

README
Income and Poverty Content

2018 Current Population Survey
Annual Social and Economic Supplement
Bridge File

Introduction

The 2014 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC) included redesigned questions for income and health insurance coverage, followed by changes in the 2015 CPS ASEC to allow spouses and unmarried partners to specifically identify as opposite- or same-sex. While data from the updated collection methods were released on schedule, data processing changes to take advantage of this new content are now available. We are re-releasing the 2018 CPS ASEC file to provide data users the opportunity to see the impact of these data processing improvements. We plan to use the new processing system for the CPS ASEC data that will be released in September 2019.

The 2018 CPS ASEC Bridge File provides income, poverty, and health insurance estimates based on these updated CPS ASEC questions as well as a redesigned processing system. This new system introduces demographic changes to account for same sex couples, revised procedures for editing income and health insurance data, and several new income and health insurance variables. Changes to the editing procedures encompass both changes to the resolution of logically inconsistent data and changes to the imputation methods.

The research file can be linked to other CPS ASEC files and supplements, including the previously released 2018 CPS ASEC production file. There are changes in income, poverty and health insurance estimates between the 2018 bridge file and the 2018 production file. The 2017 CPS ASEC file was also processed using the new system and [released earlier this year](#).

Impact on Income and Poverty Estimates

This document summarizes differences across income and poverty estimates derived from the research file compared to estimates from the legacy processing system as published in the report [Income and Poverty in the United States: 2017](#). Full information on the CPS ASEC sample is available within the documentation accompanying the September 2018 release.

For income and poverty, the updated processing system includes edits to take full advantage of the redesigned questionnaire. For example, several variables were added for defined-benefit pension income and defined-contribution withdrawals (such as from 401(k)s) to replace the previous variables on retirement income. The imputation system was updated to make use of income ranges provided by some non-respondents as well as to increase the number of characteristics used in the imputation models.

[Table 1](#) included in this release summarizes the impact of the updated processing system on estimates of income and earnings across select demographic groups. Also included in this release, [Table 2](#) provides poverty rates across the production and updated processing system for select populations.

Background

Details on the redesigned income portion of the CPS ASEC are summarized by Semega and Welniak (2013) “Evaluating the 2013 CPS ASEC Income Redesign Content Test: Proceedings of the 2013 Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) Research Conference,” available at <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/2013/demo/semega-01.html>.

Background on the reporting of same-sex marriage in the CPS ASEC and the impact of family composition on poverty rates is summarized by Edwards and Lindstrom (2017) “Measuring the Presence and Impact of Same-Sex Married Couples on Poverty Rates in the Current Population Survey,” available at <https://census.gov/library/working-papers/2017/demo/SEHSD-WP2017-01.html>.

Detailed comparisons of poverty estimates for calendar year 2016 across the legacy and updated CPS ASEC processing system are summarized by Edwards and Creamer (2019) “Updating the Current Population Survey Processing System and Bridging Differences in the Measurement of Poverty,” available at <https://census.gov/library/working-papers/2019/demo/SEHSD-WP2019-05.html>.

Plans for Public Engagement

The Census Bureau continues to finalize the CPS ASEC processing system, which will be used to produce estimates from the 2019 CPS ASEC. Researchers at the Census Bureau expect to present detailed estimates using the new processing system for the 2017 and 2018 CPS ASEC at the Population Association of America and Joint Statistical Meetings in 2019. The Census Bureau also expects to host an expert meeting to discuss these changes before the September 2019 release of annual income, poverty, and health insurance estimates.