

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR THE CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY

OMB CONTROL NO. 1220-0100

B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection methods to be used. Data on the number of entities (e.g., establishments, State and local government units, households, or persons) in the universe covered by the collection and in the corresponding sample are to be provided in tabular form for the universe as a whole and for each of the strata in the proposed sample. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.

The universe for the CPS is about 146 million households. From their Master Address File, the Census Bureau selects approximately 70,000 households each month. Of these, approximately 60,000 households are eligible for interviews. (Note: 'Eligible' can be simplistically defined as an occupied housing unit having at least one person in the civilian noninstitutional population.) The Census Bureau actually interviews about 41,000 households each month. This sample includes about 12,000 eligible housing units from the monthly supplementary sample to improve state-level estimates of health insurance coverage for low-income children, also known as the CHIP expansion. This supplementary sample has been part of the official CPS since July 2001. Thirty-two states plus the District of Columbia contain this supplementary sample each month.

The CPS sample was redesigned based on information from the 2020 decennial census. Interviewing of the redesigned sample phased in beginning in April 2025 and will be completed July 2026. Historically, the CPS sample has been redesigned after each decennial census. (See https://www.bls.gov/cps/methods/sample_redesign_2025.htm and Chapter 2-2 of Attachment F or at <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/methodology/CPS-Tech-Paper-77.pdf> for more detail about the sample design.)

2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information including:

- **Statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection,**
- **Estimation procedure,**
- **Degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification,**
- **Unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures, and**
- **Any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.**

The CPS produces demographic data, labor force data, and data from various periodic supplemental surveys. The CPS sample is designed to produce unemployment estimates that meet BLS reliability requirements for month-to-month change at the national and annual averages at the state and substate level.

One of the primary goals of the CPS is to provide change estimates (both month-to-month as well as over-the-year) in the employment and unemployment statistics. The current rotation pattern of CPS (households are contacted by interviewers for 4 consecutive months, followed by 8 months during which they are not in the survey, and then they return to the survey for another 4 months) was chosen because it provides such estimates reliably, and performs better overall than other rotation patterns in which respondents are in for a total of 8 months.

CPS Estimation Procedure:

Direct estimates using CPS data are based on responses obtained from the monthly sample of eight panels. This involves weighting the data from each sample person. The baseweight, which is the inverse of the probability of the person being in the sample, is a rough measure of the number of actual persons that the sample person represents. Almost all sample persons within the same state have the same baseweight, and every person in the same housing unit receives the same baseweight. These weights are then adjusted for noninterview, and a ratio adjustment procedure is applied.

a. Noninterview Adjustment

The baseweights for all interviewed housing units are adjusted to account for occupied sample housing units for which no information was obtained. Reasons for a noninterviewed housing unit include absence of the occupants, impassable roads, refusal of the occupant to participate in the survey, or unavailability of the occupant for other reasons. The noninterview adjustment is performed by noninterview cluster.

Noninterview clusters are classified as either metropolitan or non-metropolitan. PSUs classified as metropolitan are assigned to metropolitan clusters. PSUs representing metropolitan areas of the same or similar size (based on Census 2020 population) are grouped into the same noninterview cluster. Each metropolitan cluster is further divided into two cells: central city and balance of the metropolitan area. Likewise, non-metropolitan PSUs are assigned to non-metropolitan clusters. All non-metropolitan areas in a state are placed within the same noninterview cluster. Due to small sample sizes, a few non-metropolitan noninterview clusters contain PSUs from more than one state.

b. Adjusting Estimates to Population Controls

The distribution of the population selected in the sample may differ somewhat from that of the population as a whole in such characteristics as age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, and sex. Since these characteristics are correlated closely with labor force participation and other principal measurements made from the sample, survey estimates are substantially improved when weighted appropriately by the known distribution of these population characteristics. This is accomplished through four adjustments:

1) First-stage ratio adjustment

In the CPS, some of the sample areas (PSUs) are chosen to represent both themselves and non-sampled areas in the same state; the remainder of the sample areas represent only themselves. The first-stage ratio estimation procedure is designed to reduce that portion of the variance resulting from non-self-representing PSUs. Therefore, this adjustment procedure is applied only to sample areas that represent other areas and is done by Black alone / not Black alone cells at a state level. Each race cell is further divided into two age cells: age 0 to 15, and age 16 and older.

2) National and state coverage adjustments

The national and state coverage adjustments are intended to improve the national and state estimates by race, Hispanic ethnicity, sex, and age. The national coverage adjustment is done by Black alone, White alone, Asian alone, and the residual of all other race categories for non-Hispanics, and White alone and not White alone for Hispanics. (Note that respondents who indicate that they belong to more than one race are included in the Residual race category.) These race/ethnicity categories are further divided into cells representing various combinations of age and sex. This national adjustment is performed by month-in-sample pair (1 and 5; 2 and 6; 3 and 7; and 4 and 8).

The cells used in the state coverage adjustment are defined by race category (Black alone, not Black alone), age, and sex. The adjustment is performed either for each month-in-sample pair or for all eight month-in-sample groups combined. The actual cells used vary by state and race category.

