

Survey of Program Dynamics

The SPD Survey Content

This chapter provides an overview of the SPD content. Tables at the end of the chapter summarize the differences in content among the three components of the longitudinal data collection: the 1992/1993 SIPP, the 1997 Bridge Survey, and the 1998-2002 SPD.

The 1992/1993 SIPP

For the 1984 to 1993 Panels, SIPP data were collected by means of paper and pencil instruments that consisted of a control card and a questionnaire. Basic demographic characteristics and other classification variables associated with a household and its members were recorded on the control card in the initial interviews for a panel and updated in each subsequent wave. The survey questionnaire consisted of core questions, which were repeated at each wave, and topical modules, which included questions on selected topics. The topical modules varied from wave to wave. The main topics covered by the core questions were labor force participation and sources and amounts of income. Information for most items in these categories was obtained at every interview for each of the four months included in the interview reference period.

SIPP distinguishes between two kinds of topical modules: fixed and variable. Fixed topical modules are modules that are included in one or more waves during the life of each panel to augment the core data. They include, for example, modules on annual income, retirement accounts, income taxes, educational financing and enrollment, personal history, and wealth. Variable topical modules, which are designed to satisfy the special programmatic needs of other federal agencies, are not necessarily repeated from one panel to the next. Some topics that have been covered are child care arrangements, child support agreements, support for nonhousehold members, long-term care, pension plan coverage, housing costs, and energy usage. Variable modules were usually included in Waves 3 and 6 while fixed modules appeared in other waves.

More detailed information on the SIPP content is available in the SIPP Users' Guide.

The 1997 SPD "Bridge" Survey

The 1997 SPD used a slightly modified version of the March 1997 Current Population Survey (CPS), which asks questions about employment and income in the past year. The 1997 SPD Bridge Survey also included a few questions not collected in 1995 from the 1992 SIPP panel, questions about the receipt of public assistance.

The 1998-2002 SPD

The 1998-2002 SPD uses the core SPD questionnaire (described below) and two self-administered modules: one set of questions for adults, focusing on marital relationship, marital conflict, and parental depression; the other, a completely separate questionnaire for adolescents (administered only with parental consent), focusing on family conflict, vocational goals, educational aspirations, crime-related violence, substance abuse, and sexual activity.

The SPD core instrument included retrospective questions for all people aged 15 years and over, focusing on such topics as jobs, income, and program participation. Additional questions focusing on children in the household gathered information on school status, activities at home, child care, health care, and child support.

For the 1999 SPD, the core questions were expanded to include the following topics: new questions asked about independence, assets, vehicle operating expenses, substance abuse, health care utilization while uninsured, and food expenditures. In addition to the core questions, the 1999 SPD asked questions on Extended Measures of Children's Well-Being: new questions asked about positive behavior and social competence, family routines, and conflict between parents.

In addition to the core questions, the 2000 SPD employed the Children's Residential History Calendar topical module, which asked about with whom children have lived and the reasons for any changes in living arrangements.

In addition to the core questions, the 2001 SPD used the same Adolescent Self-Administered Questionnaire employed in 1998.

The 2002 SPD will use the core SPD instrument, plus additional questions on Extended Measures of Children's Well-Being.

Core Questions for Adults

Household Roster and Coverage

The SPD tracks movements into and out of family groups. The household roster and coverage questions establish the household composition and the relationships of those who live with the original sample members. They obtain important information about the household members for future reference in the interview and for future tabulations.

Employment and Earnings

For each person age 15 or over in the household, the SPD collects a detailed account of work-related activities in the past calendar year, including weeks worked, weeks on layoff, and weeks spent looking for work, as well as whether or not they are currently working. In addition, the SPD collects detailed employment data, for up to four jobs in the previous calendar year including annual earnings from each job.

Income Sources

These questions are similar to those from SIPP. An inventory consists of all the types of income received during the previous calendar year for all household members age 15 and older. Household-level screening questions determine if anyone in the household received income from specific sources. If so, the FR asks who received that type. This section also contains questions about cash assistance for low-income households. Cash assistance questions comparable to these have also been added to the Current Population Survey instrument.

Dependent Interviewing

Questions in the "Independent/Dependent Comparison" section of the questionnaire are asked about each person 15 years of age and older. If a household member reported in a prior interview the receipt of a particular type of income, this section seeks to confirm if the household member received the same type of income in the previous year. This series of questions also provides an option for replacing incorrect data reported in the prior interview.

