Alternative Poverty Measurement for the U.S.: Focus on Supplemental Poverty Thresholds

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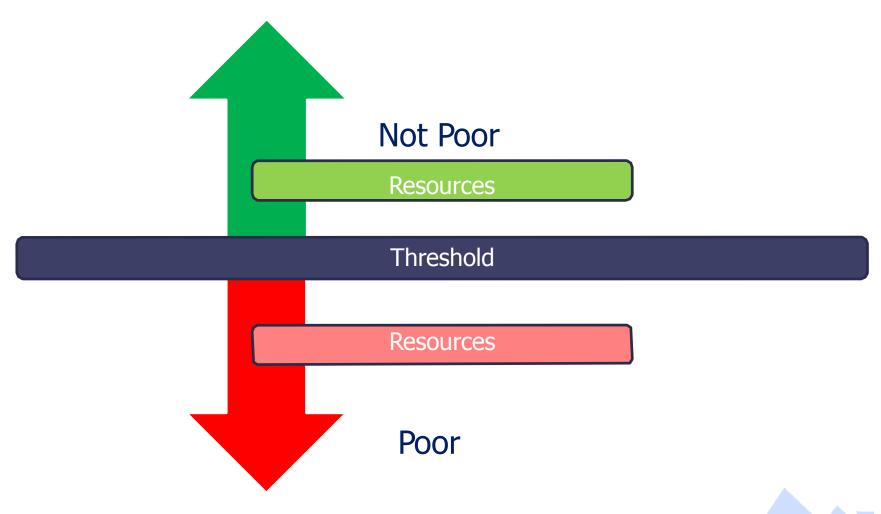
➤ This presentation reports the results of research and analysis undertaken by researchers within the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the BLS.

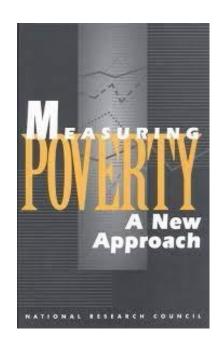
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All Poverty Measures







National Academy of Sciences Panel on Poverty and Familiy Assistance

May 1995 report, Measuring Poverty: A New Approach

The official measure does not account for

- Higher standards and levels of living since 1965
- Provision of noncash benefits (food benefits, housing subsidies, energy assistance)
- Necessary expenses (taxes, work-related, health care)

Recommended Changes to Improve the Measure of Poverty in the U.S.

- Thresholds: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- Resources and poverty statistics: Census Bureau

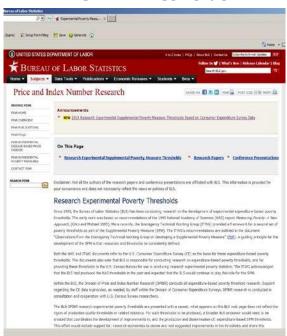


Supplemental Poverty Meaures (SPM)

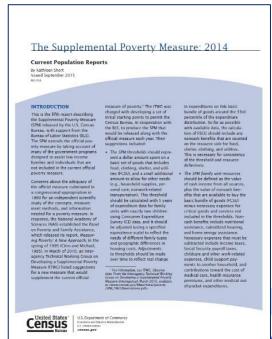
Interagency Technical Working Group - March 2, 2010

- Will not replace the official poverty measure
- Will not be used for resource allocation or program eligibility
- Justification: Evaluate impact of benefit programs on poverty
- Based on National Academy of Sciences expert panel recommendations Measuring Poverty: A New Approach (Citro and Michael, 1995)

BLS: Research Experimental SPM Thresholds



Census Bureau: Resources and Poverty Statistics



SPM and Concepts

- Poverty Concept, based on NAS recommendations
 - "...proposed thresholds, although developed in somewhat different ways, reflect concept of budget for consumption needs" (NAS Report, 1995, pp. 66-67) ...
 - "Hence, ... resources should add to money income the value of near-money in-kind benefits that are intended to support consumption" (pp. 67)
- Measurement concept for thresholds assumed
 - Expenditures are a good proxy for consumption (with the exception of owner shelter)
- Interagency Technical Working Group (ITWG) placed value on:
 - Consistency between threshold and resource definitions in terms of poverty concept
 - ▶ Data availability, simplicity in estimation, stability of the measure over time, and ease in explaining the methodology



Threshold Estimation... thus far...

- Food, clothing, shelter, and utilities (*FCSU*) expenditures
- Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey data: 5 years of data
- FCSU "expenditures" in constant year dollars
- Estimation sample: Consumer Units (CUs) with 2 children
- Reference sample: 2 adults with 2 children (3-parameter equivalence scale applied to +2 children FCSU expenditures)
- Rank CUs by their FCSU "expenditures"
 - ▶ Identify 33rd percentile represented by 30th to 36th percentile range
 - ightharpoonup Produce means of FCSU and SU by housing status
 - Estimate thresholds by housing tenure
- Send to Census Bureau to derive other CU thresholds and make geographic adjustment



Housing Status Thresholds

- Housing Status Groups, j
 - Owners with mortgages
 - Owners without mortgages
 - Renters
- \blacksquare SPM Threshold_j

$$= (1.2*FCSU_A) - SU_A + SU_i$$

 $FCSU_A$, SU_A , SU_j are means within 30^{th} to 36^{th} percentile range of $FCSU_A$ for reference CUs



In addition to owner-occupied housing...

Expenditures ≠ Consumption

when in-kind benefits not accounted for in spending



This Research

Purpose

- ► Highlight poverty concept underlying SPM and issue of consistency
- Examine options to value consumption needs when data are missing
- Produce 2014 SPM thresholds that reflect the "consumption" of FCSU, with expection of owner-occupied housing

Contribution

- ► Improved SPM thresholds that more nearly reflect consumption value of FCSU basic needs
- Improve overall SPM to better evaluate impact of in-kind benefit programs considered in resources



Poverty Concept: Economic Deprivation

Thresholds represent "needs" Resources meet "needs"



"Consumption Needs" defined as

- Food
- **Clothing**
- Shelter
- **Utilities**
- + "a little bit more" for personal care, non-work related transportation, etc.



