

# Survey of Consumer Payment Choice Data User's Guide

## 1 Introduction

One of the major goals of the Survey of Consumer Payment Choice (SCPC) is to provide a publicly available, consumer-level longitudinal dataset to support research on consumer payments and to provide aggregate data on trends in U.S. consumer payments.

The questionnaires and public datasets for the 2014 SCPC are available for download on the Consumer Payments Research Center (CPRC) website at <http://www.bostonfed.org/economic/cprc/scpc/index.htm>. The data are provided in SAS, Stata, and CSV formats. The CPRC assumes that data users are familiar with a statistical analysis software package such as SAS, Stata, or R. The CPRC does not provide any software assistance.

This document is a data user's guide for the SCPC survey (see the [The 2014 Survey of Consumer Payment Choice: Technical Appendix](#) for details). Anyone interested in conducting research based on SCPC data will find it helpful to become familiar with this document.

A broad overview of the 2014 SCPC, including a summary of the survey and tables of survey results, can be found in the [The 2014 Survey of Consumer Payment Choice](#). Details about data collection and data processing are found in [The 2014 Survey of Consumer Payment Choice: Technical Appendix](#).

All questions regarding the use of the data can be directed to:

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## 2 SCPC variable overview

There are three broad categories of SCPC variables. Below we provide general information about each.

**My Household Questionnaire variables** represent a small fraction of variables that come from the [RAND American Life Panel \(ALP\)](#) My Household Questionnaire (MHQ). The MHQ is used to gather demographic data about each respondent. ALP members take the MHQ quarterly, and their most recent responses to the MHQ are included in these SCPC datasets.

**Survey variables** are the actual results from the SCPC survey questions. Survey variables have variable names such as pa001\_a or pu004\_b. To see the exact question text, respondent instructions, response option wording, and structure of the questions on the screen, it is recommended to search the survey questionnaires themselves (available on the [SCPC website](#)). Two important considerations of the survey variables are:

- *Randomization of question orders:* To avoid potential biases arising from the order of response options presented to respondents, the survey instrument randomizes response options for some questions. The questionnaire clearly indicates if response options were randomized. The unrandomized variables have the same variable names as the original survey variables. The raw data from the unrandomized variables and the SAS macros that unrandomize the responses will be made available upon request.
- *Responses for different time frequencies:* Respondents are given the option of reporting payment use and cash management in terms of a typical week, month, or year. This dataset includes variables where responses have been standardized to a monthly frequency, in addition to the original responses for the weekly, monthly or yearly rates. The frequency converted variables have the same name as the original responses, but without a numeric suffix. For instance, the variable pu006a\_a refers to the number of cash payments for retail goods in a typical month, after frequency conversion. The set of three original variables that produce pu006a\_a are pu006a.a1 (respondent used the weekly box to report these transactions), pu006a.a2 (monthly) and pu006a.a3 (yearly). The SAS macros for the frequency conversions can be made available upon request.

**Created variables** are created by the CPRC to populate the SCPC results tables and to aid in data analysis. Most of these variables have descriptive names based on a combination of mnemonics. For example, the variable cc\_typ consists of two mnemonics: cc stands for “credit card”, and typ stands for “number of transactions in a typical month”. More insight into variable name mnemonics is provided in [Section 2.2](#).

## 2.1 Survey variables

### 2.1.1 Respondent identifier

prim_key	Unique respondent identifier
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The variable `prim_key` is of the form `xyyzzzz:n` or `xyyyzzzz:n` (for 2010 onward), where `x` or `xx` is year (9 for 2009, 10 for 2010, e.g.), `yy` is month (08 for August, e.g.), and `zzzz` is a household identifier within that year/month. `xyyzzzz` and `xyyyzzzz` are the unique household identifier. The number to the right of the colon is the member id (1, 2, ..., n) for a panel member inside a household. It is assigned in the order that the respondent entered the survey; panel members with member id equal to 1 are the panelist that was contacted and recruited to join the ALP. Those with member id numbers of 2 or greater are household members of the original recruits. The `prim_key` for an ALP member is the same across all RAND ALP surveys. This allows data users to merge other RAND ALP survey datasets onto the SCPC dataset.

### 2.1.2 Survey weight

r_weight	Individual-level post-stratification weights - from a raking procedure
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For information about how the survey weights are calculated, please see the 2014 SCPC Technical Appendix.

## 2.2 Created variables

Most created variable names are a combination of 2 or more mnemonics, combined using underscores. Typically, the first mnemonic refers to payment instrument, type of account, or a method of payment. The second or last mnemonic often indicates the concept being communicated, such as its characteristic, adoption, or typical use. This section describes the most common mnemonics.