Amounts

This section of the questionnaire is designed to obtain the amount of income received during the reference period from each income source reported in the previous section, and the number of months it was received for selected income. This section also contains cash assistance questions for low-income households. Cash assistance questions comparable to these are also included in the Current Population Survey instrument.

Eligibility and Assets

Selected questions about assets and debts are included because they are critical to measuring program eligibility. These assets include the value of homes, cars, stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. Other payments critical to eligibility include medical expenses, child support, and energy costs. Some items, such as stocks and bonds are covered in previous sections on income sources and amounts. These questions are asked of everyone—to measure changes that occur among previous program participants, and to obtain a picture of the rest of the population with which to compare their answers.

Vehicle Operating Expenses

The purpose of these questions is to find out what types of transportation are available to respondents, which type is used, how much is spent on work-related travel, and whether transportation issues are limiting respondents' employment or training opportunities.

Educational Enrollment

The educational enrollment part of the SPD instrument collects information on the enrollment of people age 18 and older in regular school, including post-secondary vocational, technical, or business school. People 15 to 17 will be included in the children's

school enrollment questions since we believe that the children's series of questions is more appropriate for that age group.

The focus of this section is on basic education and general skills development, and will track the progress of adults toward receiving high school or high school equivalency degrees as well as college and graduate degrees.

Work Training

The work training part of the SPD instrument is intended to collect information on the training that people age 15 and older have received either to help them find a job or to get a better job. This training may focus on the following:

1. Basic academic preparation—e.g., reading skills, math skills or preparation for high school equivalency (GED).
2. Training to learn a specific job skill—e.g., word processing, auto mechanics.
3. Other training to improve job skills or learn a new job.
4. Job search assistance—placement service.
5. Job readiness training—e.g., resume writing, interviewing.
6. Unpaid work experience or community service work.

The first question, on basic academic preparation, is asked only of people whose current educational attainment is below the associate degree level. Questions 2, 5, and 6 are asked only of those who have received or applied for public assistance in the past year. The two remaining questions (3 and 4) are asked of all respondents.

Work training is not basic education of the sort one would receive in a high school or college. Nor is it the general skill development that one would expect to receive in a post-secondary vocational, technical, or business school. These are covered in the adult Educational Enrollment section of the instrument.

The main differentiating factor between training and education is the nature of the credential awarded. Training is strictly vocational in nature. Any award or certificate for completion of the program is purely incidental to the purpose of training for employment. Only in rare instances would training count in a program in regular school leading to a degree.

In some instances the training programs focus on the job search process itself. These programs may focus on résumé preparation, interviewing skills, or organizing one's schedule or life's circumstances to allow work.

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse can prevent people from getting and keeping jobs. States can deny benefits to people who use drugs. Therefore, it is necessary to ask about substance usage when talking about welfare. These questions are only asked of adults 18 or older. All answers are respondent-defined.

Functional Limitation and Disability

The ability to see, hear, carry items, walk short distances, and perform other activities may affect employment status and the ability to live independently. These questions are condensed versions of a similar series included as topical modules in the Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) surveys.

Health Care Utilization

These questions are included to measure changes in the U.S. health care system and how the changes affect accessibility to health services. As the health care system of the U.S. changes, an important goal of the SPD will be to chart how these changes affect coverage, health utilization, and outcomes. To that extent, we need to know how individuals are accessing the health care system.

Health Insurance

Questions on health insurance are condensed versions of a similar series included in the SIPP core. These questions are included to measure changes in the U.S. health care system and how the changes affect accessibility to government health insurance such as Medicaid and Medicare as well as private or employer-provided insurance. The first series of questions are about health insurance coverage for the previous year, with a follow-up about current health coverage.

Health Care Utilization While Uninsured

As the health care system in the United States evolves, an important goal of the SPD will be to chart how these changes affect coverage, health care utilization, and outcomes. It is therefore important to know to what extent individuals without health care coverage are able to access health care services.

Food Expenditures and Food Security

This series of questions is taken from the USDA-sponsored Food Security Supplement to the CPS. It is intended to measure the subjective experience of hunger. The questions are used as a scale to measure the severity of hunger in a household. Food expenditure questions ask how people spend their money on food. The introductory food security question serves as a screening question—those with higher incomes who have "enough and the kinds of food" skip to the next section of the instrument.

The subsequent scale incorporates:

- increasing food insecurity
- anxiety
- perceptions
- incidents of reduced food intake in adults
- incidents of reduced food intake in children.

