

Expert meeting on measuring poverty and inequality

29-30 November 2018, Vienna, Austria

Topic E: Inclusion of social transfers in kind, housing wealth and imputed rent in the measurement of poverty

Improving the Accuracy of the Measurement of Poverty and Well-being: The Supplemental Poverty Measure for the United States

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Abstract

Even if we were able to agree on a bundle of basic needs that must be met before an individual can be considered not “in poverty”, there are questions about how these basic needs and the cost of these basic needs vary across households - by place of residence, family size, age, disability status, receipt of social transfers in kind, etc. Beginning in 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau began publishing the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), which extends the official poverty measure by taking account of many of the government programs designed to assist low-income families and individuals that are not included in the official measure. Based on a 1995 report by the National Academy of Sciences, the suggestions of an interagency technical working group and several decades of research, the SPM offers new approaches to many of these issues. My presentation will discuss the methodological choices underpinning the SPM with regards to how basic needs vary by place of residence, family size, age, disability status, health status and receipt of social transfers in kind.