

PART A

**THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY
AND YOU**

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Part A, Chapter 1

The Current Population Survey

Topic	See Page
1.A Purpose of the Survey	A1-3
1.B Design of the Questionnaire	A1-3
1.C Uses of the Data	A1-3
1.D When the CPS is Conducted	A1-5
1.E Description of the Sample	A1-5
1.F General Labor Force Classification Groups	A1-7
1.G Paths Through the Instrument	A1-8

PART A, CHAPTER 1 THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

1.A PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The Census Bureau has been conducting the Current Population Survey (CPS) since 1940. This survey collects up-to-date facts about the number of Americans who are employed, unemployed, or not in the market for jobs. It is the main source of information on the characteristics of greatest importance in dealing with the unemployed. It provides information about their sex, race, age, how long they've been looking for work, and what their last jobs were.

Facts about the kind of work people are doing, how many hours they work, and how much they earn, are essential for judging the economic condition of the country.

1.B DESIGN OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

For over a decade, the CPS has made use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). This technology allows very complex skip patterns and other procedures which combine data collection and data input into a single operation. This technology also reduces respondent burden and allows us to do many things that are not possible in a paper and pencil environment. For example, by providing you with the previous month's job descriptions you only ask the respondent if anything has changed, thus reducing the burden on the respondent and the interviewer.

In January 2007, this computer assisted interviewing technology converted from a

DOS based environment, using CASES, to a Windows based environment, using Blaise. Both the CPS instrument and Case Management are now Windows based. This conversion to Windows allows us to utilize color and graphics in our new CPS Blaise instrument. In addition, the Windows based environment also makes navigation through the instrument much easier on the interviewer.

This technology, combined with your interviewing skills and knowledge of CPS concepts, help maintain CPS's position as the most highly regarded survey of labor market behavior in the world.

1.C USES OF THE DATA

CPS data are released within three weeks after you and other Census representatives collect them. The data are reported in a press release called the "Employment Situation," distributed by the Department of Labor. The commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reports the results to the Joint Economic Committee of the United States Congress. Within two weeks following the press release, the BLS publishes Employment and Earnings. This publication contains figures on employment and unemployment, the age and sex of the working population, the number employed in agricultural and nonagricultural industries, hours worked, duration of unemployment, and other current facts collected through the CPS. The Census Bureau collects labor force data while the BLS analyzes the data and publishes the results.

Other information is collected periodically in conjunction with this survey in supplements to the CPS.

Supplement topics:

1. Special employment

Measures the extent to which persons work during the year.

Measures "displaced workers" who have lost a job in the last three years for involuntary reasons.

2. Education

Measures the population's education level and the educational training level of employed workers and persons looking for work. It also measures the high school drop out rate.

3. Family data

Determines growth and characteristics of families.

4. Income

Obtains information on family and individual income and how it relates to age, occupation, and other characteristics.

5. Migration

Studies the extent of the nation's internal migration from one year to the next.

6. Community participation

Measures the level of participation from community members in volunteer activities and various political events.

7. Health insurance coverage

Measures Americans level of insurance coverage.

Measures the different ways insurance are obtained, e.g. through an employer, government sponsored, health insurance exchanges etc.

6. Other topics

Measures the extent of employment and unemployment among veterans by period of service.

Determines the availability of telephones.

Calculates the extent of heating, plumbing, and other facilities in vacant living quarters.

As stated earlier, the CPS provides labor force data for the nation. Those who use CPS data include: the Federal Government, State and local governments, the press, private businesses, labor groups, university and private researchers, and the public. The survey provides a vast amount of statistics that help describe the current state of the economy. When combined with other economic indicators, we can show the direction in which the economy is moving month by month.

Following are examples of some specific uses of CPS employment and unemployment data:

- Government may revise policies or develop new policies based on the levels of employment and unemployment.
- The Federal Government uses the data to allocate funds for states and local areas stricken by high unemployment. Billions

of dollars are allocated to states and local areas based in part on CPS findings.

