

A Comparison of Child Support Paid from CPS and SIPP

Collection Period - Data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) asks questions about child support paid in the Support for Nonhousehold Members Topical Module (SNHMTM). The latest data available from this topical module was collected from June through September of 2005 in the fifth wave of the 2004 SIPP panel. The amount of child support paid refers to those payments made in the 12 months immediately preceding interview.

The Current Population Survey (CPS)-Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) is conducted in February, March, or April and questions about amount of child support paid refers to the annual amount paid in the previous calendar year. The latest CPS-ASEC data available are from 2010, and refer to annual child support paid during calendar year 2009.

Universe Differences - The questions that ask about which household members pay child support in CPS and SIPP are similar but different in their approach and wording. Initially, the SIPP-SNHMTM asks all persons aged 15 or older whether or not they made payments for the support of their children under 21 years of age who lived outside their household during the previous 12 months. Those who respond in the affirmative are then asked a series of questions about type of payment, how many children are covered and if under 18 years of age, if payments are the result of a court order or agreement, and other questions about type of agreement and year it was reached. The respondent is then asked how much they paid in child support under this most recent child support agreement during the previous 12 months. Additional questions determine if another agreement existed that covered other children not covered by the most recent agreement, and how much was paid. A final question asks how much was paid for children living outside the household where there was no type of agreement in place. The sum of the amount responses to these three questions determine the total amount of child support paid.

The CPS-ASEC asks all persons 15 years and older whether they have any children living elsewhere with their other parent or guardian at anytime during the previous year. Each individual who satisfies this requirement is then asked whether or not they were required to pay child support and how much was paid in totality during the previous calendar year.

Estimate Differences - As seen in Table 1, the SIPP-SNHMTM estimates that during 2004-2005 there were 5.4 million support payers, weighted from a sample of 1,697 responses in the topical module. In contrast, the CPS-ASEC shows only about half as many weighted support payers, 2.7 million, based on responses from 1,801 respondents who reported paying child support.

Apart from the large magnitude difference in universe sizes, the distributions of child support paid between CPS and SIPP are relatively similar. Additionally, the mean child support paid in the 2010 CPS was \$6,163, or 5% higher than the adjusted amount found in the 2004 SIPP panel (\$5,347, or \$5,874 in adjusted 2009 dollars). When multiplied by the universe, the aggregate amount of child support paid from the CPS (\$16.8 billion) was 46 percent lower than the adjusted aggregate support paid in SIPP (\$31.5 billion).

Table 1. Child Support Paid Comparison, CPS 2010 ASEC vs SIPP 2004 Wave 5

	Unweighted				Weighted		Unweighted				Weighted	
	2010 CPS				2010 CPS		2004 SIPP				2004 SIPP	
	Total	Percent of total	Allocated Number	Percent Allocated	Total	Percent of total	Total	Percent of total	Allocated Number	Percent Allocated	Total	Percent of total
Total paying support	1,801	100.0	284	15.8	2,738,000	100.0	1,697	100.0	384	22.6	5,364,000	100.0
ANNUAL AMOUNT PAID												
\$1 to \$499	136	7.6	23	16.9	222,000	8.1	159	9.4	39	24.5	465,000	8.7
\$500 to \$999	59	3.3	9	15.3	74,000	2.7	100	5.9	24	24.0	281,000	5.2
\$1,000 to \$2,499	256	14.2	47	18.4	352,000	12.9	325	19.2	77	23.7	1,017,000	19.0
\$2,500 to \$4,999	435	24.2	55	12.6	683,000	24.9	498	29.3	104	20.9	1,538,000	28.7
\$5,000 to \$7,499	454	25.2	80	17.6	699,000	25.5	302	17.8	56	18.5	955,000	17.8
\$7,500 to \$9,999	190	10.5	34	17.9	268,000	9.8	118	7.0	33	28.0	420,000	7.8
\$10,000 to \$12,499	111	6.2	16	14.4	192,000	7.0	98	5.8	25	25.5	343,000	6.4
\$12,500 to \$14,999	59	3.3	5	8.5	97,000	3.5	19	1.1	3	15.8	61,000	1.1
\$15,000 to \$24,999	80	4.4	11	13.8	116,000	4.2	55	3.2	18	32.7	189,000	3.5
\$25,000 or more	21	1.2	4	19.0	35,000	1.3	23	1.4	5	21.7	95,000	1.8
Mean	-	-	-	-	\$6,163	-	-	-	-	-	\$5,347	-
Aggregate					\$16,874,294,000						\$28,681,308,000	
SEX												
Male	1,649	91.6	268	16.3	2,530,000	92.4	1,474	86.9	302	20.5	4,745,000	88.5
Female	152	8.4	16	10.5	208,000	7.6	223	13.1	82	36.8	619,000	11.5
RACE & ORIGIN												
White only	1,348	74.8	191	14.2	2,066,000	75.5	1,315	77.5	275	20.9	4,124,000	76.9
Black only	307	17.0	67	21.8	516,000	18.8	263	15.5	78	29.7	898,000	16.7
Asian only	36	2.0	9	25.0	43,000	1.6	92	5.4	21	22.8	229,000	4.3
Residual	110	6.1	17	15.5	113,000	4.1	27	1.6	10	37.0	112,000	2.1
Hispanic origin	254	14.1	42	16.5	371,000	13.6	165	9.7	39	23.6	747,000	13.9
AGE												
Under 30	235	13.0	48	20.4	390,000	14.2	223	13.1	67	30.0	659,000	12.3
30 to 39	685	38.0	88	12.8	984,000	35.9	599	35.3	115	19.2	1,847,000	34.4
40 to 49	669	37.1	116	17.3	1,003,000	36.6	627	36.9	136	21.7	2,062,000	38.4
50 to 59	183	10.2	27	14.8	316,000	11.5	205	12.1	41	20.0	677,000	12.6
60 and over	29	1.6	5	17.2	44,000	1.6	43	2.5	25	58.1	118,000	2.2
MARITAL STATUS												
Married	595	33.0	71	11.9	937,000	34.2	661	39.0	126	19.1	1,959,000	36.5
Widowed	10	0.6	2	20.0	17,000	0.6	17	1.0	5	29.4	46,000	0.9
Divorced	554	30.8	116	20.9	1,019,000	37.2	639	37.7	143	22.4	2,043,000	38.1

Separated	110	6.1	23	20.9	211,000	7.7		117	6.9	25	21.4	433,000	8.1
Never Married	287	15.9	72	25.1	554,000	20.2		263	15.5	85	32.3	882,000	16.4
EDUCATION													
Less than HS	231	12.8	32	13.9	374,000	13.7		153	9.0	43	28.1	462,000	8.6
HS graduate	714	39.6	136	19.0	1,088,000	39.7		584	34.4	136	23.3	1,848,000	34.5
Some college	577	32.0	81	14.0	840,000	30.7		660	38.9	128	19.4	2,081,000	38.8
College degree	279	15.5	35	12.5	436,000	15.9		300	17.7	77	25.7	973,000	18.1