Core Questions for Children

Children's School Enrollment

These questions track children's progress through and out of school over time. A critical element of the well-being of children is their enrollment, at an appropriate age, in school and their normal progress through the educational system. School enrollment includes both preschool and regular school, kindergarten through twelfth grade. The former includes both Federally-funded Head Start and other pre-kindergarten programs with a substantial educational or school readiness component.

Children's Enrichment Activities

This section of the SPD instrument is intended to collect information on activities, in addition to schooling, which promote the development of children. Some of these activities are school-related functions such as sports and clubs. Others are home or community activities that the child might do independently or jointly with parents or other household members.

Children's Disability

Parents of children with disabilities often have special financial burdens, and there is concern about access to educational services. This series of questions is asked for children 14 and under. The FR interviews the designated parent or guardian of the child.

Children's Health Care Utilization

This series of questions is asked for children 14 and under, to record how children are accessing the health care system. The FR interviews the designated parent or guardian of the child.

Mother's Work Schedule

The SPD asks about activities associated with work, school, training, and looking for work for the designated parent to determine the demands for child care on the family for each child.

Child Care

The SPD collects information on child care arrangements for working and non-working parents: what child care arrangements parents make, especially while they are working, looking for work, going to school, or attending work training; how much parents pay for child care and whether these costs are paid in part or in full by the government, an employer, or someone else; and how often parents miss work or leave children to care for the children themselves because regular child care arrangements are not available.

Child Support Agreement

These questions are asked of households containing children no older than 20 years of age. One aspect of welfare reform is improved compliance with child support agreements. The amount of child support received by a parent or legal guardian is an important factor in determining the economic well-being of children. Also, the child support questions asked in this section will allow users of SPD data to examine the evolving system of child support awards and enforcement in the U.S.

Contact with Absent Parent

An objective of welfare reform is to encourage closer family ties and greater responsibility of parents for their children. Absent parents may participate in and contribute to their children's well-being by providing economic resources or by spending time with them, or both. These questions measure the amount of time absent parents spend with their children.

Adult Self-Administered Questions

Marital Relationship and Conflict

Marital relationships may be affected by changes in welfare reform policies, (e.g., a spouse's finding a job may improve the relationship if household income rises, or it may cause the relationship to decline if child care problems are exacerbated). It is also evident from prior research that the frequency and level of inter-parental conflict are related to children's adjustment.

Depression Scale

This section is about feelings the respondent may have experienced over the past 30 days. These questions explore the respondents' feelings about themselves and how they perceive their lives.

Self-Administered Adolescent Questionnaire

Adolescents between the ages of 12-17 are interviewed directly, because their knowledge of their own behavior often differs radically from parents' or guardians' knowledge of their children's behavior and attitudes. These questions are administered by audio-cassette with the adolescent filling in an answer booklet. The questionnaire takes about 20-30 minutes. The answer booklet contains only the answers to the questions and not the questions themselves in order to protect the adolescent's privacy.

Children's Residential History Calendar

The Residential History module collects information about the childhood residential histories of people who were recorded as children (18 years of age and younger) in Wave 1 of the 1992/1993 SIPP or on a subsequent SPD roster. The module is designed to measure variability in the living arrangements of children. To gauge the disruptions in children's

lives, this module measures all instances of more than three months in which children lived away from their biological mothers or biological fathers, and all instances of more than three months when children shared a residence with adults other than their biological parents, regardless of whether the biological parent(s) was also present.

Extended Measures of Child Well-Being

In 1999, the SPD asked a series of questions devoted to measuring child well-being. These questions were asked again in the 2002 SPD.

Comparability of Content Across SPD Components

The components comprising the SPD (the 1992/1993 SIPP, the 1997 SPD Bridge, and the 1998-2002 SPD) have different recall periods and different levels of aggregation. Respondents in the SIPP panels were interviewed three times per year and faced a recall period of four months. Respondents in the 1997-2002 SPD, interviewed only once a year, faced recall periods up to fifteen months. Also, some topics that appear on more than one component (for example, receipt of welfare) are covered by questions that have different categories of response. The following table summarizes the major differences in the content and comparability of the SPD components.

