

# Statistical Descriptive Analysis of the Development and Disparity of the Number of Poor in South Sulawesi in 2016–2025

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## **Abstract:**

*Poverty is a complex development problem because it is related to limited income, access to basic needs, and inequality between regions. This study aims to analyze the development and disparity in the number of poor people in South Sulawesi Province during the period 2016–2025. The research uses a descriptive quantitative approach with secondary data in the form of the number of poor people by district/city sourced from the Central Statistics Agency. The analysis was carried out through descriptive statistics, intertemporal comparisons, comparisons between regions, as well as the calculation of absolute change and percentage change. The results of the study show that the number of poor people in South Sulawesi tends to decrease in the long term, from 807.03 thousand people in 2016 to 698.13 thousand people in 2025, or a decrease of around 13.49%. However, the decline did not take place linear because there were fluctuations in several years, especially in 2017, 2020, 2021, and 2023. The disparity between regions is also quite clear. By 2025, Makassar, Bone, and Gowa will be the areas with the largest number of poor people, while Parepare, Barru, and Palopo will be among the lowest. The six regions with the largest number of poor people accounted for almost half of the total number of poor people in the province. These findings show that the burden of poverty in South Sulawesi has not been evenly distributed and that its handling requires a more targeted approach based on regional characteristics. This study confirms that the number of poor people can be used to describe the dynamics of poverty burden between regions, although it does not fully reflect the relative poverty rate.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Poverty is one of the most fundamental problems in economic and social development. In classical and contemporary studies, poverty is not only interpreted as a lack of income, but also as a limitation of the ability to meet the needs of a decent life, gain access to education and health, and participate in social life in dignity (Sen, 1976, 1981). This perspective is then extended in human development approaches that place poverty as a multidimensional deprivation, rather than simply a lack of consumption or expenditure (Alkire & Foster, 2011; Anand & Sen, 1997; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020).

In official measurement practice, poverty is generally measured through a basic needs approach. This approach assesses whether a person or household is able to meet the

minimum standards of food and non-food needs. In Indonesia, the Central Statistics Agency uses this approach to establish poverty lines and calculate the number of poor people (Central Statistics Agency [BPS], 2024). Thus, the number of poor people is an important indicator to see the magnitude of the burden of poverty that must be handled in a region.

Development studies show that poverty is closely related to economic growth, income distribution, and regional institutional capacity. Economic growth can reduce poverty, but its impact is highly dependent on how the benefits of that growth are distributed to low-income groups (Datt & Ravallion, 1992; Dollar & Kraay, 2002; Kraay, 2006). If the distribution of development results is uneven, high growth can also go hand in hand with still large poverty. Therefore, the relationship between growth and poverty reduction is neither automatic nor uniform (Fosu, 2017; Ravallion, 2016; Todaro & Smith, 2021).

Poverty also has a strong spatial dimension. Inequality between regions arises when growth centers enjoy greater accumulation of capital, infrastructure, and economic opportunities than other regions (Kanbur & Venables, 2005; Kuncoro, 2010; Sjafrizal, 2012). In regional development theory, this condition is explained through differences in economic structure, proximity to the market, quality of human resources, and regional institutional capacity (Arsyad, 2016; Lewis, 1954; Myrdal, 1957). As a result, the distribution of poverty is often uneven between regions, both in number and depth.

South Sulawesi Province is one of the strategic provinces in the eastern region of Indonesia. The region serves as a regional growth hub with the support of the agriculture, trade, processing industry, transportation, and services sectors. However, regional economic growth is not always followed by equal distribution of welfare. Development reports confirm that even in relatively dynamic regions, poor and vulnerable households can still be left behind if access to economic opportunities, basic services, and social protection is not evenly distributed (World Bank, 2000, 2006, 2020, 2022).

