Census Bureau Pulse Surveys
Experimental Surveys to Address Data Needs During the Coronavirus Pandemic

State Date Centers (SDC) Overview
September 2021

Kathryn Bonney, Economic Directorate, Economic Management Division
Colin Shevlin, Economic Directorate, Economic Indicators Division

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Two Populations, Two Surveys

Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS)

The Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS) measures the effect of changing business conditions during the Coronavirus pandemic on our nation’s small businesses. SBPS data complements existing U.S. Census Bureau data collections by providing high-frequency, detailed information on the challenges small businesses are facing during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Timeline for SBPS Data Collection
April 26, 2020 - current

Partners
Small Business Administration
Federal Reserve Board of Governors
International Trade Administration
Minority Business Development Administration
Bureau of Economic Analysis
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
Bureau of Labor Statistics
US Department of Health and Human Services

Household Pulse Survey (HPS)

Designed to understand impacts of Covid-19 on American families relating to employment, food security, housing, health and educational disruption

Timeline for HPS Data Collection
April 23, 2020 – current

Partners
Bureau of Labor Statistics
National Center for Health Statistics
Housing and Urban Development
National Center for Education Statistics
Office of Management and Budget
USDA Economic Research Service
Centers for Disease Control
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Department of Defense
Office of Management and Budget
SBPS Overview

Small Business Pulse Survey
• Leverages existing business frame and infrastructure
• Designed to measure at high frequency the effects of the pandemic on small businesses
• Partnered with subject matter experts at other federal agencies

Timeline
Phase 1: April 2020 – June 2020
Phase 2: August 2020 – October 2020
Phase 3: November 2020 – January 2021
Phase 4: February 2020 – April 2021
Phase 5: May 2021 – July 2021
Phase 6: August 2021–October 2021
Phase 7: November 2021–January 2022 (working through approvals)
**What’s the SBPS?**
A weekly survey to measure the effect of changing business conditions during the Coronavirus pandemic on our nation’s small businesses. Each phase has consisted of around 20 questions taking 5 - 6 minutes to complete. Each phase, this survey reaches ~1M small businesses split across nine weeks.

**What are we collecting?**
Near real time data from small business on operational challenges, vaccine requirements, supply chain impacts, and outlook and expectations.

**Collaboration Partners**
SBPS content has been developed in a joint effort between internal and external stakeholders. Internal: ADEP and CES. External: MBDA, FRB, SBA, ITA, NTIA, BTS BEA and BLS

**Methodology and Collection**
- ~1M sample representative of 5.6M small businesses
- Include all single-location businesses with 1-499 employees and $1000+ revenue that reported an email address. Excludes non-employers or multi-units
- Initial email on Monday asking for a response by Thursday
- Due date reminder sent Wednesday and a final notice is sent on Friday.
- This company has until the end of the phase to respond.

**SBPS Key Facts**
- In March-April 2020, Small Business Pulse Survey (SBPS) went from concept to data release in 39 days.
- Is the first economic survey conducted solely by email
- Weekly data releases
- Provides national estimates as well as state, top 50 metro, and sector detail
- Uses Centurion as reporting instrument
- Response rate of ~25%

**Phases**
- Phase 1: April 2020 – June 2020
- Phase 2: August 2020 – October 2020
- Phase 3: November 2020 – January 2021
- Phase 4: February 2021 – April 2021
- Phase 5: May 2021 – July 2021
- Phase 6: August 2021 – October 2021
SBPS Data Products Summary

Highly Interactive Website

• National estimates map
• Sector estimates
• By sector, state, and MSA:
  • Survey detail bar charts
  • Scatter plot of 2 questions/answers
  • Time series by sector, state, and MSA

Download Files and Documentation

• National estimates
• State estimates (includes Puerto Rico)
• Sector & Sub-sector (NAICS2, NAICS3) estimates
• MSA estimates for top 50 by population
• Employment size class (1-4, 5-19, 20+) estimates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phases 2 &amp; 3</th>
<th>Phase 4 &amp; 5</th>
<th>Phase 6</th>
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<td>Negative COVID Test</td>
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<td><strong>Carry-out/Curbside</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Operating Capacity Factors</strong></td>
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<td>Leased Space</td>
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<td>Planned Capital Expenditures</td>
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</table>
Overall Effect
Revenue & Employment

Q: In the last week, did this business have a change in operating revenues/sales/receipts?

