



SHADAC-Enhanced Current Population Survey Health Insurance Coverage Estimates: A Summary of Historical Adjustments

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Introduction

SHADAC has created an enhanced time series to enable a harmonized view of health insurance coverage over time using the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS). This was done to account for methodological changes to the CPS.

The applied enhancements are outlined in this technical brief. All years refer to CPS year, which is the year of data collection but the year after the calendar year for which the health insurance estimate corresponds. For example, 2009 refers to health insurance coverage in 2008.

Weighting Enhancements

1. Full-supplement Imputation

Description: Approximately 10 percent of CPS cases do not answer any of the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) supplement. Davern and colleagues (2007) uncovered a systematic bias introduced in the way that those cases were imputed, resulting in an overestimation of the portion of the population without health insurance coverage.

Correction: Cases that did not have at least one non-imputed supplement in the household were removed from the file. The remaining cases were weighted back to the population totals before removing those individuals.

2. Smooth to Decennial Census

Description: The 1991 and 1992 CPS use weighted control totals based on the 1980 census. The 1990, 1993-1998 CPS use weighted control totals based on the 1990 census. This results in disjointed estimates that are based on assumptions of population growth that did not necessarily hold, particularly for some populations.

Correction: The estimates between the decades were averaged to occur linearly across years.

Health Insurance Coverage Enhancements

1. Impute Verification Question

Description: In 2000 a verification question was added to the series of questions about health insurance coverage. From this survey year forward individuals who did not respond to any type of coverage were asked to verify if they were, in fact, uninsured.

Correction: To simulate the impact of this question prior to 2000 we imputed the possible values obtained from the verification question on the years 1988-1999 for those cases that were characterized as uninsured.

2. IHS-only Not Considered Insurance

Description: A question about Indian Health Service (IHS) coverage was introduced in 1996 and those with IHS and no other type of coverage were considered insured. In 1998, the Census Bureau, in consultation with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, changed the way that individuals with only Indian Health Services were classified. Starting in 1998 the HIS-only individuals would be considered uninsured.

Correction: To correct for the break in the time series, those cases who only have IHS in 1996 and 1997 are switched to be considered uninsured in the enhanced data.

3. SCHIP to Public Coverage

Description: In 2001, the CPS began asking for children who did not have Medicaid if they had SCHIP coverage. The first year that this question was introduced, cases of “yes” to SCHIP were mistakenly coded as having private health insurance coverage instead of public coverage. The error was corrected in subsequent years.

Correction: Cases indicating SCHIP are coded as having public coverage and if there is no other type of private coverage reported; they are removed from the population of those with private coverage in the enhanced data.

4. Household Coverage Flag

Description: In August 2006 and March of 2007, the Census Bureau made changes to the way that health insurance is edited in the 2005 and 2006 CPS, resulting in fewer people being considered uninsured. The previous procedure mistakenly left health insurance missing for an individual when a respondent reported that it should actually be assigned to everyone in the household.

Correction: The edit was fixed with the release of the 2007 CPS. The 2005 and the 2006 were fixed retrospectively and re-released in March 2007. An indicator variable was released that approximates the edit in earlier years.

Suggested Citation

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References

Davern M., H. Rodin, L.A. Blewett, and K.T. Call. 2007 “Are the Current Population Survey Uninsurance Estimates Too High? An Examination of the Imputation Process.” *Health Services Research* 42(5): 2038-55.