



Findings from the 2004 Current Population Survey SHADAC Conference Call Highlights

On August 31, 2005, the State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC) sponsored a conference call featuring Charles T. Nelson, Assistant Division Chief for Income, Poverty and Health Statistics at the U.S. Census Bureau. Nelson discussed the recently issued findings from the Current Population Survey, published in an August 2005 report, [Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004](#) by Carmen DeNavas-Walt, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Cheryl Hill Lee. More than 49 state health policy and data analysts representing 33 states, several universities, and national health policy organizations participated in the audioconference.

Major Findings

- Overall, the percent of the population without coverage (15.7%) did not change significantly between 2003 and 2004.
- The percentage (11.2%) and number (8.3 million) of uninsured children remained stable from 2003 to 2004.
- Children in poverty were more likely to be uninsured than all other children (18.2% vs. 11.2%).
- There was a drop in the rate of employer-based insurance from 60.4 percent in 2003 to 59.8 percent in 2004.
- There was an increase in government health insurance coverage through Medicare, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program—from 26.6% in 2003 to 27.2% in 2004.
- The uninsurance rate for Asians decreased from 18.8% in 2003 to 16.8% in 2004.
- Three states had a significant decline in their two-year average rate of uninsurance (NY, ID, and WY); while eight states witnessed a significant increase (DE, FL, MA, MT, NH, OK, SC, and TN).
- There was a rise in the number of workers without health insurance from 18.6% in 2003 to 19.0% in 2004.
- Between 2003 and 2004, the proportion of Americans with military health coverage rose from 3.5% to 3.7%.
- Over the last three to four years, there has been an increase in the number of Americans covered by public health insurance programs.

Data Issues

- The 2005 CPS-ASEC micro data file uses 2000 metropolitan area definitions, which reflect the differences in the definitions of metropolitan statistical areas (MSA) in the 1990 and 2000 Census.

- Most of the variable names changed for geographic variables. (See Appendix A for a listing of all variable changes in the micro data file.)
- Roughly half of the sample for this year is from the new sample design that is based on findings from the 2000 Census. The 2006 CPS-ASEC will reflect the complete sample design change.

Follow-Up Items

- Link to the Census Bureau's August 2005 report, Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004:
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/hlthin04.html>
- Link to the US Census Bureau's FERRET Current Population Survey micro data extraction tool: <http://www.bls.census.gov/ferretftp.htm>
- Link to Census document that describes the Current Population Survey's Design and Methodology: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/tp63rv.pdf>
- SHADAC's document on how to deal with the break in the time series due to the addition of the health insurance verification survey item:
http://www.shadac.org/publications/papers/CPS_Time_Series.pdf
- Link to SHADAC issue brief on the discrepancy between general population survey results and administrative counts of public program enrollment:
<http://www.shadac.org/publications/issuebriefs/IssueBrief9.pdf>

Summary of Conference Call Questions and Answers

Q: How can I tell which states' rates of health coverage are statistically different from my own?

A: Divide the 90% confidence interval in the report by 1.645 to obtain the standard errors so you can do your t-test calculations.

$$t\text{-value} = \frac{\mu_1 - \mu_2}{(\text{sq rt} (SE_1^2 + SE_2^2))^*}$$

*Please note the issue regarding correlations between years of the CPS for more exact p-values (For more information, see the Source and Accuracy documents at:
http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/p60_229sa.pdf
and <http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/bsrcacc.htm>).

Q: Do states need to use two- or three-year averages, or can they use year-to-year data points?

A: Currently, the Census Bureau uses multi-year averages to pool state-level data to increase precision. Generally speaking, two-year averages are used for looking at one state's information across time, and three-year averages are utilized for state-by-state comparisons. However, by smoothing the data year-to-year trends are lost.

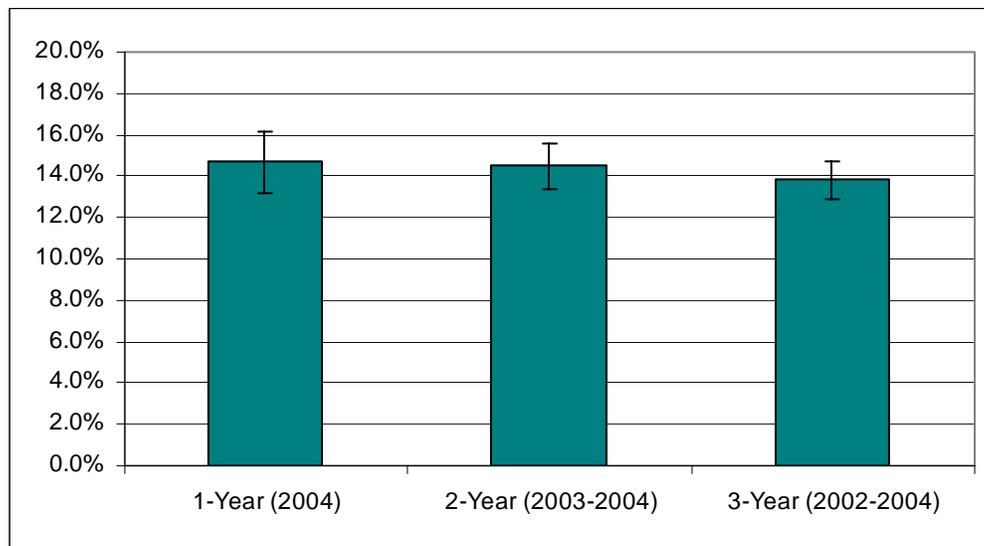
Q: Our state's uninsurance rate changed 1 percentage point and it made the news. How do you explain to policy makers that it is better to use multi-year averages than look at single year-to-year data?

