

<http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/04poverty.shtml>
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THE 2004 HHS POVERTY GUIDELINES One Version of the [U.S.] Federal Poverty Measure

[[Federal Register Notice with 2004 Guidelines – Full Text](#)]
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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 1980](#) 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 full text of the *Federal Register* notice with the 2004 poverty guidelines is [available here](#).)

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.

A more extensive [discussion of poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines](#) is available on the Institute for Research on Poverty's Web site.

2004 HHS Poverty Guidelines

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.	Alaska	Hawaii
1	\$ 9,310	\$11,630	\$10,700
2	12,490	15,610	14,360
3	15,670	19,590	18,020
4	18,850	23,570	21,680
5	22,030	27,550	25,340
6	25,210	31,530	29,000
7	28,390	35,510	32,660
8	31,570	39,490	36,320
For each additional person, add	3,180	3,980	3,660

SOURCE: *Federal Register*, Vol. 69, No. 30, February 13, 2004, pp. 7336-7338.

The separate poverty guidelines for Alaska and Hawaii reflect Office of Economic Opportunity administrative practice beginning in the 1966-1970 period. Note that the poverty thresholds — the original version of the poverty measure — have never had separate figures for Alaska and Hawaii. The poverty guidelines are not defined for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Palau. In cases in which a Federal program using the poverty guidelines serves any of those jurisdictions, the Federal office which administers the program is responsible for deciding whether to use the contiguous-states-and-D.C. guidelines for those jurisdictions or to follow some other procedure.

The poverty guidelines apply to both aged and non-aged units. The guidelines have never had an aged/non-aged distinction; only the Census Bureau (statistical) poverty thresholds have separate figures for aged and non-aged one-person and two-person units.

Programs using the guidelines (or percentage multiples of the guidelines — for instance, 125 percent or 185 percent of the guidelines) in determining eligibility include Head Start, the Food Stamp Program, the National School Lunch Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and the Children's Health Insurance Program. Note that in general, cash public assistance programs (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Supplemental Security Income) do NOT use the poverty guidelines in determining eligibility. The Earned Income Tax Credit program also does NOT use the poverty guidelines to determine eligibility.

The poverty guidelines (unlike the poverty thresholds) are designated by the year in which they are issued. For instance, the guidelines issued in February 2004 are designated the 2004 poverty guidelines. However, the 2004 HHS poverty guidelines only reflect price changes through calendar year 2003; accordingly, they are approximately equal to the Census Bureau poverty thresholds for calendar year 2003. (The 2003 thresholds are expected to be issued in final form in September or October 2004; a preliminary version of the 2003 thresholds is now available from the Census Bureau.)

The [computations for the 2004 poverty guidelines](#) are available.

The poverty guidelines may be formally referenced as "the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2)."

(HHS page: Last Revised: May 3, 2004)

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<http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/04fedreg.htm>
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[Federal Register: February 13, 2004 (Volume 69, Number 30)]
[Notices]
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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Office of the Secretary

Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines

AGENCY: Department of Health and Human Services.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice provides an update of the HHS poverty guidelines to account for last (calendar) year's increase in prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index.

EFFECTIVE DATE: These guidelines go into effect on the day they are published (unless an office administering a program using the guidelines specifies a different effective date for that particular program).

ADDRESSES: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Room 404E, Humphrey Building, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Washington, DC 20201.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: *For information about how the poverty guidelines are used or how income is defined in a particular program, contact the Federal (or other) office which is responsible for that program.*

For general questions about the poverty guidelines (but NOT for questions about a particular program that uses the poverty guidelines), contact Gordon Fisher, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Room 404E, Humphrey Building, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC 20201 — telephone: (202) 690-7507; persons with Internet access may visit the poverty guidelines Internet site at <<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty>>.

