



Examining Errors in Medicaid Reporting Across Four National Surveys: ACS, CPS, MEPS, and NHIS

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- Coauthors:
 - Brett O’Hara: Census Bureau
 - Brett Fried, Michel Boudreaux, Joanna Turner: SHADAC

The problem

- Every survey said to “undercount” Medicaid enrollment
- If not reporting Medicaid, counts of Medicaid are biased downward, counts of other coverage and uninsurance are biased upward
- The size of the undercount varies by survey
- Extend prior analysis to the ACS
 - How does the ACS undercount compare to other federal surveys?

Data and methods

- 2008 ACS: first year insurance questions added
- 2008 Medicaid Statistical Information System (MSIS – enrollment files)
- Prepared MSIS data: remove duplicates, deceased, and partial coverage. Institutional are included in MSIS and ACS.
- Benchmark analysis
 - Compare enrollment counts between ACS and MSIS: total and by age
 - Compare magnitude of undercount to other national surveys: CPS, NHIS, MEPS

The ACS question ask about Medicaid and all other public programs.

All other surveys have separate questions.

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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.

	Yes	No
a. Insurance through a current or former employer or union (of this person or another family member)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Insurance purchased directly from an insurance company (by this person or another family member)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Medicare, for people 65 and older, or people with certain disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Medicaid, Medical Assistance, or any kind of government-assistance plan for those with low incomes or a disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. TRICARE or other military health care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. VA (including those who have ever used or enrolled for VA health care)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Indian Health Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Any other type of health insurance or health coverage plan – <i>Specify</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Medicaid undercount

	Number		Percent			
	MSIS	Prelim ACS	Prelim ACS	NHIS	CPS	MEPS/HC
All Ages	40,320,000	46,910,000	-16%	26%	32%	6%
0-17	23,320,000	22,900,000	2%	29%	38%	12%
18-44	8,660,000	10,130,000	-17%	27%	31%	3%
45-64	4,430,000	6,910,000	-56%	11%	2%	0%
65+	3,850,000	6,970,000	-81%	19%	30%	-8%
Unknown	60,000	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Summary of undercount findings:

- Highest for CPS, likely due to long reference period
- Lowest for MEPS/HC, likely due to in-person component, priming from prior waves
- Lowest for near elderly and elderly; highest for children (largest enrollment population)

ACS largely overcounts Medicaid; likely due to structure of question that is a public catch all, and inclusion of institutional population

2008 NHIS analysis

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Closing comments

- The magnitude of the undercount varies across surveys
 - Highest in the CPS
 - Lowest for the MEPS/HC
 - By contrast the ACS largely overcounts Medicaid enrollment. This is a function of:
 - Question structure
 - Inclusion of institutional population

Next steps

- Omit institutional cases to allow direct comparison with other survey results
- Link the ACS and MSIS to examine how known Medicaid enrollees report coverage in ACS
- Explore factors associate with accurate and inaccurate reporting
- Describe variation in the undercount by state
- Explore accuracy by survey mode
- Stay tuned!

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