

Directions for Determining High-Poverty Areas for WIOA Youth

Introduction

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I Youth Program contains a provision that allows for youth living in a high-poverty area to automatically meet the low-income eligibility criterion. This criterion applies to all in-school youth and some out-of-school youth in the WIOA Youth Program, and for youth in the Indian and Native American Supplemental Youth Services Program.

This document contains instructions for how to determine whether a youth lives in a high-poverty area for WIOA eligibility purposes. These instructions reference the layout of the Census Bureau's website as of July 2024. If you run into any problems with these instructions or if you have any questions, please email youth.services@dol.gov for technical assistance.

Background Information:

WIOA regulations at [20 CFR § 681.260](#) define high-poverty areas as a Census tract, a set of contiguous Census tracts, an American Indian Reservation, Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area ([as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau](#)), Alaska Native Village Statistical Area or Alaska Native Regional Corporation Area, Native Hawaiian Homeland Area, or other tribal land as defined by the Secretary in guidance or county that has a poverty rate of at least 25 percent as set every 5 years using American Community Survey 5-Year data. (Please note that this definition does not include cities, towns, or sets of non-contiguous Census tracts.)

For more information about the low-income WIOA Youth eligibility criterion, please review [Training and Employment Guidance Letter \(TEGL\) 21-16](#).

INDIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN SUPPLEMENTAL YOUTH SERVICES PROGRAM: The regulations at [20 CFR § 684.130](#) allow Indian and Native American Program grantees to use either the poverty rate of an area's total population or the poverty rate of an area's Indian and Native American population in determining whether the poverty rate of the area meets the 25 percent threshold.

For more information about the Indian and Native American Supplemental Youth Services Program poverty guidelines, please visit the [Youth Program Poverty Guidelines page on WorkforceGPS](#).

Step-by-Step Instructions for Determining High-Poverty Areas

These instructions are divided up by section. Use:

- **Section A** to identify the youth’s Census tract and county;
- **Section B** to prepare the Census Bureau’s website for use in Sections C and D;
- **Section C** to identify whether the youth lives in a high-poverty Census tract, county, American Indian Reservation, Oklahoma Tribal Statistical Area (OTSA), Alaska Native Village Statistical Area (ANVSA), Alaska Native Regional Corporation (ANRC), or Native Hawaiian Homeland area; and
- **Section D** to check whether the youth lives in a high-poverty set of contiguous Census tracts if the youth does not qualify as low-income under Section C.

Section A: Use a youth’s street address to determine their Census tract and county.

1. Go to: <https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/geocoder/geographies/address?form>
2. Type in the youth’s residential address in the designated boxes.
3. Leave the default selections under Benchmark and Vintage (i.e., “Public_AR_Current” and “Current_Current,” respectively).
4. Click **Get Results**.
5. Scroll down. The two relevant sections are **Counties** and **Census Tracts**. Under each of these sections, take note of the output next to “**NAME**.”

Census Tracts:
STATE CODE: 27
CENTLON: -093.3134539
GEOID: 27053003200
CENTLAT: +44.9879128
COUNTY CODE: 053
TRACT CODE: 003200
AREAWATER: 1933
AREALAND: 646049
NAME: Census Tract 32

Section B: Set up the data table on the Census Bureau’s website.

1. Go to: <https://data.census.gov/>
2. In the search box, type “S1701” and select **S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months** from the dropdown menu that appears. You will be redirected to the table.
3. **Identify the menu** at the top of the page that contains a variety of icons, including Notes, Geos, Topics, Codes, etc. These instructions will reference this as “the toolbar.” Depending on the size of your screen, some of the icons referenced in these instructions may be under “More Tools” in the toolbar.



4. **Change the data source** for the table to the most recent ACS 5-Year Estimates. One way to do this is to click the icon for **Dataset** in the toolbar. In the dropdown that appears, select **2022: ACS 5-Year Estimate Subject Tables** or the most recent ACS 5-Year Estimates dataset that is available.
5. [OPTIONAL] Click the icon for **Margin of Error** (which may be under “More Tools”) in the toolbar to deselect it. This will clean up the table by hiding columns that you do not need for this process.

Section C: Determine whether a youth lives in a high-poverty county, Census tract, American Indian Reservation, OTSA, ANVSA, ANRC, or Native Hawaiian Homeland Area.

