

## Appendix A. Overview of the SIPP Program

The SIPP's content consists of three basic elements. The first is a control card used to record basic social and demographic characteristics for each person in the household at the time of the initial interview. Because households are interviewed at intervals, the card is also used to record changes in characteristics and to record the dates when persons enter or leave the household. Finally, during each interview, information on each source of income is reviewed and the name of each job or business is transcribed to the card so that this information can be used in the updating process in subsequent interviews.

The second major element of the survey's content is the core portion of the questionnaire. The core questions are repeated at each interview and cover labor force activity, the types and amounts of income received during the 4-month period, and participation status in various programs. Some of the more important elements of labor force activity are recorded for each week of the period. (See appendix B for definitions and explanations of labor force concepts and terminology used in this report.) Income reciprocity and amounts are recorded on a monthly basis with the exception of amounts of property income (interest, dividends, rent, etc.). Data for these types are recorded as totals for the 4-month reference period. The core also contains questions covering attendance in postsecondary schools, private health insurance coverage, public or subsidized rental housing, low-income energy assistance, and school breakfast and lunch participation.

The third major element is the various supplements or topical modules that are included during selected household visits. Examples of topics that have been covered in topical modules include (1) work history, (2) health characteristics (including disability), (3) assets and liabilities, (4) pension plan coverage, (5) child care, (6) child support agreements, (7) support for nonhousehold members, (8) program participation history, (9) reasons for not working and (10) tax payments.

### SAMPLE DESIGN

The SIPP sample design for the 1984 panel consisted of about 26,000 housing units selected to represent the noninstitutional population of the United States. (See appendix C for more details of the procedures used to select the sample.) About 20,900 of these were

occupied and eligible for interview. Table A-1 shows the sample design for the first panel of SIPP. Each household in the sample was interviewed at 4-month intervals over a period of 2 1/2 years beginning in October 1983. The reference period for the questions is the 4-month period preceding the interview. For example, households interviewed in October 1983 were asked questions for the months of June, July, August, and September. These households were interviewed again in February 1984 for the October through January period. The sample households within a given panel are divided into

Table A-1. Design of First SIPP Panel

Rotation	Wave	Interview month	Reference months
1 .....	1	Oct. 83	June, July, Aug., Sept.(83)
2 .....	1	Nov. 83	July, Aug., Sept., Oct.(83)
3 .....	1	Dec. 83	Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.(83)
4 .....	1	Jan. 84	Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.(83)
1 .....	2	Feb. 84	Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan.(84)
2 .....	2	Mar. 84	Nov., Dec.(83), Jan., Feb.(84)
3 .....	2	Apr. 84	Dec.(83), Jan., Feb., Mar.(84)
4 .....	3	May 84	Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr.(84)
1 .....	3	June 84	Feb., Mar., Apr., May(84)
2 .....	3	July 84	Mar., Apr., May, June (84)
3 .....	3	Aug. 84	Apr., May, June, July (84)
4 .....	4	Sept. 84	May, June, July, Aug.(84)
1 .....	4	Oct. 84	June, July, Aug., Sept.(84)
2 .....	4	Nov. 84	July, Aug., Sept., Oct.(84)
3 .....	4	Dec. 84	Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.(84)
4 .....	5	Jan. 85	Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.(84)
1 .....	5	Feb. 85	Oct., Nov., Dec.(84), Jan.(85)
2 .....	5	Mar. 85	Nov., Dec.(84), Jan., Feb.(85)
3 .....	5	Apr. 85	Dec.(84), Jan., Feb., Mar.(85)
4 .....	6	May 85	Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr.(85)
1 .....	6	June 85	Feb., Mar., Apr., May (85)
2 .....	6	July 85	Mar., Apr., May, June (85)
3 .....	6	Aug. 85	Apr., May, June, July (85)
4 .....	7	Sept. 85	May, June, July, Aug.(85)
1 .....	7	Oct. 85	June, July, Aug., Sept.(85)
2 .....	7	Nov. 85	July, Aug., Sept., Oct.(85)
3 .....	7	Dec. 85	Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov.(85)
4 .....	8	Jan. 86	Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.(85)
1 .....	8	Feb. 86	Oct., Nov., Dec.(85), Jan.(86)
2 .....	8	Mar. 86	Nov., Dec.(85), Jan., Feb.(86)
3 .....	8	Apr. 86	Dec.(85), Jan., Feb., Mar.(86)
4 .....	9	May 86	Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr.(86)
1 .....	9	June 86	Feb., Mar., Apr., May (86)
2 .....	9	July 86	Mar., Apr., May, June (86)
3 .....	9	Aug. 86	Apr., May, June, July (86)

four subsamples of nearly equal size. These subsamples are called rotation groups and one rotation group is interviewed each month. In general, one cycle of four interviews covering the entire sample, using the same questionnaire, is called a wave. This design was chosen because it provides a smooth and steady work load for data collection and processing.

## **SURVEY OPERATIONS**

Data collection operations are managed through the Census Bureau's 12 permanent regional offices. A staff of interviewers assigned to SIPP conduct interviews by personal visit each month with most interviewing completed during the first 2 weeks of that month. Completed questionnaires are transmitted to the regional offices where they undergo an extensive clerical edit before being entered into the Bureau's SIPP data processing system. Upon entering this processing system the data are subjected to a detailed computer edit. Errors identified in this phase are corrected and computer processing continues.

Two of the major steps of computer processing are the assignment of weights to each sample person and imputation for missing survey responses. The weighting procedures assure that SIPP estimates of the number of persons agree with independent estimates of the population within specified age, race, and sex categories. The procedures also assure close correspondence with monthly CPS estimates of households. In almost all cases, a survey nonresponse is assigned a value in the imputation phase of processing. The imputation for missing responses is based on procedures generally referred to as the "hot deck" approach. This approach assigns values for nonresponses from sample persons

who did provide responses and who have characteristics similar to those of the nonrespondents.

The longitudinal design of SIPP dictates that all persons 15 years old and over present as household members at the time of the first interview be part of the survey throughout the entire 2 1/2 year period. To meet this goal, the survey collects information useful in locating persons who move. In addition, field procedures were established that allow for the transfer of sample cases between regional offices. Persons moving within a 100-mile radius of an original sampling area (a county or group of counties) are followed and continue with the normal personal interviews at 4-month intervals. Those moving to a new residence that falls outside the 100-mile radius of any SIPP sampling area are interviewed by telephone if possible. The geographic areas defined by these rules contain more than 95 percent of the U.S. population.

Because some types of analysis using SIPP data are dependent on data for groups of individuals (households, families, etc.), provisions were made to interview all "new" persons living with original sample persons (those interviewed in the first wave). These new sample persons entering the survey through contact with original sample persons are considered as part of the sample only while residing with the original sample person.

## **FULL PANEL RESEARCH FILE**

The source of the estimates in this report is the full panel research file from the 1984 SIPP. This longitudinal file was created by matching data from consecutive interviews. Included on this file are the records for each person for whom a complete set of data for a 32-month period was obtained. For additional information on this file, see appendix C.