

What have we learned from SIPP?

Because you and thousands of others have helped us with this survey, we have learned that:

- ✓ 49 percent of households in the United States are receiving benefits from at least one government program.
- ✓ There are 9.7 million residents of households who need assistance from another person for physical or home management activities.
- ✓ The median net worth among all U.S. households was \$79,000 in 2004.

Not only does the SIPP provide data like these, but it indicates the number of families who may have a certain source of income one month but not the next. The SIPP can also show the combinations of income that families might have. These kinds of information help in evaluating the economic status of the nation, show how things change, and give policy makers the facts that enable them to make better economic decisions.

We never reveal information about you.

All the information you provide the U.S. Census Bureau is confidential by law (Title 13, United States Code, Section 9). Every Census Bureau employee takes an oath and is subject to a jail penalty and a fine for improperly disclosing any information that would identify an individual or a household. Published information is presented only in the form of statistical summaries, and no identifiable information is ever released. The Census Bureau has established rigid procedures and guidelines to ensure data confidentiality and is proud of the excellent reputation it has earned in this respect.



SIPP

You Represent Your Nation

What is SIPP?

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is an important survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau to determine the economic situation of people living in the United States. It provides information on a wide variety of topics and measures the changes in our economic status over time. The survey collects data on the types of jobs and sources of income that people have, as well as the number and the characteristics of people who participate in various government programs. By conducting this survey, the Census Bureau can get an accurate picture of the financial health of the nation and how well government assistance programs are aiding people who need help the most.

To obtain this information, we combine SIPP data with data from other government agencies to create a comprehensive set of summary information. We—along with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Labor, and other agencies—use this information to help make policy decisions about Social Security, taxes, health care programs, and welfare programs. Private researchers also use data summaries to analyze the economic health of the nation.

How is the survey designed?

As the economy changes, the worth of a person's income and assets may also change, and as the size and composition of a household changes, a family's economic situation may also be affected. SIPP gathers information over several years in order to study any changes in individual and family financial situations over time.

The 2011 SIPP survey is changing from the traditional way we administer the SIPP survey. Instead of collecting data by visiting a household every 4 months over a period of 3–4 years, field representatives will visit the household only once each year and ask questions about what occurred over the previous calendar year. This re-engineered survey includes topics such as: household relationships, work, participation in assistance programs, health insurance, health care usage and disabilities, assets and liabilities, and commuting expenses. This data helps us understand how these factors affect a person's or a family's economic situation.

Why did you choose me?

We scientifically selected your address among 4,000 similar addresses selected that represent residential addresses in the country. We initially chose these addresses without knowing the residents of the houses or apartments. Because your address was scientifically selected, we cannot substitute your next door neighbor or another house around the corner.

We selected only a sample of households because interviewing every address in the country would be too costly and take too much time, and we believe that the 4,000 household sample is sufficient to make reliable estimates from the information we collect—if we have your cooperation.

Why are my answers important?

The United States is made up of many types of people—and you are one of them. Our statistics need to be representative of all persons—rich and poor, young and old, employed and unemployed. When we interview your household, your answers represent thousands of other households similar to yours. Your participation in this survey guarantees the completeness and accuracy of the final results. Of course your participation in this survey is voluntary, and we appreciate your cooperation.