For information about the Hill-Burton Uncompensated Services Program (no-fee or reduced-fee health care services at certain hospitals and other health care facilities for certain persons unable to pay for such care), contact the Office of the Director, Division of Facilities Compliance and Recovery, Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS, Room 16C-17, Parklawn Building, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20857. To speak to a person, call (301) 443-5656. To receive a Hill-Burton information package, call 1-800-638-0742 (for callers outside Maryland) or 1-800-492-0359 (for callers in Maryland), and leave your name and address on the Hotline recording. Persons with Internet access may visit the Division of Facilities Compliance and Recovery Internet home page site at <<http://www.hrsa.gov/osp/dfcr>>. The Division of Facilities Compliance and Recovery notes that as set by 42 CFR 124.505(b), the effective date of this update of the poverty guidelines for facilities obligated under the Hill-Burton Uncompensated Services Program is sixty days from the date of this publication.

For information about the percentage multiple of the poverty guidelines to be used on immigration forms such as USCIS Form I-864, Affidavit of Support, contact U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. To obtain information on the most recent applicable poverty guidelines from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, call 1-800- 375-5283. Persons with Internet access may obtain the information from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Internet site at <<http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/affsupp.htm>>.

For information about the Department of Labor's Lower Living Standard Income Level (an alternative eligibility criterion with the poverty guidelines for certain programs under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998), contact Janeice Youngblood, Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor — telephone: (202) 693-3606 — e- mail: <youngblood.janeice@dol.gov>; persons with Internet access may visit the Employment and Training Administration's Lower Living Standard Income Level Internet site at <<http://wdsc.doleta.gov/lisil>>.

For information about the number of people in poverty since 1959 or about the Census Bureau poverty thresholds, contact the Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division information staff (HHES-Info), Room G251, Federal Office Building 3, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233-8500 — telephone: (301) 763-3242 — or send e-mail to hhes-info@census.gov; persons with Internet access may visit the Poverty section of the Census Bureau's Internet site at <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html>>.

2004 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

Size of family unit	Poverty guideline
1.....	\$9,310
2.....	12,490
3.....	15,670
4.....	18,850
5.....	22,030
6.....	25,210
7.....	28,390
8.....	31,570

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,180 for each additional member. (The same increment applies to smaller family sizes also, as can be seen in the figures above.)

2004 Poverty Guidelines for Alaska

Size of family unit	Poverty guideline
1.....	\$11,630
2.....	15,610
3.....	19,590
4.....	23,570
5.....	27,550
6.....	31,530
7.....	35,510
8.....	39,490

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,980 for each additional member. (The same increment applies to smaller family sizes

also, as can be seen in the figures above.)

2004 Poverty Guidelines for Hawaii

Size of family unit	Poverty guideline
1.....	\$10,700
2.....	14,360
3.....	18,020
4.....	21,680
5.....	25,340
6.....	29,000
7.....	32,660
8.....	36,320

For family units with more than 8 members, add \$3,660 for each additional member. (The same increment applies to smaller family sizes also, as can be seen in the figures above.)

(Separate poverty guideline figures for Alaska and Hawaii reflect Office of Economic Opportunity administrative practice beginning in the 1966-1970 period. Note that the Census Bureau poverty thresholds — the version of the poverty measure used for statistical purposes — have never had separate figures for Alaska and Hawaii. The poverty guidelines are not defined for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Palau. In cases in which a Federal program using the poverty guidelines serves any of those jurisdictions, the Federal office which administers the program is responsible for deciding whether to use the contiguous-states-and-DC guidelines for those jurisdictions or to follow some other procedure.)

The preceding figures are the 2004 update of the poverty guidelines required by section 673(2) of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1981 (Public Law 97-35 — reauthorized by Public Law 105-285, Section 201 (1998)). As required by law, this update reflects last year's change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U); it was done using the same procedure used in previous years. (The poverty guidelines are calculated each year from the latest published Census Bureau poverty thresholds — not from the previous year's guidelines. Besides the inflation adjustment, the guidelines are also rounded and adjusted to standardize the differences between family sizes.)

