

Changes to 2022 CPS Public Use Microdata Files
(REVISED January 14, 2022)

This is an **update** to the U.S. Census Bureau's plans for releasing the 2022 Current Population Survey Public Use File (CPS PUF).

The Census Bureau will release the January 2022 CPS PUF in February, without previously announced delays and changes. Given the historical circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, combined with the urgent need for workforce data, the Census Bureau has decided to defer the introduction of updated confidentiality protections and release the January 2022 Current Population Survey Public Use File (CPS PUF) in February 2022 as originally scheduled.

The 2022 CPS PUF will retain characteristics of the 2021 CPS PUF that enable data users to conduct year-over-year time series analysis and other research activities key to understanding the U.S. economy and workforce, specifically the public-use file household identifier. This adjustment reflects a change to the 2022 CPS PUF annual announcement that indicated there would be a delay while additional protections were applied to the data.

As it does every year, the Census Bureau will continue to strengthen the methods to protect the confidentiality of data provided by CPS respondents. New protections will be introduced in a phased approach beginning later this year that will preserve the CPS time series and better prepare data users for the changes. The following suppressions are still planned for this phase-in:

1. Geographic Suppression

Currently, substate geographic areas with populations less than 100,000 are suppressed on the CPS public use files. This cutoff will either increase to 250,000 or additional disclosure limitation will be applied to households living in geographic areas with less than 250,000 to permit users to continue to produce some statistics using the 2021 geographic areas. Note that the CPS sample is based on the results of the 2010 Decennial Census and, as such, we are using the 2010 population counts to determine CBSAs size and not 2020 population count.

2. Topcoding of the Usual Weekly Earnings and Usual Hourly Earnings Data

The highest earnings values for usual weekly earnings are currently topcoded to a set value of \$2,884.61. Average hourly earnings are topcoded such that an individual's average hourly earnings multiplied by the usual hours worked does not exceed \$2,884.61. This rate is never adjusted.

The topcoding will be done independently for each month and will rely on an algorithm that will identify the top 3 percent of earnings reported. This will result in fewer cases being topcoded going forward. Note that the highest earnings value will change from month to month using this algorithm. For individuals whose earnings have been topcoded, the earnings variable will contain the weighted average of the top 3% and not the cutoff value.

For example, if the top 3% of weekly earnings is anything over \$2400 but the average of the top 3% is \$3450, the public use file will report 3450.

The new topcoding algorithm will be implemented for the following variables: PTERNHLY, PTERNH1O, PTERNH2, PTERNH1C, PTERNWA, PTERN, and PTERN2.

3. Rounding of the Usual Weekly Earnings and Usual Hourly Earnings Data

In addition to the topcoding, usual weekly earnings and usual hourly earnings, which are unrounded currently, will be rounded to protect respondent confidentiality.

- a. For Usual Weekly Earnings data the following variables will be rounded using Table 1: PTERNWA, PTERN, and PTERN2.

Table 1: Rounding Rules for Weekly earnings

Usual weekly earnings as reported	Rounded value on public use files
Less than \$15	"N<15" will appear on the file
\$15 to \$99	Nearest \$10
\$100 to \$999	Nearest \$50
\$1,000 to \$9,999	Nearest \$100 (unless topcoded)
\$10,000 to 99,999	Nearest \$500 (unless topcoded)
\$100,000 to \$999,999	Nearest \$1000 (unless topcoded)
\$1,000,000 or more	Will be topcoded

As part of the rounding, there will no longer be 2 implied decimals stored in the variables and all values reported will be whole dollar amounts.

- b. For Usual Hourly Earnings data the following variables will be rounded using Table 2: PTERNHLY, PTERNH1O, PTERNH2, and PTERNH1C. For readability, the implied decimal is shown:

Usual hourly earnings as reported	Rounded value on public use files
Less than \$00.15	“N<15” will appear on the file
\$00.15 to \$00.99	Nearest \$00.10
\$1.00 to \$9.99	Nearest \$00.50
\$10.00 to \$99.99	Nearest \$1.00 (unless topcoded)
\$100.00 to \$999.99	Nearest \$5.00 (unless topcoded)
\$1000.00 to \$9999.99	Nearest \$10.00 (unless topcoded)
\$10,000 or more	Will be topcoded

- c. Because of the interest in workers earning at or below the prevailing Federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, the variable PRERNMIN will be added to the public use files that will identify workers who earn \$7.25 per hour or less. To maintain confidentiality with the flag, the value of \$7.25 will be rounded down.

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