- **Poverty Concept:** deprivation based on comparison of resources and consumption "needs"
- Consumption "needs" proxied by spending (or expenditures)
 - NAS Panel assumption: "CE expenditures include housing assistance subsidies (rent and utilities)" ... and "benefits from food stamps and other meals provided free" (paraphrase of NAS Report, 1995, pp. 393-394)
 - ▶ BUT: CE expenditures only account for food stamps or SNAP

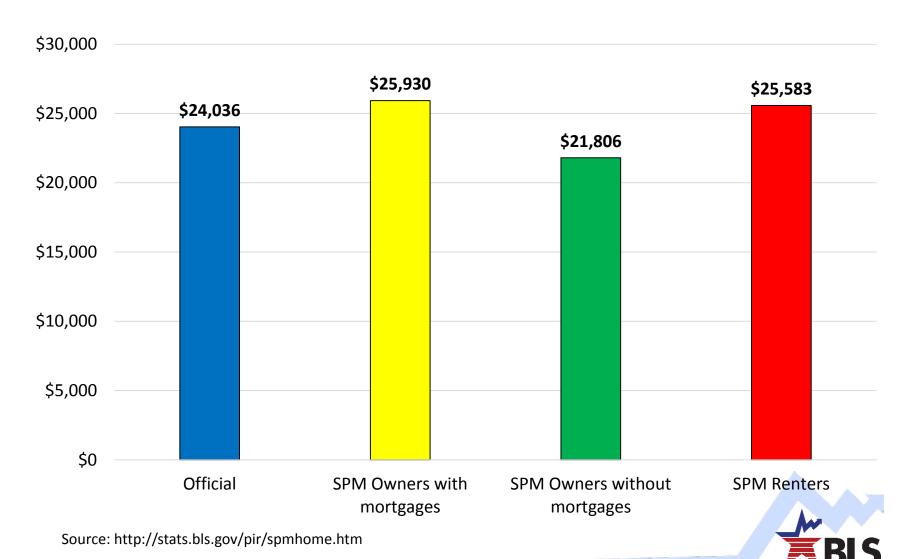


SPM Thresholds and Housing Tenure Shares (2005 – 2015)

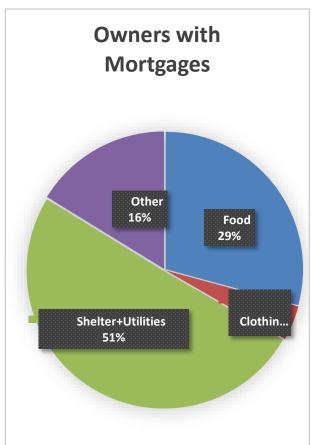
Two-Adult-Two-Child BLS-DPINR Research Experimental Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) Thresholds *											
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
OWNERS WITH MORTGAGES											
	\$21,064	\$22,010	\$22,772	\$24,259	\$24,450	\$25,018	\$25,703	\$25,784	\$25,639	\$25,844	\$25,930
S.E.	\$200	\$194	\$171	\$259	\$242	\$323	\$347	\$368	\$289	\$345	\$297
% Sample	0.483	0.472	0.5	0.493	0.489	0.486	0.459	0.439	0.438	0.415	0.371
OWNERS V	OWNERS WITHOUT MORTGAGES										
	\$17,643	\$18,301	\$19,206	\$20,386	\$20,298	\$20,590	\$21,175	\$21,400	\$21,397	\$21,380	\$21,806
S.E.	\$230	\$279	\$299	\$340	\$335	\$341	\$298	\$233	\$337	\$470	\$417
% Sample	0.118	0.102	0.086	0.082	0.084	0.093	0.11	0.12	0.115	0.108	0.119
RENTERS	RENTERS										
	\$20,641	\$21,278	\$22,418	\$23,472	\$23,874	\$24,391	\$25,222	\$25,105	\$25,144	\$25,460	\$25,583
S.E.	\$224	\$241	\$249	\$257	\$345	\$379	\$378	\$398	\$400	\$363	\$282
% Sample	0.399	0.426	0.414	0.425	0.426	0.421	0.431	0.442	0.447	0.476	0.51
* Based on out-of-pocket expenditures for food, clothing, shelter, and utilities. Shelter expenditures include those for mortgage principal payments.											

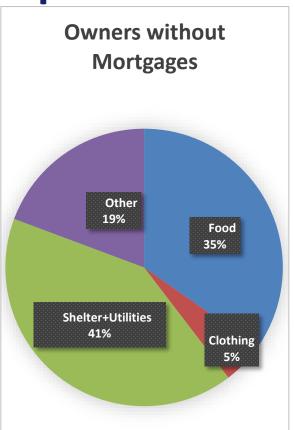


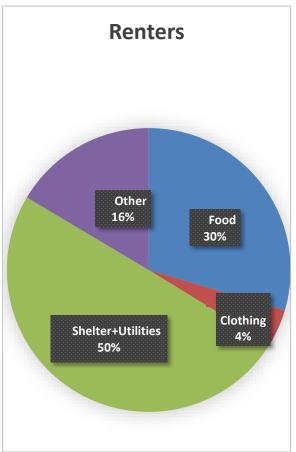
SPM (and Official) Thresholds for Two Adults with Two Children: 2015