Section 673(2) of OBRA-1981 (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)) requires the use of these poverty guidelines as an eligibility criterion for the Community Services Block Grant program. The poverty guidelines are also used as an eligibility criterion by a number of other Federal programs (both HHS and non-HHS). Due to confusing legislative language dating back to 1972, the poverty guidelines have sometimes been mistakenly referred to as the "OMB" (Office of Management and Budget) poverty guidelines or poverty line. In fact, OMB has never issued the guidelines; the guidelines are issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services (formerly by the Office of Economic Opportunity/Community Services Administration). The poverty guidelines may be formally referenced as "the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the **Federal Register** by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2)."

The poverty guidelines are a simplified version of the Federal Government's statistical poverty thresholds used by the Census Bureau to prepare its statistical estimates of the number of persons and families in poverty. The poverty guidelines issued by the Department of Health and Human Services are used for administrative purposes — for instance, for determining whether a person or family is financially eligible for assistance or services under a particular Federal program. The poverty thresholds are used primarily for statistical purposes. Since the poverty guidelines in this notice — the 2004 guidelines — reflect price changes through calendar year 2003, they are approximately equal to the poverty thresholds for calendar year 2003 which the Census Bureau expects to issue in September or October 2004. (A preliminary version of the 2003 thresholds is now available from the Census Bureau.)

In certain cases, as noted in the relevant authorizing legislation or program regulations, a program uses the poverty guidelines as only one of several eligibility criteria, or uses a percentage multiple of the guidelines (for example, 125 percent or 185 percent of the guidelines). Non-Federal organizations which use the poverty guidelines under their own authority in non-Federally-funded activities also have the option of choosing to use a percentage multiple of the guidelines such as 125 percent or 185 percent.

While many programs use the guidelines to classify persons or families as either eligible or ineligible, some other programs use the guidelines for the purpose of giving priority to lower-income persons or families in the provision of assistance or services.

In some cases, these poverty guidelines may not become effective for a particular program until a regulation or notice specifically applying to the program in question has been issued. The poverty guidelines given above should be used for both farm and non-farm families. Similarly, these guidelines should be used for both aged and non-aged units. The poverty guidelines have never had an aged/non-aged distinction; only the Census Bureau (statistical) poverty thresholds have separate figures for aged and non-aged one-person and two-person units.

Definitions

There is no universal administrative definition of "family," "family unit," or "household" that is valid for all programs that use the poverty guidelines. Federal programs in some cases use administrative definitions that differ somewhat from the statistical definitions given below; the Federal office which administers a program has the responsibility for making decisions about its administrative definitions. Similarly, non-Federal organizations which use the poverty guidelines in non-Federally-funded activities may use administrative definitions that differ from the statistical definitions given below. In either case, to find out the precise definitions used by a particular program, please consult the office or organization administering the program in question.

The following statistical definitions (derived for the most part from language used in U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P60-185 and earlier reports in the same series) are made available for illustrative purposes only; in other words, these statistical definitions are not binding for administrative purposes.

- a. **Family.** A family is a group of two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption who live together; all such related persons are considered as members of one family. For instance, if an older married couple, their daughter and her husband and two children, and the older couple's nephew all lived in the same house or apartment, they would all be considered members of a single family.
- b. **Unrelated individual.** An unrelated individual is a person (other than an inmate of an institution) who is not living with any relatives. An unrelated individual may be the only person living in a house or apartment, or may be living in a house or apartment (or in group quarters such as a rooming house) in which one or more persons also live who are not related to the individual in question by birth, marriage, or adoption. Examples of unrelated individuals residing with others include a lodger, a foster child, a ward, or an employee.
- c. **Household.** As defined by the Census Bureau for statistical purposes, a household consists of all the persons who occupy a housing unit (house or apartment), whether they are related to each other or not. If a family and an unrelated individual, or two unrelated individuals, are living in the same housing unit, they would constitute two family units (see next item), but only one household. Some programs, such as the Food Stamp Program and the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, employ administrative variations of the "household" concept in determining income eligibility. A number of other programs use administrative variations of the "family" concept in determining income eligibility. Depending on the precise program definition used, programs using a "family" concept would generally apply the poverty guidelines separately to each family and/or unrelated individual within a household if the household includes more than one family and/or unrelated individual.
- d. **Family Unit.** "Family unit" is not an official U.S. Census Bureau term, although it has been used in the poverty guidelines Federal Register notice since 1978. As used here, either an unrelated individual or a family (as defined above) constitutes a family unit. In other words, a

