In 2012, there were 46.2 million people in poverty.

The official poverty measure is based on a fixed set of minimum needs for food, clothing, shelter, and utilities. It is calculated by comparing a person's income to the Poverty Threshold, which is a measure of how much income a family needs to meet basic needs.

Another measure, the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), takes into account additional resources such as government benefits and necessary expenses like taxes. The SPM provides a more comprehensive picture of poverty than the official measure.

The United States has an official poverty measure (SPM) and takes account of cash resources and noncash benefits. The second is known as the supplemental poverty measure based on cash resources. The first report calculates the nation's official poverty rate, identifying 49.7 million people as poor. This was 16 percent of the population.

The SPM starts with cash income, then...