

### *How the SIPP has been essential to researchers and advocates*

The Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is an essential resource for understanding economic and family well-being. Federal and state governments, researchers, and advocates in many fields have used the SIPP to help them shape policy.

#### **Anti-Hunger Programs**

*The SIPP was critical in preserving school lunch benefits for low-income children:*

In 2002 and 2003, the school meals programs faced serious charges of fraud, based on an analysis of Current Population Survey (CPS) data that showed more children receiving free school lunch than were eligible. Another study, based on SIPP data instead of CPS data, came to the opposite conclusion: that *not enough* low-income children were receiving school meals.

Without this essential second study, based on the SIPP, the anti-hunger community most likely would not have been able to effectively preserve school meal benefits for thousands of low-income children.

#### **Low-Income Heating Assistance Programs**

*The SIPP helped advocates demonstrate the impact of high heating bills on the poor:*

The poor will not be able to afford these bills, of course. The Census has periodic surveys of cohorts of lower-income individuals that are tracked through the Survey of Income and Program Participation.

Low-income consumers will sacrifice necessities. Census data show that, in 2001 when energy prices were much lower and the weather was abnormally warm, 9.6 million consumers failed to pay at least one month's energy bill last year because they could not afford it.

Analysis of the previous group's data revealed 77% of those who could not afford an energy bill endured at least one additional kind of hardship during the year, and the majority suffered three or four kinds of deprivation.

*– Testimony by David Bradley, Executive Director of the National Community Action Foundation (representing the nation's 1100 local Community Action Agencies), before the House Resources Subcommittee on Energy & Mineral Resources, November 17, 2005*

## Housing and Asset Building Programs

*In 2005, Illinois Gov. Blagojevich launched a program to help working families in immigrant and minority communities buy homes, based on SIPP research:*

Illinois Gov. Blagojevich has created a program to break down the barriers between conventional banks and the communities that are underserved by them.

The need for this program was based on SIPP data, analyzed by the Chicago's Center for Financial Services Innovation. They found that 46 percent of all African American's don't have bank accounts ("unbanked"); 34 percent of U.S. born Hispanics are similarly unbanked and a third of all immigrants, Asian, European, Latino and other are unbanked.

## Effects of Welfare Reform

Data from the SIPP suggest that families who left the rolls due to welfare reform were more prone to economic difficulties than other leavers, however, income improved for most post-reform leavers.

The longitudinal character of the SIPP allows us to estimate impacts of reform on more precisely defined groups. Welfare leavers can be identified and followed in the SIPP. And although identification of deterred persons remains a challenge, the SIPP allows specification of a more precise proxy than the CPS.

*– Richard B. Bavier, Policy Analyst at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, in "Welfare reform impacts in the SIPP," Monthly Labor Review, November 2002*

## Pension Coverage and Unemployment Insurance

I use the SIPP and place great value in its ability to answer questions that no other dataset can. None can do what the SIPP does. Not the CPS. Not the HRS. Not the SCF. Not the Census.

Most recently I used the SIPP to settle a debate over pension coverage and unemployment propensities.... Before identifying the SIPP's capacity to address our issue directly, there was really nothing to either of our points, which was much more than pure conjecture. As a result of the SIPP's capacity, both of our understandings of the issues involved have improved, which is to say the professions understanding has improved. I will note that these issues are directly important in the study of retirement pension savings.

I take the opportunity to note here as well the just released Economic Report of the President 2005 – Chapter 3. This Chapter is devoted to retirement security as well makes the point that the President's Council of Economic Advisers is very concerned with these very same issues. The SIPP has been and will continue to be an indispensable tool for understanding the microeconomics of our nation's well being.

*– Dr. Jason Seligman, University of Georgia, Council of Economic Advisers, Alumnus, 2000 – 2001*

## **Poverty and Health Insurance Data**

In short, the CPS data provide an incomplete picture on poverty and health insurance in America. Policymakers would be well advised to look to other data, such as SIPP, to gauge what actually happens to people who fall into poverty or lose their health insurance. Only then will public policy be fully informed, and America can truly have an intelligent debate on how to better address these problems.

– Kirk A. Johnson, Senior Policy Analyst, Heritage Foundation, in “The Data on Poverty and Health Insurance You’re Not Reading,” Heritage Foundation WebMemo #556, August 27, 2004

## **Medicaid and Food Stamps**

I am a health services researcher at Brown University, Chair of the Department of Community Health and a collaborator with many health economists and social scientists who monitor changes in Medicaid, food stamps and other federal and state programs using the SIPP. It would be terrible to lose this resource for public policy researchers in and outside the government.

– Vincent Mor, Ph.D., Professor and Chair, Department of Community Health, Brown Medical School

## **Social Security and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**

As one of the original developers of the SIPP and as one who has used it to analyze several social security policy issues as well as the well-being of the aged, and am currently working on an analysis of the TANF program, I will gladly sign the letter. Its centrality in studying social security reform issues, one of the biggest policy issues of the day, [is] worth [noting].

– Denny Vaughan, Staff of the Income Survey Development Program (ISDP), 1975-2003

## **Immigrant Population Research**

I am a frequent user of SIPP data, which I use to study the dynamics of welfare participation and living arrangements among immigrants.

The SIPP is the only data source currently available that provides information about welfare and living arrangements dynamics and provides enough cases to study immigrants.

– Jennifer Van Hook, Associate Professor of Sociology, Bowling Green State University

## **Academic and Policy Research**

I am former Director of the National Center for Health Statistics and former Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Research at the Social Security Administration. Discontinuing SIPP would be a major blow to academic researchers, policy analysts, and legislative and executive government officials. We must save it.

– Dorothy P. Rice, Professor Emerita, Institute for Health & Aging, University of California, San Francisco