3) Second-stage ratio adjustment

The second-stage ratio adjustment modifies sample estimates in a number of age-sex-race-Hispanic ethnicity groups to independently derived census-based estimates of the civilian noninstitutional population in each of these groups. This adjustment reduces mean square error of sample estimates by reducing bias due to differential coverage of the sampling frame and reduces errors that result from selecting a sample and not the entire frame. The adjustment is executed in three steps and each set of three steps is referred to as a “rake.” There are 10 cycles (or iterations) of raking. Each step in each rake is done by month-in-sample pair.

In the first step, the sample estimates are adjusted for each state and the District of Columbia to independent controls for the civilian noninstitutional population by age and sex. There are three age cells by sex (0 to 15, 16 to 44, and 45 and over). The second step of the adjustment is done at the national level by Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic and non-Hispanic each have 18 age/sex cells, which are adjusted to nationwide independent controls. The third and final step of the

second-stage adjustment is performed by race (Black alone, White alone, Residual race). The cell division is by age/race/sex. Each of these cells is adjusted to national independent population controls as in the previous step.

The entire second-stage adjustment procedure is iterated through 10 rakes. This iteration ensures that the sample estimates of state and national population by the various age-race-sex-Hispanic ethnicity categories will be virtually equal to the independent population controls.

c. Composite Estimation and Weighting

The last step in the preparation of most CPS estimates makes use of a composite estimation procedure. A basic composite estimate is a weighted average of 1) a second-stage estimate based solely on current month responses, and 2) a composite estimate from the previous month that is updated to the current month with an estimate of month-to-month change based on six sample panels that are common to both months. Estimates of month-to-month change in employment and unemployment that are computed using composite estimates generally have lower sampling errors than comparable change estimates using second-stage estimates. A composite weighting procedure computes a weight for each person. Using these weights, it is then unnecessary to recompute composite labor force estimates each time a table is produced.

Estimation and weighting is discussed more fully in Chapter 2-3 of Technical Paper 77. (See Appendix H or <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/methodology/CPS-Tech-Paper-77.pdf>.)

3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.

Response rates and data accuracy for the CPS are maintained at high levels through internal consistency edits in the computerized instrument, interviewer instructions, training, and close monitoring of these data. In 2025, the CPS response rate averaged about 67 percent.

If a respondent is reluctant to participate in the CPS, the interviewer immediately informs the Regional Office staff. The Regional Office sends a follow-up letter to the household explaining CPS in greater detail and urging cooperation. The interviewer then recontacts the household and attempts the interview again. If this procedure fails, a field supervisor then contacts the household in an attempt to convert the reluctant respondent. Methods used to interview reluctant households include conducting telephone or personal interviews with the household, if so requested, and interviewing an individual within the household. (The CPS estimation procedure adjusts for household nonresponse in its noninterview adjustment procedure, detailed in the preceding Paragraph 2.a.) Accuracy of the CPS data is maintained through interviewer training

and monthly home studies, and monitoring of error and noninterview rates. Chapter 3-5 of Technical Paper 77 discusses the organization and training of interviewers. (See Appendix H or <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/methodology/CPS-Tech-Paper-77.pdf>.)

In addition, each month about 3 percent of all CPS households are reinterviewed to deter data falsification and to monitor interviewer adherence to established procedures. The reinterview sampling selection system, which takes into account interviewers' tenure with the Census Bureau, is set up so that a selected interviewer is in the reinterview program at least once but no more than four times within a 15-month cycle. Errors uncovered during the reinterview are discussed with the original interviewer and remedial action is taken. Chapter 4-2 of [Technical Paper 77](https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/methodology/CPS-Tech-Paper-77.pdf) discusses the reinterview program. (See Appendix H or <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/methodology/CPS-Tech-Paper-77.pdf>.)

For individual item nonresponse, three imputation methods are used: relational imputation, hot-deck imputation, and longitudinal assignments. As appropriate, longitudinal assignments are used in most of the labor force edits. Chapter 3-4 of Technical Paper 77 discusses imputation, and Chapter 4-1 addresses overall CPS and item nonresponse. (See Appendix H or <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps/methodology/CPS-Tech-Paper-77.pdf>.)

4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility. Tests must be approved if they call for answers to identical questions from 10 or more respondents. A proposed test or set of test may be submitted for approval separately or in combination with the main collection of information.

The Census Bureau, which is responsible for the collection of the CPS data—designing the sample, training and monitoring the interviewers, and conducting a continuous quality control program—is using methods designed to keep respondent burden as low as possible. These interviewing methods, which include the use of computer-assisted interviewing, were improved as part of a complete CPS redesign implemented in January 1994. The redesign was preceded by years of wide-ranging discussions, research, and large-scale field tests aimed at long-range improvements in the survey. The CPS and all of its supplements are collected 100 percent electronically by using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) and Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI). Since January 2007, the data collection instrument has been programmed in Blaise, a Windows-based survey processing system developed by Statistics Netherlands.

Each month, about 3 percent of all CPS households are reinterviewed for quality control purposes. Depending on the interviewer's experience level and position, a selected interviewer is in the reinterview program at least once, but no more than four times within a 15-month cycle. Errors uncovered during the reinterview are discussed with the original interviewer and remedial action is taken.

5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.

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Attachments:

- A. Basic CPS Questionnaire-Front
- B. Basic CPS Questionnaire- Demographic
- C. Basic CPS Questionnaire- Labor force
- D. CPS Advance Letter
- E. Confidentiality Brochure
- F. Design and Methodology: Current Population Survey, Technical Paper 77