

Glossary of Common Data Terms and Sources

American Community Survey (ACS) - An ongoing survey that produces important statistics about our nation's people and housing. It covers the same type of detailed information previously collected every 10 years from the decennial census long form questionnaire. This eliminates the need for a separate long form in the 2010 Census. <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>

Bureau of the Census (BOC) - The country's preeminent statistical collection and dissemination agency. It publishes a wide variety of statistical data about people, housing, and the economy of the nation. The Census Bureau conducts approximately 200 annual surveys and conducts the 10 year census of the United States population and housing and the 5 year economic census and census of governments. <http://www.census.gov/>

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) - The principal fact-finding agency for the Federal Government in the broad field of labor economics and statistics. Source for data on unemployment statistics, mass layoffs, the Consumer Price Index and more. <http://www.bls.gov/>

Census (Decennial) - The census of population and housing, taken by the Census Bureau in years ending in 0 (zero). Article I of the Constitution requires that a census be taken every ten years for the purpose of reapportioning the U.S. House of Representatives. Preparations for Census 2010 are ongoing.

Consumer Price Indexes (CPI) - Produces monthly data on changes in the prices paid by urban consumers for a representative basket of goods and services. For example it is used to calculate the cost of the Thrifty Food Plan. Many government programs like the official poverty thresholds are adjusted base on the CPI. <http://www.bls.gov/cpi/>

Confidence Interval - Represents the degree of uncertainty about the estimate. A 90 percent confidence interval can be interpreted roughly as providing 90 percent certainty that the true number falls between the upper and lower bounds.

Current Population Survey (CPS) - A monthly survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey has been conducted for more than 50 years and is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population. The sample provides estimates for the nation as a whole and serves as part of model-based estimates for individual states and other geographic areas. <http://www.census.gov/cps/>

Economic Research Service (ERS) - Primary source of economic information and research in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Along with other analyses, ERS publishes a report on household food insecurity each year. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/>

Fiscal Year (FY) - Any yearly accounting period. The fiscal year for the federal government begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. FY 2009 runs from 10/1/2008 to 9/30/2009.

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) - Administers the nutrition assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Data on all the programs they administer can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>.

Food Security - Access by all members of a household at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum:

- The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies.

Food Insecurity - Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

General categories (old and new labels are the same)	Detailed categories		
	Old label	New label	Description of conditions in the household
Food security	Food security	High food security	No reported indications of food-access problems or limitations
		Marginal food security	One or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake
Food insecurity	Food insecurity without hunger	Low food security	Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake
	Food insecurity with hunger	Very low food security	Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake

Income-to-Poverty Ratios - Income-to-poverty ratios represent the ratio of family or unrelated individual income to their appropriate poverty threshold. Ratios below 1.00 indicate that the income for the respective family or unrelated individual is below the official definition of poverty, while a ratio of 1.00 or greater indicates income above the poverty level. A ratio of 1.25, for example, indicates that income was 125 percent above the appropriate poverty threshold.

Mean - This measure represents an arithmetic average of a set of numbers. It is derived by dividing the sum of a group of numbers by the total number of items in that group.

Median - This measure represents the middle value in a set of numbers. One-half of the cases fall below the median and one-half of the cases exceed the median.

Office of Research and Analysis (ORA) – Division of USDA that conducts program analysis and assessment that informs policymaking and management of federal nutrition assistance programs.
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/>

Per Capita Income - Average obtained by dividing aggregate (total) income by total population of an area.

Percentage - This measure is calculated by taking the number of items in a group possessing a characteristic of interest and dividing by the total number of items in that group, and then multiplying by 100.

Poverty - A set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to detect who is poor. If a family's total income is less than that family's threshold, then that family, and every individual in it, is considered poor. The poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated annually for inflation with the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition counts money income before taxes and excludes capital gains and noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps). <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/09poverty.shtml>

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.	

Rank - An array or list of values placed in numeric order.

Rate - This is a measure of occurrences in a given period of time divided by the possible number of occurrences during that period.

Ratio - This is a measure of the relative size of one number to a second number expressed as the quotient of the first number divided by the second.

Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) - The basis for maximum food stamp allotments. TFP provides a healthful and minimal cost meal plan that assumes that all purchased food is consumed at home.

<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/USDAFoodPlansCostofFood.htm>

Other Sources for Data:

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) - <http://frac.org/data/>

Feeding America - <http://feedingamerica.org/our-network/the-studies.aspx>