- The Veterans Administration uses the data to help determine the employment level of veterans and what services veterans need.
- State governments use the data to improve the job opportunities for areas within states that are experiencing high unemployment.
- Private businesses use the data to project potential sales by area and to see the supply and demand for labor in certain areas. This can be useful in deciding where to build a new plant. They might want to build in an area with high unemployment since the supply of labor would be adequate.
- The public uses the data, as well as other economic indicators, to decide whether to purchase major items such as automobiles and houses. For example, a person considering buying a new house might decide to wait if the economic news is bad.

1.D WHEN THE CPS IS CONDUCTED

CPS Field Representatives and Interviewers conduct interviews each month at a sample of households throughout the United States. You conduct the CPS one week (interview week) and ask the labor force questions that refer to the previous week (reference /survey week). You will need to understand the difference between these two terms.

Interview Week. The week in which you conduct interviews. CPS interviews normally take place during the week (Sunday through Saturday) of the month containing the 19th day.

Reference Week/Survey Week.

The week for which you ask information from the respondent; it is sometimes referred to as "survey week." Reference week for the CPS will be the week (Sunday through Saturday) of the month containing the 12th day.

1.E DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

The CPS sample was redesigned after the 2010 Decennial Census. Cases belonging to this new sample are referred to as 2010 Sample Design cases. You will NOT have any of these cases before April 2014; you will be able to identify them by their control number. Page C1-18 of this manual provides more information on CPS control numbers. Differences between the 2010 Sample Design and the 2000 Sample Design are noted throughout this section.

1.E.1 How the Sample is Designed

The sample areas, called Primary Sampling Units (PSUs), are established as follows:

Sample PSUs

Census Bureau statisticians classified all the counties in the United States by certain characteristics, such as number of unemployed males and females, number of males and females in the civilian labor force, number of persons (15+) employed in agriculture and manufacturing, and rate of population growth. From each group of similar counties, they selected one county to represent that group. These representative counties (or combinations) are PSUs. Each PSU is assigned a unique 5-digit number, such as 99993 or 99726. Each PSU number is made up of a two digit state code and a three digit county code.

Sample selection and segments within each PSU:

Our current sample is drawn from the 2000 Census.

- Each selected PSU was divided into either small land areas or groups of addresses called segments.
- Each segment contains addresses which are assigned for interview in one or more samples. There are four types of segments: area, permit, unit and group quarters.

Consult your 11-8 Listing and Coverage Manual for more details on listing the various types of segments.

The 2010 Sample Design was drawn from the Master Address File (MAF), which contains the results of the 2010 Census operations and ongoing operations such as government listings and updates from surveys like the American Community Survey.

Units within each PSU are sampled from one of two lists of addresses (or “frames”) within that PSU. The two frames are the Unit frame (containing housing units within the PSU) and the Group Quarters frame (containing Group Quarters within the PSU). The 2010 Sample Design does not utilize segments.

Consult your 11-922: Field Representatives’ Guide to Locating Sample Addresses for more details on the Unit frame and Group Quarters frame. This manual is available in your laptop under the ‘Manuals’ folder.

Sample Units

For 2000 Sample Design cases, depending

on the type of segment, you will either interview at units already designated on your laptop, or you will list the units at a specific address. In the latter situation, you will also interview those units on designated lines of the listing sheet. In any case, the sample is of addresses, not persons or families.

Because the 2010 Sample Design does not utilize segments, no listing will be required for cases belonging to this sample. You will only interview at units already designated on your laptop for these cases. The units were selected from within the PSU. This can be a house, apartment, or any type of structure designated as a separate living area.

Sample of Newly Constructed Units

In areas where building permits are issued for new construction (Permit Areas), we select a sample of building permits issued since the 2000 Decennial Census. We assign these addresses as permit segments.

In places where no building permits are required (Non-Permit Areas), you list and interview newly constructed units in area segments.

There is NO sample of newly constructed units for the 2010 Sample Design and no listing will be required for cases belonging to this sample.