Follow the instructions in this section to determine whether a youth qualifies as low-income based on whether they reside in a high-poverty area. You may check the poverty rates of multiple types of geographic areas permitted under [WIOA regulations](#) to find one that qualifies as high poverty. For instance, if you find that the youth’s residential county does not have a poverty rate of at least 25 percent, then you can check their Census tract. If the youth lives on an American Indian Reservation or in an OTSA, ANVSA, ANRC, or Native Hawaiian Homeland area, then you may also check the poverty rates of those geographic areas.

It does not matter the order in which you check the types of geographic areas. As long as one of the types of geographic areas permitted under WIOA regulations has a poverty rate of at least 25 percent, then the youth who lives in that geographic area qualifies as low-income.

1. Use the table that you set up in **Section B: S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months**. Confirm that your dataset is the most recent ACS 5-Year Estimates.

S1701 | Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months

American Community Survey | 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables

2. Select the **Geos** icon in the toolbar.



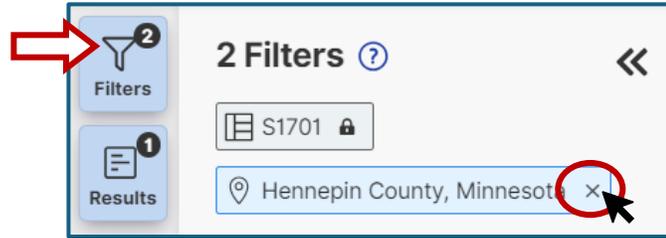
3. Select a type of geographic area in the dropdown to check. This may include:
 - a. County
 - b. Census Tract
 - c. Alaska Native Regional Corporation
 - d. American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area (Reservation or Statistical Entity Only)
 - e. American Indian Area/Alaska Native Area/Hawaiian Home Land

4. Navigate through the menu to select the youth’s residential geographic area.
5. Exit out of the Geos selector by clicking the **X** in the corner of the dropdown.
6. Confirm that your geographic area was correctly selected by checking that it is written in the header of the table (directly underneath the toolbar).
7. Identify the percent below poverty level for the geographic area. This is found in the top row of the table, “**Population for whom poverty status is determined,**” under the column header “**Percent below poverty level, Estimate**” for your selected geographic area.

Label	Hennepin County, Minnesota		
	Total	Below poverty level	Percent below poverty level
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
✓ Population for whom poverty status is determined	1,248,688	122,904	9.8%

8. If the percentage listed is **above 25%**, then the geographic area is considered to be high poverty under WIOA regulations. Document this for the youth’s file and you are done. If the percentage is 25% or below, move on to the next step.
9. If the percentage listed is **25% or below**, then you may repeat these steps in Section C to check other types of geographic areas. (For instance, if the youth’s county is not considered high poverty, you can check their Census tract, or vice versa.) Clear your existing geographic filter and go back to step #2 above to check another type of geographic area. To clear your geographic filters:

- a. Click the **Filters** icon on the far left of the screen.
- b. Select the **X** next to the geographic filter(s) you want to remove.
- c. Click the **Filters** icon again to hide the section.



If you have already repeated Section C and you have determined that the youth does not live in a high-poverty county, Census tract, American Indian Reservation, OTSA, ANVSA, ANRC, or Native Hawaiian Homeland area, then you can check if they live in a high-poverty set of contiguous Census tracts by following the instructions in [Section D](#) on the next page.

10. **FOR INDIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAM GRANTEES ONLY:** If the percentage listed for the **population for whom poverty status is determined** is **25% or below**, you may check the poverty level for the area’s American Indian and Alaska Native population alone. To do this:

- a. Scroll down in the table until you see the race and ethnicity breakdown under “RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN” in the left column.
- b. Find the “**Percent below poverty level, Estimate**” for the American Indian and Alaska Native population of your selected geographic area.

If the percentage below poverty level for the area’s American Indian and Alaska Native population alone is **above 25%**, then the youth qualifies as low income. Document this for the youth’s file and you are done.

If the percentage is **25% or below**, then you may repeat these steps in Section C to check other types of geographic areas. Clear your existing geographic filters and go back to step #2 above to check another type of geographic area.

If you have already repeated Section C and you have determined that the youth does not live in a high-poverty county, Census tract, American Indian Reservation, OTSA, ANVSA, ANRC, or Native Hawaiian Homeland area, then you can check if they live in a high-poverty set of contiguous Census tracts by following the instructions in [Section D](#) on the next page.

