

The Monthly Flow of Current Population Survey Data

Issued April 2010

CPS-692(4-10)



The Monthly Flow of Current Population Survey Data

1. Select sample. The U.S. Census Bureau scientifically selects the addresses included in the Current Population Survey sample to accurately represent all residences across our country. The selected addresses come from two principal sources: census records and listing.

- A. *Census records.* The list of addresses established during the latest census of population and housing (the decennial census).
- B. *Listing.* Addresses of housing units identified or built after the latest census of population and housing. Census Bureau field representatives compile this listing in local areas.

We interview the eligible people in households at the addresses that make up the sample. If the original household members move, we interview the new occupants, if they are eligible.

2. Conduct interviews. For initial interviews, field representatives personally visit addresses in the survey sample. If the residence is occupied, the field representative, using a portable computer, records basic demographic information, such as name, age, and race, about each person living there. The field representative then asks labor force questions for each eligible household member who is 15 years of age and older.

In following months, Census Bureau staff phone or personally visit the sample addresses to update the basic information and conduct labor force interviews with eligible household members.

3. Transmit data. Each day during the week in which the survey is conducted, Census Bureau staff connect their computers to telephone lines, and the computer sends the interview data to Census Bureau headquarters in Suitland, Maryland.

The Census Bureau maintains strict computer security by requiring individual passwords for all computers and by transmitting data in a compressed format that is unreadable until processed by Census Bureau headquarters computers. Once we successfully receive individual interviews at Census Bureau headquarters, field representatives erase the interview data from their computers.

4. Tabulate and review survey results.

Census Bureau analysts produce initial summary tabulations and review the monthly survey results before turning them over to the survey sponsor, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Then, Bureau of Labor Statistics analysts produce final tabulations, review the data, and prepare a public press release summarizing the most significant findings.

5. Present results:

- A. *To the media.* The Bureau of Labor Statistics releases the employment data to the media, who then report to the public on key results. The most publicized survey result is the monthly national unemployment rate.
- B. *To Congress.* The Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics presents the monthly labor force data to the Joint Economic Committee of the Congress one hour following public release.

6. Use results to determine policy. The data are very important to national and local policymakers and researchers from public and private institutions who use survey results to help make budgeting, marketing, and job-training decisions.

CENSUS BUREAU RESULTS ARE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

We are conducting this survey under the authority of Title 13, U.S. Code, Section 182. Section 9 of this law requires us to keep all information about you and your household strictly confidential. We may use this information only for statistical purposes.