

# **Comments on Income, Poverty and Health Insurance in the CPS ASEC**

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# Improving Response

- Income
  - It is a good idea to ask about **types** of income before asking about **amounts**.
  - Collecting ranges in lieu of exact amounts when people don't remember or **aren't willing** to state exact amounts also is a good idea.
- Health Insurance Coverage
  - Changing to a calendar year reference period is a good idea.
  - Analogous to the income questions, it is a good idea to ask about general coverage first.
  - The objective of comparison with earlier years seems to have been essentially abandoned. This was probably necessary.

# Data Translation Issues

- Whenever measures are changed, there is the inherent conflict between 1) having a better measure, and 2) providing an effective translation to the earlier measure so that trends can be detected.
- For the health insurance measure a major aim is to assess the effect of the Affordable Care Act.
- Thus, it is excellent that the new measure was implemented **before** the implementation of the act for consistent comparison.
- This is more important than comparison with earlier years.

# Data Translation Issues – The Lesson of Racial and Ethnic Categories

- In some cases, changed measures have remaining problems.
- Racial and ethnic categories is a case in point.
- It seems there is still no satisfactory translation from the earlier single race categories to multiple racial choices. This is especially troubling since the estimates for the Black population are non-trivially affected by any translation.
- It is also disturbing that both before and after the change to multiple race choices, the same racial and ethnic categories are **not** used across all parts of the Federal government.
- Is it intended that measurement of health insurance coverage, poverty and income will be standardized across Federal government surveys?

# Suggestions in Response to Census Questions

- What do you think of the idea of an expert group meeting focusing on the logic of the new edits for income and health insurance?
  - **This is a good idea. What do you think will be the main differences between the old and the new edits?**
- Do you have any thoughts on how we communicate the change in health insurance for next fall's release?
  - **One issue is motivating people to understand and answer the questions asked. In this case, experience from experiments with participation in the ACS could be relevant.**
  - **Another issue is interpretation of results. Presentation of comparisons between the old and the new measures, as has begun to be done, could help people understand what the changes means.**
- Do you have advice on our fallback plan of using old edits?
  - **The differences between the old and the new edits are important. It would **not** be desirable to use one set of edits for the 2013 data and a different set for 2014 and later survey data.**