

**What is the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)?**

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is a series of national panels that began in 1984 and continue today. Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, the SIPP collects information on sources and amounts of income (individual and household level), labor force participation, and program participation and eligibility from a representative sample of households. Sample sizes for the panels range from 14,000-36,700 households with most panels ranging in duration from 2½ - 4 years. Interviews are conducted either by personalized visit or by telephone.

The SIPP's core questionnaire includes general demographic characteristics, sources of income, expenditures, and program eligibility. In addition to the core questionnaire, topical modules provide detailed data on more specific information that can be linked to household earnings and assets. Both the core questionnaire and topical modules can be used to better understand the effectiveness of aid programs, estimate costs and coverage for future government programs, and provide statistics on the distribution of income and economic well-being in the U.S.

**What does the SIPP offer family scholars?**

The SIPP design allows for both cross-sectional and longitudinal data analysis. Researchers can use the SIPP's core data files to examine dynamic characteristics of the population, such as household and family composition, changes in income, changes in program eligibility/status, and labor force behaviors.

The topical modules in the SIPP range from topics such as personal history, wealth, and tax information to child support, childcare arrangements, and health expenses. These modules allow the researcher to examine processes that might affect income and program participation in addition to the demographic measures included in the core data files.

Of particular interest to family scholars, the SIPP includes a very detailed *household relationships* topical module (including information on type of parent/child and sibling/child relationships as well as other biological ties) that is particularly useful in identifying a wide variety of children's living arrangements. In addition to the household roster, there are other areas of interest amenable to family research, including:

- *Marital and fertility histories* (dates of marriage (last 3), separation, divorce, and dates of birth for all children)
- *Child well-being* (living arrangements, daily interaction with parents, academic experiences, etc.)
- *Childcare* (who provides childcare, how often, and what they are paid/or pay concerning childcare arrangements)
- *Child support agreements* (detailed information on frequency of payment, amount of payment owed/received, and timing of child support payments)

**Key points concerning changes in the SIPP over time**

The initial SIPP panels, 1984 -1993, were conducted at one-year intervals resulting in data collection of multiple panels simultaneously. In 1996, the SIPP dropped the overlapping

panel structure and began using CAPI methods to collect data. Due to budget constraints, the 2004 SIPP has a reduced sample size, and topical modules were not collected in waves 9 -12 (October 2006 - January 2008). The most recent panel began in 2008 and is scheduled to continue through 2012.

### How do I access the SIPP data?

Information on accessing the SIPP data can be found at <http://www.census.gov/sipp/access.html>. For new users, the DataFerret application allows the researcher to search for items across multiple surveys, run frequencies and crosstabs, construct figures, and manipulate data through recoding or by creating averages/standard deviations.

For the more advanced user, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) provides SIPP data files that are compatible with SPSS, SAS, and STATA (<http://www.nber.org/data/survey-of-income-and-program-participation-sipp-data.html>). The raw data files from the SIPP FTP site ([http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp\\_ftp.html#sipp](http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp_ftp.html#sipp)) cannot be read into statistical packaging software.

### Reports using the SIPP Data

The SIPP provides a variety of reports highlighting topics of interest to family researchers (<http://www.census.gov/sipp/p70s/p70s.html>). For example, Rose Kreider and Renee Ellis authored a report on the living arrangements of children. Additional reports address topics such as marital duration and histories as well as childcare arrangements.

### SIPP Data Resources Provided by the National Center for Family & Marriage Research

The National Center for Family & Marriage Research (NCFMR) provides two data products featuring the SIPP.

- [Measures Snapshots](#) – detailed summaries of family measures (available in multiple large national data sets) addressing questions such as family structure and family ties across households (see bullet 2) included in the SIPP.
- [Question Crosswalks](#) – side-by-side comparisons of key family measures (in particular, [Family Structure and Instability](#) and [Family Ties across Households](#)) that are asked in the SIPP compared to almost a dozen other large nationally representative data sets.

### Where can I learn more about the SIPP?

Jason Fields, a family demographer working for the Census Bureau, provides a detailed PowerPoint presentation discussing sampling design and methods employed in the SIPP. He also makes useful comparisons between the SIPP and CPS data ([www.bgsu.edu/offices/mc/ncmr/ppt/ICPSR-Mar-Fam.ppt](http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/mc/ncmr/ppt/ICPSR-Mar-Fam.ppt)).

There are several resources available to researchers from the main SIPP webpage (<http://www.census.gov/sipp/index.html>). The most recent User Guide for the SIPP data is

the Third Edition completed in 2001; however, drafts of some chapters concerning the 2008 SIPP panel are available in addition to the completed edition from 2001 (<http://www.census.gov/sipp/usrguide.html>).

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