Sample of Group Quarters

Some units are in places with special living arrangements. A Group Quarter (GQ) is a type of living quarters where the residents share common facilities or receive authorized care or custody. A GQ is not a housing unit by definition. Examples of these would include dormitories and convents. A GQ segment is comprised of one or more GQs that were identified in 2000 census blocks originally screened for unit segments. GQs which were not

identified as such in the 2000 Decennial Census may appear in area, unit and permit segments also. However, we do not sample and interview GQs in permit segments.

For 2010 Sample Design cases, you will generally only encounter GQs in your GQ frame assignments. You know your case is a GQ frame assignment when the letters “GQ” appear in the Frame field of the Assignment tab. However, because GQs are not always identified properly on the MAF, you may encounter this type of living quarters when attempting to complete a Unit frame assignment. If you find a GQ at your assigned case’s address when attempting to complete a Unit frame assignment, refer to the 11-922: Field Representatives’ Guide to Locating Sample Addresses for further guidance.

1.E.2 How the Sample Works

Each month about 72,000 housing units are selected for interview. The CPS is based on about 60,000 of the 72,000 selected housing units. Approximately 50,000 interviews are completed.

Each sample unit is in sample for four consecutive months, dropped for eight months, and then interviewed for another four consecutive months. After these eight months in sample the household is out of the CPS. In this way sample units are "rotated" in and out of a sample.

1.F GENERAL LABOR FORCE CLASSIFICATION GROUPS

We classify all household members 15 years of age or older into three broad groupings: employed, unemployed, and not in the labor force.

The definitions and components of the three

labor force groupings are as follows:

Employed. Employed persons are those who are working at a paid job or business for at least one hour during the reference week, or are working at an unpaid family business for 15 or more hours during the reference week or who did not work last week, but held a job or owned a business from which they were temporarily absent during the reference week.

Unemployed. Unemployed persons are those individuals who did not work at all during the reference week, who were not absent from a job, but who actively looked for work during the past four weeks **and** were available for work during the reference week.

Persons who were on layoff from a job to which they expect to return and were available for work during the reference week are also classified as unemployed, even if they did not actively look for work.

Not in the Labor Force. This group consists of persons who are neither employed nor unemployed; that is, they did not work, they were not absent from a job, nor did they actively look for work within the past four weeks.

1.G PATHS THROUGH THE INSTRUMENT

The CPS instrument collects demographic data on all household members, but only collects labor force data for civilian household members who are 15 years of age or older. There are four distinct "paths" in the questionnaire: (1) the employed, at work path; (2) the employed, temporarily absent path; (3) the unemployed path; and (4) the not in labor force path. (The computer will determine which series of questions to ask based on your entries in each question.)

PATH 1: Employed, At Work

If the specified person did any paid work during the reference week, even for as little as one hour, or did 15 hours or more of unpaid work on a family farm or business, you ask for the number of hours worked and a description of the person's job. If you (or another interviewer) interviewed the person in the previous month, you will verify that the person still holds the same job.

PATH 2: Employed, Absent From Work

If the specified person did not work during the reference week, but held a job from which (s)he was absent, you ask for the same job information as you do for the persons who were at work last week.

PATH 3: Unemployed

If the specified person did not work and was not absent from a job, you find out if (s)he was on layoff from a job or if (s)he looked for work in the previous 4 weeks. If (s)he has looked for work and was not unemployed in the previous month you ask how long (s)he has been looking for work or on layoff. If the person was unemployed in the past month, the instrument automatically

updates the previous month's duration of unemployment and data relating to job search activities.

PATH 4: Not in the Labor Force

If the specified person did not work, was not absent from a job, and did not look for work in the previous four weeks, (s)he is not in the labor force. You ask whether (s)he has looked for work in the past 12 months, wants a job now, and was available for work in the reference week. During interview numbers 4 and 8, you also ask about the person's work history, why (s)he is not currently looking for work, and what his/her future intentions are regarding job search.