Thresholds Distribution Shares by Component: 2015

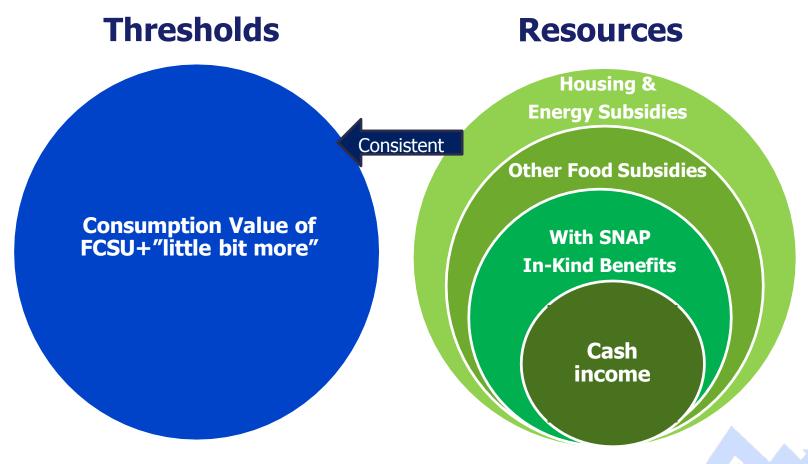






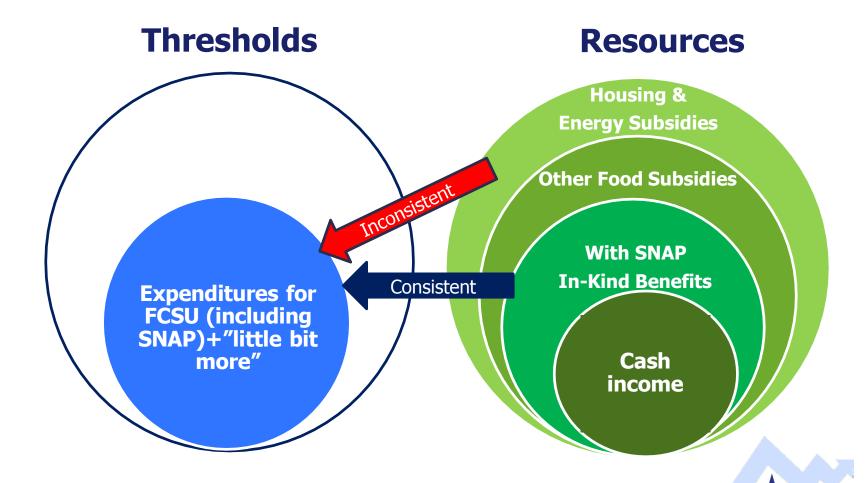
Send SPM thresholds and housing (shelter+utilities) shares to Census Bureau to derive other CU thresholds and make geographic adjustments

Consistency in Poverty Concept: Resources to Meet FCSU and Evaluate In-Kind

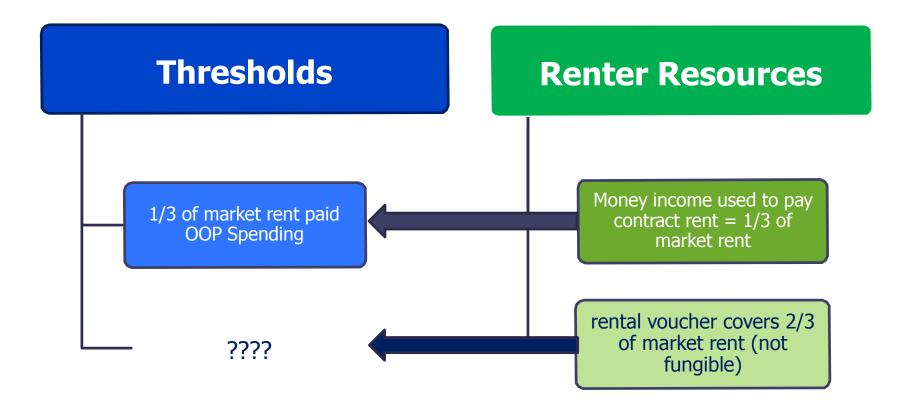


Missing Data Problem in Thresholds Leads to Inconsistency in Poverty Measure

(current measure)

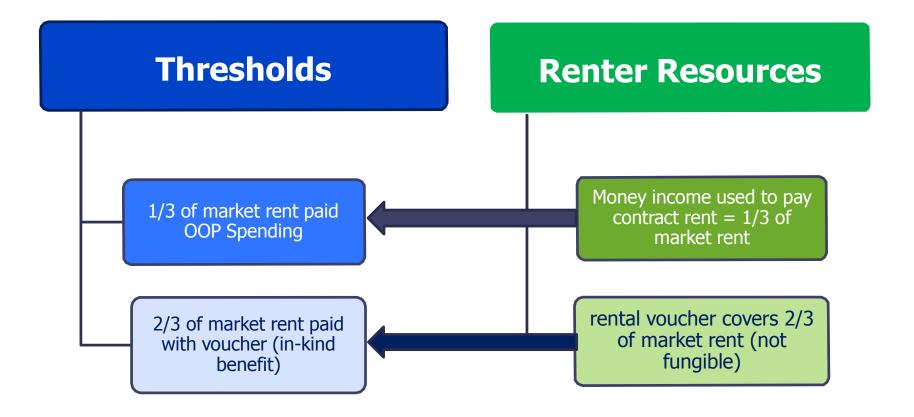


Example of Subsidized Renter: the Case of Rent Spending in Thresholds





Example of Subsidized Renter: Consumption Rent Value in Thresholds





Challenges in Using

U.S. Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey for SPM

- Expenditures collected: out-of-pocket
- Limited data on Rental Assistance Programs
 - Indicator variables for rented living quarters
 - Is this house a public housing project, that is, it is owned by a local housing authority or other local public agency? (CE variable: pub_hous)
 - Are your housing costs lower because the Federal, State, or local government is paying part of the cost? (CE variable: govtcost)
 - ► Total rent payments for each of last 3 months (do not include direct payments by local, state, or federal agencies)
 - Expenditures for utilities
- No data on programs but data on potential participants
 - National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
 - Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - Low income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- SNAP implicitly included in reported food expenditures



Acknowledged CE Measurement Issue: ITWG (2010) Guidelines for SPM Thresholds

> ITWG stated ...

"so far as possible with available data, the calculation of FCSU should include any in-kind benefits that are counted on the resource side for food, shelter, clothing and utilities. This is necessary for consistency of the threshold and resource definitions." (March 2010)

FCSU = sum (food, clothing, shelter, utilities) at micro-level

SPM Threshold = FCSU + little bit more

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Housing Subsidies

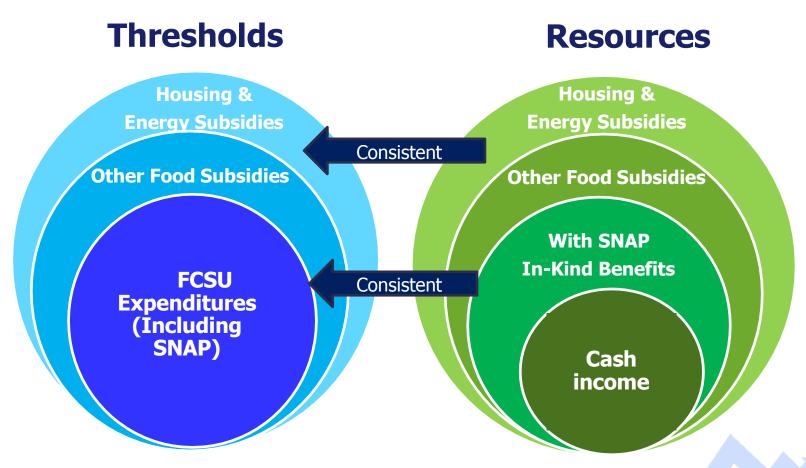
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)



ITWG Solution to CE Missing Data Problem



Options: Valuing "Needs" when Data Are Missing

All Imputed

Impute NSLP, WIC, LIHEAP using CPS recipiency; CE rental program reported participation Impute NSLP, WIC, LIHEAP; Rental Subsidy values (based on CE)

