The latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) used to estimate poverty in Kiribati was conducted from April 2019 to March 2020. By World Bank definitions of data deprivation, Kiribati is classified as moderately deprived, as it has only completed one HIES in the last 10 years, with the previous round conducted in 2006.

Using the national measures (see "Poverty Data and Methodology" section for details), 21.9 percent of the population lived below the basic needs poverty line in 2019-20. Poverty rates were lowest in the Central division (9.6 percent), followed by the main island of South Tarawa (19.5 percent), the Line Islands (24.6 percent), and Northern division (25.8 percent), with poverty highest in the Southern division (31.5 percent). However, South Tarawa accounts for nearly half of the poor in Kiribati. Households whose heads had higher levels of education were less likely to be poor, though this relationship was much stronger in South Tarawa than elsewhere.
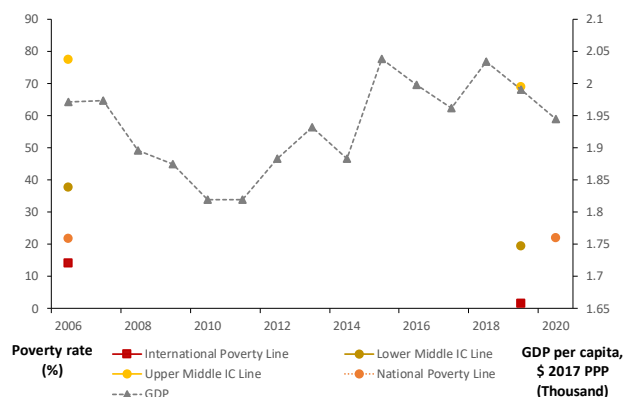
In 2019, using the $3.65 poverty line (2017 PPP USD per person per day), which reflects living standards across all lower middle-income countries, the headcount poverty rate was estimated at 19.5 percent. It is not possible to calculate changes in poverty from the previous survey in 2006, due to the lack of comparability between them. Inequality, as measured by the Gini index, was estimated at 27.8.

The COVID-19 pandemic did not have a large impact on economic growth and poverty in Kiribati. The slight uptick in poverty was likely cancelled out by the generous Support Fund for Unemployment program in 2021, though at a large fiscal cost to the government.

POVERTY	Number of Poor (thousand)	Rate (%)	Period
National Poverty Line	26.0	21.9	2020
International Poverty Line 2.1 in Australian dollar (2019) or US$2.15 (2017 PPP) per day per capita	2.1	1.7	2019
Lower Middle Income Class Poverty Line 3.6 in Australian dollar (2019) or US$3.65 (2017 PPP) per day per capita	24.2	19.5	2019
Upper Middle Income Class Poverty Line 6.7 in Australian dollar (2019) or US$6.85 (2017 PPP) per day per capita	85.6	68.9	2019
Multidimensional Poverty Measure		5.6	2019
SHARED PROSPERITY			
Annualized Income or Consumption Growth per capita of the bottom 40 percent		N/A	N/A
INEQUALITY			
Gini Index		27.8	2019
Shared Prosperity Premium = Growth of the bottom 40 - Average Growth		N/A	N/A
GROWTH			
Annualized GDP per capita growth		1.11	2014-2019
Annualized Income or Consumption Growth per capita from Household Survey		N/A	N/A
MEDIAN INCOME			
Growth of the annual median income/consumption per capita		N/A	N/A

Sources: WDI for GDP, National Statistical Offices for national poverty rates, PIP as of April 2023, and Global Monitoring Database for the rest.
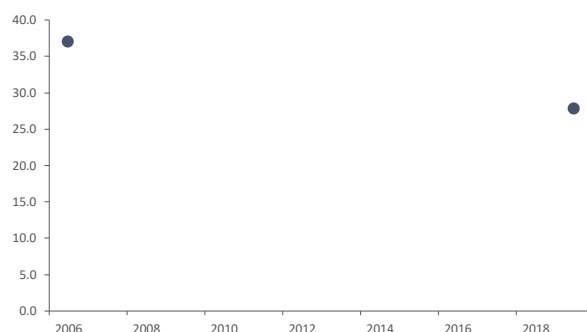
POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATE, 2006-2020