Based on data from BPS South Sulawesi Province, the number of poor people in South Sulawesi in 2016 was recorded at 807.03 thousand people, then increased to 813.07 thousand people in 2017. After that, the number decreased to 792.63 thousand people in 2018 and 767.80 thousand people in 2019. In 2020 and 2021, the number of poor people increased again to 776.83 thousand people and 784.98 thousand people. In 2022, it showed a small decrease to 777.44 thousand people, but rose again in 2023 to 788.85 thousand people. Furthermore, in 2024 and 2025 there will be a sharp decline to 736.48 thousand people and 698.13 thousand people (BPS South Sulawesi Province, 2025). This pattern shows that the decline in poverty does not remain stable from year to year.

In addition to changes between times, the data also shows that there is a disparity in the number of poor people between districts/cities. In 2025, Makassar will have the largest

number of poor people at 71.63 thousand people, followed by Bone with 69.73 thousand people and Gowa with 54.04 thousand people. On the other hand, Parepare has the smallest number of poor people, namely 6.73 thousand people, followed by Barru with 14.13 thousand people and Palopo with 14.31 thousand people (BPS South Sulawesi Province, 2025). This difference shows that the burden of poverty is not evenly distributed between regions.

Based on these conditions, this study focuses on the question of how the number of poor people in South Sulawesi develops during 2016–2025, how the disparity in the number of poor people between districts/cities, which regions have the largest and smallest number of poor people, and how the tendency of changes in the number of poor people in each district/city. In line with that, this study aims to describe the development of the number of poor people in South Sulawesi, analyze the disparity between regions, identify the areas with the largest and smallest number of poor people, and explain the tendency to change in the number of poor people in each district/city. This research is expected to be useful academically as a reference for the study of regional poverty, practically as an input for local governments, and methodologically as an example of the use of descriptive statistics in the reading of socio-economic problems.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of poverty has developed quite a long way in the development economics literature. Sen (1976) emphasizes the importance of measuring poverty that does not stop at counting the number of poor people, but also considers the level of deprivation they experience. This idea was reinforced in his later work when Sen (1981) explained poverty as a failure of capabilities, that is, the inability of individuals to achieve the basic functions of life. This perspective was later expanded by Anand and Sen (1997), who saw human development and poverty as multidimensional issues.

In operational measurement, the basic needs approach remains one of the most widely used methods. Atkinson (1987) emphasizes the importance of clear definitions in poverty measurement, while Foster et al. (1984) offer a measurement framework that takes into account the incidence, depth, and severity of poverty. Ravallion (1998) explained that poverty lines and measurement methods must be constructed consistently so that they can be used for comparisons between time and between regions. In the Indonesian context, this approach is applied by BPS through the poverty line which is the basis for calculating the number of poor people (BPS, 2024).

The number of poor people is an important indicator because it shows the magnitude of the absolute burden of poverty. However, this indicator does not directly describe the relative poverty level as it is strongly influenced by the number of people in the region (Haughton & Khandker, 2009; Ravallion, 2016). Areas with large populations tend to have large numbers of poor people even though the percentage of poverty is not

necessarily high. Therefore, the number of poor people is more accurately used to read the scale of the problem or burden of regional poverty.

The literature on growth and poverty shows that poverty reduction is influenced by two main things, namely the average growth of welfare and the distribution of growth results. Datt and Ravallion (1992) show that changes in poverty can be broken down into growth and redistribution components. Dollar and Kraay (2002) argue that growth is generally good for the poor, while Kraay (2006) suggests that growth will be *pro-poor* if it actually lowers the relevant poverty measure. In subsequent developments, Dollar et al. (2016) and Fosu (2017) assert that the effectiveness of growth in reducing poverty is highly dependent on the initial level of inequality and how inclusive the growth is.

Regional disparity is an important concept in the study of regional development. Lewis (1954) through the theory of structural dualism shows that differences in productivity between sectors can result in long-lasting income inequality. Myrdal (1957) then emphasized the backwash *effect*, which is the tendency of developed regions to absorb resources from underdeveloped areas. In a more recent development, Kanbur and Venables (2005) show that spatial inequality is a central element in understanding development, as geographical location affects access to economic opportunities. Kuncoro (2010), Sjafrizal (2012), and Arsyad (2016) also explained that inequality between regions in Indonesia is largely influenced by differences in economic structure, infrastructure quality, urbanization, and investment concentration.

