

Essential notes for using the 2003 data

The user should note one key difference between the 2003 ATUS and the earlier heritage data sets. The earlier surveys have diaries that start and end at midnight. The 2003 ATUS diaries begin at 4:00 and end at 4:00 on the following morning. This difference does not matter for the analysis of what happens before and after a particular activity or the total time spent in an activity. Nevertheless, the user must exercise caution in modeling the day with this difference. It may prove most effective to analyze only the period from 4:00 to midnight for all years – the period common in all files. We have added the variable `CLOCKST`, which lists the time of day that each activity started in addition to variables marking the start and end time of the activity in minutes from the beginning of the diary.

The ATUS and CPS questionnaire include separate questions about race, one ethnicity question does not include an option for being Hispanic. A separate question asks whether people consider themselves to be Latino or Hispanic. Consequently, one harmonized ethnicity variable has a more limited range of reported responses for the 2003 as for the earlier surveys.

The housing tenure variable available in the AHTUS data was not included with the original dataset released by the BLS with the 2003 ATUS data. The CPS released the housing tenure variable with a separate supplement to the CPS. We matched this variable into the AHTUS from a special file provided by the BLS. In future, the BLS hope to be able to release the housing tenure variable with main ATUS files.

The ATUS did not collect secondary activity per say (though original records of the respondent's own descriptions which at this time are not publicly available do include the description of multiple activities where the diarists volunteered simultaneous activity – but reports of simultaneous activity was not solicited). Nevertheless, diarists who lived with or performed care for a child aged <13 were separately asked during which activities in the diary was a child aged <13 in their care (though the in your care is not recorded alongside some activities, including sleep, in the ATUS data). We have coded this in your care time as secondary child care in the secondary activity variable. Additionally, our secondary activity variable for this dataset includes codes for imputed travel and imputed eating. For all other episodes, the secondary activity variable is set to 0 for this survey.

Additionally, users should note that this survey collected a higher level of reported main activity child care time than the previous surveys. The causes of this reporting is under investigation. In part, political and global events may have increased parent's concern for physically monitoring their children. The effect may also be influenced by some aspect of the data collection. The cause is under investigation by a number of researchers.