



## The American Community Survey Health Insurance Coverage Estimates

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SHADAC Webinar featuring Chuck Nelson and Sharon Stern of the U.S. Census Bureau

September 23, 2009  
1:00 PM EDT

*Supported by a grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*

## Presentation agenda

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- Introductions
  - SHADAC and RWJF
    - Lynn Blewett, Mike Davern, Karen Soderberg, Mike Boudreaux, Brian Quinn
  - Census Bureau
    - Chuck Nelson, Sharon Stern, Joanna Turner
- About the American Community Survey (ACS)
- ACS health insurance coverage estimates
- Data release information
- Known issues and implications for states
- Question and answer session

## Ground Rules

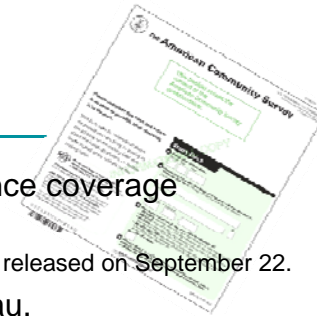
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- You are all muted.
- Contact Readytalk's support if you have browser or phone problems, 1-800-843-9166.
- Type questions into your chat window.
  - We will address as many as possible at the end of the presentation; others will be addressed in a follow-up summary.
- The webinar is being recorded and will be available on SHADAC's web site.
  - E-mail notice will be sent to participants.

## About the ACS

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- New source of data for health insurance coverage estimates.
  - The first year of data (for 2008 calendar year) released on September 22.
- Conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.
  - Intended to provide communities with up-to-date information on key demographics and policy-relevant data.
  - Replacement for the old "long form" decennial census questionnaire.
- Large enough sample for state-level and sub-state health insurance coverage estimates.
  - Provides alternate state-level insurance coverage estimates to the CPS.
- Annual data releases in late summer each year, reflecting prior year.



## Data collected

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- Health insurance is collected for each person in the household.
- Collects data on...
  - housing, income, poverty, food stamp participation
  - marital status and history, education,
  - occupation, travel to work, and disability, and military service-related disability support.

## Methodology

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- Ongoing survey with monthly samples
- Samples about three million households each year, collecting responses from nearly 2 million
  - 25-30 times larger than the sample size of the CPS.
  - ACS collects sample in all 3,141 counties (or county equivalents) in the U.S. every year
  - Includes people living in institutionalized group quarters
  - Includes vacant housing units
- 98% response rate

## Methodology, continued

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- Mixed-mode survey with the modes applied sequentially.
  - Sampled households are first mailed a pre-notification letter and then the questionnaire.
  - If the survey is not returned, the household is called for a phone interview.
  - If the household cannot be reached by phone, a field representative is sent to a sample of non-responders to:
    - verify the status of the address and,
    - if possible, conduct the interview in person.

## Health insurance question

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**Is this person CURRENTLY covered by any of the following types of health insurance or health coverage plans? Mark “Yes” or “No” for EACH type of coverage in items a-h.**

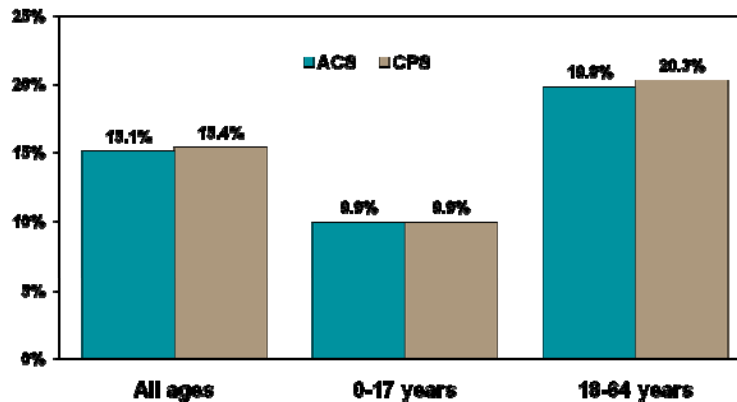
- a. Insurance through a current or former employer or union (of this person or another family member)
- b. Insurance purchased directly from an insurance company (by this person or another family member)
- c. Medicare, for people age 65 and older, or people with certain disabilities
- d. Medicaid, Medical Assistance, or any kind of government- assistance plan for those with low incomes or a disability
- e. TRICARE or other military health care
- f. VA (including those who have ever used or enrolled for VA health care)
- g. Indian Health Service
- h. Any other type of health insurance or health coverage plan - specify

## Survey feature comparisons

Survey Features	CPS	ACS
<b>Geography for which Estimates are Produced</b>		
Nation, States (and Washington, DC)	All	All
Metro Areas	Largest 250 in Population	All
Counties	Most Over 100,000 in Population	All
Cities and Places of 20,000 in Population	None	All
Congressional Districts	None	All
Census Tracts	None	All
<b>Health Insurance Items</b>		
Reference Period for Health Insurance Coverage	Any Coverage During the Last Calendar Year	Coverage at the Point in Time of the Interview
Uninsured Measure	All Year Uninsured	Point in Time
State-specific health insurance program names	Yes	No
Information Collected for Everyone in a Household	Yes	Yes
<b>Other Key Content</b>		
Activities of Daily Living (ADL)	No	Yes
Self Reported Health Status	Yes	No
Housing Values (and Rent and Mortgage Payment)	No	Yes
<b>Survey Methods</b>		
Annual Sample Size (Number of Households Sampled)	100,000	3,000,000
Population Studied	Non-institutionalized	U.S. Population (Including group quarters)
Data Collected	February-April	All Year
Mode of Data Collection	Phone and Face-to-Face	Mail, Phone and Face-to-Face
Response Rate	84%	98%
<b>Uninsured Estimates</b>		
2008 Uninsured Estimate	15.4%	15.1%
2008 Uninsured Estimate in Millions	46.3	45.1

