Income and Poverty Data

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Poverty Statistics Branch
U.S. Census Bureau
Presentation for the State Data Users Meetings

October 2015
Highlights

- Median household money income for the nation $53,700 in 2014, not statistically different from 2013, in real terms.

- The official poverty rate for the nation was 14.8 percent. There were 46.7 million people in poverty. No change.

- The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) rate was 15.3 percent. No change.

- The percentage of people without health insurance coverage for the entire calendar year was 10.4 percent, or 33.0 million people. This was a decrease of 2.9 percentage points from the previous year.
September 2015 Release

Income and Poverty Estimates

2012
Traditional income questions
Full Sample

2013
Traditional income questions
(68,000 addresses)

2014
Redesigned income questions
(30,000 addresses)

Full Sample

• All 2013 estimates in the report will be based on the redesign set of questions
• Preserved continuity between the years
  ▪ Consistent questions
  ▪ Used the same processing system

For more information related to the measurement and release of data on income, poverty and health insurance coverage, see:
Real Median Household Income: 1967 to 2014

Note: The 2013 data reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions. See Appendix D of the P60 report, "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014," for more information. Income rounded to nearest $100.
Real Household Income at Selected Percentiles: 1967 to 2014

Income in thousands (2014 dollars)

10th $10,100
50th (median) $44,300
90th $93,200
95th $117,800
50th (median) $53,700
95th $157,500
10th $123,000

Note: The 2013 data reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions. See Appendix D of the P60 report, "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014," for more information. Income rounded to nearest $100.

Gini Index of Money Income and Equivalence-Adjusted Income: 1967 to 2014


Millions of Workers by Work Experience: 2005-2014

Median Earnings: Oregon and Washington
2005 to 2014

Source: American Community Survey
Gini Index: 2006 to 2014

Source: American Community Survey

Source: American Community Survey
Community Facts

Find popular facts (population, income, etc.) and frequently requested data about your community.

Enter a state, county, city, town, or zip code: [e.g., Atlanta, GA] GO

Guided Search

Advanced Search

Download Center

Popular Tables

Population and Housing
- Annual Population Estimates (2014 PEP, PEPAHRES)
- Demographic and Housing Estimates (2013 ACS, DP05)
- General Housing Characteristics (2013 ACS, DP04)
- General Demographic Characteristics (2010 Census, DP.1)

Poverty and Income
- General Economic Characteristics (2013 ACS, DP03)

Age, Race, Sex and Education
- Selected Social Characteristics (2013 ACS, DP02)
- Educational Attainment (2013 ACS, S1501)
National Poverty Rate and Number in Poverty: 1959 to 2014

- Poverty rate:
  - 1959: 22.4%
  - 2014: 14.8%

- Number in poverty:
  - 1959: 39.5 million
  - 2014: 46.7 million

Note: The 2013 data reflect the implementation of the redesigned income questions. See Appendix D of the P60 report, "Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014," for more information.
Oregon Poverty Rate and Number in Poverty: 2005 to 2014

Poverty rate

Percent

Recession

Number in poverty

United States Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Poverty rate

- 2005: 14.1%
- 2009 (Recession): 16.6%
- 2014: 16.6%

Number in poverty

- 2005: 499,000
- 2009 (Recession): 644,000
- 2014: 644,000
Washington Poverty Rate and Number in Poverty: 2005 to 2014

Poverty rate:
- 2005: 11.9%
- 2008: 13.2%
- 2009: 13.2%
- 2014: Above 13.2% (light blue indicates recession)

Number in poverty:
- 2005: 729,000
- 2008: Above 900,000
- 2013: 914,000

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau
Poverty: The History of a Measure

First Census Bureau Report on Poverty: 1967

President Lyndon Johnson declares War on Poverty, January 1964.

The Office of Economic Opportunity adopts Mollie Orshansky’s poverty thresholds as a working definition of poverty for statistical planning, May 1965.

