American Community Survey (ACS)
Why We Ask: Health Insurance

We ask questions about health insurance to create statistics about the percentage of the population covered by health insurance, and the sources of their health insurance. These statistics help federal agencies better understand health insurance coverage, state and local health insurance needs, and to help federal agencies accurately distribute resources and plan programs.

Examples of Federal Uses
- Required to identify vulnerable populations which may be at disproportionate risk of experiencing limitations in health care access, poor health quality, and suboptimal health outcomes.
- Used for Marketplace, Medicaid, and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to target efforts to enroll eligible people and allocate Navigator funding.
- Used to project the demand for VA extended health care services.
- Used to determine where health insurance is lacking as part of research into infectious disease and contaminants. Also used in the development of exposure assessment tools that estimate potential exposures to the general public and specific demographic groups.
- Used to review and analyze the unmet needs of people with disabilities and to identify the characteristics of the target service population.

Examples of Other Uses
State and local agencies use these statistics to understand gaps in community services, and to plan services for everyone, including the uninsured. Researchers use these statistics to understand the effect of new health care policies, and to understand who is covered by health insurance and the sources of their insurance. Advocacy groups use these statistics to understand current and future challenges and to advocate for policies that benefit their groups, such as those with chronic illness or disabilities.

The questions as they appear on the 2016 ACS paper questionnaire. This topic was added to the ACS in 2008.