Solving the Puzzle of U.S. Government Statistics

Doug Way, Grand Valley State University
Solving the Puzzle of U.S. Government Statistics

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Grand Valley State University Libraries
Why Open the Box?

- Federal Government is one of the largest **producers** and **compilers** of statistics in the world.
- The Federal Government is also often the **only** source of statistics on a topic.
- The Federal Government makes its statistics freely available to the public *(most of the time…)*
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Three things to think about before you begin looking for government-produced statistics

1. What kind of information am I looking for?
   - economic, demographic, education, health, etc.
   - When using government information you want to think agency, not subject
     - Often multiple agencies produce statistics on a topic
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Poverty in the United States
### Poverty in the United States

**Before You Dump out the Pieces**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Census Bureau</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Overview**
  - Basic facts about poverty and how it is measured

- **What's New**
  - View the most recent reports, briefs, and data on poverty for the past 12 months

- **Publications**
  - View reports and briefs (short reports) on poverty

- **Definitions**
  - Find definitions to poverty-related terms

- **Poverty Thresholds**
  - Dollar amounts the Census Bureau uses to determine poverty status

- **Poverty Data Sources**
  - Description of poverty estimates from different sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Poverty Data</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Poverty Tables: 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical Tables (poverty over time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income, Earnings, and Poverty from the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS-05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed Tables from the American Community Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Areas with Concentrated Poverty: 1999 [PDF]</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microdata Access</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtain data files to create your own tabulations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates**
  - Annual Estimates for State, Counties and School Districts

- **History of the Poverty Measure**
  - Documentation about how the official poverty measure was developed

- **Poverty Measurement Studies and Alternative Measures**
  - Research about how alternative methods of measuring poverty affect poverty data

- **Links to Related Sites**
  - Find other agencies or organizations that provide poverty data and information

- **Frequently Asked Questions**
  - Answers from the Census Bureau's Question and
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Poverty in the United States

Health, United States, 2005

with Chartbook on
Trends in the Health of Americans
With Special Feature on Adults 55-64 Years

Poverty Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Inpatient care</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health status, risk factors, and chronic diseases</td>
<td>Health care coverage and Medicaid Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulatory Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Persons and families below poverty level, according to selected characteristics, race, and Hispanic origin: United States, selected years 1976-2003

Figure 4. Poverty by age: United States, 1966-2003

View/download PDF
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Poverty in the United States

The Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program produces monthly and annual employment, unemployment, and labor force data for Census regions and divisions, States, counties, metropolitan areas, and many cities, by place of residence.

- General Overview
- Economic News Releases
- Special Notices
- Get Detailed LAUS Statistics
- Tables and Maps Created by BLS
- Publications and Other Documentation
- Related Links
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Contact Us

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

ECONOMIC NEWS RELEASES:

Regional and State Employment and Unemployment (HTML)(PDF)
Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment (HTML)(PDF)
Subscribe to the BLS News Service -- receive BLS economic news releases by e-mail.
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Poverty in the United States
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Poverty in the United States

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946.

- Program Fact Sheet
- Program History
- Program Eligibility
- School Food Safety
- Guidance Materials

Second Extension of Waivers Due to Emergency Conditions Caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita
- Extension of School Meals Related Provisions
- Extension of 30 Day Limit for Initial Carry-over of Previous Year's Eligibility
- Verification Procedures & Hurricane Katrina
- Emergency Feeding of School Children

What's New
- Guidance Materials
- Regulations

Current

- Regional and State Employment and Unemployment (HTML)(PDF)
- Metropolitan Area Employment and Unemployment (HTML)(PDF)
- Subscribe to the BLS News Service -- receive BLS economic news releases by e-mail.
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Three things to think about…

2. What format might I find this information in?
   - Will it be online? Often pre-1990s information cannot be found online.
   - Not always the case
Before You Dump out the Pieces

Three things to think about...

3. What level of geography am I looking for information on?
   - State, metropolitan area, city, place, etc.
Looking for Corner Pieces

- **Top Statistical Resources**
  - **Statistical Abstract of the United States**
    - *THE* first place go for statistical information
    - Statistics from government and private sources
    - Almost every edition is available online
      - [http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2878](http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2878)
      - Paper is easier to use
  - **Related Publications**
    - State and Metropolitan Area Data Book
    - County and City Data Book
Looking for Corner Pieces

- Top Statistical Resources
    - Inter-agency portal for statistical information
    - Browse by topic
    - Browse by state
    - Search across agencies
Filling in the Edges

- Major Statistical Reference Sources
  - Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970
    - [http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS55561](http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS55561) (part 1)
    - [http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS55811](http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS55811) (part 2)
  - Digest of Education Statistics
    - [http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS6878](http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS6878)
  - Health, United States
    - [http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2649](http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS2649)
Filling in the Edges

- Major Statistical Reference Sources
  - Uniform Crime Reports
    - http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS3082
  - Yearbook of Immigration Statistics
    - http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS40400
  - Agricultural Statistics
    - http://purl.access.gpo.gov/GPO/LPS1063
Filling in the Edges

Major Online Resources for Demographic Information

- American FactFinder
  - [http://factfinder.census.gov](http://factfinder.census.gov)
- State and County Quick Facts
  - [http://quickfacts.census.gov](http://quickfacts.census.gov)
Looking Under the Table

Any Questions?