

# Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance in the CPS ASEC

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Census Scientific Advisory Committee  
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# Project Overview

**Objective:** To improve the income and health insurance estimates from the CPS ASEC

- For income, to reduce nonresponse, and improve the questions, particularly on pension withdrawals and asset income
- For health insurance, to improve accuracy and ensure that coverage under the ACA is properly captured

# Income

## The Need for Change

### Income

- Questions had not been substantially changed since 1980
- Pension questions did not adequately collect defined contribution plan withdrawals
- Amount nonresponse was a large and growing problem
- Asset income was not well reported

# Improvement Strategy

## Income:

- Ask all questions about reciprocity before collecting amounts
- Customize question order based on household characteristics
- Collect amount ranges for those unable to provide exact amounts
- Add questions on retirement account withdrawals
- Add more detailed questions on asset types and amounts

# Health Insurance

## The Need for Change

### Health Insurance

- Estimates of the uninsured population inflated
  - Estimates biased due to respondent recall issues over the 1 ¼ year recall period
  - Confusion between current year and previous calendar year
  - Undercounts of some types of health insurance
  - Missing some people's coverage
- Law change:
  - Patient Protection and the Affordable Care Act complicates health insurance measurement. Need additional information on obtaining health insurance through new marketplace and changes to employer-sponsored insurance

# Research and Testing

1999 - present

**Academic researchers suggest the CPS estimates of health insurance (Medicaid) may be too low**

2001 – 2004

**Research on whether question order matters**

2005 – present

**Medicaid Undercount Project**

2006 – 2009

**Cognitive tests on improving health insurance questions**

2010

**Survey of Health Insurance and Program Participation**

2012

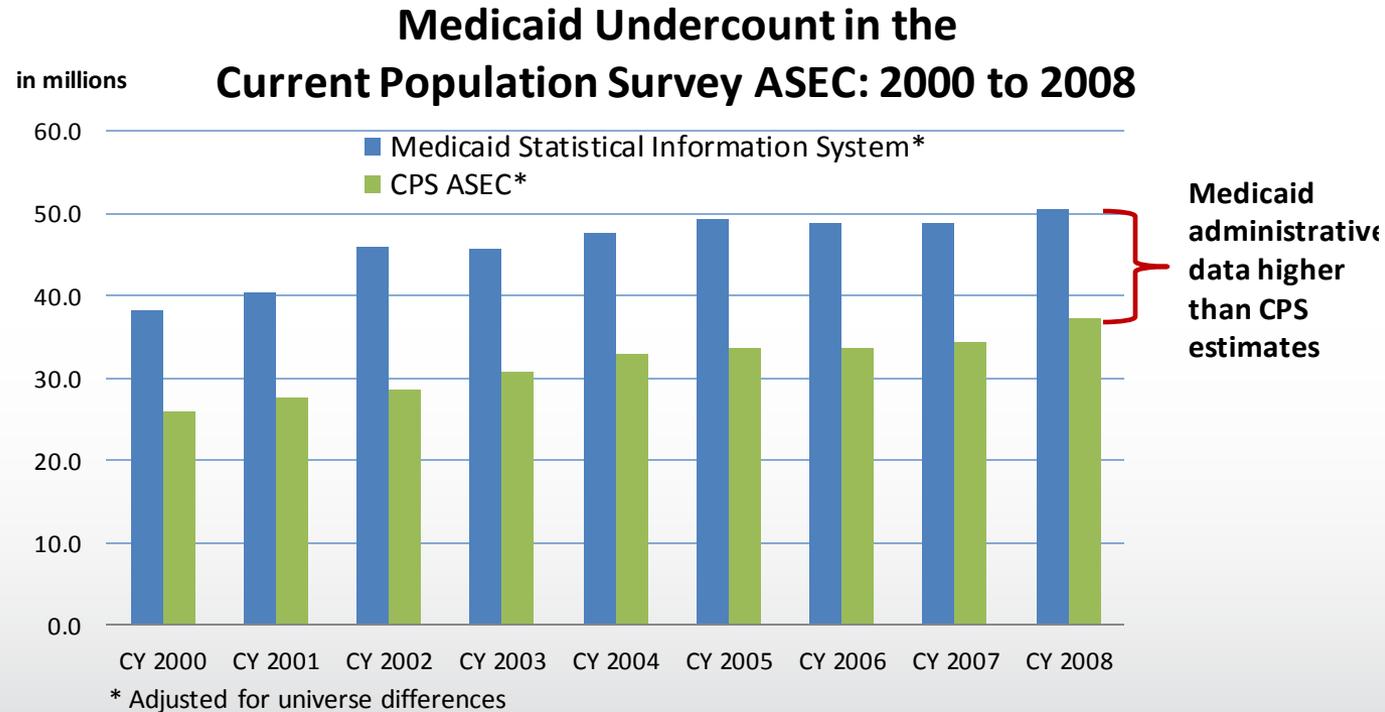
**Massachusetts cognitive study on exchanges**

