

2023 Survey of Income and Program Participation Conference

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

February 8, 2023

- Good morning, everyone. It's an honor to be here as director of the U.S. Census Bureau. I'd like to start by expressing my sincere thanks to you for joining us today for this virtual conference on the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP).
- I have a deep appreciation for this survey as a long-time policy researcher. [Personal reflections on ISDP.]
- We're excited to hear about your research and uses of SIPP ... and let me tell you why:
- In 2021, President Biden announced a federal agenda to advance equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. Because this goal "requires a systemic approach to embedding fairness in decision-making processes," policy makers and the public will need quality data about America's people and economy to advance equity.
- The Census Bureau is the leading provider of quality data about the nation's people and economy. We're committed to producing data that reflect an accurate portrait of America. Census Bureau data are valuable assets that can be used by policy makers and the public to advance equity.
- Our data can assist federal agencies and others in equitably distributing resources and identifying underserved communities. We provide a wealth of data by age, disability, race, ethnicity, sex, income, veteran status, and other key demographic variables to help measure equity. These data are often by geography, which provides meaning and context to the statistical data and can identify rural and underserved communities. The measures inform policy makers working to advance equity and enable them to propose effective, data-driven solutions.
- SIPP is a key component in measuring and improving equity. Since 1983, SIPP data have provided the most comprehensive information available on how America's economic well-being has changed over time. With its wide range of topics and rich data, policy makers depend on SIPP for information on the distribution of income and the success of government assistance programs.
- Now, throughout the Census Bureau, we're continually striving for excellence. And that can be challenging in our current environment. But even in the face of challenges, I believe that we can find new ways to collect data that are more accurate, timely, relevant, and most of all have utility, as in fit-for-use.
- Moreover, I believe that we promote excellence in how we engage stakeholders and how we gather and incorporate feedback and advice. We're eager to reach out and listen to the full diversity of our stakeholders—which of course includes you.
- Stakeholder feedback is critical to understanding the needs of our data users and decision-making. Events like this conference are an opportunity to provide our expertise to help others learn—but just as importantly, they are an opportunity for us to learn from community engagement. We can do things like literature reviews, but it's much better to have people together to talk and discuss for rich, contextual feedback.

- At the Census Bureau, we continuously engage in improving how we measure equity and diversity. We are constantly assessing how we can improve our statistical programs to better serve and represent underserved groups. We continuously research strategies for improving respondent understanding of questions we ask and the accuracy of the data we produce. And SIPP is no exception to this.
- A big topic of innovation in SIPP is the integration of administrative records, throughout the survey life cycle. We're also working on data collection enhancements to reduce respondent burden, including those like the SIPP Event History Calendar, which increases content coherence and reduces the cognitive recall burden.
- For the future of SIPP, we are considering designs that will fit with the Census Bureau's transformations in data collection. We're also thinking through how to optimize new systems and improve efficiencies in data collection. By doing so, we can meet the needs for a complex and dynamic social and economic environment.
- One way we're doing that is by moving to a multimode framework, to enable respondents to share their stories and information in their preferred mode. We're also leveraging administrative records to enhance sampling and incorporate dynamic methods for reducing nonresponse bias. By continuing to provide longitudinal data that can be used to inform and evaluate policy and programs, we can continue to tell the dynamic story of the U.S. population.
- Thank you again for joining us today. I know we're all looking forward to these presentations and learning more about your research.