family unit of size one is an unrelated individual, while a family unit of two/three/etc. is the same as a family of two/ three/etc.

Note that this notice no longer provides a definition of "income." This is for two reasons. First, there is no universal administrative definition of "income" that is valid for all programs that use the poverty guidelines. Second, in the past there has been confusion regarding important differences between the statistical definition of income and various administrative definitions of "income" or "countable income." The precise definition of "income" for a particular program is very sensitive to the specific needs and purposes of that program. To determine, for example, whether or not taxes, college scholarships, or other particular types of income should be counted as "income" in determining eligibility for a specific program, one must consult the office or organization administering the program in question; that office or organization has the responsibility for making decisions about the definition of "income" used by the program (to the extent that the definition is not already contained in legislation or regulations).

Dated: February 11, 2004.

Tommy G. Thompson,
Secretary of Health and Human Services.
[FR Doc. 04-3329 Filed 2-12-04; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4154-05-P

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<http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/income-defn.shtml>
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Is There a Single Definition of "Income" That is Used with the Poverty Guidelines?

As noted in the poverty guidelines *Federal Register* notice, there is no universal administrative definition of "income" that is valid for all programs that use the poverty guidelines. The office or organization that administers a particular program or activity is responsible for making decisions about the definition of "income" used by that program (to the extent that the definition is not already contained in legislation or regulations). To find out the specific definition of "income" used by a particular program or activity, one must consult the office or organization that administers that program.

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http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/04computations.shtml
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Computations for the 2004 Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

(1) Size of family unit	(2) Poverty thresholds for 2002 (weighted averages) ^{a/}	(3) Column 2 multiplied by 1.023 price inflater ^{b/}	(4) Difference between successive Column 3 entries	(5) Average difference in Column 4 ^{c/}	(6) February 2004 poverty guidelines
1	\$9,183	\$9,394			\$9,310
			\$2,632	\$3,180	
2	11,756	12,026			12,490
			2,652	3,180	
3	14,348	14,678			15,670
			4,137	3,180	
4	18,392	18,815			18,850 ^{d/}
			3,429	3,180	
5	21,744	22,244			22,030
			2,897	3,180	
6	24,576	25,141			25,210
			3,504	3,180	
7	28,001	28,645			28,390
			2,973	3,180	
8	30,907	31,618			31,570

Notes:

a/ Column 2 entries are from U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, Series P60-222, *Poverty in the United States: 2002*, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, September 2003, p. 4.

b/ Price inflation calculated from Table 1A of U.S. Department of Labor, Consumer Price Index press release (USD-04-29), January 15, 2004. (The Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) for all items was 179.9 for calendar year 2002 and 184.0 for calendar year 2003, an increase of 2.3 percent.)

c/ The arithmetic average of Column 4 entries, rounded to the nearest multiple of \$20.

d/ Obtained by multiplying the average poverty threshold for a family unit of four persons for 2002 (\$18,392, from Column 2) by the price increase factor from 2002 to 2003 (1.023) and rounding the result upward to the nearest whole multiple of \$50. All other entries in Column 6 are obtained by successive addition or subtraction of the average difference (\$3,180) to the size-4 2004 guideline entry (\$18,850).