Q: In the last week, did this business have a change in the number of paid employees?
COVID-19 Testing & Vaccination Requirements

Q: In the last week, did this business require employees to...
### Changes from Normal

Comparing now to what was normal before March 13, 2020 how have the following changed?

(Data Collected 09/13/2021 to 09/19/2021)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Large decrease</th>
<th>Moderate decrease</th>
<th>Little or no change</th>
<th>Moderate increase</th>
<th>Large increase</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of paid employees</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>61.2</td>
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<td>Hours worked from home</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>75.9</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
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<td>Demand for business's goods/services</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>6.3</td>
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<td>Prices this business pays for goods/services</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>28.8</td>
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Percent of Small Businesses

- Large decrease
- Moderate decrease
- Little or no change
- Moderate increase
- Large increase
Future Needs

Future Needs: National

First Week of Phases 2-6

- Financial Assistance
- Supply Chain
- Online
- Marketing or Sales
- New Employees
- Close
- None

Percentage of Businesses

Survey Indexes

Used to create a numeric representation of a question or set of questions.

• Overall Sentiment Index (OSI) assesses the overall effect of the pandemic on businesses.

• Operational Challenges Index (OCI) assesses the overall effect of the pandemic on business operations.

• Market Challenges Index (MCI) assesses the tightness in business conditions experience by businesses. (Introduced in Phase 6)

• Expected Recovery Index (ERI) summarizes the length of the expected recovery of businesses.
Overall Sentiment - National
Research Papers and Data Products

Papers

Catherine Buffington, Daniel Chapman, Emin Dinlersoz, Lucia Foster, Jim Hunt, and Shawn Klimek
Small Business Pulse Survey Estimates by Owner Characteristics and Rural/Urban Designation
View paper here
Working Paper Number CES-WP-21-24 August 2021

Catherine Buffington, Daniel Chapman, Emin Dinlersoz, Lucia Foster, and John Haltiwanger
High-frequency data from the U.S. Census Bureau during the COVID-19 pandemic: small vs. new businesses
View paper here
Business Economics Vol. 56 July 2021

Catherine Buffington, Jason Fields, and Lucia Foster
Measuring the Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses and People: Lessons from the Census Bureau’s Experience
View paper here
Aea Papers and Proceedings Vol. 111 May 2021

Catherine Buffington, Daniel Chapman, Emin Dinlersoz, Lucia Foster, and John Haltiwanger
High Frequency Business Dynamics in the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic
View paper here
Working Paper Number CES-21-06 March 2021

Catherine Buffington, Carrie Dennis, Emin Dinlersoz, Lucia Foster, and Shawn Klimek
View paper here
Working Paper Number CES-20-16 May 2020
Providing Insights Beyond COVID

Operational challenges index

Index values range from [-1, 1] with -1 (+1) representing the most (least) challenges.

Note: No data collected between 06/29/2020 - 08/08/2020, 10/13/2020 - 11/6/2020, 01/11/2021 - 02/14/2021, 04/19/2021 - 05/16/2021, and 07/19/2021 - 09/15/2021.

National State LA
SBPS Resources

Respondent Mailbox
• Found on respondent materials
• Email: econ.pulse@census.gov

Data - User Mailbox
• Listed on data viz page
• Email: econ.pulse.data@census.gov
SBPS Resources – External Links

- Small Business Pulse Respondent Landing Page
- Small Business Pulse Data Landing Page
- Small Business Pulse Data Visualization and Downloads Page
- COVID19 Data Hub Link – uses downloads data: https://covid19.census.gov/
  - ESRI uses data download files from data viz page (MSA, National, Sector)
Development of the COVID-19 Household Pulse Survey

Jason Fields, PhD, MPH

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Senior Researcher for Demographic Programs and the SIPP Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division
U.S. Census Bureau

Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author and do not represent the views of the U.S. Census Bureau. All results are from the Household Pulse Survey website that notes the following: The U.S. Census Bureau reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release. CBDRB-FY21-091.
Setting the Stage

Issues of the Moment (as of February...)

- **Census 2020** – operations accelerating and April 1, 2020 Census Day imminent
- Declining response
- Maintaining data quality
- Enhancing use of administrative records and adaptive design
- Developing survey based small-area estimates
- Moving forward with disclosure protection development for surveys

**COVID-19 ONSET [MARCH 13 through the end of MARCH]**

- In-person field data collection ceased
- Mail-center activities at National Processing Center (NPC) ceased
- Telephone Interviewing (CATI) centers closed
- Field personnel shifted from in-person to decentralized telephone interviewing
- Headquarters staff were shifted to full-time telework

**Survey changes**

- Content changes for ongoing surveys was expedited, but did not change survey cycles
The Household Pulse

What are the goals of the pulse?

