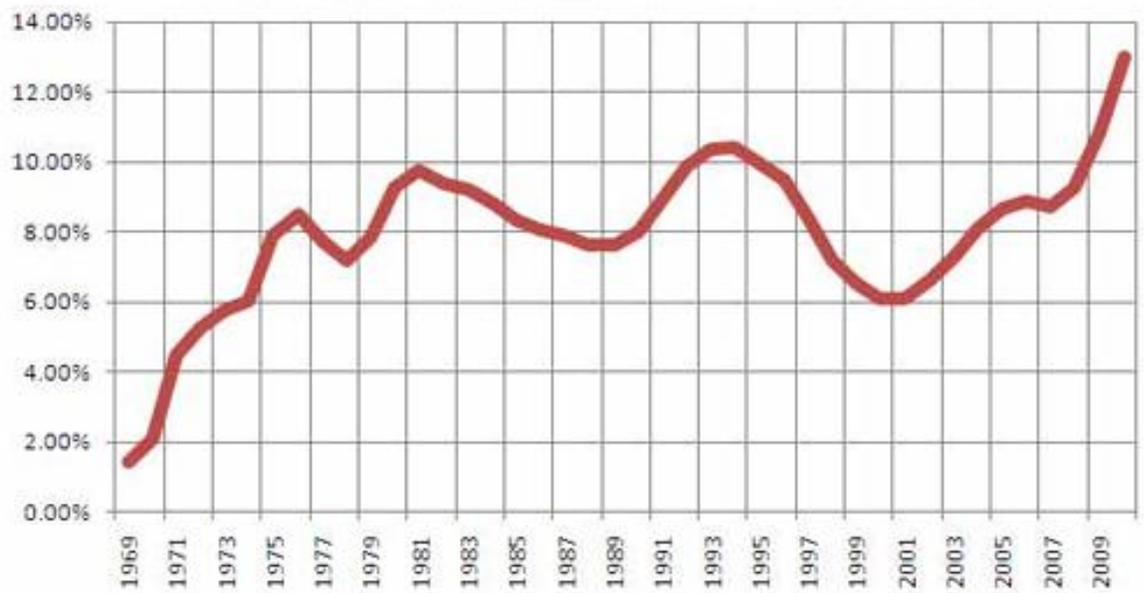
Share of the population below 50% of median income and share living below poverty line, 1979-2009



Note: Shaded areas denote recession.

Source: EPI analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Poverty Tables and Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

Percentage Of Americans On Food Stamps



<http://www.economicpopulist.org>