For Alaska and Hawaii, where the cost of living is traditionally believed to be significantly higher than in other states, scaling factors of 1.25 and 1.15, respectively, are applied to the 2004 guideline for a family of four for the 48 contiguous states, and the results (if not already a multiple of \$10) are rounded upward to the nearest whole multiple of \$10. (These scaling factors were based on Office of Economic Opportunity administrative practice for these two states only beginning in the 1966-1970 period.) These scaling factors are applied to the average difference for the 48 contiguous states (Column 5) to obtain average differences for Alaska and Hawaii for deriving guidelines for other family

sizes; these average differences for Alaska and Hawaii are rounded to the nearest multiple of \$10. For families with more than 8 members, add the following amount for each additional person: \$3,180 (48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia); \$3,980 (Alaska); \$3,660 (Hawaii).

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<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/faqs/faq7.htm>
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Information Contacts and References on:

The Poverty Guidelines, The Poverty Thresholds, and The Development and History of U.S. Poverty Lines

For information about how the poverty guidelines are used or how income is defined in a particular program, contact the federal (or other) office that is responsible for that program.

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Poverty Thresholds vs. Poverty Guidelines

There are two slightly different versions of the [U.S.] 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 1980](#) 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.

(For further details on the poverty guidelines, including the actual figures, return to the main [Poverty Guidelines, Research, and Measurement page](#), and click on the appropriate line there.)

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.

A more extensive [discussion of poverty thresholds and poverty guidelines](#) is available on the Institute for Research on Poverty's Web site.

Report on 80 Means-Tested Programs

For information on more than 80 means-tested programs — both programs using the poverty guidelines and programs not using the poverty guidelines — see *Cash and Noncash Benefits for Persons with Limited Income: Eligibility Rules, Recipient and Expenditure Data, FY2000-FY2002* (CRS Report for Congress – Order Code RL32233), Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, November 25, 2003. (This report is available upon request from the office of your U.S. Senator or Representative.)

General Questions/Information on the Poverty Guidelines

[[Is there a single definition of “income” that is used with the poverty guidelines?](#)]

For general information about the poverty guidelines (but NOT for information about a particular program or about how a program uses the guidelines), see Gordon M. Fisher, “Poverty Guidelines for 1992” [a background paper on the poverty guidelines], *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 43-46; or contact Gordon Fisher, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, Room 404E, Humphrey Building, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201 — telephone: (202) 690-7507; e-mail address: gordon.fisher@hhs.gov (NOTE: If you are looking for information about the number of people in poverty, see the next paragraph instead of contacting Gordon Fisher.)

Information on *the Number of People in Poverty* or the Census Bureau's Poverty Thresholds

For information about **the number of people in poverty** since 1959 or for general information about the Census Bureau's poverty thresholds, contact the Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division's information staff (HHES-Info), Room G251, Federal Office Building #3, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, D.C. 20233-8500 — telephone: (301) 763-3242; e-mail address: hhes-info@census.gov; or you may visit the Poverty section of the Census Bureau's web site at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html>.

Historical Tables of Poverty Thresholds and Poverty Guidelines

For historical tables showing the poverty thresholds back to 1959 and the poverty guidelines back to 1965, see Tables 3.E1 (poverty thresholds) and 3.E8 (poverty guidelines) in the most recent *Annual Statistical Supplement* of the *Social Security Bulletin*. These tables are also available on the Social

Security Administration's Web site at <http://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/supplement/2002/3e.pdf>; to access them, one needs the latest version of the Adobe Acrobat Reader, available at www.adobe.com. Another historical table showing the poverty thresholds back to 1959 — one that can be accessed without the Adobe Acrobat Reader — is available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/histpov/hstpov1.html>. For the poverty guidelines since 1982, [summary figures and Federal Register references](#) are available.