Impute "better" measured

Impute NSLP using CPS recipiency; CE rental program reported participation Impute NSLP; Rental Subsidy values (based on CE)

Rental Impute - CE

CE rental program reported participation Impute Rental Subsidy values (based on CE)

"No" Imputes

Limit population to CUs without benefits (exception NSPL paid)
Assumption: spending=consumption

Rental Impute - CE Data Only CE rental program reported participation
Impute Rental Subsidy values (based on CE imputed rents)



In-Kind Benefits, Expenditures, and Resources

Benefit	Form of Benefit	Value of Commodity or Service in CE Reported Expenditures?	SPM Resources Include
SNAP	EBT cash-value to CU	Yes, food expenditures= food consumption	yes
NSLP	Direct payment to school	No, < consumption	yes
WIC	Voucher paper or EBT for commodities to CU	No, < consumption	yes
LIHEAP	Direct payment to vendor	No, < consumption	yes
Rental Subsidies	Landlord accepts voucher or CU lives in public housing	No, < consumption	yes

EBT: Electronic benefit transfers Consumption value could be at recipient or market value



Impute for Missing In-Kind Benefit Program Participation: NSLP, WIC, & LIHEAP

- Impute recipiency to CE from U.S. Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC) reported recipiency
- Data
 - Household level data with household and member characteristics
 - Same years as in CE: collected 2011-2015 refers to 2010-2014
 - CPS ASEC public use data accessed from NBER
- Method
 - ► Treat CE as having missing data so combine CPS and CE into one data file to impute from CPS to CE
 - ► SAS Proc MI
 - Logistic regression method when the classification variable has binary response (assuming monotone missing pattern for classification variable)
 - Renter with subsidy (=1)
 - Renter without subsidy (=2)
 - Draw random uniform error between 0 and 1 to impute recipiency= 1 or = 2 for each observation

Impute for Missing NSLP, WIC, & LIHEAP Benefits

- NSLP: U.S. Department of Agriculture for 2010-2014
 - Average per school lunch payment rates x # school days by state
 - Over 48 contiguous states plus Hawaii and Alaska
 - Rates for schools in which less than 60% of lunches served were free or reduced price for all but District of Columbia Louisiana, Mississippi, and New Mexico (60% or more with free or reduced, USDEd)
 - Number of school days by state from Department of Education , Schools & Staffing Survey (2011-2012 school year)
 - Different values (same values for commodities' subsidy)
 - Free
 - Reduced
 - Student paid full price for lunch (=commodities subsidy)
- WIC: U.S. Department of Agriculture for 2010-2014
 - Monthly average values of monthly pre-rebate value per person, by state
 - ► Higher average infant rebate assigned to infants
- LIHEAP: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for 2010
 - Average annual benefit levels per household per state
 - Benefits assigned based reference months in CE
 - Heating (October to March) all states
 - Cooling (April to September) not all states offer this benefit



Impute Missing Market Rents for Subsidized Renters

- Need market rent for consumption of rental services
 - Market rent=(rent paid + rental subsidy)
 - Do not need rental subsidies for thresholds (produce for data comparison)
- Market values assigned to subsidized rental units, approaches:
 - 1. Imputed market rents from CE data using 2-stage regression model
 - Stage 1: Logit regression of subsidized renters versus non-subsidized renters (CU sample selection)
 - Stage 2: Market rents paid controlling for sample selection, rental unit characteristics, and geography
 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2010-2014 Fair Market Rents (FMRs) matched to CE by Census tract and number of bedrooms



RESULTS



Results

- U.S. Population Comparisons
 - Aggregates
 - Program participation
 - Annual average benefits
- SPM Threshold Estimation Sample (within FCSU 30th-36th percentiles of FCSU+IK) compared to all CUs
 - Aggregate shares
 - Shares of in-kind benefits by participate type
 - Distribution of CUs with in-kind benefits by housing tenure group
- Thresholds with and without in-kind benefits imputed



CE-Imputed In-Kind Benefits for U.S.: Aggregates

Data Source	NSLP	WIC ²	LIHEAP	Rent Subsidies	
				FMR	CE imputed rent
CE Imputed Participation TH2014 (5 years of data) with	\$12.3	\$3.6	\$1.1	\$29.8	\$27.5
	free=\$4.7 reduced=\$5.7 paid=\$1.9	children=\$2.1 infants=\$1.2 women=\$0.3			
CPS 2014	<i>\$12.0</i>	<i>\$3.4</i>	\$1.8	\$41.2	
USDA 2014 (9 months Jan May, SeptDec.)	\$10.4-\$10.51				
USDA Calendar Year 2014		\$6.1			
HHS FY2010 in 2014\$			\$3.2		
Heating			\$2.9		
Cooling			\$0.3		
HUD & USDA 2014				\$38.1	
HUD 2014					\$37.0
Public Housing					\$6.2
Voucher and other					\$30.9
USDA 2014					\$1.1

¹ Lower value assumes all schools less than 60% free/reduced lunch; higher value assumes all school 60% or higher free/reduced lunch ² WIC: CE estimates and USDA based on pre-rebate values for infant food; CPS values based on cost to USDA, not benefit value.



CE-Imputed In-Kind Benefits for U.S.: CU/HH Participation

Data Source	NSLP	WIC*	LIHEAP	Rent Subsidies	
				FMR	CE imputed rent
CE Imputed Participation (5 years of data) with	18.5%	2.9%	2.2%	3.4%	4.1%
	free=3.5% reduced=5.0% paid=10.1%	children=1.9% infants=0.5% women=0.6%			
CPS 2014	17.2%	3.1%	3.4%	4.1%	
HHS 2010**					
Heating			6.3%		
Cooling			0.8%		
HUD 2014					3.9%
Public Housing					0.9%
Voucher and other					3.1%
USDA 2014					0.2%



^{*}WIC: CE estimates based on pre-rebate values for infant food

^{**}HUD 2010 latest data availables; 34% of all housing units received heating and cooling assistance in FY2010.