An Interagency Poverty Studies Task Force is established under the leadership of the Department of Health and Human Services (then Health, Education, and Welfare), 1974.


The Census Bureau holds a conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, on the measurement of noncash benefits, December 1985.


The National Academy of Sciences convenes a panel of experts to conduct a study of statistical issues in the measurement and understanding of poverty, June 1992.

Interagency Technical Working Group on Developing a Supplemental Poverty Measure is formed by Commerce Under Secretary Rebecca Blank and Office of Management and Budget Chief Statistician Katherine Wallman and charged with developing a set of initial starting points to permit the U.S. Census Bureau, in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, to produce a Supplemental Poverty Measure, December 2009.
Criticisms of the Official Poverty Measure

- The official measure does not account for:
  - Provision of in-kind benefits
  - Necessary expenses (taxes, health care, work)
  - Changes in family or household structure
  - Higher standards and levels of living since 1965
  - Geographic price differences among regions
Observations from the Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) - March 2, 2010

- Will not replace the official poverty measure
- Will not be used for resource allocation or program eligibility
- Census Bureau and BLS responsible for improving and updating the measure
- Continued research and improvement
- Based on National Academy of Sciences expert panel recommendations in *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach* (Citro and Michael, 1995)
For both measures, individuals are considered poor if the resources they share with others in the household are not enough to meet basic needs.

But the two measures are very different.
Who shares resources?

The two measures make different assumptions about who shares resources. The SPM assumes that more people in a household share resources with one another.

The official measure of poverty assumes that all individuals residing together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption share income.

The SPM starts with the family and then adds some unrelated people such as foster children and unmarried partners.
How do we measure needs?

The **poverty threshold**, or **poverty line**, is the minimum level of resources that are adequate to meet basic needs.

The official measure uses three times the cost of a minimum food diet in 1963 in *today’s prices*.

The SPM uses information about what people *spend today* for basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, and utilities.

---

**1963**

1. Food
2. Food
3. Food
   \[ \times 3 \]

**2012**

1. Food
2. Clothing
3. Shelter
4. Utilities
   \[ + + \]

---

**Official Measure**

**Supplemental Measure**
**Are needs the same in New York and Mississippi?**

**Poverty thresholds** for both measures are adjusted to reflect the needs of families of different types and sizes. Only the SPM thresholds take account of geographic differences in housing costs.

Yes, the official poverty threshold is the same throughout the United States. In 2012, the poverty threshold for a family with two adults and two children was $23,283*.

No, SPM thresholds vary based on several factors such as place of residence and whether it is a rental unit or purchased property or home with a mortgage. The map below shows the SPM thresholds for renters with two adults and two children in 2012.

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**2012 Official Poverty Thresholds**  
(Two Adults and Two Children)

$23,283*

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**2012 SPM Poverty Thresholds for Renters**  
(Two Adults and Two Children)


*Revised since first release on Jan. 7, 2014. Original number was $22,283.
What resources do people have to meet their needs?

What we count as available resources differs between the two poverty measures.

The official measure uses cash income, such as wages and salaries, Social Security benefits, interest, dividends, pension or other retirement income.

The SPM starts with cash income, then...

**ADDING BENEFITS**

The SPM adds benefits from the government that are not cash but help families meet their basic needs.

**SUBTRACTING EXPENSES**

The SPM subtracts necessary expenses like taxes, health care, commuting costs for all workers, and child care expenses while parents work.