In the Indonesian context, several studies confirm that poverty dynamics are strongly influenced by household economic vulnerability and regional capacity differences. Balisacan et al. (2003) show that subnational data provide a sharper picture of the relationship between growth and poverty in Indonesia. Suryahadi et al. (2003) show that economic shocks can rapidly change the level of poverty and vulnerability of households. World Bank reports also confirm that poverty reduction in Indonesia requires more effective regional development governance, increased productivity, and expanded social protection (World Bank, 2006, 2020, 2022). With this framework, research on South Sulawesi is relevant because it allows for a more specific reading of the development and distribution of the burden of poverty at the regional level.

### 3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach. The descriptive approach was chosen because the purpose of the research is to describe phenomena systematically, factually, and accurately based on available data, rather than testing cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Nazir, 2014; Sugiyono, 2019). The quantitative approach is used because all research data is numerical and analyzed through descriptive statistics.

The object of the study is the number of poor people according to districts/cities in South Sulawesi Province in units of thousands of people. The analysis unit covers all 24 districts/cities in South Sulawesi, namely Selayar Islands, Bulukumba, Bantaeng, Jenepono, Takalar, Gowa, Sinjai, Maros, Pangkajene and Islands, Barru, Bone, Soppeng, Wajo, Sidenreng Rappang, Pinrang, Enrekang, Luwu, Tana Toraja, North Luwu, East Luwu, North Toraja, Makassar, Parepare, and Palopo. Since all population units were analyzed, this study used census or saturated sample techniques.

The research data is secondary data derived from the official publication of the BPS of South Sulawesi Province, especially data on the number of poor people by district/city in 2016–2025 and the publication of relevant regional statistics (BPS of South Sulawesi Province, 2024, 2025). Data collection is carried out through documentation techniques, namely collecting, recording, and organizing data from official documents.

The analysis is carried out in several stages. First, data on the number of poor people at the provincial level is presented to see the intertemporal development. Second, data for 2025 is compared between districts/cities to see the latest disparities. Third, an absolute change and percentage change between 2016 and 2025 is calculated. Fourth, the quantitative results are interpreted using the theoretical framework of poverty and regional development.

The formula used is as follows:

Absolute Change = End Year Value - Early Year Value

Percentage Change = ((End Year Value - Early Year Value) / Early Year Value) × 100%

Regional Contribution = (Number of Region Poor / Number of Provincial Poor Population) × 100%

Disparity Ratio = Highest Score / Lowest Score

The main limitation of this study is the use of indicators of the number of poor people in absolute numbers. Therefore, the results of the study are more accurately interpreted as an overview of the burden of poverty, not the relative poverty level. This study also did not examine the influence of other variables such as economic growth, unemployment, education, inflation, and the human development index.

## **4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Development of the Number of Poor Population in South Sulawesi in 2016–2025**

The development of the number of poor people in South Sulawesi during 2016–2025 can be seen in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1 Development of the Number of Poor in South Sulawesi in 2016–2025**

| Year | Number of Poor People (Thousands) | Changes from the Previous Year |
|------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2016 | 807,03                            | -                              |
| 2017 | 813,07                            | 6,04                           |
| 2018 | 792,63                            | -20,44                         |
| 2019 | 767,8                             | -24,83                         |
| 2020 | 776,83                            | 9,03                           |
| 2021 | 784,98                            | 8,15                           |
| 2022 | 777,44                            | -7,54                          |
| 2023 | 788,85                            | 11,41                          |
| 2024 | 736,48                            | -52,37                         |
| 2025 | 698,13                            | -38,35                         |

Source: BPS South Sulawesi Province (2025), processed.

Table 4.1 shows that the number of poor people in South Sulawesi tends to decline in the long term, but fluctuations are quite noticeable. The number of poor people in 2016 was 807.03 thousand people down to 698.13 thousand people in 2025. In absolute terms, the decrease reached 108.90 thousand people, while in percentage terms it was around 13.49%. This means that the average net decline over nine time intervals is in the range of 12.10 thousand people per year.