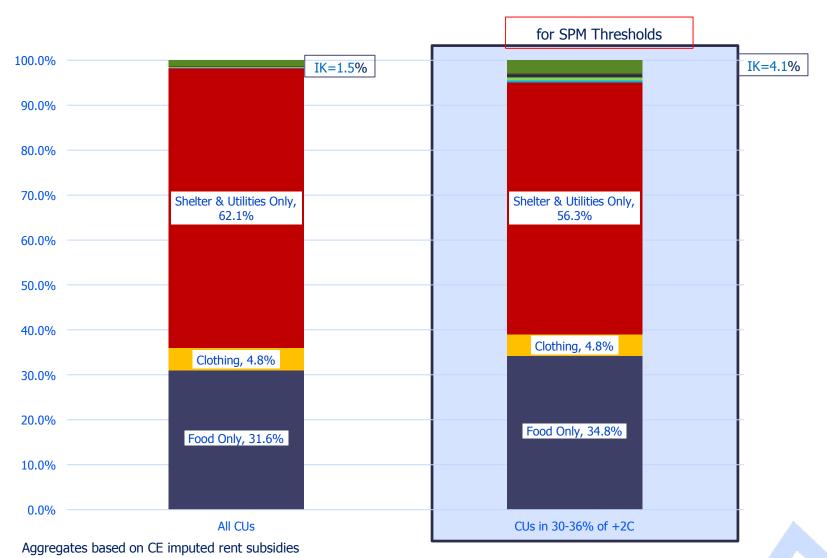
CE-Imputed In-Kind Benefits for U.S.: Annual Average Benefit per CU/HH

Data Source	NSLP	WIC*	LIHEAP	Rent Subsidies	
				FMR	CE imput ed rent
CE Imputed Participation (5 years of data) with	\$535	\$983	\$390	\$7,078	\$5,386
	free=\$1,098 reduced=\$912 paid=\$154	children=\$904 infants=\$2,052 women=\$400			
CPS 2014	<i>\$534</i>	<i>\$828</i>	\$395	\$7	7,643
HHS FY2010 in 2014\$					
Heating			\$406		
Cooling			\$332		
HUD 2014					\$7,992
Public Housing					\$5,784
Voucher and other					\$9,500
USDA 2014					\$4,148

*WIC: CE estimates based on pre-rebate values for infant food.



Percent of 2014 Aggregate Dollars Using 5 Years of CE Data

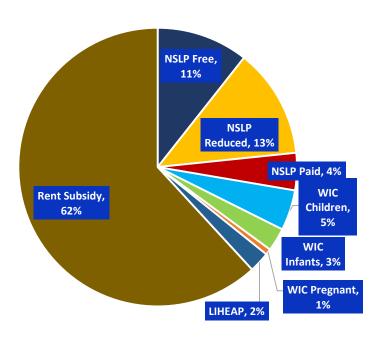




Aggregate Shares of In-kind Benefits by Participant Type

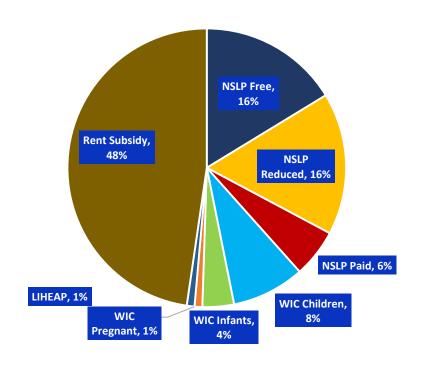
All CUs:

IK = 1.5% of Aggregate



CUs in 30-36th Percentile "2+2":

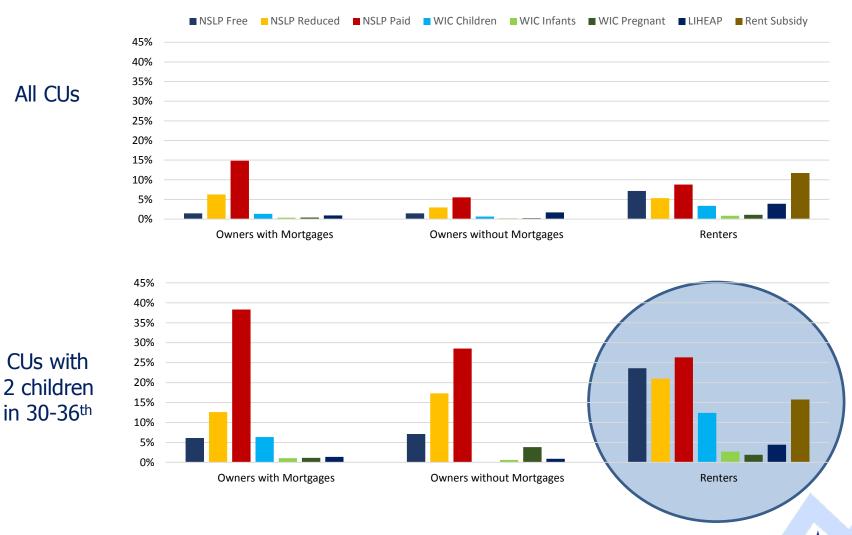
IK = 4.1% of Aggregate



Aggregates based on imputed rent subsidies



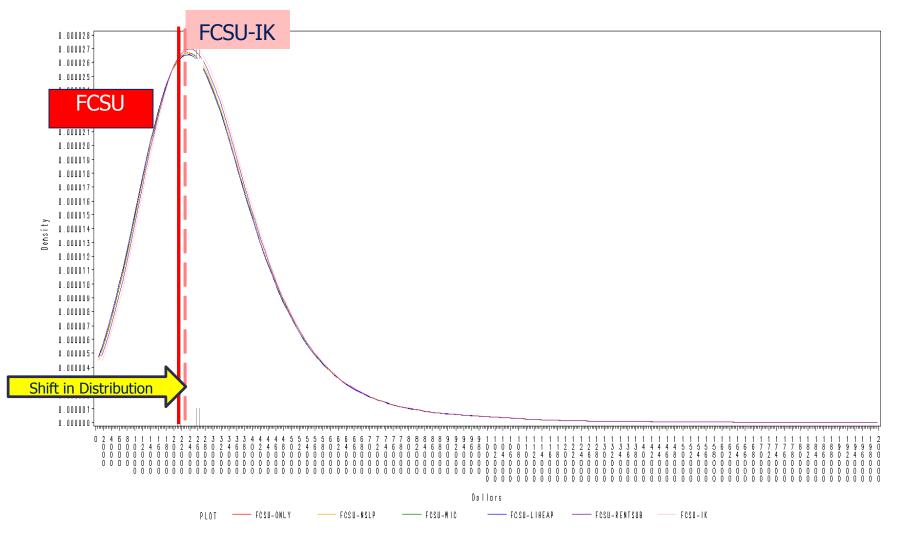
Distribution of CUs with In-kind Benefits





