

DHEW is currently testing a proposed Survey of Income and Program Participation which should provide data presently not included in the Current Population Survey.

The second covered the need for more accuracy of data obtained from household surveys and censuses, especially on income data. In this regard, it was noted that the Social Security Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Census Bureau are jointly cooperating in evaluation projects aimed to obtain results which could be used to reduce not only survey response errors but also improve adjustments for nonresponses. These studies use administrative records and household survey data. New techniques derived from these projects will be valuable in improving future surveys and censuses, especially on collecting income data.

The third area of discussion dealt with the lack of adequate guidelines regarding the meaning and scope of confidentiality. There appears to be a need to differentiate situations where confidentiality rules can be used with some flexibility. This calls for clearer definitions.

The fourth topic covered work needed to develop and expand the use of sample microdata files for public welfare assistance statistical reporting and analyses in States which have capabilities of doing so. The basic approach used in the Texas demonstration project outlined in reference 4 appears to be promising.

Other areas of discussion touched on the need to obtain better small-area data from general purpose surveys and censuses for local government administrative use and the impact of the current OMB directive to reduce reporting burdens of Federal reports.

NOTE: Participants agreed that the discussion was made more interesting and useful because of the

diverse background of discussants. A suggestion was made that, if possible, participants should review background papers before the meeting. As an alternative, it was suggested that participants be queried beforehand on topics/questions they would like to discuss and this listing be distributed before the meeting. The background paper used for this meeting can be obtained from the writer, address: OPRE, OHDS, DHEW, Room 2614, Switzer Building, 330 C Street, S. W., Washington, D. C. 20201.

REFERENCES:

1. Toward an Effective Income Support System: Problems, Prospects and Choices by M. C. Barth, G. C. Carcagno, and J. L. Palmer; also Overview Paper by I. Garfinkel, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1974.
2. Studies in Public Welfare, Handbook on Public Income Transfer Programs, Paper No. 20, Joint Economic Committee Print, 93rd Congress, 2d Session, 1974.
3. "Social Welfare Expenditure, FY 1976" by A. M. Skolnik and S. R. Dales, Social Security Bulletin, January 1977. See also Social Welfare Expenditures Under Public Programs in the United States, 1929-1966, by I. C. Merriam and A. M. Skolnik, Social Security Administration, 1968.
4. "Development of Computerized Welfare Recipient Statistical Reporting System" by G. Higgins, R. Becker, and M. Ono. Presented at 1977 Annual Meeting of American Statistical Association
5. The Measurement of Economic and Social Performance, Milton Moss, Editor, Studies in Income and Wealth, Volume Thirty-Eight. National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, 1973. See also "Social Accounting for Transfer" by Robert Lampman, Reprint No. 143, Institute for Research on Poverty Reprint Series.

CURRENT NATIONAL FERTILITY SURVEYS

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A great number of recent, current and projected national surveys have developed in many countries under the aegis of the World Fertility Survey. These are very largely modelled on KAP studies and earlier national studies undertaken in a few developed countries. In the United States specifically, the major current national studies in the area of fertility are the 1975 National Fertility Study (based on a follow-back to once-married, currently married women in the 1970 NFS and a supplemental sample of women married in the intervening years), the Johns Hopkins studies of teenage pregnancy (1971 and 1976) and the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) 1973 and 1976.

The presentation and discussion focused largely on the NSFG. Described as a lineal descendant of the earlier NFS and GAF studies going back to 1955, the NSFG is a new data system in the National Center for Health Statistics. Field

work for the first two cycles of the survey was done in 1973 and 1976, respectively. In order to exploit the data of these first two cycles as fully as possible, and to expand the coverage to include all women 15-44 years, regardless of marital status, Cycle III has been postponed to 1980.

The NSFG is a household survey based on personal interviews with an area probability sample of women 15 through 44 years of age, who have children of their own in the household or have ever been married, and who reside in the conterminous U.S. Completed interviews in the first two cycles were 9,797 and 8,611, respectively. The topics of the interviews included a detailed marital history, a complete pregnancy history with dates, outcomes, and various characteristics of each pregnancy, a pregnancy planning history with information on the "wantedness" of each pregnancy and details on

the specific contraceptive methods used in the three years preceding the interview, ability to bear children in the future and the intentions and expectations of couples regarding future births and future use of contraception, and examination of preferences for the number and sex of children, information on family planning services received including services to increase the chances of childbearing, and general social and demographic characteristics.

NSFG data will be published by the NCHS in Advance Data releases and in Series 23 of the Vital and Health Statistics Reports. Advance reports from Cycle I on contraceptive utilization, wanted and unwanted births, birth expectations and pregnant workers have been published, to be followed in the fall of 1977 and through 1978 by detailed reports on a wide range of topics such as trends in contraceptive utilization, the realization of family size goals, underlying preferences for family composition, employment before and after childbirth, trends in unwanted fertility, family planning services, use-effectiveness of contraception, short-term birth projections, and socio-economic differentials in expected family size. Advance data from Cycle II are expected to begin in the summer of 1978, followed by detailed reports throughout 1979. A public use tape for Cycle I has been made available by NCHS and a similar tape for Cycle II is anticipated for December 1978.

It was agreed that inclusion of single women in the NSFG was an important step because of their contribution to current levels of abortion and illegitimate conceptions, the growing interest in family planning services to young women and because their behavior and expectation about marriage and childbearing play a major part in the birth rates of the next few years. It was noted that, while single women with children of their own in the household were already in the NSFG, they comprise a very selective group of sexually active singles. The possible

difficulties in obtaining reliable data on unmarried minors was considered. The need for parental consent, for instance, would add to the costs and possibly effect response rates adversely.

The need for better abortion data was emphasized. It was pointed out that responses to direct inquiries on abortions seemed to be improving though still short of complete candor. The randomized response technique, though yielding estimates vary substantially greater than those based on reports by abortion providers, left too many points of doubt to be a satisfactory procedure. Asking about the use of specific abortion techniques rather than the general and possibly loaded term "induced abortion" was suggested.

The increasing frequency of cohabiting couples suggests possible institutional changes in marriage that should be monitored through a survey like the NSFG. The survey presently includes "informal marriages" provided this information is volunteered in response to questions on "relationship to head" and "marital status." More direct questions might be developed for monitoring the frequency of these unions, though difficulties in obtaining reliable retrospective accounts of these unions were acknowledged.

The desirability of obtaining more family background characteristics was examined. Background characteristics of the couple, as presently asked, comprise the largest single section of the interview. Expansion of these items would probably be at the cost of information on one or more dependent variables. It was recognized, however, that the traditional background characteristics of couples were explaining less and less of the variation in fertility behavior. While the explanatory power of alternative characteristics need study, it was questioned whether one should disrupt valuable times series data in a large scale national survey to experiment with new items whose discriminant value was largely unknown.