

2020 Household Pulse Survey User Notes

DATE: July 29, 2020

[Release Note](#)

The Household Pulse Survey (HPS) collection ended July 21, 2020. The Week 12 release (data collected between July 16-21) is the last collection period for first phase of the HPS. Today's release includes the Week 12 Detailed Tables and the Public Use Files for both Weeks 11 and 12.

The Census Bureau is working closely with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on receiving clearance to conduct the HPS for a second phase of data collection. We will announce the details of a possible Phase 2 as soon as they are available.

DATE: July 8, 2020

[Release Note on Table Sourcing Specification](#)

A sourcing specification for the Detailed Tables is now available on the [Technical Documentation](#) website of the Household Pulse Survey. Please see the *Household Pulse Survey Table Specification* for more detail. This sourcing spec includes the new and modified items as described in this User Note for June 17 and June 24, therefore this spec represents the tables from Week 7 on. Data users, however, can use this spec for all the other items from prior weeks as they have not changed since Week 1.

[Release Note on Updated Source and Accuracy Statements](#)

Updated Source and Accuracy Statements are available for Week 1 to Week 3. All Source and Accuracy Statements are available on the [Technical Documentation](#) website.

[Release Note on Detailed Tables](#)

The detailed tables were updated for the Food 2a, 2b, 3a, and 3b tables. For these four tables, the "Last month's mortgage or rent paid on time" reporting of 'Did not report' included respondents that were identified as being in universe for the question based on their housing tenure (Q39) but did not report their payment status (Q40); however, the 'Did not report' incorrectly omitted respondents that did not report their housing tenure (Q39) as well as not reporting their payment status (Q40).

This correction was made to all prior weeks of release (Weeks 1-8).

DATE: June 24, 2020

Release Note on New Questionnaire

1. The Household Pulse Survey (HPS) data collection instrument starting June 11, 2020 added three new questions (Q15, Q19, and Q20). The updated questionnaire is available on the HPS website <https://www.census.gov/householdpulsedata>.

Q15 If you, or anyone in your household, already received, or plan to receive a “stimulus payment,” that is the coronavirus related Economic Impact Payment from the Federal Government, did or will you use it: *Select only one answer.*

- Mostly to pay for expenses (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) (1)
- Mostly to pay off debt (car loans, student loans, credit cards) (2)
- Mostly to add to savings (3)
- Not applicable, I did not and do not expect to receive the stimulus payment (4)

Q19 What did, or will, you and your household spend the “stimulus payment” on? *Select all that apply.*

- Food (groceries, eating out, take out) (1)
- Clothing (clothing, accessories, shoes) (2)
- Household supplies and personal care products (3)
- Household items (TV, electronics, furniture, appliances) (4)
- Recreational goods (sports and fitness equipment, bicycles, toys, games) (5)
- Rent (6)
- Mortgage (scheduled or monthly) (7)
- Utilities and telecommunications (natural gas, electricity, cable, internet, cellphone) (8)
- Vehicle payments (scheduled or monthly) (9)
- Paying down credit card, student loans, or other debts (10)
- Charitable donations or giving to family members (11)
- Savings or investments (12)
- Other, specify (13) _____

Q20 Thinking about your experience in the **last 7 days**, which of the following did you use (or do you expect to use) to meet your spending needs? *Select all that apply.*

- Regular income sources like those received before the pandemic (1)
- Credit cards or loans (2)
- Money from savings or selling assets (3)
- Borrowing from friends or family (4)
- Unemployment insurance (UI) benefit payments (5)
- Stimulus (economic impact) payment (6)
- Money saved from deferred or forgiven payments [to meet your spending needs] (7)

DATE: June 17, 2020

Release Note on New Questionnaire and Detailed Tables

1. The Household Pulse Survey (HPS) data collection instrument starting June 4, 2020 added two new questions and modified one existing question. The updated questionnaire is available on the HPS website <https://www.census.gov/householdpulsedata>.
2. Due to two new question and one modified question, the detailed tables were updated to account for these changes.

New Questions

Q24a
Please indicate whether the next statement was often true, sometimes true, or never true in the **last 7 days** for the children living in your household who are under 18 years old.

"The children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food."

- Often true (1)
- Sometimes true (2)
- Never true (3)

Data from this additional question was included in the Food Sufficiency and Food Security Table 5.

Q48a During the **last 7 days**, about how many hours did the student(s) spend doing learning activities on their own? Do not include time spent with teachers or other household members. Enter the total number of hours for all students. *If none, enter 0.*

Data from this new question was included in the Education Table 1.

Modified Question

Q13 (RSNNOWRK) added a new answer category “I was concerned about getting or spreading coronavirus” (13), updated the question stems to be less redundant, and changed the wording for answer category “My employer experienced a reduction in business (including furlough) due to coronavirus pandemic” (8).