• Focus on quickly and efficiently, collecting data on a range of ways in which people’s lives have been impacted by the pandemic

• Serve federal agencies to meet their critical information gaps in household information needed for their decisions related to the pandemic

• Provide data as rapidly as possible with as much transparency in methods and quality as possible

• Experimental data collection – Proof of concept – Accepting that this does not meet regular program quality standards
Frame

Contact frame and MAF

- Matched to Census Bureau’s Master Address File (MAF) records
- Emails and phone numbers from respondent contacts and from third party vendors
Agency Collaboration

Rapid Collaboration and Extensive Expertise

- Subject matter experts recognized opportunity and limitations of the tools available
- Quickly aligned information requests to the limitations
- Cognitive labs at Census, NCHS, and BLS collaborated to evaluate proposed questionnaire content

Burden and success

- Rapidly expanding interest in the Household Pulse platform highlighted information gap and demand for rapid information sources
- Requests were well supported by programmatic needs to measure the impact of the pandemic and the course of the recovery.
- Response and respondent burden are ongoing concerns

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AVERAGE INTERVIEW LENGTH

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<th>18-20 MIN</th>
<th>18-20 MIN</th>
<th>20-21 MIN</th>
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22
## PHASE 1

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Weighted Response Rate</th>
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<tr>
<td>April 23 – May 5 : Week 1</td>
<td>74,413</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 7 – May 12 : Week 2</td>
<td>41,996</td>
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<td>May 14 – May 19 : Week 3</td>
<td>132,961</td>
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<td>May 21 – May 26 : Week 4</td>
<td>101,215</td>
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<td>May 28 – June 2 : Week 5</td>
<td>105,066</td>
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<td>June 4 – June 9 : Week 6</td>
<td>83,302</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<td>June 11 – June 16: Week 7</td>
<td>73,472</td>
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<td>June 18 – June 23: Week 8</td>
<td>108,062</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 25 – June 30: Week 9</td>
<td>98,663</td>
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<td>July 2 – July 7: Week 10</td>
<td>90,767</td>
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<td>July 9 – July 14: Week 11</td>
<td>91,605</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 16 – July 21: Week 12</td>
<td>86,792</td>
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## PHASE 2/3

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<td>August 19 – August 31: Week 13</td>
<td>109,051</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<td>September 2 – September 14: Week 14</td>
<td>110,019</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 16 – September 28: Week 15</td>
<td>99,302</td>
<td>9.2</td>
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<td>September 30 – October 12: Week 16</td>
<td>95,604</td>
<td>8.8</td>
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<td>October 14 – October 26: Week 17</td>
<td>88,716</td>
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<td>October 28 – November 9: Week 18</td>
<td>58,729</td>
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<td>November 11 – November 23: Week 19</td>
<td>71,939</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<td>November 25 – December 7: Week 20</td>
<td>72,484</td>
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<td>December 9 – December 21: Week 21</td>
<td>69,944</td>
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## PHASE 3

**PHASE 3.1**

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<td>April 14 – April 26: Week 28</td>
<td>68,913</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
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<td>April 28 – May 10: Week 29</td>
<td>78,467</td>
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<td>May 12 – May 24: Week 30</td>
<td>72,897</td>
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<td>May 26 – June 7: Week 31</td>
<td>70,854</td>
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<td>June 9 – June 21: Week 32</td>
<td>68,067</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 23 – July 5: Week 33</td>
<td>66,262</td>
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**PHASE 3.2**

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<td>July 21 – August 2: Week 34</td>
<td>64,562</td>
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<td>August 4 – August 16: Week 35</td>
<td>68,799</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
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<td>August 18 – August 30: Week 36</td>
<td>69,114</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1 – September 13: Week 37</td>
<td>63,536</td>
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**PHASE 3.3**

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<td>September 15 – September 27: Week 38</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 29 – October 11: Week 39</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
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**TOTAL** 40,160,430 Sampled Units

3,079,492 Interviews
Content: Phase 3.2

Basic demographics
Age, race, Hispanic origin, marital status, educational attainment
SOGI (Census/OMB/DPC)
Disability status (NCHS/CDC)
Armed forces status (DOD)

Employment questions
Employment and employment income (BLS/Census)
Spending source of funds (BLS)
Child Tax Credit receipt (CEA/DPC/BLS/Census)
Series on expenditures (BLS)
Essential worker occupations (NIOSH)