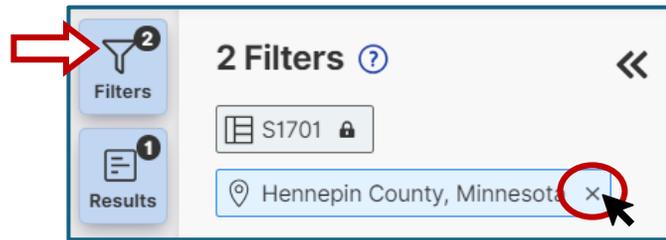
Section D: Identify a set of contiguous high-poverty Census tracts to determine eligibility or target recruitment and services.

A youth may be eligible for WIOA Youth services if they reside within a set of contiguous Census tracts that has a combined poverty rate of at least 25 percent. The instructions in this section describe how to identify a set of contiguous Census tracts and check their combined poverty rate.

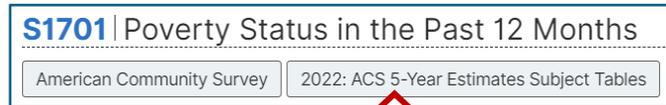
Identifying contiguous high-poverty Census tracts can also be helpful when creating and implementing a targeted recruitment strategy for WIOA programs.

1. Use the table that you set up in [Section B: S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months](#).
2. If applicable, clear any previously selected geographic filters you have from Section C.

- a. Click the **Filters** icon on the far left of the screen.
- b. Select the **X** next to the geographic filter(s) you want to remove.
- c. Click the **Filters** icon again to hide the section.



3. Confirm that the data source is the most recent ACS 5-Year Estimates by looking underneath the table title, **S1701: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months**.

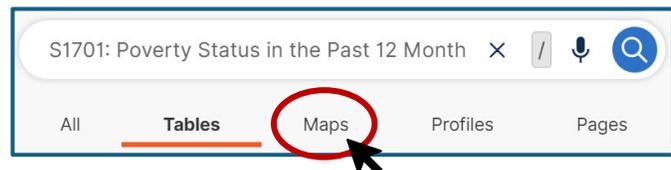


4. Select the **Geos** icon in the toolbar.
5. Select **Census Tract** from the dropdown and select the correct state, county, then Census tract for the youth. (See [Section A](#) if you need help identifying the youth's Census tract.)

If you see “No results found” here, your data source may be incorrectly set to the ACS 1-Year Estimates. Check that your data source is set to the most recent ACS 5-Year Estimates and try again.

6. Exit out of the Geos selector by clicking the **X** in the corner of the dropdown.

7. Select the **Maps** tab directly above the toolbar (in between “Tables” and “Profiles”). This option may also show up as an icon in the toolbar under “More Tools.”

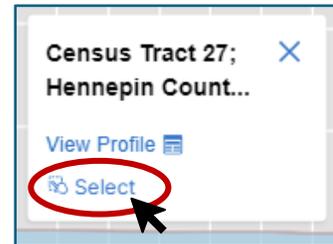


8. The map that appears should automatically be centered and zoomed in on the youth’s Census tract. The Census tract should be shaded, indicating that it is selected. (If this is not the case, check that your Geos are selected correctly and try again.)

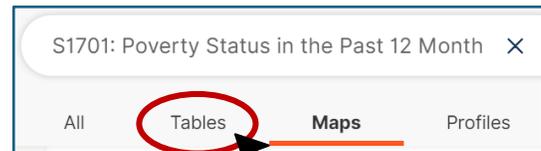
TIPS FOR USING THE MAP:

- ▶ To zoom in and out, you can use your mouse, trackpad, or touchscreen to scroll, or you can use the plus and minus buttons in the top right corner of the map.
- ▶ To move across the map, you can click the map and drag in any direction or use your arrow keys after you have selected the map.
- ▶ Adjust the color scheme of the map for improved visibility by selecting the **Colors** icon in the toolbar and selecting your preferred color scheme.

9. Select one or more additional Census tracts.
 - a. Click on Census tracts that are contiguous to (i.e., **share a border with**) the youth’s residential Census tract.
 - b. When you click on a Census tract, a small pop-up will appear. Click **Select** on the pop-up. The Census tract will become shaded indicating that it has been selected.
 - c. Click on the Census tract again to view the individual tract’s poverty rate or to deselect it by clicking **Deselect** in the pop-up.



10. Once you have selected one or more additional Census tracts and you are ready to check if their combined poverty rate is at least 25 percent, select **Tables** at the top of the screen between the search bar and the toolbar.