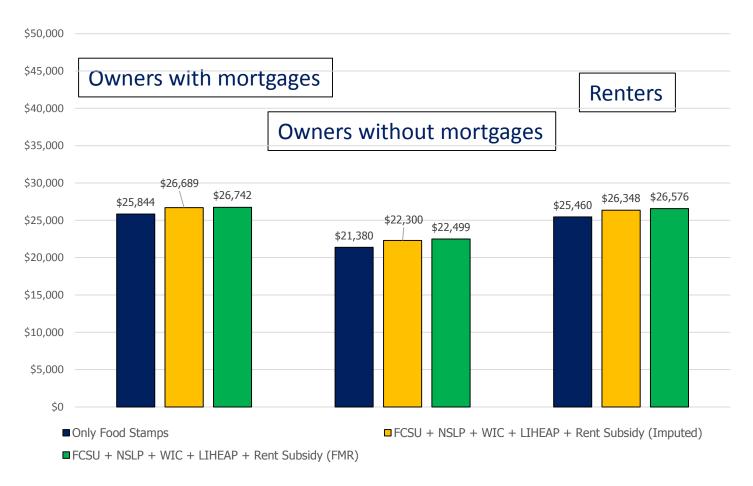
Going from FCSU to FCSU-IK in Thresholds

Density of FCSU and FCSU-IK for 2A+2C around "33rd" Percentile



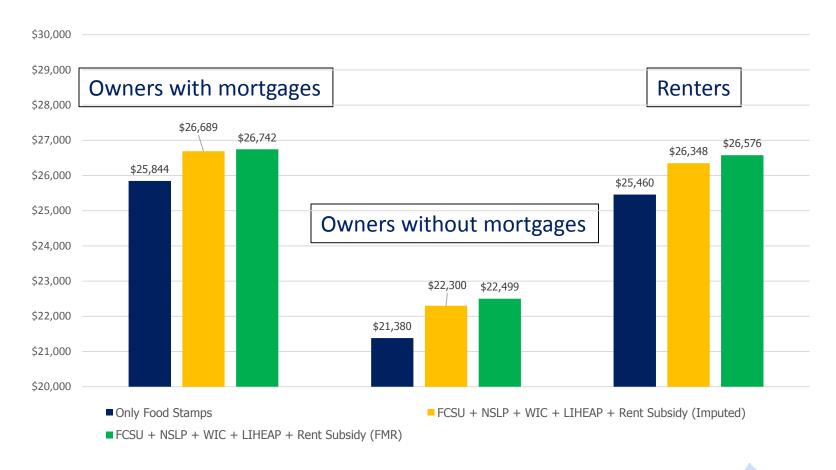


2014 SPM Thresholds with and without In-Kind Imputed Benefits: 2 Adults with 2 Children ("2A+2C")



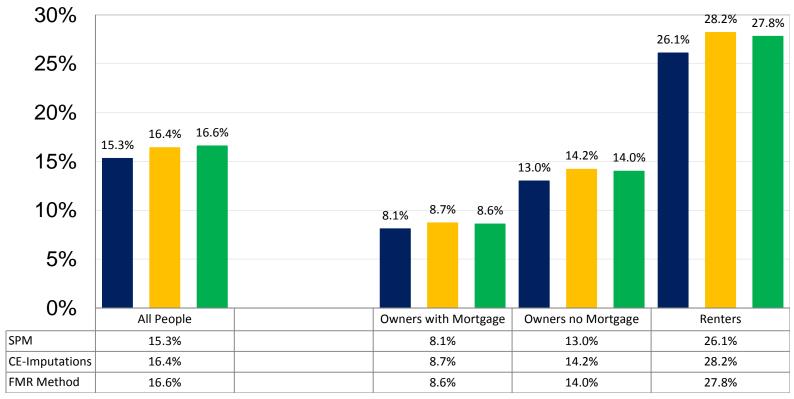


2014 SPM Thresholds with and without In-Kind Imputed Benefits: 2 Adults with 2 Children ("2A+2C")





2014 Poverty Rates for Thresholds with and without In-Kind Imputed Benefits



^{*}Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. www.census.gov/library/publications/2015/demo/p60-254.html



Summary

- Expenditures ≠ Consumption in the presence of in-kind benefits
- Examined impact of different options to deal with missing data in the CE, imputing participation (with exception of subsidized rental housing) and benefits
- Estimating consumption of FCSU, when benefits present, results in better measure of "needs"
- Questions remain
 - To what source should consumption values be compared?
 - Administrative data
 - CPS reports
 - Other CUs
 - Should two thresholds for renters be produced (renters with and renters without subsidies) like the treatment of owners?
 - Are benefit valuations sufficient to estimate consumption needs?



Conclusions

- 1. Spending ≠ Consumption in the presence of in-kind benefit participation
- Estimating consumption of FCSU, when benefits present, results in better measure of "needs"
 - Improved SPM thresholds that reflect values of FCSU "purchased by/made available to" CUs (consumption for all but owner-occupied housing)
 - Consistency in threshold and resource concepts: resources to meet "needs"
- 3. Imputing for missing data in CE for in-kind benefit recipients -- one approach to value consumption
- 4. Questions remain
 - To what should consumption values be targeted?
 - Administrative data
 - CPS statistics
- 5. Continue research to address missing data problem in the CE
 - Explore possibility of 2 renter thresholds (with and without subsidies)



Contact Information

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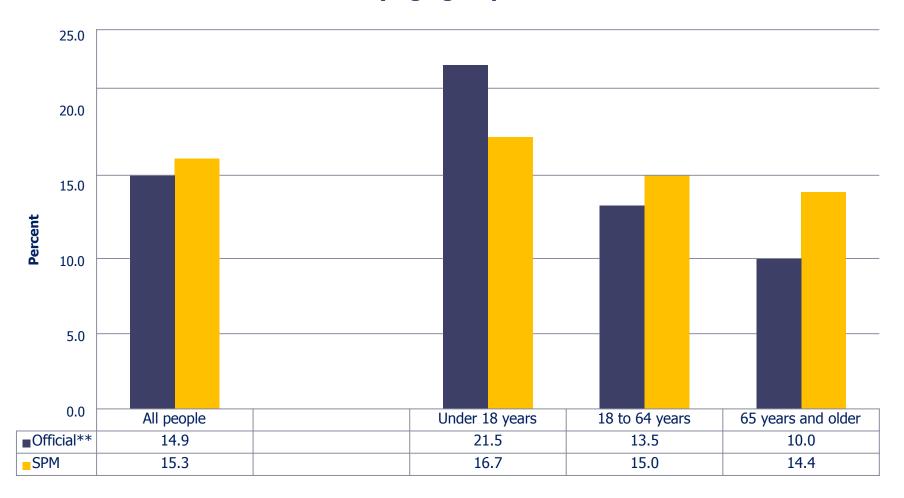
Division of Price and Index Number Research/
Office of Prices and Living Conditions
http://stats.bls.gov/pir/spmhome.htm
202-691-6576
garner.thesia@bls.gov



Extra Slides



Figure 1: Poverty rates using two measures for total population and by age group: 2014



^{**}Includes unrelated individuals under the age of 15. Source: Current Population Survey, 2015 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Southern Economics Association Annual Conference, November 2015.



