



City fares better, except when it doesn't

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Mayor Mike Bloomberg found himself walking a fine line yesterday as he fielded questions about New York's poverty rate, which reached a 30-year high of 20.1% in 2010.

The mayor reiterated his claim that the city has fared better during the recession than the rest of the nation. While the country has shed 6% of its private-sector jobs since 2008, New York has lost 0.3%, Bloomberg said.

Yet he was quick to point to the recession as a central cause of the city's 1.4 percentage-point increase in poverty between 2009 and 2010, which was nearly double the national increase.

"There's a little bit of cognitive dissonance in holding those two perspectives," said James Parrott, chief economist at the Fiscal Policy Institute. "There's this misleading perception out there that somehow, New York City dodged the bullet during this recession."

Parrott said the statistics suggest that the city may not be as insulated from the woeful national economy as some have asserted. Particularly troubling, he said, is the fact that median family income in the city plummeted by about 6% in 2010, to \$53,593.

But Bloomberg officials argued that poverty rates in the U.S. and the city typically run in parallel. "It could be worse," said Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar. "It is worse in many large cities."

Detroit's poverty rate in 2010 was 37.6%. Philadelphia's was 26.7%, up 1.7 points from 2009. Los Angeles County's was 17.5%, up 2.5 points.