### 2.2.1 Payment instruments

banp	Bank account number payment
cc	Credit card
chk	Check
cash	Cash
dc	Debit card
income	Direct deduction from income (used in automatic bill payments only)
mon	Money order
obbp	Online banking bill payment
svc	Stored-value card/prepaid card
tc	Travelers check

Payment instruments are grouped as follows:

card	Credit cards, debit cards, prepaid cards
elect	Bank account number payments, online banking bill payments
paper	Cash, check, money order, travelers checks
pi	All payment instruments

### 2.2.2 Transaction types

abp	Automatic bill payment
ipbp	In-person bill payment (or via mail)
obp	Online bill payment
op	Online (non-bill) payments
p2p	Person-to-person payment
rp	Retail payments (made in-person)
serv	Services and other payments (in-person)

Transaction types are grouped as follows:

bp	Bill payment i.e. union of abp, obp, ipbp
op	Online (non-bill) payments
posp2p	All in-person (non-bill) payments, i.e. union of rp, serv and p2p

### 2.2.3 Assessment of payment characteristics

acceptance	Acceptance for payment
convenience	Convenience
cost	Cost
records	Payment records
security	Security
setup	Getting and setting up

### 2.2.4 Payment adoption

adopt	Respondent is currently an adopter (Y/N)
discard	Respondent was an adopter, not anymore (Y/N)
ever	Respondent was an adopter in the past but does not currently have or own the item in question (Y/N)
num	Number of payment instruments (equals 0 for non-adopters)

### 2.2.5 Payment use

For each payment instrument and seven transaction types, respondents are asked to report their payment use behavior - how frequently they use a payment instrument for a specific transaction type. Therefore, at the most disaggregated level, a payment use variable name consists of three mnemonic components: the payment instrument (Section 2.2.1), followed by the transaction type (Section 2.2.2), and ending with a suffix that indicates the type of payment use information (incidence of use, frequency of use, and share of all transactions made):

sh	Number of transactions in a typical month, as proportion of all payments
typ	Number of transactions in a typical month
t_m	Respondent makes the corresponding type of payment at least once in a typical month (Y/N)
t_y	Respondent makes the corresponding type of payment at least once in a typical year (Y/N)

It is important to note that not all combinations of payment instruments and transaction types exist. This is because they were assumed not to be possible at the time of the survey. The following table illustrates combinations that do exist in the data and the corresponding combinations of mnemonic prefixes:

	bp			op	posp2p		
	abp	obp	ipbp	op	rp	serv	p2p
banp	banp_abp	banp_obp		banp_op			banp_p2p
cc	cc_abp	cc_obp	cc_ipbp	cc_op	cc_rp	cc_serv	cc_p2p
chk			chk_ipbp	chk_op	chk_rp	chk_serv	chk_p2p
csh			csh_ipbp		csh_rp	csh_serv	csh_p2p
dc	dc_abp	dc_obp	dc_ipbp	dc_op	dc_rp	dc_serv	dc_p2p
income	income_abp						
mon			mon_ipbp	mon_op	mon_rp	mon_serv	mon_p2p
obbp	obbp_abp	obbp_obp					obbp_p2p
svc			svc_ipbp	svc_op	svc_rp	svc_serv	
tc	tc_ (not asked by transaction type)						

The variable `tot_pay_typ` is defined for each respondent as the sum of all payments made in a typical month. The share variables “\_sh” express the original “typ” variable as a proportion of `tot_pay_typ` for that respondent. The tables in the 2014 SCPC results paper describing payment shares are not computed using these individually defined variables. Instead, each share denotes the total number of transactions falling under that category as a proportion of all reported transactions, aggregated over all respondents. This differs slightly from taking means of the \_sh variables defined in this document: it weights respondents who have a large number of transactions more heavily than respondents who have a smaller number of transactions.

### **2.2.6 Variables defined conditional on adoption**

Some tables in the 2014 SCPC results paper include statistics that are calculated conditional on the adoption of a bank account, a certain payment instrument, or other payment technology. Separate variables were created to facilitate this calculation for the tables; these variables either end with the suffix “\_adoptonly” or contain the term “oadopt”, indicating the conditional coding of the underlying variable. Such variables contain missing values (rather than zeros) for non-adopters of the respective account/instrument/technology.

### **2.2.7 Flags for variables that were cleaned for outliers**

The SCPC has many continuous variables. These variables come from survey questions where the respondent is allowed to enter a number into an open ended text box. For instance, we ask the respondent to tell us how many credit card payments they make for retail goods in a typical week, month, or year. Continuous variables in the SCPC are cleaned for outliers and edited based on algorithms described in the 2014 SCPC Technical Appendix. To indicate an edited variable, the prefix “f\_” is added to the front of a variable name. A flag value of 0 indicates that the particular observation was not edited. A flag value greater than 0 means the observation was edited.