## Uninsurance comparisons by age

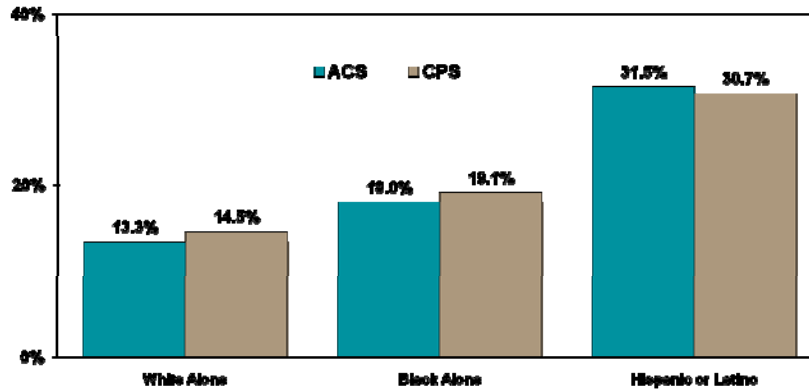
ACS and CPS percent uninsured by age, United States



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual and Social Economic Supplement, 2009; and 2008 American Community Survey.

## Uninsurance comparisons by race/ethnicity

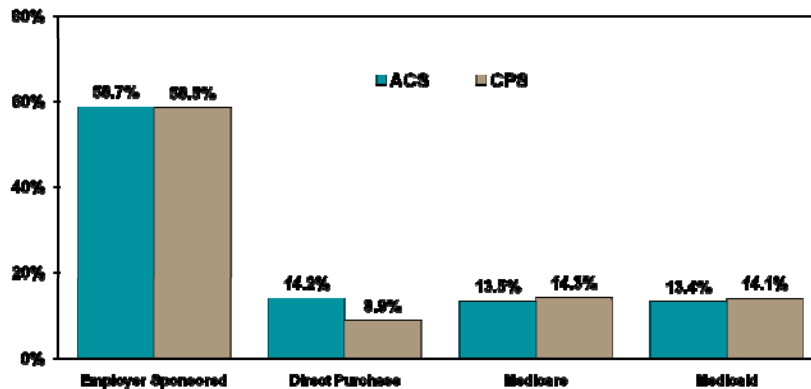
ACS and CPS percent uninsured by race, United States, all ages



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual and Social Economic Supplement, 2009; and 2008 American Community Survey.

## Comparisons by type of coverage

ACS and CPS coverage type, United States, all ages



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey Annual and Social Economic Supplement, 2009; and 2008 American Community Survey.

## Data releases – summary tables

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- ACS working paper and select tables
  - <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/acs08paper/index.html>
- American FactFinder summary tables
  - <http://factfinder.census.gov>
  - Limited number of tables available for 2008 ACS
  - Poverty, family income and food stamp participation not available until September 29.

## Data releases – public use data

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- Public use microdata samples (PUMS)
  - 1% public use microdata sample
  - Single-year file for geographic areas with population of 65,000+
  - In 2011 release of 3-year file for areas with population of 20,000+
  - The smallest identifiable geographic unit is the PUMA, containing at least 100,000 persons.
    - PUMAs do not cross state boundaries.
  - [http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/users\\_guide/index.htm](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/users_guide/index.htm)

## PUMS sample counts – 2007 ACS

- Overall 1,456% more sample than CPS
- State-level increase ranges from 117% to 2,406%

State	CPS 2007	ACS 2007	ACS PUMS 2007	ACS PUMS Sample Increase as a percent of CPS
Louisiana	664	27,905	16,640	2,406%
North Carolina	1,498	54,072	37,365	2,394%
Tennessee	1,026	37,279	25,384	2,374%
Alabama	817	32,345	19,419	2,277%
Massachusetts	1,095	37,141	25,481	2,227%
Florida	3,368	101,953	77,483	2,201%
...	...	...	...	...
South Dakota	1,111	8,000	3,244	192%
Delaware	1,157	6,359	3,357	190%
Vermont	1,049	7,984	2,522	140%
Wyoming	950	3,893	2,189	130%
Alaska	1,030	5,908	2,274	121%
District of Columbia	1,214	3,601	2,629	117%
<b>United States</b>	<b>75,477</b>	<b>1,937,659</b>	<b>1,174,272</b>	<b>1,456%</b>

## Measurement issues

- Mode
- Does not include a localized or comprehensive list of public program names
  - Potential for respondents to errantly report their enrollment.
  - Program names added to CATI/CAPI version as an interviewer aid in 2009.
- No verification question

## Other issues

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- Will require some training among analysts to become familiar with the survey and data.
- Does not have the base of knowledge established to understand the strengths and limitations of this resource.

## Opportunities

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- Better tool for several applications:
  - Including evaluating state health reform initiatives.
  - Scoring legislative proposals.
  - Reporting for federal program allocation formulae.
  - Monitoring local-level insurance coverage.
- Will be a regular source of health insurance coverage for local areas.
- Use in conjunction with the CPS to enhance understanding of state-level estimates.

## Resources

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- ACS Home Page: <http://www.census.gov/acs/www/>
- ACS evaluation working paper: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/acs08paper/index.html>
- American FactFinder: <http://factfinder.census.gov>
- SHADAC's ACS page: <http://www.shadac.org/content/acs-info-and-resources>

## Contact information

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- Direct inquiries to Karen Soderberg  
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