How Mollie Orshansky Developed the Poverty Thresholds

For information about how [Mollie Orshansky](#) developed the poverty thresholds during the 1960's, see Gordon M. Fisher, "The Development and History of the Poverty Thresholds," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 55, No. 4, Winter 1992, pp. 3-14. (This article is available on the Social Security Administration History Page at <http://www.ssa.gov/history/fisheronpoverty.html>.) For a 2-page summary of this article, see Gordon M. Fisher, "[The Development and History of the U.S. Poverty Thresholds — A Brief Overview.](#)" *GSS/SSS Newsletter* [Newsletter of the Government Statistics Section and the Social Statistics Section of the American Statistical Association], Winter 1997, pp. 6-7. For an 88-page revision of the unpublished paper from which the *Social Security Bulletin* article was condensed, visit the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/papers/orshansky.html> (or contact Gordon Fisher at the [address given above](#)). For the original article in which Orshansky presented the poverty thresholds, see Mollie Orshansky, "Counting the Poor: Another Look at the Poverty Profile," *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January 1965, pp. 3-29 — reprinted in *Social Security Bulletin*, Vol. 51, No. 10, October 1988, pp. 25-51. (A list of [selected articles and papers by Orshansky](#) on the poverty thresholds and the poverty population is available.)

The Official Federal Statistical Definition of Poverty

In August 1969, the U.S. Bureau of the Budget (the predecessor of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget) designated the Census Bureau poverty thresholds as the federal government's official statistical definition of poverty. The latest version of the document embodying this designation is Statistical Policy Directive No. 14 ("Definition of Poverty for Statistical Purposes"). The text of this directive may be found on p. 35 of the Commerce Department's *Statistical Policy Handbook* (1978); in the *Federal Register*, Vol. 43, No. 87, May 4, 1978, p. 19269; and on the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/ombdir14.html>

A Report Proposing a New Definition of Poverty, and Subsequent Developments

In May 1995, the Panel on Poverty and Family Assistance appointed by the National Research Council's Committee on National Statistics issued a report (Constance F. Citro and Robert T. Michael (editors), *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*, Washington, D.C., National Academy Press, 1995) which proposed a new approach for developing an official poverty measure for the U.S. — although it did not propose a specific set of dollar figures. For further information on this report, contact the Committee on National Statistics, HA 192, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20418 — telephone: (202)334-3093; e-mail address: cnstat@nas.edu; or you may visit the WorldWide Web page for the report at <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/poverty/>. The full text of the report is on the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/toc.html>. (To view the text, you will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader program, which is available at www.adobe.com.)

- An overview of developments since 1995 relating to a possible new U.S. poverty measure, plus an unofficial summary of the recommendations of the Panel on Poverty and Family Assistance, is available on the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/papers/fisher.html>.
- In mid-1999, the Census Bureau released a report on new experimental poverty measures which presented a number of variants of a poverty measure based on the recommendations of the Panel on Poverty and Family

Assistance, and examined the marginal effects of varying individual elements (e.g., the equivalence scale) of the proposed poverty measures. See Kathleen Short, Thesia Garner, David Johnson, and Patricia Doyle, *Experimental Poverty Measures: 1990 to 1997*, U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-205, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, June 1999. This report is also available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <http://www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/p60-205.pdf>; to view the text, you will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader. More recent Census Bureau reports on experimental poverty measures are available at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/reports.html>.

Unofficial Poverty Lines in the U.S. Before 1965

For historical information about unofficial poverty lines in the United States before 1965, see Gordon M. Fisher, "From Hunter to Orshansky: An Overview of (Unofficial) Poverty Lines in the United States from 1904 to 1965" (unpublished paper, October 1993--revised August 1997). This paper is available on the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/papers/hstorsp4.html> (or contact Gordon Fisher at the [above address](#)). A [7-page summary](#) is also available.