RESOURCES

- Housing subsidies
- SNAP
- Low-income home energy assistance (LIHEAP)
- National school lunch program
- Medicaid out-of-pocket expenses (MOOP)
- Child care expenses
- Child support paid
- Taxes
- Expenses related to work
Official and SPM Thresholds: 2013 and 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Owners with a Mortgage</th>
<th>Owners without a mortgage</th>
<th>Renters</th>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>$21,380</td>
<td>$25,460</td>
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</table>
Official and Research SPM Thresholds for Two Adult, Two Child Units with Geographic Adjustments: 2014

Supplemental Poverty Thresholds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>North Dakota - Nonmetro - No Mortgage</th>
<th>Washington, DC - Renter</th>
<th>San Jose, CA - Homeowner with mortgage</th>
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<tr>
<td>No Geo Adj</td>
<td>$24,008</td>
<td>$25,844</td>
<td>$21,380</td>
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<td>SPM</td>
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Oregon SPM Thresholds: 2014

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<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>$25,844</td>
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<td>Portland MSA</td>
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<td>Nonmetro</td>
<td>$22,997</td>
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</table>
## Washington SPM Thresholds: 2014

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<td>National</td>
<td>$25,844</td>
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<td>Nonmetro</td>
<td>$23,790</td>
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Comparison of SPM and Official Poverty Estimates: 2014

*Includes unrelated individuals under age 15.


www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
Comparison of SPM Poverty Estimates: 2013 and 2014

www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: 2014

Percentage point change:

-8.2  Social Security
-3.1  Refundable tax credits
-1.5  SNAP
-0.3  Unemployment Insurance
-1.2  SSI
-0.9  Housing subsidies
-0.3  Child support received
-0.4  School lunch
-0.2  TANF
-0.1  WIC
-0.1  LIHEAP
0.1  Child support paid
0.5  Federal income tax
1.6  FICA
2.0  Work expenses
3.5  Medical Out-of-Pocket

Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: 2014

Percentage point change

-8.2
-3.1
-1.5
-1.2
-0.9
-0.3
-0.3
-0.4
-0.2
-0.1
-0.1
0.1
0.5
1.6
2.0
3.5

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www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: 2014

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Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: 2014

Percentage point change

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Percentage point change

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-0.3  | Child support received
-0.4  | School lunch
-0.2  | TANF
-0.1  | WIC
-0.1  | LIHEAP

Child support paid | 0.1
Federal income tax | 0.5
FICA | 1.6
Work expenses | 2.0
Medical Out-of-Pocket | 3.5

www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
Figure 3.
Difference In Poverty Rates by State Using the Official Measure and the SPM: 3-Year Average 2011 to 2013

Poverty rates by state: 2011-2013

**Includes unrelated individuals under age 15.
Annual Social and Economic Supplement.
Comparison of SPM and Official Poverty Estimates: Oregon 2011-2013

- Includes unrelated individuals under age 15.


www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html

*Includes unrelated individuals under age 15.


www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
**Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: Oregon**

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www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
### Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: Washington

<table>
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<th>Social Security</th>
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<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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Difference in SPM Rate After Including Each Element: Washington

Percentage point change

-9.9  -7.5

-2.9  -2.3
-2.6  -1.3
-1.0  -0.8
-0.9  -0.8
-1.2  -1.0
-0.3  -0.3
-0.2  -0.2
-0.5  -0.6
-0.1  -0.1
0.0   0.0
0.1   0.0
0.0   0.0
1.1   3.4
1.5   4.6

Social Security
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Washington
Oregon

www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html
Estimating the SPM Using ACS Data

- CPS ASEC sample not large enough for:
  - single year state level poverty estimates
  - substate poverty estimates, e.g. metro area
- Researchers across country using the ACS to estimate SPM-like measures:
  - New York City, Wisconsin, Urban Institute, New York State, Philadelphia, San Francisco, California, Virginia
  - interest in production of comparable estimates
  - provide estimates for jurisdictions not able to fund their own research operations
Challenges

- Unit of analysis – ACS does not identify unrelated subfamilies

- Resources
  - Noncash benefits
    - Amount of SNAP Benefits
    - Participation and amount for LIHEAP, WIC, School Lunch and Housing Assistance
  - Necessary expenditures
    - Taxes
    - Childcare and other work-related expenses
    - Medical out-of-pocket expenses
Imputation Strategy

