



United States Department of
Health & Human Services

• [Frequent Questions](#)

Search

THE 2009 HHS POVERTY GUIDELINES

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

[[Federal Register notice, January 23, 2009](#) (PDF - 3 pages)]

[[Prior Poverty Guidelines and Federal Register References Since 1982](#)]

[[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)]

[[Further Resources on Poverty Measurement, Poverty Lines, and Their History](#)]

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 [Federal Register notice with the 2009 poverty guidelines](#) (PDF - 3 pages).

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.

The 2009 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia

Persons in family	Poverty guideline
1	\$10,830
2	14,570
3	18,310
4	22,050

5	25,790
6	29,530
7	33,270
8	37,010
For families with more than 8 persons, add \$3,740 for each additional person.	

2009 Poverty Guidelines for Alaska

Persons in family	Poverty guideline
1	\$13,530
2	18,210
3	22,890
4	27,570
5	32,250
6	36,930
7	41,610
8	46,290
For families with more than 8 persons, add \$4,680 for each additional person.	

2009 Poverty Guidelines for Hawaii

Persons in family	Poverty guideline
1	\$12,460
2	16,760
3	21,060
4	25,360
5	29,660
6	33,960
7	38,260
8	42,560
For families with more than 8 persons, add \$4,300 for each additional person.	

Go to [Further Resources](#) on Poverty Measurement, Poverty Lines, and Their History

Go to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs).

Return to the main [Poverty Guidelines, Research, and Measurement](#) page.

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