

### Who is in poverty?

The 2000 Census reported 11.6 percent poverty among Oregonians. However, in the more recent 2005 American Community Survey, Oregon's poverty rate stood at 14.1 percent, a significant increase from the 2001 ACS level of 13.4 percent. This increase reflects the impact of the 2001 recession and Oregon's slow recovery.

The poverty rate varies by age, race, and family status, and affects:

- 22.0 percent of children 5 years of age and younger
- 18.4 percent of children younger than 18 years of age
- 7.7 percent of people 65 and older
- 10.1 percent of Oregon families
- 15.9 percent of Oregon families with children younger than 18
- 16.9 percent of families with children younger than 5 years of age

Most troubling, 56.5 percent of families headed by single mothers with children younger than age 5 lived in poverty.

### A bigger problem for minority populations

While the majority of Oregon's poverty population is White, the state's minority and ethnic populations experience poverty at a disproportionate rate. Poverty rates for these groups:

- 25.9 percent for Black
- 28.6 percent for American Indian
- 27.2 percent for Hispanic origin

In contrast, 12.9 percent of the White non-Hispanic population experienced poverty.

For most groups, poverty among women exceeded poverty among men. Among people who identified themselves as Black, however, 25.0 percent of women and 26.7 percent of men lived in poverty in 2004.

### Poverty defined

#### Two sources of data—the Census and the American Communities Survey

Much of the data presented in this report come from the 2000 Census, based on 1999 income. In 1999, the poverty threshold for a family of four, with two children under age 18, was \$16,895 in annual income. The poverty threshold for a single individual under age 65 in 1999 was \$8,667. For a person over 65 years of age, the threshold was \$7,990.

Where possible, however, this report includes findings of the 2001 to 2005 American Community Surveys. The 2004 poverty thresholds in 2004 were

## What is poverty?

\$19,157 for a family of four, \$9,827 for a single person younger than 65 years of age, and \$9,060 for a single person age 65 or older. As of 2006, ACS does not produce data about every Oregon county – although that remains a goal for the survey. Instead, it reports data for the state as a whole and for larger metropolitan areas.

Every ten years, the Census seeks to count every person living in the country. In contrast, ACS is an annual survey and samples the nation's population. It will replace the decennial long form in future censuses as part of the Census Bureau's reengineered 2010 census.

The decennial census has two parts: 1) the short form, which counts the population; and 2) the long form, which obtains demographic, housing, social, and economic information from a 1-in-6 sample of households.

Conducted on once every 10 years, data from the traditional Census long-form information becomes out-dated. ACS provides the data communities need every year instead of once in ten years.

Implementation of the annual ACS provides more current information in policy and program decision making. It will also provide better information for the administration of federal programs and the distribution of federal resources.

### Poverty guidelines

Poverty guidelines (sometimes referred to as the federal poverty level) serve as a widely accepted federal poverty measure. In February of each year, the federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) sets poverty guidelines as the basis for program eligibility. DHHS simplifies the Census Bureau's poverty threshold to calculate poverty guidelines. DHHS and other agencies use these simplified measures to administer certain federal programs such as food stamps.

In 1999, the poverty guideline for a family of four (in the continental United States) was \$16,700. The 1999 guideline for a single individual was \$8,240. The 2006 levels are \$20,000 for a family of four and \$9,800 for an individual in the 48 contiguous states and Washington, DC.

Despite the limitations of the federal measures, they continue to be the most widely used measures of poverty. Poverty definitions give only a general indication of hardship for various groups that may not be accurate for certain individuals.

### Resources and links

- Census: [www.census.gov/](http://www.census.gov/)
- American Community Survey: [www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html)
- For more on poverty thresholds, see [www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povdef.html](http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povdef.html)
- For more on poverty guidelines, see [www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/poverty.shtml](http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/poverty.shtml)