



SHADAC-Enhanced Current Population Survey Health Insurance Coverage Estimates: Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the SHADAC enhanced CPS?

SHADAC's enhanced Current Population Survey (CPS) health insurance estimates are CPS data reweighted and adjusted to account for historical changes in the survey's methodology, the conceptual definition of health insurance coverage, and the population counts used to weight the survey estimates. The enhanced estimates also adjust for procedures used by the Census Bureau to correct for missing data. These adjustments produce estimates that differ from those published by the Census Bureau, generally resulting in lower uninsurance estimates. However, they provide a more accurate assessment of coverage estimates both for any given year and over time.

Why did SHADAC develop this?

The SHADAC-enhanced CPS estimates were developed to provide health insurance coverage estimates for policy makers that are accurate and consistent over time. The estimates released by the Census Bureau do not account for some methodological changes that result in known consistency problems. Research conducted by SHADAC since 2000 has proven that these and other problems impact health insurance coverage estimates.

When would you use the enhanced CPS vs. the regular CPS?

SHADAC recommends using the enhanced estimates for any analysis of health insurance coverage, particularly for evaluation of trends over time. Further, we recommend that microdata users use the enhanced variables when analyzing health insurance coverage. These variables will be available in March 2010 for public use through the Minnesota Population Center, available at <http://www.ipums.org/>.

Data users should note that some statistical power is lost when using the enhanced data because the adjustments exclude some survey respondents. The excluded respondents are those who did not complete any portion of the Annual Social and Economic Supplement, or ASEC (which includes the health insurance question). The Census Bureau retains these respondents by "imputing" responses to the ASEC. Imputing is a data-editing process that "borrows" responses from a similar respondent and applies them to the non-respondent. About 10 percent of the responses to the ASEC supplemental questionnaire are imputed. SHADAC discovered a bias in the imputation process and maintains that estimates without these cases more accurately reflect health insurance coverage rates. For more information on this finding, please see: Davern, M. et al., "Are the Current Population Survey uninsurance estimates too high? An examination of the imputation process." *Health Services Research* 42(5): 2038-55.

The loss of non-ASEC respondents in the enhanced data has a larger impact on statistical power in states that have a smaller sample size. SHADAC maintains a worksheet with CPS sample size by state, at <http://www.shadac.org/publications/cps-sample-size>.

What organizations use this method?

The SHADAC-enhanced estimates were introduced in November 2009 with health insurance coverage tables available from SHADAC's Data Center, at www.shadac.org/datacenter. The estimates are available for public use and are being used by health policy analysts from states and health services research organizations. The microdata will be released in March 2010 for public use through the Minnesota Population Center, available at <http://www.ipums.org/>.

Where can I find more information on the methods used to develop the enhanced CPS?

A technical brief describing the adjustments is available at: http://www.shadac.org/files/shadac/publications/TechBrief_CPSEnhanced.pdf. A full-length paper providing further details is currently under review and will be provided at a later date. The microdata will be released with descriptions for each of the enhanced variables early in 2010 through the Minnesota Population Center. Downloads will be available at <http://www.ipums.org/>.

Have U.S. Census Bureau staff reviewed the adjustments?

Staff from the Census Bureau have reviewed a description of the adjustments; there are no plans to apply them to any Census Bureau products. The adjustments have also been reviewed by an advisory group of health services researchers.

How can I use the enhanced data?

Tabulated estimates are available at SHADAC's Data Center. The microdata variables will be released in March 2010 for public use through the Minnesota Population Center, available at <http://www.ipums.org/>.