On the Income Elasticity of the Poverty Line

For historical information about the income elasticity of the poverty line — the tendency of poverty lines to rise in real terms over time as the real income of the general population rises — see Gordon M. Fisher, "[Relative or Absolute — New Light on the Behavior of Poverty Lines Over Time.](#)" *GSS/SSS Newsletter* [Joint Newsletter of the Government Statistics Section and the Social Statistics Section of the American Statistical Association], Summer 1996, pp. 10-12. This brief article was condensed from a 78-page paper which assembles historical evidence on this subject not only from the U.S. but also from Britain, Canada, and Australia. This 78-page paper is available on the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement Web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/papers/elastap4.html> (or contact Gordon Fisher at the [above address](#)). A [9-page summary](#) is also available.

Other Papers on the History of U.S. Poverty Lines

The following papers about the history and other aspects of U.S. poverty lines are also available from Gordon Fisher at the [above address](#):

Gordon M. Fisher, "'Enough for a Family to Live On?' — Questions from Members of the American Public and New Perspectives from British Social Scientists" (a paper presented at the 23rd Annual Research Conference of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management in Washington, D.C.), November 2001 [reviews four approaches to determining a socially acceptable minimum standard of living (poverty) that are being used in Britain and other European countries; This paper is available on the Census Bureau's Poverty Measurement web site at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povmeas/papers/ndqppr1c.nnt.pdf>.]

Gordon M. Fisher, "[Reasons for Measuring Poverty in the United States in the Context of Public Policy — A Historical Review, 1916-1995.](#)" August 1999 — revised June 2000.

Gordon M. Fisher, "How Many Americans Were Really in Poverty in 1947? Estimates of the U.S. Poverty Population Between 1947 and 1963 Under Two Contemporary (1949 and 1959) Definitions of Poverty" (a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Economic History Association in Baltimore, Maryland), October 1999.

Gordon Fisher, "Income (In-)Adequacy? The Official Poverty Line, Possible Changes, and Some Historical Lessons," *Community Action Digest*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, Spring 1999, pp. 25-33.

Gordon M. Fisher, "Setting American Standards of Poverty: A Look Back," *Focus* [newsletter of the Institute for Research on Poverty], Vol. 19, No. 2, Spring 1998, pp. 47-52. [This issue of *Focus* is available in Adobe Acrobat format on the Institute for Research on Poverty's Web site at <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/irp/pubs/foc192.pdf>.]

Gordon M. Fisher, "Disseminating the Administrative Version and Explaining the Administrative and Statistical Versions of the Federal Poverty Measure," *Clinical Sociology Review*, Vol. 15, 1997, pp. 163-182 [includes a section on the income elasticity of the poverty line and a section on whether poverty lines are necessarily "arbitrary"].

Gordon M. Fisher, "[Poverty Lines and Measures of Income Inadequacy in the United States Since 1870: Collecting and Using a Little-Known Body of Historical Material](#)" (a paper presented at the 22nd Meeting of the Social Science History Association in Washington, D.C.), October 1997.

Gordon M. Fisher, "[Some Popular Beliefs About the U.S. Poverty Line as Reflected in Inquiries from the Public](#)," *The Sociologist* [Newsletter of the District of Columbia Sociological Society], Vol. 30, No. 2, October 1996 [p. 6].

Reference to International Glossary on Poverty

David Gordon and Paul Spicker (editors), *The International Glossary on Poverty*, London, Zed Books, 1999.

The [Comparative Research Programme on Poverty](#) (CROP) published this glossary as part of the series of CROP International Studies in Poverty Research. The glossary defines almost 200 technical terms used in contemporary scholarly research on poverty. Each entry provides an explanation of the term in question and gives a list of relevant journal articles and books. The glossary was compiled by academics from Britain, other European countries, and international agencies. The glossary is intended to help overcome current difficulties arising from the absence of an agreed vocabulary, and to familiarize persons in one discipline with terms and concepts used in other relevant disciplines. A special effort was made to include non-Western approaches and concepts in order to facilitate comparative poverty studies. Further information about the glossary was available on the CROP Internet site, but information about CROP's publications is temporarily unavailable while it is being reorganized. However, some information about this book can be found at: <http://www.unhabitat.org/HD/hdv5n2/pubvid.htm>.

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