Although the general trend shows a decline, the annual pattern does not move in a linear fashion. The increase in 2017, 2020, 2021, and 2023 indicates that the poverty reduction process is unstable. In the development literature, fluctuating patterns like this are common because poor households are very vulnerable to price changes, employment, economic shocks, and declining purchasing power (Ravallion, 2016; World Bank, 2022). Poverty reduction is not only a matter of economic growth, but also the extent to which it is able to reach the lower group consistently (Dollar & Kraay, 2002; Fosu, 2017).

The 2018–2019 period showed a fairly good decline. From 813.07 thousand people in 2017, the number of poor people decreased to 792.63 thousand people in 2018 and again

dropped to 767.80 thousand people in 2019. This can be read as a relatively strong phase of improvement. However, this pattern did not continue smoothly in 2020 and 2021, when the number of poor people increased again to 776.83 thousand people and 784.98 thousand people. Theoretically, such changes support the view of Datt and Ravallion (1992) that poverty can move up or down as distribution changes and changes in average welfare.

The 2022 period gave a small improvement signal, but 2023 again showed an increase. This means that at the provincial level, there are still population groups that are vulnerable to re-entering poverty when facing certain economic pressures. This is in line with the findings of Suryahadi et al. (2003) that poverty and vulnerability are closely related, especially when households are in a position that is only slightly above the poverty line.

The last two years, namely 2024 and 2025, showed the largest decline in the entire observation period. The number of poor people will decrease by 52.37 thousand people in 2024 and 38.35 thousand people in 2025. This sharp decline shows a significant improvement in aggregate. In the perspective of growth in favor of the poor, such a phase suggests the possibility of improving the ability of lower households to meet basic needs, although this study does not trace the causal mechanisms in a causal manner (Dollar et al., 2016; Kraay, 2006).

#### 4.2 Disparity in the Number of Poor People Between Regencies/Cities in 2025

To illustrate the most up-to-date spatial conditions, the 2025 data is used as the basis for comparisons between regions. Table 4.2 presents the districts/cities with the largest and smallest number of poor populations.

**Table 4.2 Regencies/Cities with the Largest and Smallest Number of Poor People in South Sulawesi in 2025**

| Groups  | Regency/City | Number of Poor People (Thousands) |
|---------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| Largest | Makassar     | 71,63                             |
|         | Bone         | 69,73                             |
|         | Gowa         | 54,04                             |
|         | Jeneponto    | 42,56                             |
|         | Luwu         | 41,76                             |
|         | Pangkep      | 40,37                             |

|          |           |       |
|----------|-----------|-------|
| Smallest | Pare-pare | 6,73  |
|          | Barru     | 14,13 |
|          | Palopo    | 14,31 |
|          | Bantaeng  | 14,74 |
|          | Selayar   | 14,77 |

Source: BPS South Sulawesi Province (2025), processed.

Table 4.2 shows a clear disparity in the distribution of the number of poor people. Makassar is in first place with 71.63 thousand people, while Parepare is in the lowest position with 6.73 thousand people. The ratio between the two is about 10.64 times. This shows that the absolute poverty burden in the largest region is more than ten times the poverty burden in the smallest region.

This difference reflects a fairly strong spatial inequality. From the perspective of regional development, such inequalities can arise due to differences in population, economic function, urbanization rate, employment structure, and access to basic infrastructure and services (Kanbur & Venables, 2005; Kuncoro, 2010; Sjafrizal, 2012). Therefore, the regional poverty map needs to be read not only as a list of numbers, but as a reflection of the different socio-economic structures between regions.

Makassar occupies the highest position because it is the center of population and economic center of the province. In many cases, metropolitan areas tend to accommodate large numbers of absolute poor due to high urbanization flows, dominance of the informal sector, labor competition, and large variations in the cost of living (World Bank, 2000, 2020). Thus, the large number of poor people in big cities does not necessarily mean the highest poverty rate, but it shows that the social burden to be addressed is also large.

