



OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
1436 Duke Street • Alexandria, VA 22314
www.populationassociation.org • www.popcenters.org • 301-565-6710 x 1006



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September 13, 2023

Sent via email to: census.sipp@census.gov

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the organizations we represent, the [Population Association of America \(PAA\)](#) and [Association of Population Centers \(APC\)](#), we are writing to express our concern regarding the [Census Bureau's plans](#) to make permanent a 34 percent cut to the sample size of the Survey on Income and Program Participation (SIPP).

As you may know, PAA and APC are two affiliated organizations that together represent over 3,000 social and behavioral scientists and the over 40 population research centers that receive federal funding and conduct research on the implications of population change. Our members, which include demographers, economists, sociologists, and epidemiologists, conduct scientific and applied research, analyze changing demographic and socio-economic trends, develop policy and planning recommendations, and train undergraduate and graduate students. Their research expertise covers a wide range of issues, including adolescent health and development, aging, health disparities, immigration and migration, marriage and divorce, education, social networks, housing, retirement, and labor. The Census Bureau produces essential, accurate socioeconomic and demographic data that population scientists universally rely on to inform their research and research training activities.

The SIPP is a unique resource that many population scientists use to measure and analyze economic wellbeing in American households and to formulate recommendations to design and improve social programs. Specifically, SIPP data provide invaluable, longitudinal insights on key topics such as the interplay between household economics and marriage or divorce; impact of unemployment on housing and food and economic insecurity; and the effects of federal, state, and local assistance on the health and well-being of individuals and their families. Its level of detail distinguishes SIPP from other federal household surveys, including the Current Population Survey, National Longitudinal Surveys, and the American Community Survey.

We are concerned that reducing the survey's sample size from 53,000 to 35,000 addresses will undermine the scope of SIPP data. In addition, this proposed reduction will impede the ability of population scientists to make meaningful comparisons between demographic or geographic subpopulations.

Rather than reducing the SIPP sample size, we urge the Bureau to instead consider investing in the survey—especially at this critical juncture when the nation is emerging from the post-pandemic economy. SIPP data have the potential to not only advance our understanding of how assistance programs affect vulnerable populations but also to inform long-term policy solutions. This potential, however, will not be fully realized unless the Bureau reverses course by restoring the survey’s sample size and tackling other challenges facing the survey—namely its declining response rates.

We hope the Bureau will reconsider its proposed plans to reduce the SIPP’s sample size and choose to invest in the survey to ensure its future utility and value. Thank you for considering our views and please do not hesitate to ask if our organizations can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Berkman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Lisa Berkman
2023 PAA President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Brand', with a large loop at the end.

Dr. Jennie Brand
2023-2024 APC President