Expenditures, In-Kind Benefits, and Resources

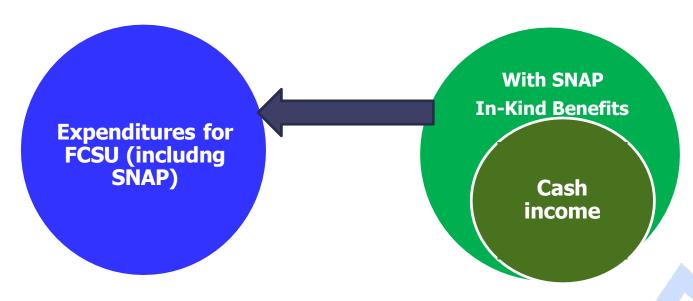
Benefit	Form of Benefit	Value of Commodity or Service in CE Reported Expenditures?	Commodity or Service Value in Thresholds	In Resources
SNAP	EBT cash-value to CU	yes, as food expenditures= full value	OOP	cash value
Housing Subsidies	Landlord accepts voucher or CU lives in public housing	< full value	OOP+imputed benefit	imputed benefit
NSLP	Direct payment to school	< full value	OOP+imputed benefit	imputed benefit
WIC	Voucher paper or EBT for commodities to CU (& cash value voucher for fruits and veggies to CU)	< full value yes, as food expenditure for WIC fruits and veggies	OOP+imputed benefit	imputed benefit (w/\$cash voucher)
LIHEAP	Direct payment to vendor (& check to CU to pay for "utilities" included in rent)	< full value Yes, as expenditures for LIHEAP utilities	OOP+imputed benefit	imputed benefit (w/\$check)



Solution: Thresholds and Resources Consistently Defined

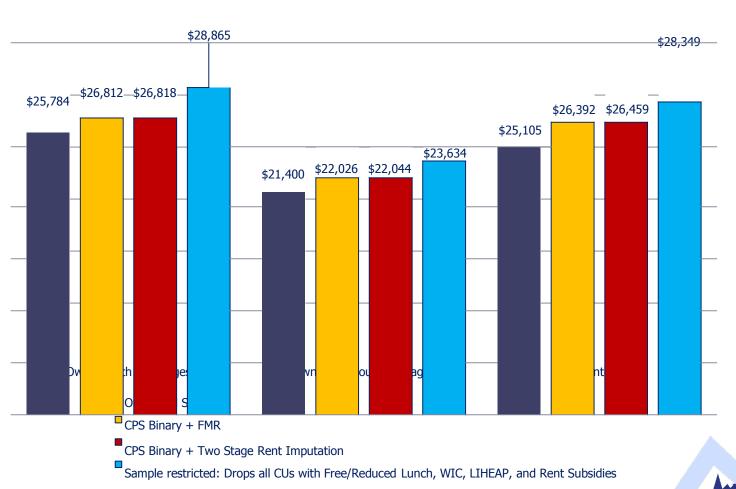
Thresholds

Resources





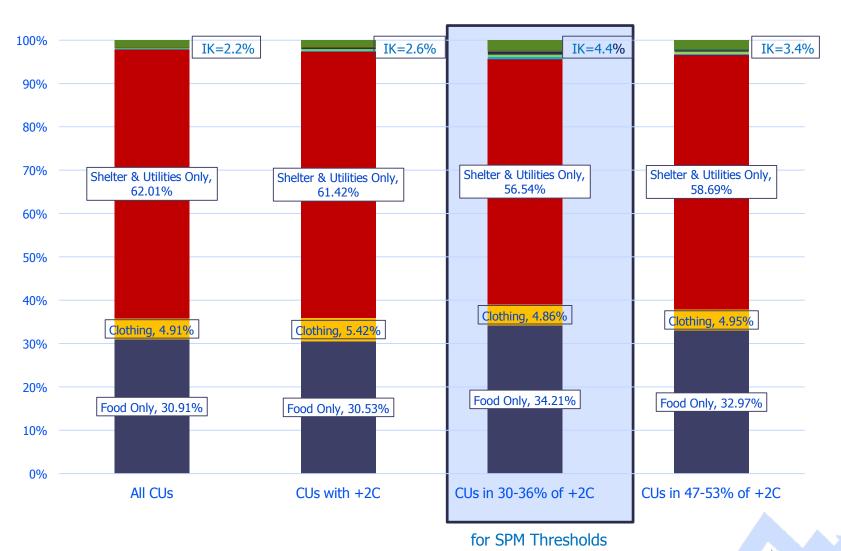
2012 Thresholds Based on Full Estimation Sample vs. Restricted by Benefit Non-participation: 2A+2C



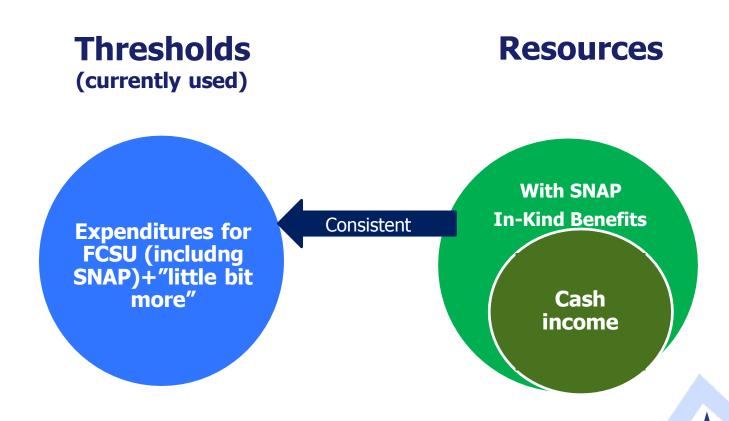




Percent of 2012 Aggregate Dollars Using 5 Years of CE Data



Consistency in Poverty Concept: Resources to Meet FCSU but only Evalulate SNAP Impact



Logistic Regression Method for Monotone Missing Data

For a binary variable Y_j with responses 1 and 2, a logistic regression model is fitted using observations with observed values for the imputed variable Y_j and its covariates $X_1, X_2, ..., X_K$

$$logit(\rho_j) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \ldots + \beta_k X_k$$

where X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_k are covariates for Y_i , $p_i = \Pr(R_i = 1 | X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_k)$, and $\log \operatorname{ic}(p) = \log(p/(1-p))$.