2013

**CPS ASEC Content test**

# Example of the CPS Health Insurance Coverage Undercount

Compared with other national surveys and administrative data, the CPS did not capture enough health insurance coverage



Source: Noon, James, Leticia Fernandez, and Sonya Rastogi. The Medicaid Undercount in the 2007-2009 Current Population Survey. Federal Committee on Statistical Methods Research Conference. Washington, D.C., 4-6 November. [http://www.copafs.org/UserFiles/file/fcsm/A4\\_Noon\\_2013FCSM.pdf](http://www.copafs.org/UserFiles/file/fcsm/A4_Noon_2013FCSM.pdf)

# Health Insurance Question Changes in the CPS ASEC

**Goal: Provide improved health insurance coverage estimates for calendar year 2013, baseline (prior to ACA) year for measuring future year changes**

## Redesigned health insurance coverage questions

### Reference period

- New current coverage question to improve responses to questions about health coverage in previous calendar year

### Health insurance coverage types

- Start with general coverage questions followed by more specific questions

### Household-level design

- Ask *who else in household* had that plan type
- Ask about *all household members by name* to address gaps in household coverage

## New questions to measure Marketplace participation

## Added questions on employer-sponsored insurance offers and take-up

## Revised questions on Medical Out-Of-Pocket expenses (MOOP)

# Implementation Process

- Income questions cognitively tested in 2011
- Health Insurance questions cognitively tested in 2009
- SHIPP field test in 2010
- Cognitive tested exchange questions in Massachusetts in 2012

CPS ASEC 2013  
Content Test  
(reference year 2012)

Incorporated in  
CPS ASEC 2014  
(reference year 2013)

# Implementation Process

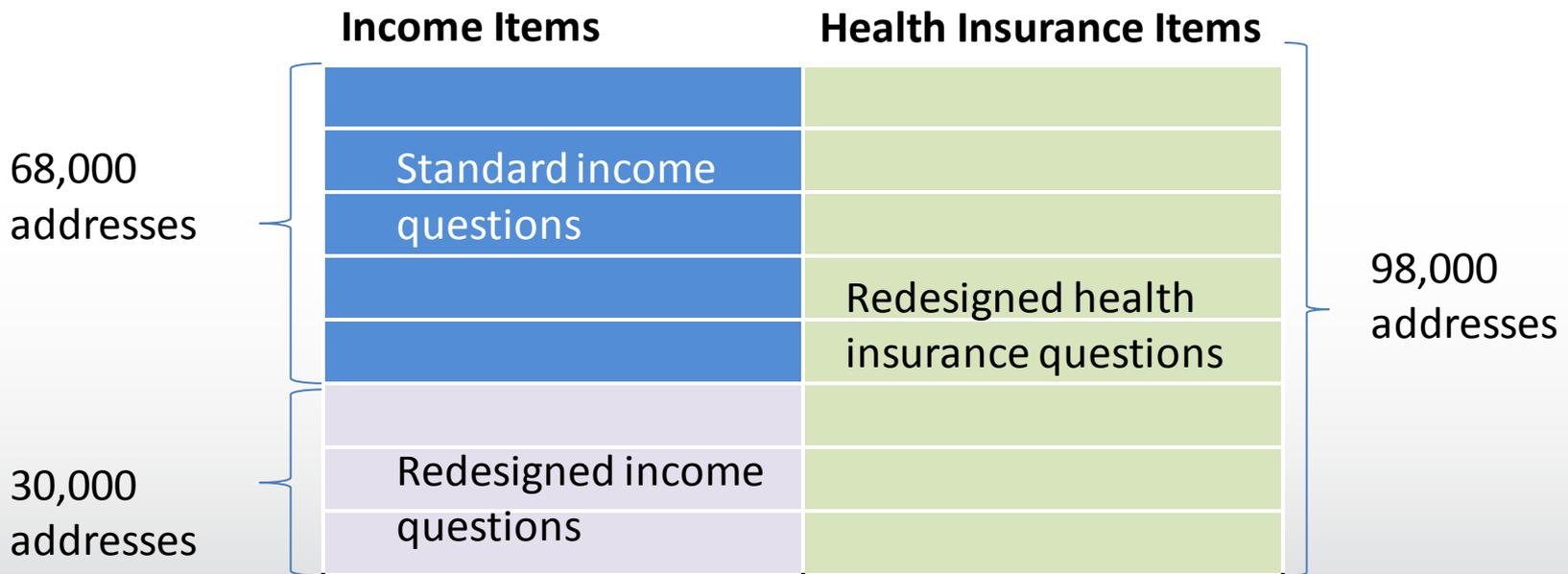
## Split Sample Implementation for Income:

- New questions used for part of the 2014 ASEC sample (30,000 eligible addresses)
- Split-panel design preserves time series and provides a bridge between old and new series

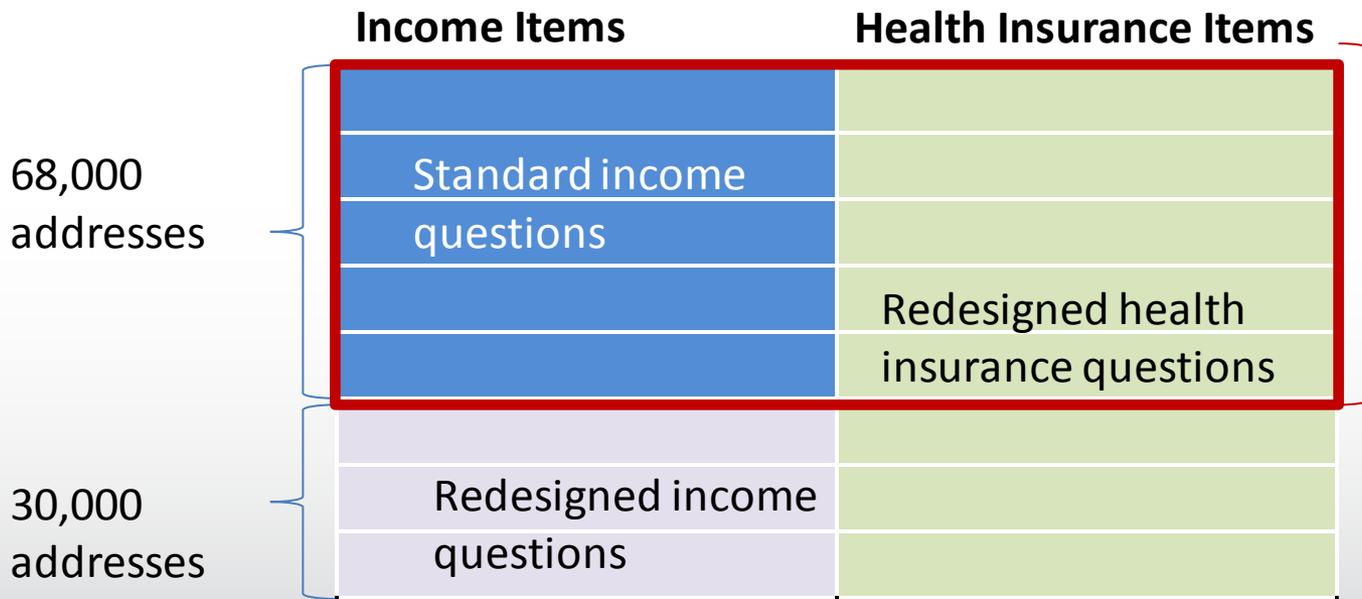
## Full Sample for Health Insurance:

