

June 2024

RAND CAMS Spending Data File 2001-2021 (V1)

The Consumption and Activities Mail Survey (CAMS) is a paper-and-pencil survey that is collected biennially in odd-numbered years. One of its primary objectives is to measure total household spending over the previous 12 months. It is an ongoing supplement to the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) which is a longitudinal survey representative of the U.S. population over the age of 50. For more information on the HRS, please visit their website at hrsonline.isr.umich.edu.

In September 2001, the first CAMS survey was mailed to 5,000 households selected at random from households that participated in the HRS 2000 core survey. In September 2003, October 2005, September 2007, September 2009, September 2011 and fall 2013, CAMS Waves 2 to 7 were sent to the same households. In CAMS 2005, an additional sub-sample was included consisting of the newly added Early Baby-Boomers cohort that was first recruited into the HRS sample as part of the HRS 2004 core survey. Likewise, in CAMS 2011 and 2017, sub-samples were added targeting a portion of the new Mid Baby-Boomers and Late Baby-Boomers cohorts that were first recruited for the HRS 2010 and 2016 core surveys. An additional portion of the Late Baby-Boomer cohort was added to the CAMS 2019 sample. In 2021, the sample consisted of everyone invited to participate in the 2019 CAMS who was alive in 2019 and who had not been permanently removed from the HRS or CAMS samples.

The CAMS survey consists of three parts. In Part A, the Respondent is asked about the amount of time spent in each of over 30 activities such as time spent watching TV or preparing meals.¹ Part B collects information on actual spending for more than 30 categories, as well as anticipated and recollected spending change at retirement. Part C asks about current labor force status.²

With the goal of making the data from the survey more accessible to researchers, the RAND Center for the Study of Aging, with funding and support from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the Social Security Administration (SSA), created the RAND CAMS data files. This distribution file contains the RAND CAMS Spending data, a user-friendly version of Part B of the CAMS survey. It contains annualized, cleaned, imputed and aggregated spending and consumption variables with consistent and intuitive naming conventions across waves. Specifically, total household spending and household consumption are calculated across all categories and for these subsets of spending: nondurables, durables, housing and transportation. This data can be easily merged to the RAND HRS and other HRS files as described in the data codebook.

The data described in this document are based on 2001 (V3), 2003 (V2), 2005 (V1), 2007 (V1), 2009 (V1), 2011 (V2), 2013 (V2), 2015 (V1), 2017 (V1), 2019 (V1) and 2021 (V1) final data releases. Full details can be found in the data codebook.

RAND CAMS Spending Data Distribution Files

The package `randcams_2001_2021v1.zip` includes the following files:

- `randcams_2001_2021v1_readme.pdf`: this readme file
- `RANDCAMS_2021V1.pdf`: the codebook
- `randcams_2001_2021v1.sas7bdat`: the data in SAS format
- `randcams_2001_2021v1.dta`: the data in Stata format

¹ Starting with CAMS 2005 and onward a separate questionnaire on time-use was sent to the spouses of CAMS respondents. The questionnaires sent to spouses did not ask any spending questions.

² In 2001 CAMS part C there were questions about the use of prescription drugs

- randcams_2001_2021v1.sav: the data in SPSS format
- camssasfmts.sas7bdat: SAS formats dataset