

Child Care Data in the Current Population Survey (CPS) - A Primer -

U.S. Census Bureau Household Data



What is the Current Population Survey (CPS)?

The CPS is a monthly survey of U.S. households sponsored jointly by the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS).

- Sample-based survey of about 60,000 eligible households.
- Combination of live telephone and in-person interviews.
- Comprehensive historical body of monthly data.
- Labor force, economic and demographic data by sex, race, income, education, parental status, and other measures.



What is the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC)?

The ASEC, conducted every February, March, and April along with the monthly CPS survey, is a widely used supplement.

- A range of topics including health insurance coverage, work experience, income, receipt of noncash benefits, poverty, migration, geographic mobility, and paid child care usage and expenditures.
- A broader sample and larger universe than the CPS.
- Sample exceeds 75,000 households.



What is the IPUMS–CPS Database? (Maintained by the University of Minnesota)

IPUMS–CPS is a harmonized version of the Census Bureau's CPS database that allows for continuity of use and consistent definitions of survey items across multiple years.

- Full access to both the monthly CPS and the annual ASEC datasets.
- All CPS data used to form summary measures in the first three reports in CED's series, *The Economic Role of Paid Child Care in the U.S.*, were from the IPUMS–CPS database.

Survey Sampling and Weighting

The CPS survey uses a probability-based sample designed to produce estimates that are representative of the national and state labor forces.

- An independent sample is prepared for each state and the District of Columbia using the unique demographic and labor market conditions present in each state.
- The CPS uses a weighted sample to draw inferences about the population. A series of weights are applied to each household, family, and person in the survey.



Child Care Questions in the CPS



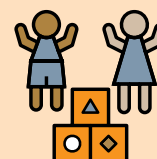
CPS ASEC first surveyed parents about the use of paid child care in 2001 and contains two decades of data available for analysis. The survey added a question about child care expenditures in 2010.

- Parents are asked whether or not they paid for child care while they worked and how much they spent on child care in the prior year.
- The expenditure questions ask about costs across all child care arrangements for all children in the household under 15.
- The survey does not ask about the setting type, whether the setting is regulated, or about costs for each child.

Using CPS Child Care Data

Advantages

- Consistent survey data available on both usage and expenditures
- Consistent survey design and implementation process by the Census Bureau over the extended survey years of child care data collection
- Coverage availability at both the U.S. and state levels. National data are derived from the same dataset, making state totals additive to the national total.
- Extended annual coverage exceeding one decade for child care expenditures and two decades for paid child care use
- Ability to disaggregate child care data using detailed economic and demographic data on families and children available in the ASEC
- Coverage of children ages 0-14, which captures paid care usage of both preschool and school-age children



Limitations

- No data are collected on the specific type of child care arrangement for each child
- The amount paid for care does not specifically capture the price of care within a community
- Expenditures are calculated per household and not per child in care
- No estimate is provided for the typical number of hours of care per day or week
- Some state samples are too small for valid analysis