| Topic | Instrument | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | 1992/1993 SIPP Panels | 1997 SPD Bridge Survey | 1998-2002 SPD |
| Basic Demographic Characteristics | at time of survey | at time of survey | at time of survey |
| Adolescent and Child Questions* | | | |
| Family Routines | | | at time of survey |
| Interaction with Parents | | | at time of survey and last 12 months |
| School Routines and Behaviors | | | last school year |
| Parental Rules | | | at time of survey |
| Delinquent Behaviors | | | last 12 months |
| Substance Use | | | ever, first, last 30 days |
| Dating and Sexual Behavior | | | first, last, and at time of survey |
| Armed Forces Status | at time of survey and ever | at time of survey and ever | at time of survey and ever |
| Child Care | | | |
| Child Care Arrangements | | | |

| | at time of survey**, last month, and changes during last 12 months | | Jan. of previous year to May of current year and at time of survey |
|---|--|--|--|
| Child Care Hours and Amounts | at time of survey** and typical week | | this April and last calendar year |
| Mother's Work Schedule | | | this April |
| Work and Child Care Conflicts | last month** and typical week** | | last calendar year |
| Child Enrichment Activities | | | |
| Sports, Clubs, and Lessons | at time of survey (6-17)** | | last September to this April |
| TV, Reading, Outings | past month** | | at time of survey |
| Gang Activity | | | at time of survey and ever |
| Job | | | at time of survey |
| Education | | | |
| Attainment | at time of survey (6-17** and 15+) | at time of survey | at time of survey |
| Education (continued) | | | |
| School Enrollment | at time of survey (children)** and monthly | last week and 1996 | monthly (3+) and last (children) |
| Financial Aid | last 12 months** and last 4 months | 1996 | last 12 months and last school year |
| Post-Secondary Educational Expenses | last 12 months** | | |
| Expelled or Repeated Grade | past (children)** | | ever, when? |
| Child's School Progress* | | | overall and last school year |
| English Ability and Other Language | | | |
| | | | at time of survey |
| Family Context | | | |
| Marital Relationship and Conflict | | | at time of survey, past few months, last year |
| Parental Depression Scale | | | last 30 days |
| Child Activities* | | | at time of survey and last week/month/year |
| Problem and Positive Child Behaviors* | | | last 3 months |
| Family Structure | | | |
| Marital Status | past** and at time of survey change since last month | at time of survey and month/year of change | at time of survey and |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Contact with Absent Parent | | | last and at time of survey |
| Residential History* | | | birth to age 18 |
| Food Security | last 4 months** | | last 12 months |
| Food Sufficiency | | | |
| Immigration Status | | | |
| Nativity, Citizenship | | | |
| Date of Entry | at time of survey** | | |
| Migration | past** | where living 1 year ago, 3/1/96 | |
| Work Training | past** | | last 12 months |
| Employment & Earnings | monthly | previous calendar year | |
| Work/Employment Status | | | previous calendar year, which weeks? |
| Layoffs/Looking for Work | | | previous calendar year, which weeks? |
| Reasons NOT Working | | | current |
| Earnings | | | previous calendar year |
| Income Sources (excluding earnings) | monthly | previous calendar year | previous calendar year |
| Unemployment | | | which months? which weeks? |
| Worker's Compensation | | | which months? which weeks? |
| Social Security | | | which months? |
| Supplemental Security Income (SSI) | | | which months? |
| Food Stamps | | | which months? |
| AFDC/TANF | | | which months? |
| WIC | | | which months? |
| Child Care | | | which months? |
| General Assistance | | | which months? |
| Other Assistance | | | which months? |
| Veteran's/Disability Payments | | | which months? |
| Assets | | | previous calendar year |
| Child Support | | | which months?, which weeks? |
| Income Amounts | monthly | total of previous calendar year | total of previous calendar year |
| (For Each Previously Listed Source) | | | (may be reported weekly, bi-weekly, monthly or annually) |
| Eligibility & Assets | topical modules | N/A | |

| | | | |
|--|------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Housing & Real Estate | topical modules | | current monthly mortgage |
| Automobile Information | topical modules | | current |
| Assets | topical modules | | current |
| Debts | topical modules | | current |
| | | | |
| Eligibility & Assets (continued) | | | |
| Child Support Paid | monthly | | previous calendar year |
| Other Support Paid | monthly | | previous calendar year |
| | | | |
| Disability | | | |
| Functional Limitations & Disabilities | once per wave, current | N/A | current |
| | | | |
| Health | | | |
| Health Care Utilization | N/A | N/A | previous calendar year |
| Medical Expenses | N/A | N/A | previous month |
| Health Insurance | monthly | previous calendar year, current | previous calendar year, which months? current |
| Uninsured Utilization*** | N/A | N/A | previous calendar year |
| | | | |
| Food Expenditures*** | N/A | N/A | previous calendar year |
| | | | |
| Public Housing | once per wave, current | current | current |
| | | | |
| *from SPD topical module | | | |
| **From SIPP topical module | | | |
| * ** Added in 1999 SPD | | | |