Bone and Gowa, which are in the top position, show that the concentration of absolute poverty occurs not only in urban centers, but also in large populated areas with mixed economic structures. If Makassar accounts for around 10.26% of the total number of poor people in South Sulawesi by 2025, then Bone will contribute around 9.99% and Gowa around 7.74%. Jeneponto, Luwu, and Pangkep accounted for 6.10%, 5.98%, and 5.78%, respectively. This means that the top six regions together account for around 45.85% of the total number of poor people in the province. The concentration of almost half of the poverty burden in these six regions is very important in terms of policy.

The findings support the view that regional poverty is often concentrated in specific areas that require special attention. If regional policies do not consider this kind of concentration, then poverty reduction at the provincial level can proceed more slowly.

In the framework of pro-poor development, areas with large poor populations need to obtain proportionate interventions, either through the creation of productive jobs, the strengthening of social protection, and the improvement of the quality of basic services (Sachs, 2005; Todaro & Smith, 2021; World Bank, 2022).

On the other hand, Parepare, Barru, Palopo, Bantaeng, and the Selayar Islands have smaller numbers of poor people. But a small absolute number does not necessarily mean a low relative poverty rate. As explained by Haughton and Khandker (2009) and Ravallion (1998), the interpretation of poverty must be adjusted to the indicators used. In this study, what is measured is the number of poor people, so the most appropriate conclusion is the magnitude of the absolute poverty burden, not the depth or relative poverty level.

#### **4.3 Trend of Change by Regency/City 2016–2025**

Analysis of developments at the district/city level shows that the majority of regions in South Sulawesi experienced a decrease in the number of poor people during 2016–2025. Of the 24 districts/cities, 22 regions experienced a decrease, while two regions experienced an increase, namely Makassar and Pinrang.

Jeneponto will drop from 55.32 thousand people in 2016 to 42.56 thousand people in 2025. This means that there was a decrease of 12.76 thousand people or around 23.07%. Pangkep also decreased from 52.86 thousand people to 40.37 thousand people, or a decrease of 12.49 thousand people equivalent to 23.63%. Other major declines occurred in Luwu, North Luwu, and North Toraja. North Toraja even recorded the largest decrease in percentage, namely from 33.02 thousand people to 24.48 thousand people, or around 25.86%.

The decline in many regions shows that in general there is an improvement in the burden of poverty. However, the improvements are uneven. Some areas declined quite sharply, while others declined more slowly. For example, Sidenreng Rappang dropped from 15.92 thousand people to 15.20 thousand people, or only about 0.72 thousand people. Palopo also only fell by around 0.71 thousand people. This kind of small decline can be interpreted as a poverty reduction process that tends to be slow or close to stagnant.

In development theory, the difference in the speed of poverty reduction between regions can be explained by variations in economic structure, access to opportunities, and growth inclusivity. Areas that are better able to connect poor households with productive economic activities tend to reduce poverty faster (Dollar & Kraay, 2002; Fosu, 2017; Kraay, 2006). On the other hand, if economic change does not reach the lower group enough, then poverty reduction will be slow even though the aggregate growth of the region is growing.

Makassar shows a different pattern. The number of poor people in this region has increased from 66.78 thousand people in 2016 to 71.63 thousand people in 2025, or an increase of 4.85 thousand people. Pinrang also increased from 31.28 thousand people to 32.52 thousand people, or around 1.24 thousand people. This increase is important to note because it shows that not all regions enjoy a reduction in the burden of poverty, even when there is a downward trend at the provincial level.

The increase in Makassar City can be read in the context of urban poverty. Large cities are often a magnet for migration because they offer economic opportunities, but they also present fiercer job competition and dependence on the informal sector. Under such conditions, urban economic growth may be rapid, but not all levels of the population are able to access its benefits equally (UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2020). These findings are also in line with the view of Chambers (1983) that poverty is often related to vulnerability, not merely a short-term lack of income.

