

Appendix A: The Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the 1997 Child Development Supplement

The study sample comes from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), a nationally representative sample of U.S. men, women, children, and the families in which they reside which has been followed for more than 30 years. Data on employment, income, wealth, housing, food expenditures, transfer income, and marital and fertility behavior have been collected annually since 1968 and biennially since 1997. From 5,000 families in 1968, the study grew to over 9,000 core families in 1996 since children and other sample members become respondents in their own right when they leave the original household. In 1997 the PSID reduced its core sample to 6,700 and added a refresher sample of 450 immigrant families so that the sample represents the U.S. population.

Until 1997, measures were collected annually from interviews with one adult respondent about all family members, but only limited information was available on children and parental interaction. During spring and fall 1997, information on up to two randomly selected 0-12-year-old children of PSID respondents was collected from the primary caregivers, from other caregivers, and from the children themselves (Hofferth et al., 1999). The Child Development Supplement (CDS) completed interviews with 2,394 child households and about 3,600 children. The response rate was 90 percent for those families regularly interviewed in the core PSID and 84 percent for those contacted the first time in 1997 for an immigrant refresher to the sample, with a combined response rate for both groups of 88 percent.

The 18-item food security survey instrument was included in 1997 Child Development Supplement and again for the full PSID in 1999. A sample of children under age 13 in 1997 was matched to the 1999 sample and families in which these children were residing in both years were selected for this comparison. For children who are siblings living in the same family, their families are represented only once. Therefore, this study is a study of the families of children under age 13 in 1997 and in 1999.

Attrition averages only about 4 percent between waves. When weights are used, as is done throughout this report, the results have been found to be representative of U.S. individuals and their families (Fitzgerald, Gottschalk, and Moffitt, 1998). Case counts represent actual sample sizes. Statistics are calculated based upon actual sample sizes. The unit of analysis in the PSID is the family, not the household. A small fraction of families that share households are treated as separate family units in the PSID. The Current Population Survey, in contrast, is a household-based survey. This difference in sampling unit could lead to some differences in estimates of the incidence of food insecurity in the United States. However, this is unlikely to affect our estimates of food security dynamics.