

DEFINITION OF POVERTY

INTRODUCTION

The decrease within a year of around a million in the poor found among 190 million Americans may be partly due to changes in sample and partly due to changes in the economic climate. By repeated measurement of larger samples, the actual change in numbers of the poor will eventually be measured with more reliability.

The poor

[Millions of persons ¹]

	Total	Nonfarm	Farm
All ages:			
1964	34.3	29.9	4.4
1963	35.4	31.4	4.0

¹ Members of the Armed Forces living on post are excluded, also poor persons living in institutions. Two hundred fifty thousand unrelated children having foster child status are included.

Source: Special tabulations by U.S. Bureau of Census of 1964 and 1963 annual cash incomes, surveyed in March of the following year.

SUMMARY

In March 1965, about 12 million households comprising 34 million persons were living on cash incomes insufficient to buy goods and services vital to health. Measured by the reports of 1964 cash incomes to the Census Bureau, these—based on a sliding scale of cash incomes allowing for family size and the ages of family members—are the poor, averaging, on these incomes, at most, 70 cents a day per person for food, and choosing, among hard alternatives, which needs may be endured and which must be satisfied.

Among these poor were about 300,000 children living with foster parents, about 200,000 youths and 4,800,000 adults living in their own rooms and flats, and about 29 million members of families of 2 or more related persons.

Almost 70 percent of the poor were white; 87 percent did not live on farms; 47 percent (over half of those not on farms) lived inside the metropolitan boundaries of areas containing cities of 50,000 population or more. As nearly as can be determined, cities, large and small, contain about 55 percent of all these poor. The rest spreads thinly like a retreating nerve network over the hamlet traces of past and dying industry, mining, lumbering, transportation and farming, with rural nonfarm poverty outnumbering farm poverty two to one.