- Use data from the CPS ASEC to
  - Model program participation for WIC, school lunch, housing assistance and LIHEAP – using logistic regression model
  - Model benefit amounts for SNAP and LIHEAP – using predicted means match
- Use administrative data to assign values to WIC, school lunch and housing assistance
- Taxes – use ACS tax calculator
  - Limited relationship data to model tax units
  - Less specific data on income sources
  - Use IRS match for itemized deductions
- Childcare
  - Logistic regression to model whether unit pays for child care
  - Predicted means match to set weekly amount from CPS ASEC
  - Use reports of weeks worked
- MOOP –
  - Three groups: families, elderly and unrelated individuals
  - Predicted means match to model premium amounts for those reporting private insurance
  - Model other MOOP for three different groups by insurance status using predicted means match
Poverty Main

The Census Bureau reports poverty data from several major household surveys and programs. The Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS) is the source of official national poverty estimates. The American Community Survey (ACS) provides single and multi-year estimates for smaller areas. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) provides longitudinal estimates. The Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program provides model-based poverty estimates for counties and school districts. See Description of Income and Poverty Data Sources to determine which survey or program meets your specific needs.

Latest Releases

- Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2011 (P60-243)
- Poverty, 2010 and 2011 American Community Survey (ACSBR/11-01)
- Sharing a Household: Household Composition and Economic Well-Being, 2007-2010 (P60-242)
- Access With Concentrated Poverty, 2006-2010 (ACSBR/10-17) [PDF - 764k]
Since the development of the current official poverty measure in the 1960's by Mollie Orshansky there have been a series of studies and reviews of the conceptual and technical elements that make up the measure. These studies produced a large number of technical working papers and reports, including the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) 1995 report Measuring Poverty, that address the important measurement issues that are still being discussed by researchers and policy makers today.

For many years, the Census Bureau has estimated a number of experimental poverty measures based on recommendations of the 1995 NAS report (NAS-based measures).

An Interagency Technical Working Group on Developing a Supplemental Poverty Measure was formed in 2009 and charged with developing a set of initial starting points to permit the U.S. Census Bureau, in cooperation with the Bureau of Labor Statistics, to produce a Supplemental Poverty Measure. The Supplemental Poverty Measure will not replace the official poverty measure and will not be used to determine eligibility for government programs. Instead, the Supplemental Poverty Measure is designed as an experimental poverty measure that defines income thresholds and resources in a manner different from the official poverty measure.
Resource Links:

- Poverty
  - http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/

- Experimental Poverty Measures:

- Table Creator
  - http://www.census.gov/cps/data/cpstablecreator.html
The CPS Table Creator gives you the ability to create customized tables from the Current Population Survey. You can define your table by selecting specific criteria such as states, sexes, races, and origins.

- Complete the form to the left and press the “Get Table” button at the top or bottom of the form to generate your table.
- To create a table, you must make one or more selections in the Define Your Table section. For help in getting started, see the detailed examples of completing the form to create a table.

Disclaimer:

While tabulations may be conceptually the same as published estimates, in many cases they will not match published estimates because the Table Creator uses the CPS public use file. The CPS public use file suppresses some general and detailed income information, topcodes several categories of income, and suppresses some general and detailed income information in order to protect survey confidentiality.

* This tool is best viewed with normal font settings and in the Firefox web browser.
Poverty Threshold Options

Pre-Set Poverty Threshold Choices:
-- Official Poverty Thresholds
-- Three-Parameter Thresholds
-- CE-based Thresholds
-- CE-based Thresholds with Medical Out-of-Pocket

Relative Poverty Scale Choices:
-- OECD Equivalence Scale (1)
-- OECD Equivalence Scale (2)

Price Adjustment Options

CPI-U
CPI-U-RS

Geographic Price Difference Adjustment

No
Yes

Income Base for Relative Poverty

Thresholds
Median Income
Mean Income

Income-to-Poverty Ratio Percent Cutoff or Relative Poverty Thresholds Income Percent Cutoff
100 %
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