Food security questions
Past and current food sufficiency (USDA-ERS)
Free meals (USDA-ERS)
SNAP receipt (USDA-ERS)

Health questions
Mental health and mental health services use (NCHS)
Health insurance (NCHS/Census)
Vaccination receipt, intentions, and COVID diagnosis (CDC)
Children’s vaccination receipt (CDC)
Tele/Video health (NCHS/MCHB)
Children’s preventive health care (MCHB)

Housing questions
Tenure (HUD)
Living quarters (HUD)
Rent and mortgage current payment status (HUD)
Confidence about paying rent/mortgage next month (HUD)
Eviction and foreclosure expectations (HUD)
Months behind on rent/mortgage (CFPB)
Use of rent assistance (CFPB)
Energy assistance and use (EIA)

Education questions
Catch-up education experience K-12 (NCES)
Post-Secondary questions (NCES)
Measuring Household Experiences during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Data collection for Phase 3 of the Household Pulse Survey ran from October 28, 2020, to March 20, 2021 and is now closed. Data collection for Phase 4 of the survey is scheduled to begin on April 14, 2021, with the next data release on May 3, 2021.

What is the Household Pulse Survey?

The U.S. Census Bureau, in collaboration with multiple federal agencies, is in a unique position to produce data on the social and economic effects of coronaviruses on American households. The Household Pulse Survey is designed to deploy quickly and efficiently, collecting data to measure household experiences during the coronavirus pandemic. Data will be disseminated in near real-time to inform federal and state response and recovery planning.

https://www.census.gov/householdpulsedata
Food Scarcity

Percentage of adults in households where there was either sometimes or often not enough to eat in the last 7 days.

- **Louisiana**: 17.4% (± 3.7%)
- **South Carolina**: 15.8% (± 3.4%)
- **Oklahoma**: 15.4% (± 3.2%)
- **Arkansas**: 15.1% (± 3.1%)
- **New Mexico**: 14.1% (± 3.0%)
- **Alabama**: 13.2% (± 2.9%)
- **Georgia**: 12.4% (± 2.8%)
- **District of Columbia**: 11.8% (± 2.7%)
- **Tennessee**: 11.4% (± 2.6%)
- **Kentucky**: 11.1% (± 2.5%)

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Household Pulse Survey*
Mental Health Measures

Source: Data from the Household Pulse Survey (April 23rd, 2020 – March 29th, 2021).
Universe: 18+ Adults

NHIS January-June 2019:
- Anxiety Symptoms: 8.2%
- Depressive Symptoms: 6.6%
Percentage of Adults in Households with Children Under 18 Having Received the Child Tax Credit

15 Largest Metros: July 21 - August 2, 2021


Universe limited to adults in households with children under 18

UPDATED 8/20/2021 TO EXCLUDE MISSING
Expected Likelihood of Eviction by Category of Emergency Rental Assistance Responses


Universe limited to adults in rented households that are not current on rent

UPDATED 8/20/2021 TO EXCLUDE MISSING
Lessons Learned
Where do we go from here?

What we did

- A stripped-down version of a regular survey, but faster, and with a few new features

What did it tell us?

- Data collection – a place for low response data collection with enough caution

- Data processing – limited data processing has an appropriate use

- Rapid collection and release prioritized along with methodological transparency has a unique and separate value in the portfolio of data products

- Incredible hunger and need for rapid information sources especially during major events

- This new work highlighted gaps in staffing that would be needed to support it
Lessons Learned
Where do we go from here?

What we need

• Envision an integrated data resource that can generate rapid, reliable estimates to support information needs
• Geographic requirements (national, states, regions, small areas) – ability to serve all the above
• Revisit sampling design and requirements to sustain ongoing rapid collections
• Integrate small-area estimates feasibility into the design and coverage requirements,
• Ensure that there are enough cross-over data elements to model based on linkages to the ACS
• Incorporate administrative records and adaptive design to monitor and adjust data collection

Develop methods for maintaining a representative sample that can be surveyed rapidly for changing data needs

• Accommodate the coverage gap represented by the gap between the contact frame and the MAF
• Response differentials, acknowledge and adjust for differential non-response in sample maintenance
Household Pulse Resources – External Links

Household Pulse Survey main page:
https://www.census.gov/householdpulsedata

Data tool:
https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp

Vaccine tracker:

Data Tables main page:
https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html

Technical Documentation:
https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/technical-documentation.html

Survey Respondent overview:
https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey.html