The fitted model includes the regression parameter estimates $\hat{\pmb{\beta}} = (\hat{\beta}_0, \hat{\beta}_1, \dots, \hat{\beta}_k)$ and the associated covariance matrix \mathbf{V}_j .

The following steps are used to generate imputed values for a binary variable Y_i with responses 1 and 2:

New parameters β_{*} = (β_{*0},β_{*1},...,β_{*(k)}) are drawn from the posterior predictive distribution of the parameters.

$$\hat{\pmb{\beta}}_{\tau} = \hat{\pmb{\beta}} + \mathbf{V}_{hj}^{\prime} \mathbf{Z}$$

where V'_{kj} is the upper triangular matrix in the Cholesky decomposition, $V_j = V'_{kj} V_{kj}$, and Z is a vector of k-1 independent random normal variates.

2. For an observation with missing Y_i and covariates x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k compute the expected probability that $x_i = 1$:

$$p_j = \frac{\exp(\mu_j)}{1 + \exp(\mu_i)}$$

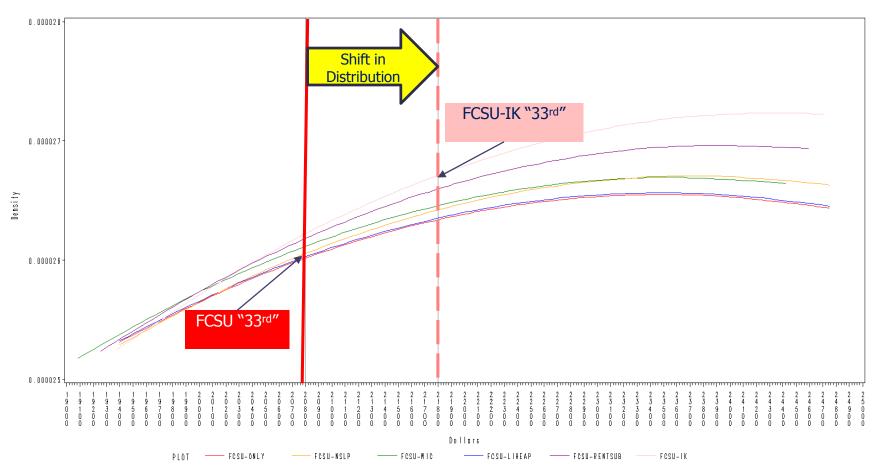
where $\mu_i = \beta_{v0} - \beta_{v'} x_{i'} + \beta_{v2} x_2 + \ldots + \beta_{v(k)} x_k$.

3. Draw a random uniform variate, u, between 0 and 1. If the value of u is less than p_j , impute $Y_j = 1$; otherwise impute $Y_j = 2$.

Reference: PROC MI: Logistic Regression Method for Monotone Missing Data: SAS/STAT® 9.2 User's Guide, Second Edition

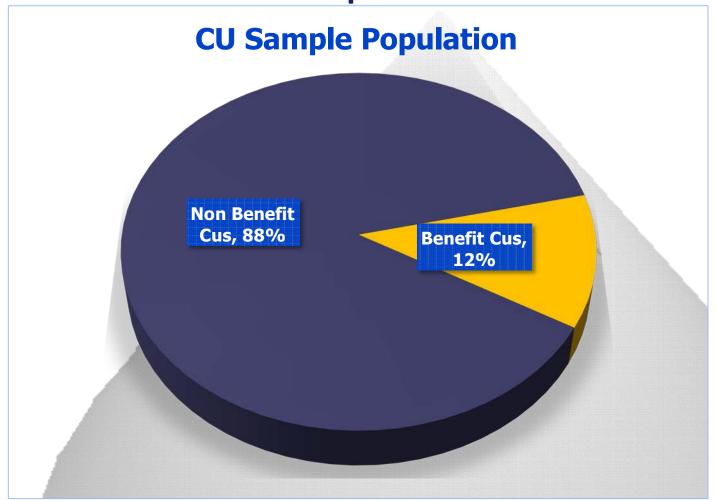


Density of FCSU and FCSU-IK for 2A+2C around the 33rd Percentile

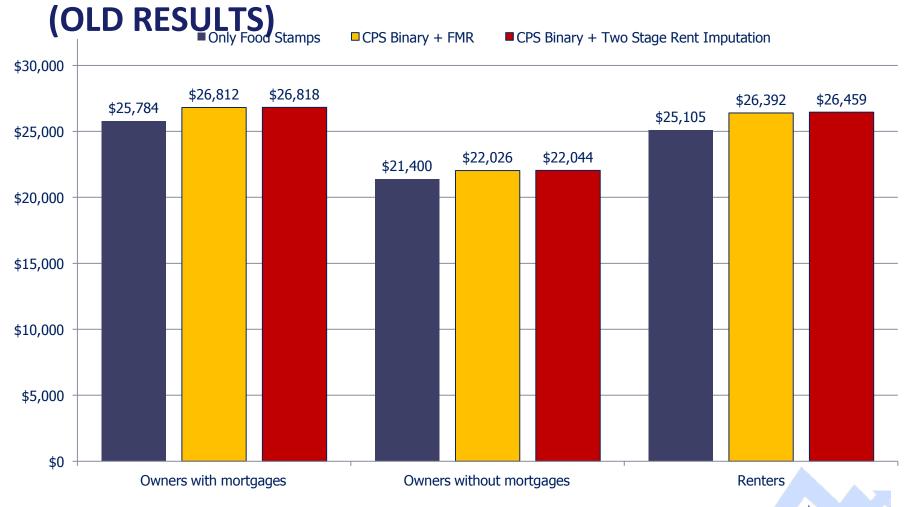




Which CU Population's Economic Behavior Reflects Consumption Needs?



2012 SPM Thresholds with and without In-Kind Imputed Benefits: 2 Adults with 2 Children ("2A+2C")





Aggregate Shares of In-kind Benefits by Participant Type



CUs in 30-36th Percentile "2+2": 4.9% of Aggregate