- Q13 What is your main reason for not working for pay or profit? *Select only one answer.*
I did not work because:
- I did not want to be employed at this time (1)
 - I am/was sick with coronavirus symptoms (2)
 - I am/was caring for someone with coronavirus symptoms (3)
 - I am/was caring for children not in school or daycare (4)
 - I am/was caring for an elderly person (5)
 - I was concerned about getting or spreading the coronavirus (13)
 - I am/was sick (not coronavirus related) or disabled (6)
 - I am retired (7)
 - My employer experienced a reduction in business (including furlough) due to coronavirus pandemic (8)
 - I am/was laid off due to coronavirus pandemic (9)
 - My employer closed temporarily due to the coronavirus pandemic (10)
 - My employer went out of business due to the coronavirus pandemic (11)
 - Other reason, please specify (12)
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Data from this modified question was included in Employment Table 3.

3. Food Tables 4 and 5
 - a. An error was discovered in these tables. While the totals for Food Tables 4 and 5 were correct, earlier tables had erroneously had the cross-tabulations of the “Households with food insufficiency in the last 7 days” with the “Reason for recent food insufficiency.”
 - b. This error was corrected and re-release on the Household Pulse Survey website.

DATE: June 3, 2020

[Release Note on Detailed Tables](#)

The detailed tables were updated with the following.

- 1) Housing Tables 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b
 - a. In Tables 1a and 2a, the extra column of “renter occupied” was removed. These tables show the “owner-occupied housing units.”
 - b. In Tables 1b and 2b, the extra column of “owner occupied” was removed. These tables show the “renter-occupied housing units.”
- 2) Food Tables 4 and 5
 - a. The universes for Food Tables 4 and 5 represent a subset of respondents who identify some level of food insufficiency.
 - b. Table 4 (*Recent Food Insufficiency for Households, by Prior Food Insufficiency, and Additional Food Related Household Characteristics*) shows counts of respondents limited to those reporting some level of current food insufficiency. Respondents reporting any response in the categories (2-Enough food, but not always the types wanted; 3-Sometimes not enough to eat; and 4-Often not enough to eat) are included in these tables along with respondents who are recorded as missing on their current food sufficiency.
 - c. Table 5 (*Recent Food Insufficiency for Households with Children, by Prior Food Insufficiency, and Additional Food Related Household Characteristics*) uses the same restrictions with the additional restriction to households with children under 18.

[Release Note on Metropolitan Statistical Areas](#)

The Household Pulse Survey detailed tables have data for the top 15 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (metro areas). For two of these metro areas, the New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area and the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area, respondents in states where the weighted count in that metro area and state that do not meet the disclosure guidelines, and have their metro area codes suppressed. The disclosure limit of 100,000 weighted cases was not met for West Virginia residents of the Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area, and their metro area identification was removed. For New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area, the

Pennsylvania geography, similarly, failed to meet this 100,000 weighted population threshold, and the metro area identification was removed for those respondents as well.

DATE: May 27, 2020

Technical Note on Percentages

The detailed tables released for the experimental Household Pulse Survey show frequency counts rather than percentages. Showing the frequency counts allows data users to see the count of cases for each topic and variable that are in each response category and in the 'Did Not Report' category. This 'Did Not Report' category is not a commonly used data category in U.S. Census Bureau tables. Most survey programs review these missing data, and statistically assign them to one of the other response categories based on numerous characteristics.

In these tables, we recommend choosing the numerators and denominators for your percentages carefully, so that you deliberately include or exclude these counts with missing data. In the absence of external information, the percentage based on only the responding cases will most closely match a percentage that would result from statistical imputation. You will calculate lower percentages if you include the missing data in your denominator, but not in your numerator.

Microdata will be available by FTP in the future. Users may develop statistical imputations for the missing data, but should ensure that they continue to be deliberate and transparent with their handling of these data.

Release Note

Since the initial release of the 2020 Household Pulse Survey on May 20, 2020, the detailed tables were updated with the following.

- 1) Tables are now available for Week 1 and Week 2 releases for the nation, each of the fifty states, plus Washington, D.C., and the fifteen largest metropolitan areas.
- 2) An error was discovered in presenting data for where the respondent got free groceries or free meals (variable WHEREFREE1 to WHEREFREE7). This error affected the Food Sufficiency and Food Security Tables 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4, and 5. These tables were updated for this release.
- 3) An error was discovered in Housing Tables 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b.
 - a. In Tables 1a and 2a, the previous header of "Did not respond to tenure or renter occupied" actually showed data for those who did not respond to tenure. For this release, the header was updated to accurately show "Did not respond to tenure." A new column was added to show those who were in the universe of renter occupied in this release.
 - b. In Tables 1b and 2b, the previous header of "Did not respond to tenure or owner occupied" actually showed data for those who did not respond to tenure. For this

release, the header was updated to accurately show “Did not respond to tenure.” A new column was added to show whose who were in the universe of owner occupied in this release.

- 4) Select tables have standard errors included for calculated means. The tables released on May 20, 2020 had these standard errors listed incorrectly as standard deviations. The tables Education Table 1 and Food Sufficiency and Food Security Table 1 were updated correctly to say standard errors. Food Sufficiency and Food Security Tables 4 and 5 still say standard deviation, however, these are standard errors. The mistake will be updated in the next release.