

2012 HHS Poverty Guidelines

One Version of the [U.S.] Federal Poverty Measure

[[Federal Register Notice, January 26, 2012](#) — Full text]
[[Prior Poverty Guidelines and Federal Register References Since 1982](#)]
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There are two slightly different versions of the federal poverty measure:

- The [poverty thresholds](#), and
- The [poverty guidelines](#).

The **poverty thresholds** are the original version of the federal poverty measure. They are updated each year by the **Census Bureau** (although they were [originally developed by Mollie Orshansky](#) of the Social Security Administration). The thresholds are used mainly for **statistical** purposes — for instance, preparing estimates of the number of Americans in poverty each year. (In other words, all official poverty population figures are calculated using the poverty thresholds, not the guidelines.) [Poverty thresholds since 1973 \(and for selected earlier years\)](#) and [weighted average poverty thresholds since 1959](#) are available on the Census Bureau's Web site. For an example of how the Census Bureau applies the thresholds to a family's income to determine its poverty status, see "[How the Census Bureau Measures Poverty](#)" on the Census Bureau's web site.

The **poverty guidelines** are the other version of the federal poverty measure. They are issued each year in the *Federal Register* by the **Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**. The guidelines are a simplification of the poverty thresholds for use for **administrative** purposes — for instance, determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs. The [Federal Register notice of the 2012 poverty guidelines](#) is available.

The poverty guidelines are sometimes loosely referred to as the "federal poverty level" (FPL), but that phrase is ambiguous and should be avoided, especially in situations (e.g., legislative or administrative) where precision is important.

Key differences between poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines are outlined in a table under [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs). See also the [discussion of this topic](#) on the Institute for Research on Poverty's web site.

NOTE: The poverty guideline figures below are NOT the figures the Census Bureau uses to calculate the number of poor persons. The figures that the Census Bureau uses are the [poverty thresholds](#).

2012 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,170
2	15,130
3	19,090
4	23,050
5	27,010
6	30,970
7	34,930
8	38,890
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$3,960 for each additional person.	

2012 Poverty Guidelines for Alaska	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$13,970
2	18,920
3	23,870
4	28,820
5	33,770
6	38,720
7	43,670
8	48,620

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,950 for each additional person.

2012 Poverty Guidelines for Hawaii	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$12,860
2	17,410
3	21,960
4	26,510
5	31,060
6	35,610
7	40,160
8	44,710

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,550 for each additional person.

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 77, No. 17, January 26, 2012, pp. 4034-4035

Found at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>