

Title: The 'meaning and measurement of poverty'

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Awarded: 2008

Abstract:

Debates about the meaning and measurement of poverty are very current in Britain and internationally. This study attempts to determine semi-normative food poverty lines for older people living in the United Kingdom, developing the ideas of Peter Townsend originally published in the *British Journal of Sociology* in 1954. A semi-normative approach to setting poverty lines, and household budgets, represents expert normative standards, such as standards of nutrition for health, while simultaneously respecting cultural context and everyday requirements for participation in society. Recent developments in national survey data collection now make it possible to test Townsend's idea for measuring poverty over half a century on, possibly for the first time. The inquiry uses a variety of statistical techniques including logistic regression and discriminant function analysis to determine the minimum level of (a) disposable household income and (b) non-housing expenditure at which nutritional requirements for good health have been met in the study sample of older persons living in private households. Three years of data (2002-05) from the *Expenditure and Food Survey* (EFS), a family budget survey, provides a combined sample of about 5,000 households, single persons and couples. The finding and poverty lines are critically discussed in relation to the national and international research literature on poverty measurement. A programme for further research and development has been suggested.