Poverty rate (%)		GDP per capita, $ 2017 PPP (Thousand)
■ International Poverty Line	● Lower Middle IC Line	
● Upper Middle IC Line	● National Poverty Line	
▲ GDP		

Source: World Bank using HIES/EAPPOV/GMD

INEQUALITY TRENDS, 2006-2019

Gini Index

Source: World Bank using HIES/EAPPOV/GMD

KEY INDICATORS

Distribution among groups: 2019	International Poverty Line(%)		Relative group (%)	
	Non-Poor	Poor	Bottom 40	Top 60
Urban population	100	N/A*	39	61
Rural population	97	3	41	59
Males				N/A
Females				N/A
0 to 14 years old	98	2	46	54
15 to 64 years old	99	1	36	64
65 and older	98	N/A*	44	56
Without education (16+)	96	N/A*	53	47
Primary education (16+)	98	2	41	59
Secondary education (16+)	99	1	36	64
Tertiary/post-secondary education (16+)	100	N/A*	14	86

Source: World Bank using HIES/EAPPOV/GMD

Notes: N/A missing value, N/A* value removed due to less than 30 observations

Multidimensional Poverty Measures: 2019	(% of population)
Monetary poverty (Consumption)	
Daily consumption less than US$2.15 per person	1.7
Education	
At least one school-aged child is not enrolled in school	6.0
No adult has completed primary education	0.6
Access to basic infrastructure	
No access to limited-standard drinking water	17.1
No access to limited-standard sanitation	59.8
No access to electricity	16.8

Source: World Bank using HIES/EAPPOV/GMD

POVERTY DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The Kiribati National Statistics Office used a "cost of basic needs" approach to establish a welfare benchmark for the poverty line in 2019-20. The methods followed the guidance of the Pacific Statistics Methods Board on poverty measurement. A Food Poverty Line (FPL) estimated the required expenditure to achieve 2500 calories of consumption per adult-equivalent (with children aged 0-14 counting as half of an adult), using a reference population of percentiles 11-35, as determined through an iterative calculation. The Non-Food Poverty Line (NFPL) was estimated using the Ravallion Lower method. A single national poverty line was calculated, with consumption aggregates deflated to account for price differences by season and geography. To facilitate meaningful comparisons across countries, the World Bank publishes consumption-based estimates using three different poverty lines (2017 PPP): the International Poverty Line (US$2.15), and two other poverty lines at US$3.65 and US$6.85. In Kiribati, per capita consumption aggregates were spatially deflated by survey strata and temporally deflated by survey quarter.

Note on new global poverty lines: Poverty data are now expressed in 2017 Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) prices, versus 2011 PPP in previous editions. As price levels across the world evolve, global poverty lines have to be periodically updated to reflect the increase of the value of the lines in nominal terms. The new global poverty lines of $2.15, $3.65, and $6.85 reflect the typical national poverty lines of low-income, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries in 2017 prices. In addition to reflecting updates in nominal terms, upper-middle-income countries raised the standards by which they determine people to be poor from 2011 to 2017. Hence, the increase in the upper line is larger, and the population that does not meet the new standard is higher in most countries than it was with 2011 PPPs. See pip.worldbank.org.

HARMONIZATION

The numbers presented in this brief are based on the EAPPOV database. EAPPOV is a database of socio-economic statistics constructed using microdata from household surveys in the East Asia and the Pacific (EAP) region and is managed by the East Asia & Pacific Team for Statistical Development (EAPTSD). As of January 2023, the collection includes 21 countries and 122 surveys. Harmonized surveys in the EAPPOV database are compiled into 4 modules following Global Monitoring Database (GMD) Harmonization guidelines. A subset of the harmonized variables form the basis of the GMD collection, including the welfare aggregate which is used for Global Poverty Monitoring. Terms of use of the data adhere to agreements with the original data producers.