In terms of policy, the distinction between areas that are experiencing rapid decline, slow decline, and increased poverty burden are very important. Areas such as Jeneponto, Pangkep, and North Toraja showed relatively strong improvement results. On the other hand, areas such as Makassar and Pinrang need to be studied further because they have less favorable dynamics. Mapping like this helps governments develop sharper intervention priorities.

#### **4.4 Discussion**

Overall, the results of the study show two main patterns. First, the number of poor people in South Sulawesi has declined in the long term, but the decline has been volatile. Second, the distribution of the number of poor people between regions is very uneven. These two findings are in line with the literature that states that poverty is a dynamic and spatial phenomenon (Kanbur & Venables, 2005; Ravallion, 2016).

Annual fluctuations show that poverty reduction is strongly influenced by household economic resilience. Poor and vulnerable households tend to be easily pushed back below the poverty line when there is a disruption to income or an increase in the cost of living. Therefore, poverty reduction strategies are not enough to rely solely on macroeconomic growth, but must also strengthen social protection, income stability, and access to decent work (Todaro & Smith, 2021; UNDP, 2020; World Bank, 2022).

Disparities between regions show that poverty management cannot be standardized. Areas with large poor populations require a broader scale of intervention, while areas with slow declines require an evaluation of the effectiveness of policies that have been implemented. In this regard, the results of the study support the view of Balisacan et al. (2003) that subnational data is very important to read the variation in the relationship between growth and poverty in Indonesia.

Makassar, Bone, and Gowa need to be seen as priority areas because the burden of poverty is large in absolute terms. However, the strategy for Makassar is likely to be different from the strategy for Bone or Gowa. Metropolitan areas need to focus on addressing urban poverty, informal employment, the cost of living, and access to housing and basic services. Meanwhile, other regions may need more strengthening of the local productive sector, economic infrastructure, and household empowerment that depend on the primary sector (Arsyad, 2016; Kuncoro, 2010; Sjafrizal, 2012).

The results of this study also remind that poverty evaluation should not stop at one indicator. The number of poor people is indeed very useful for looking at the scale of the problem, but it is not enough to assess the relative poverty rate, the depth of poverty, or the severity of poverty. Therefore, follow-up research ideally combines indicators of the number of poor people with poverty percentages, poverty depth index, and other welfare indicators so that the understanding of regional poverty becomes more complete (Alkire & Foster, 2011; Atkinson, 1987; Foster et al., 1984).

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The number of poor people in South Sulawesi during 2016–2025 shows a decreasing trend in the long term, from 807.03 thousand people to 698.13 thousand people. The decrease is equivalent to 108.90 thousand people or around 13.49%. However, the pattern of decline is not linear as there has been an increase in several years, indicating that poor and vulnerable households in South Sulawesi are still facing economic instability.

The disparity in the number of poor people between districts/cities is also quite clear. By 2025, Makassar, Bone, and Gowa will be the regions with the largest number of poor people, while Parepare, Barru, and Palopo will be among the lowest. The top six regions account for almost half of the province's total poor population. This shows that the burden of poverty in South Sulawesi is concentrated in a number of specific areas.

At the district/city level, the majority of regions have experienced a decrease in the number of poor people, but at different speeds. Two regions, namely Makassar and Pinrang, actually experienced an increase during the 2016-2025 period. Thus, this study confirms that the number of poor people can be used to describe the development and disparity of poverty burden between regions, but it is not enough to represent the relative poverty level as a whole.

The South Sulawesi Provincial Government needs to strengthen region-based poverty alleviation policies. Districts/cities with large poor populations, especially Makassar, Bone, Gowa, Jeneponto, Luwu, and Pangkep, need to be prioritized in program planning. Policy approaches should also be differentiated according to regional character. Urban areas require a focus on decent work, adaptive social protection, and strengthening the informal economy, while non-urban areas or areas with a primary

sector-based need productivity support, market access, infrastructure, and strengthening household businesses. For further research, the analysis of the number of poor people should be combined with other indicators such as the percentage of the poor population, the poverty depth index, the poverty severity index, the unemployment rate, education, and the GDP per capita so that the picture of regional poverty becomes more comprehensive.

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