A: A multi-year average is more reliable because its sampling error is smaller (i.e., the estimate's precision is higher). You may want to show confidence intervals around the estimates to make this point. For example, Table 1 provides the rates of uninsurance and 90-percent confidence intervals for the state of South Carolina using a one-year estimate and two and three-year averages. Figure 1 displays this information graphically.

Table 1. Rates of Uninsurance in South Carolina Using a 1-Year Estimate, a 2-Year Average and a 3-Year Average; Current Population Survey 2002-2004

	1-Year (2004)	2-Year (2003-04)	3-Year (2002-04)
Uninsurance Rate	14.7%	14.5%	13.8%
90-Percent Confidence Interval (Lower, Upper bound)	(13.2%, 16.2%)	(13.4%, 15.6%)	(12.9%, 14.7%)

Figure 1. Rates of Uninsurance in South Carolina Using a 1-Year Estimate, a 2-Year Average and a 3-Year Average; Current Population Survey 2002-2004



Q: I noticed that Robert Mills is no longer listed on the author list. Who should I direct my questions to regarding the 2004 report?

A: Robert Mills has left the Census Bureau. Please direct your questions to Cheryl Hill Lee. Her e-mail address is: Cheryl.H.Lee@census.gov

Q: The link to the CPS source and accuracy document listed in the Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004 is incorrect. What is the correct web link?

A: The correct web link is: <http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/bsrcacc.htm>

Q: Recently, there has been a lot of press regarding the accuracy of the CPS estimates. Critics have said that it overestimates the number of uninsured persons in the US by undercounting the number of people with Medicaid coverage. How does the Medicaid undercount affect the estimates?

A: Currently, there are projects underway to assess the magnitude of the Medicaid undercount and how it affects survey estimates of health insurance coverage. SHADAC is planning a conference call to discuss the results of recent findings on this issue. An announcement will be sent out in the near future.

For more information, please see SHADAC Issue Brief # 9, "Do National Surveys Overestimate the Number of Uninsured? Findings from the Medicaid Undercount Study in Minnesota" on the web at <http://www.shadac.org/publications/issuebriefs/IssueBrief9.pdf>

Q: What are the geographic variable name changes in the data set?

A: The data set not only includes many new geographic variable names but also includes a few new variables. In Appendix A, there are two tables that document these changes. Table 2 displays variables found in the 2005 CPS-ASEC that were not found in 2004. Many of the new variables reflect questions about 5-year migration that are added to the supplement once every ten years in years that end in 5. This table was taken from the technical documentation (Chart #4), with a description of the variables added. Table 3 displays variable changes from 2004 to 2005 and a description of the change. This information was also taken from Chart #4 in the Technical Documentation with detail added.

Q: Is there any possibility of adding the health insurance questions to the monthly survey?

A: It is very difficult to add questions to the monthly survey and would require significant funding to do so. The Census Bureau has however, had some conversations with the Department of Health and Human Services about adding additional items to the ASEC, but it is very unlikely that funding will be available any time in the foreseeable future.

Q: Are there any specific tables that show employer offerings are declining? I'm concerned that when our legislators see that employer coverage has declined and public coverage has increased they will jump to the conclusion that we are witnessing crowd out.

A: Table HI.05 [Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type of Coverage by State for All People: 2004](#) provides estimates of employer-sponsored and publicly sponsored coverage. You may also want to share with your legislators that the decrease in employer coverage and increase in public program enrollment may reflect the increase in poverty that occurred between 2003 and 2004.