11. [OPTIONAL] Click the icon for **Margin of Error** (which may or may not be under “More Tools”) in the toolbar to deselect it. This will clean up the table by hiding columns that you do not need for this process.
12. Data for each Census tract that you selected on the map will appear in the table. The data you need are in the top row of the table: **Population for whom poverty status is determined**. You may need to scroll to the right to see all of the data.
13. Calculate the total poverty rate for the set of contiguous Census tracts. To do this:
 - a. Add together the **Total, Estimate** for all Census tracts.
 - b. Add together the number **Below poverty level, Estimate** for all Census tracts.
 - c. Divide the total below poverty level from part (b) by the total population from part (a) to find the proportion of the population that is below the poverty level. Multiply this number by 100 to get the percentage.

TIPS FOR CALCULATING THE TOTAL POVERTY RATE:

- ▶ Check out the last page of these instructions for [an example of how to calculate the combined poverty rate of a set of contiguous Census tracts](#).
- ▶ For this calculation, you can [download the Excel worksheet from WorkforceGPS](#), which will do this calculation for you based on the numbers you enter.
- ▶ If you would prefer to do the calculations yourself in Excel, you may download the Table from the Census website to Excel by selecting the **Excel** icon in the toolbar.

- 14.** If the calculated percentage is **above 25%**, the set of contiguous Census tracts is considered high poverty under WIOA. Document this by downloading the Table to Excel by clicking the **Excel** icon in the toolbar under “More Tools” and saving it to the youth’s file. At this point, you are done.
- 15.** If the calculated percentage is **25% or below**, you may continue reworking the set of contiguous Census tracts if you think there is another combination that will yield a total poverty rate that is above 25%. To return to the map and continue selecting and deselecting Census tracts, click the **Maps** tab between the search bar and the toolbar or select the icon under “More Tools” in the toolbar.

If you have already reworked the set of contiguous Census tracts and you do not find a combination that yields a combined poverty rate of at least 25%, then the youth does not qualify as living in a high-poverty area for WIOA.

- 16. FOR INDIAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAM GRANTEES ONLY:** If the percentage listed for the set of contiguous Census tracts is **25% or below**, you can check the poverty level for the area’s American Indian and Alaska Native population alone. To do this:
- a.** Scroll down in the table until you see the race and ethnicity breakdown under “RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN” in the left column.
 - b.** Use the **Total, Estimate and Below poverty level, Estimate** for the American Indian and Alaska Native alone population to calculate the combined poverty rate for the set of contiguous Census tracts.

If the percentage below poverty level for the area’s American Indian and Alaska Native population alone is **above 25%**, then the youth qualifies as low income. Document this for the youth’s file and you are done.

If the percentage is **25% or below**, you may continue reworking the set of contiguous Census tracts if you think there is another combination that will yield a total poverty rate that is above 25%. To return to the map and continue selecting and deselecting tracts, click the **Maps** tab between the search bar and the toolbar or select the icon under “More Tools” in the toolbar.

If you have already reworked the set of contiguous Census tracts and you do not find a combination that yields a combined poverty rate of at least 25%, then the youth does not qualify as living in a high-poverty area for WIOA.

Example: Calculating the Combined Poverty Rate for a Set of Contiguous Census Tracts

This is an example of how to calculate the combined poverty rate of a set of contiguous Census tracts using data for Census tract 27 and Census tract 32.

Label	Census Tract 27; Hennepin County; Minnesota			Census Tract 32; Hennepin County; Minnesota		
	Total	Below poverty l...	Percent belo...	Total	Below poverty l...	Percent belo...
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
✓ Population for whom poverty sta...	2,820	889	31.5%	2,136	482	22.6%

The table below is a recreation of the table in the image above:

Label	Census Tract 27, Total, Estimate	Census Tract 27, Below poverty level, Estimate	Census Tract 27, Percent below poverty level, Estimate	Census Tract 32, Total, Estimate	Census Tract 32, Below poverty level, Estimate	Census Tract 32, Percent below poverty level, Estimate
Population for whom poverty status is determined	2,820	889	31.5%	2,136	482	22.6%

- a. Add together the **Total, Estimate** for all Census tracts.

$$2,820 + 2,136 = 4,956$$

- b. Add together the number **Below poverty level, Estimate** for all Census tracts.

$$889 + 482 = 1,371$$

- c. Divide the total below poverty level from part (b) by the total population from part (a) to find the proportion of the population that is below the poverty level. Multiply this number by 100 to get the percentage.

$$1,371 / 4,956 = 0.277 \text{ or } 27.7\%$$

The total combined poverty rate for the set of two contiguous Census tracts in the table above is **27.7%**. Because this is greater than 25%, a youth who resides in Census tract 32 would qualify as living in a high poverty set of contiguous Census tracts under WIOA.