

Measuring Poverty Using Census Bureau Data

January 30th, 2025

Q: I missed it, what does SPM stand for?

A: SPM stands for Supplemental Poverty Measure.

Q: Who is included/excluded in ACS tables that have a universe of "population for whom poverty status is determined?"

A: The poverty universe excludes people in institutional group quarters, people living in college dormitories or military barracks, and children under the age of 15 not related to the householder.

Q: Are SAIPE numbers based upon supplemental Poverty Measure or the official poverty measure?

A: SAIPE numbers are based on the official poverty measure.

Q: Can I use the SPM data coupled with Median Income data to create an economic indicator to track the potential ability to save as a percentage of income? I want to be able to create an indicator of the economy as experienced at the median income level - very different to GDP.

A: Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov.

A: Please see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe/guidance.html>

Q: What is likelihood that families are consider poor by SPM but not Official poverty, or vise versa?

A. The majority of people, the vast majority of people are either poor according to both or poor according to neither. But there is a subset of people that are poor according to one and not the other. Look for a working paper addressing this issue coming out later this year.

Q:is SPM broken down by race and ethnicity?

A: Not published tables. But there are race and ethnicity variables in the microdata files.

Q: So, it sounds like OPM is used for SAIPE which determines Federal Title I eligibility

A: That is correct.

Q: Can I find the percentage of residents under the SPM threshold at the local level?

A: SPM rates at the state level are published each year. Using the microdata file, you can find sub-state rates at the [Public Use Microdata Area](#) (PUMA) level.

Q: What are the ACS and Census variable IDs needed to calculate both SPM and Official Poverty Measure?

A: The microdata is located here: <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/supplemental-poverty-measure/acs-research-files.html>. At the top of the page is a data dictionary which lists the name and definition of all variables on the file.

Q: Does the 5-year ACS data come out each September too?

A: The 1-year ACS releases every September, and the 5-year ACS releases every December.

Q: Is Puerto Rico included in the SIPP and SAIPE program estimates?

A: SAIPE is not available for Puerto Rico. The SIPP sample universe is the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States. The sampling universe is based on addresses from multiple sources – chiefly the 2020 Decennial Census – and contains approximately 327.7 million individuals at the time of sampling for the 2023 SIPP.

Q: I haven't used SAIPE before - does it give estimates by age brackets?

A: Yes, SAIPE data is available for all ages, Under age 18, Age 5-17 in families, and under age 5

Q: So sps is all that has microdata available?

A: Please see <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/saipe/guidance.html>
please see <https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov/guidance-for-data-users/how-to-materials-for-using-the-microdata-access.html>

Q: Did you say SAIPE does not include SPM?

A: That is correct. It uses the OPM along with other data sources.

Q: Very rich in information. Are there pre-scripted queries to draw out the data and that can make it available in dashboards?

A: Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov

Q: Do the alpha numerical identifiers for reports on data.census.gov ever change or are these stable? For example S1701 etc.

A: These are stable.

Q: where can I find statistics on # or % of people at various percentages of poverty level for a county?

A: Table S1703. There is a geo tab at the top that you can click on to select all counties or a specific county.

Q: Can these data be used in a Tableau dashboard?

A: Hello - which datasets specifically are you referring to? You have the ability to access data tables and to download data through data.census.gov and using our API.

Q: This might be too specific, but if I use the Tobacco Use Supplement (TUS) to the CPS which typically collects data every 3-4 years (through three data collection periods across a year), could I match the 5-year ASEC to that dataset?

A: Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov.

Q: Hello, I am looking for data on Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for Puerto Rico. Where can I find it?

A: SAIPE is not available for Puerto Rico.

Q: Is there a way to break down table S1701 by race/ethnicity?

A: Race and ethnicity breakdowns are included in table S1701.

Q: Does this information include emancipated minors and children in the system but not necessarily in foster care; groups homes or state-run programs

A: Yes, if they are age 15 or older.

Q: What would be the best table to use for the most current poverty data by county for a given state at 125% of Federal Poverty Limit?

A: Table S1703.

Q: That visualization tool is great. Are there similar visualization tools on the Census Bureau website?

A: Yes there are! Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov.

Q: Is any of this data show a trend line?

A: You can either use tables to make trend lines yourself or see our reports which show trends over time: [Poverty in the United States: 2023](#) and [Poverty in States and Metropolitan Areas: 2023](#).

Q: What's the best way to query a measure longitudinally across multiple years?

A: Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov

Q: Is all data available by race as well?

A: Yes, Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov.

Q: is SPM available by county?

A: Currently only for one year: [Exploring a Method to Produce County-Level Supplemental Poverty Measure Estimates in the American Community Survey](#)

Q: Thank you! Is there any app/website to visualize poverty geographically?

A: Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov

Q: Question to Brian: Is it possible (statistically robust) to estimate the multidimensional poverty index at the county/city level?

A: State and county level rates are available here: [Multidimensional Deprivation Index \(MDI\)](#)

Q: Are State level SPM rates available on data.census.gov?

A: No. Only here: [ACS SPM State Tables 2009 to 2019 and 2021 to 2022](#)

Q: Where can I find the SPM by age groups and by State for 2023 data?

A: 2023 data is coming soon.

Q: Where to find specific poverty data on specific ethnic groups within a racial category? for example, African- American or Nigerian- American

A: Please reach out to our Ask Data help line to be connected with a local data specialist who can assist you directly with your data needs at 1-844-ASK-DATA or census.askdata@census.gov

Q: What are the formulas that determine the poverty rates?

A: OPM: If family income < OPM poverty threshold, than the family is in poverty.

SPM: If SPM resources < SPM poverty threshold, than SPM unit is in poverty.

Q: I find working with the race/ethnicity data and the intersection of poverty data especially challenging. Is it possible using this data to essentially create a pie chart showing what percent of the entire population that is at or below 200% official FPL in a geography (say California) is White-non-Hispanic, black, Asian, two or more races etc. Is that possible to do from this data? Or can you just not add up the different race/ethnicity categories?

A: Yes. You would be able to do something like this using the microdata.

Q: What is the best data that report poverty among children by race by county

A: Table S1701.

Q: When will the ACS SPM State Tables 2009 to 2019 and 2021 to 2023 be released?

A: Coming early Spring

Q: Did you say people in shelters are INCLUDED or EXCLUDED?

A: Shelters are included in the poverty universe.
