AFDC Data Archive Documentation

The AFDC Data Archive contains two types of
  data files

AFDC Characteristics Surveys

Documentation not available.

AFDC Quality Control Files

Objective

The Aid to Families with Dependent Children Quality Control (AFDC-QC) system was established by the federal government to ensure that the program's funds were going to people who were eligible, and to determine whether those who were eligible were receiving the amount to which they are entitled. Each year, the federal government used the QC data to calculate AFDC error rates for each state.

The QC data were also used, and continue to be used, to examine the characteristics of AFDC families.

Data Collection

Each year's QC data set consists of case record samples that were submitted by the states to the federal government. Each month, each state selected a probability sample of its cases receiving cash payments. Data were coded from case records onto the review schedules and transmitted from each state to the federal government. Within a particular state, approximately the same number of cases was selected in each month of the year. Each year's AFDC-QC file includes records from each month of the fiscal year. For example, the FY 1995 AFDC-QC data include records from October 1994 through September 1995.

The federal government established a standard sample size for each state, depending on the state's average monthly caseload. In fiscal year 1995, for example, the standard sample size ranged from about 300 to 2,400 over the 12-month period. In some years, states were allowed to reduce their samples below the standard if they signed a waiver stating that they would not challenge the reliability of the AFDC payment error rates calculated from their QC data.

Each record in an AFDC-QC data file represents a single AFDC case in a single month. Each state's sample is weighted so that the sum of the weighted records equals the average monthly caseload in the state during the fiscal year. For a particular state or across the country, the AFDC-QC data give a snapshot of the average monthly AFDC caseload.

Sampling Errors

Because the AFDC-QC data files are based on samples, any tabulations from the files are estimates and are subject to sampling errors. Sampling errors occur to the extent that the results would have been different if

obtained from a complete enumeration of all AFDC cases.

National estimates of 50 percent should not vary from the true value being estimated by more than 0.9 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. At the state level, in the states with the smallest samples, an estimate of 50 percent should not vary from the true value being estimated by more than 5.5 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. Researchers should calculate standard errors for their specific estimates.

Non-sampling errors

Non-sampling errors are errors in response to questions or in coding of responses, or due to incomplete sampling frames.

The data entries are based on the information that was in the case records. Errors may have occurred because of misinterpretation of questions or because of incomplete or out-of-date case record information. Errors may also have occurred in coding and transmitting the data. Selected sample cases may have been omitted because full information was not available on them at the time the QC data set was being completed.

There are no measures of the reliability of the coded information.

Every effort was made to assure that each state's sampling frame was complete. It is possible, however, that some cases receiving a payment during the review month were not included in the frame. There is no measure of the completeness of the sampling frames.

Fields With Coding Changes

The coding of some fields has changed over time. A field naming convention reflects which fields change and the year of change. A two-digit suffix in a field name indicates the first year in which a coding change became effective. The coding of the following fields changed during the 1983-1997 period.

- AFDC affiliation: aft83, aft86, aft92, aft93
- Citizenship: cit83, cit92
- Food Stamp affiliation: fstyb83, fstyb92
- Employment status: emp83, emp86, emp89, emp92
- Employment training program: etp83, etp89
- Institutional status: instit83, instit86, instit92
- Education: neduc86, neduc89
- Relationship to head: rel83, rel86, rel89, rel93
- Restricted payment: rstrc83, rstrc86, rstr92a, rstr92b
- Review type: revtyp83 revtyp86
- Shelter arrangements: sheltr83, sheltr86, sheltr92
- State disposition: statds83, statds86
- Type of action: typact83, typact84, typact86
- Unborn children: unborn83, unborn92

Users should be alert to the fact that the coding of four fields--ETP, NEDUC, REL, and EMP--changed mid-year in 1989. See the codebook for details.