- Needed to establish a 2013 baseline before major provisions of ACA take effect.
- Only full ASEC sample provides reliable estimates of small groups

# Implementation and the ASEC Sample



# Two 2013 Reports: Income & Poverty, Health Insurance

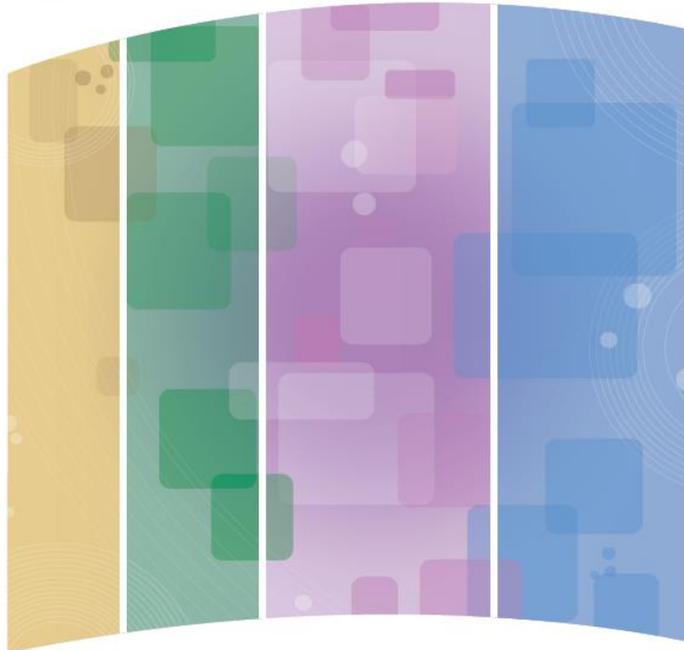


**2013 Income & Poverty, and Health Insurance reports based on a sample of 68,000 addresses, representing the total U.S. population.**

# Income and Poverty in the United States: 2013

## Current Population Reports

By Carmen DeNavas-Walt and Bernadette D. Proctor  
Issued September 2014  
P60-249



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# Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2013

## Current Population Reports

By Jessica C. Smith and Carla Medalia  
Issued September 2014  
P60-250



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# Continuing Research

**We are presently analyzing these data to evaluate the income questions.**

## Income Items

## Health Insurance Items

Standard income questions	
	Redesigned health insurance questions
Redesigned income questions	

# Public Use File Release

Public use microdata full file based on 98,000 addresses to be released in January 2015.

Income Items	Health Insurance Items
Standard income questions	
	Redesigned health insurance questions
Redesigned income questions	

# The 2015 Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance

- Currently still evaluating the new income questions
- Developing new edits for both income and health insurance
- Plan to run full 2013 sample through new health insurance edits
- Fallback plan is to use old edits for income and/or health insurance.

# Health Insurance Release Fall 2015

2013

Redesigned
Health
Insurance
Questions

2014

Redesigned
Health
Insurance
Questions



New content provides a wealth of information and opportunity for more in-depth analysis of health insurance coverage

We plan to use new edits on full sample to create a baseline

Comparison to 2013 baseline will show the impact of new health insurance law

# Pre-Release Activities

Federal Statistics on Health Insurance Coverage: Technical Meeting on Methods Used in Household Surveys – hosted jointly by U.S. Census Bureau and the National Center for Health Statistics

CPS and ACS Health Insurance Estimates: Consistent Trends from 2009-2012 (Brief)

Improving Health Insurance Coverage Measurement: 1998-2014. A history of research and testing (Infographic)

Measuring Health Insurance Coverage with the Current Population Survey: A history of research and testing (Infographic)

Health Insurance Measurement: Differences by Data Sources (Infographic)

Continuously Improving the Health Insurance Coverage Estimates from the Current Population Survey (Blog)

Health Insurance Coverage Measurement in Two Surveys (Blog)

# Possible Technical Meeting on New Edits

- We plan to move forward with more comprehensive edits for both the redesigned income questions and redesigned health insurance questions.
- We are considering hosting a technical meeting where we will discuss the logic of our new edits with external experts.

# 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?
- Do you have any thoughts on how we communicate the change in health insurance for next fall's release?
- Do you have advice on our fallback plan of using old edits?