

Discussion of Income, Poverty and Health Insurance in the CPS-ASEC*

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Opening Comments on Redesigned Measurement of Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the CPS-ASEC

- Great to see updates in measurement being made; adjust to rapidly changing society
- Important rationales, much research, and cognitive/pre-testing prior to implementation
- Reports, webinar, & press releases on income, poverty, and health insurance estimates provide public, educators, media, and policymakers with critical info on US social & economic well-being

Income and Poverty

- General income questions followed by detailed questions a good change
 - Updates on defined contribution retirement plan income, in addition to defined benefit pensions, long overdue
 - Split sample for 2013 a good idea
 - Published results for 2013 use old measures; analysis forthcoming on comparison between old and new
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- CPS-ACES results for 2013 continue to be very troubling:
 - Median HH income unchanged at \$51,900
 - Gini Index of income inequality unchanged: .476
 - Poverty rate for individuals down a bit to 14.5%
 - Major age & subgroup differences in all of these

Health Insurance

- General coverage questions followed by detail a good strategy
 - Reference to previous calendar year smart
 - Redesign for 2013 good timing, prior to major implementation of the ACA
 - Use of new questions in 2013 report to establish new “pre-ACA” baseline a good idea; loss of trend data but ACS (and NHIS?) fills that hole
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- CPS-ACES results for 2013 troubling: uninsured level of 13.4% US population; huge age and subgroup variations

Continued Questions with Health Insurance Measurement

- CPS-ASEC measures any/none in previous year; while well stated in the report, this over-estimates actual insurance coverage at any one point in time in 2013 (which ACS and, I think, NHIS does). Thoughts and testing on an all/some/none measure???
- 2013 not a clear “pre-ACA” baseline; some ACA implementation (e.g., young adults staying on parent policy) goes back to 2010. This needs to be clarified in future reports.
- Homeless (no insurance up) and GQ (no insurance down) populations not included. Reports say this...but on balance, uninsured rate probably a bit higher than published.

Multiple Data Sets Measuring Health Insurance: Consider a More Comprehensive Overview

National Estimates of Lack of Health Insurance Coverage for the US Population, 2013

<u>Data Set</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>% Uninsured</u>	<u>Conf. Int</u>	<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Weaknesses</u>
CPS-ASEC	Any/None	13.4	+/- 0.2		
ACS	Point-in-Time	14.5	+/- 0.1		
SIPP					
NHIS					

Discussion Question #1:

Expert Group Meeting on New Edits?

- Yes, generally good idea
- Should include CPS-ASEC, ACS, SIPP, and NHIS colleagues, as well as outside gov't experts
- Expert group could also weigh in on future of redesigned versus old income q's/results
- Need to see detailed methodologies and preliminary results (alternatives) to be effective
- Will need to happen relatively soon to implement in 2015

Discussion Question #2:

How To Communicate (Potential) Change in Health Insurance Results With Edits?

- Could (should?) have added “Preliminary Release” to 2014 report of 2013 data...and updated at a later date
- Separate the release of Income/Poverty and Health Insurance reports in 2015; each will potentially be complicated. Difficult enough to follow this year
- Be clear and upfront with methodological updates; don't hide in notes or appendices

Discussion Question #3:

Fallback Plan of Using Old Edits?

- Expert group needs to weigh in, after seeing details and preliminary (sets of) results
- Use old edits if they are deemed to be scientifically defensible; otherwise, use new edits
- Work quickly; would confuse new edits were better and then delayed until 2016

Final Remarks

- Huge thank you to the Census Bureau for producing such scientifically well-grounded, thoughtful, and important estimates, reports, and data
- Time to go eat...