APPENDIX A

Table 2. New Variables in the 2005 CPS-ASEC

Variable Name	Variable Description
H-IDNUM2	Second part of household identification number; added to aid matching across years
CTC_CRD	Child Tax Credit
ACTC_CRD	Additional Child Tax Credit
M5G_CBST	MSA Status Description of Residence 5 years ago
M5G_DSCP	Recode-CBCSA status of Residence 5 years ago
M5GSAME	Living in same residence as 5 years ago
M5G_REG	Recode-Region of residence 5 years ago
M5G_ST	Recode-State of residence 5 years ago
M5GDIV	Recode-Census Division of residence 5 years ago
M5G_MTR1	Recode migration
M5G_MTR3	Recode migration
M5G_MTR4	Recode migration
I_M5G1	M5GSAME imputation flag
I_M5G2	M5GSAME imputation flag
I_M5G3	M5GSAME imputation flag

Sources:

- 1) U.S. Census Bureau; "Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Technical Documentation.
<http://www.census.gov/aprd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar05.pdf>, accessed September 7, 2005.
- 2) U.S. Census Bureau; "Current Population Survey, 2004 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Technical Documentation.
<http://www.census.gov/aprd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar04.pdf>, accessed September 7, 2005.

Table 3. Variables changed from the 2004 CPS-ASEC to the 2005 CPS-ASEC

Variable Removed*	Variable Replaced by*	Reason*	Explanation	
H-FAMINC	HUFAMINC	More detail	<i>Codebook changed from:</i> -1 Not in universe 00 Less than \$5,000 01 \$5,000 to \$7,499 02 \$ 7,500 to \$9,999 03 \$10,000 to \$12,499 04 \$12,500 to \$14,999 05 \$15,000 to \$19,999 06 \$20,000 to \$24,999 07 \$25,000 to \$29,999 08 \$30,000 to \$34,999 09 \$35,000 to \$39,999 10 \$40,000 to \$49,000 11 \$50,000 to \$59,999 12 \$60,000 to \$74,999 13 \$75,000 and over	<i>Codebook changed to:</i> -3 Refused -2 Don't know -1 Not in universe 01 Less than \$5,000 02 \$5,000 to \$7,499 03\$ 7,500 to \$9,999 04 \$10,000 to \$12,499 05 \$12,500 to \$14,999 06 \$15,000 to \$19,999 07 \$20,000 to \$24,999 08 \$25,000 to \$29,999 09 \$30,000 to \$34,999 10 \$35,000 to \$39,999 11 \$40,000 to \$49,000 12 \$50,000 to \$59,999 13 \$60,000 to \$74,999 14 \$75,000 to \$99,999 15 \$100,000 to \$149,999 16 \$150,000 and over
HG-REG	GEREG	Name change only	No change in data labels	
HG-ST60	GESTCEN	Name change only	No change in data labels	
HG-MSAC	GTCBSA	Geographic redefinition	MSA FIPS Code: Changed from June 30, 1993 Metropolitan Statistical Area definitions	CBSA FIPS Code: Change to June 30,2003 Core Based Statistical Area definitions
GECO	GTCO	Geographic redefinition	FIPS County Code	FIPS County Code, labels have changed based on population size changes
HG-CMSA	GTCSA	Geographic redefinition	Specific CMSA code : Changed from June 30, 1993 Metropolitan Statistical Area definitions	Consolidated Statistical Area FIPS Code: Change to June 30,2003 Core Based Statistical Area definitions

Variable Removed*	Variable Replaced by*	Reason*	Explanation	
HMSSZ	GTCBSASZ	Geographic redefinition	MSA FIPS code : Changed from June 30, 1993 Metropolitan Statistical Area definitions	Consolidated Statistical Area: Change to June 30, 2003 Core Based Statistical Area definitions
HPMSASZ	not replaced	Geographic redefinition	MSA Size: June 30, 1993 Metropolitan Statistical Area definitions, not present in 2005 data set	
HMSA-R	GTMETSTA	Geographic redefinition	MSA status, no change in codebook	
HCCC-R	GTCBSAST	Geographic redefinition	Central City Status, no change in codebook	
A_RCOW	not replaced		Class of worker recode	
INDCCODE	GTINDVPC	Geographic redefinition	Individual Central City Status Code, used to identify cities when MSA has multiple. 3 cities added in 2005	
FED_TAX	FEDTAX_BC	Name change only	No change in data labels, specifies before tax credit federal tax liability	
	FEDTAX_AC	New for 2005	Federal tax liability after credits	
STATETAX	STATETAX_BC	Name change only	No change in data labels, specifies before tax credit state tax liability	
	STATETAX_AC	New for 2005	State tax liability after credits	
MIGPLAC	MIG_CBST	Geographic redefinition	MSA status description of residence last year, codebook not changed	
PLACDSCP	MIG_DSCP	Geographic redefinition	Central city status description of residence last year, codebook not changed	

Source:

- 1) U.S. Census Bureau; "Current Population Survey, 2005 Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Technical Documentation.
<http://www.census.gov/apsd/techdoc/cps/cpsmar05.pdf>, accessed September 7, 2005.