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2025 National Survey of Children's Health

Source and Accuracy Statement

The U.S. Census Bureau has reviewed this data product to ensure appropriate access, use, and disclosure avoidance protection of the confidential source data used to produce this product (Data Management System (DMS) number: P-7502891; Disclosure Review Board (DRB) approval number: CBDRB-FY26-SEHSD003-088).

Source and Accuracy Statement for the 2025 National Survey of Children's Health

1. Introduction

The National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). It is designed to provide national and state-level information about the physical and emotional health and well-being of children under the age of 18 living in the United States, their families and their communities, as well as information about the prevalence and impact of children with special health care needs (CSHCN).

This Source and Accuracy Statement provides an overview for the following phases of the NSCH survey cycle:

2. Sample Design
    - 2.1 Creation of the Sampling Frame
    - 2.2 Sampling Strata
    - 2.3 Selection of the Sample Households
    - 2.4 Selection of the Topical Sample Children
3. Survey Weights
    - 3.1 Overview of the Weighting Process
    - 3.2 Final Weights Produced
    - 3.3 Population Controls
4. Accuracy of Survey Estimates
    - 4.1 Sampling Error
    - 4.2 Nonsampling Error

2. Sample Design

For further details on the sample design beyond what is provided in this section, see the 2025 NSCH methodology report (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026a).

2.1. Creation of the Sampling Frame

The population of interest for the NSCH is all children under the age of 18 residing in the United States on the date of the survey. Among many key elements, the survey frame was designed to identify households with children and to provide information about households' access to the internet.

The 2025 NSCH sample frame was developed from two sources: the Edited Master Address File Extract (EDMAFX) created by the Demographic Statistical Methods Division (DSMD) of the

Census Bureau, and a file of administrative flags (described in Section 2.1.2) that was created by the Census Bureau's Center for Economic Studies (CES).

2.1.1. *Use of the Edited Master Address File Extract*

The Master Address File (MAF) is an inventory of all known living quarters in the United States and Puerto Rico and is maintained by the Census Bureau's Geography Division. It is used for the decennial census, the American Community Survey (ACS), and ongoing demographic surveys. The content of the MAF includes mailing and location addresses, unit type attributes, geographic codes for areas such as state, county, census tract, and census block for each living quarter, and source and history data.

The EDMAFX is created at least once every year specifically for use by DSMD's ongoing demographic surveys. The main product of the EDMAFX for the NSCH was the assignment of a housing unit validity flag (VALDF25). This flag identified valid housing units that also had a valid mailing address, making them eligible for the NSCH sample.

The January 2025 version of the EDMAFX, used in the 2025 NSCH sample frame creation, consisted of 3,142 county and county equivalent address files rolled up to 51 state-level address files, which included the District of Columbia. Only records having VALDF25=1 (valid housing unit) were kept, with the unique identification variable MAFID[1] to match to CES's file of administrative flags.

2.1.2. *Use of the Center for Economic Studies' File of Administrative Flags*

All MAFIDs in the January 2025 MAF-X[2] were appended with flags (for example, poverty, internet access, and stratum flags) from administrative and other data sources compiled by CES. This national file was matched to the EDMAFX to produce the sample frame.

2.1.2.1. Processing Overview of the File of Administrative Flags

The frame for all households with children came from three data sources: the Numident, the Census Household Composition Key (CHCK), and the MAF Auxiliary Reference File (MAF-ARF). See Figure 1 for an overview of the process.

[1] Since MAFID cannot be released, similar household identification variables were created and placed on the Screener (HHIDS) and Topical Files (HHID).
[2] CES used different extracts of the MAF in their processing, specifically the MAF Extracts (MAF-X) and the MAF Auxiliary Reference File (MAF-ARF).

Figure 1. Processing Illustration for the National Survey of Children's Health Administrative Flags File

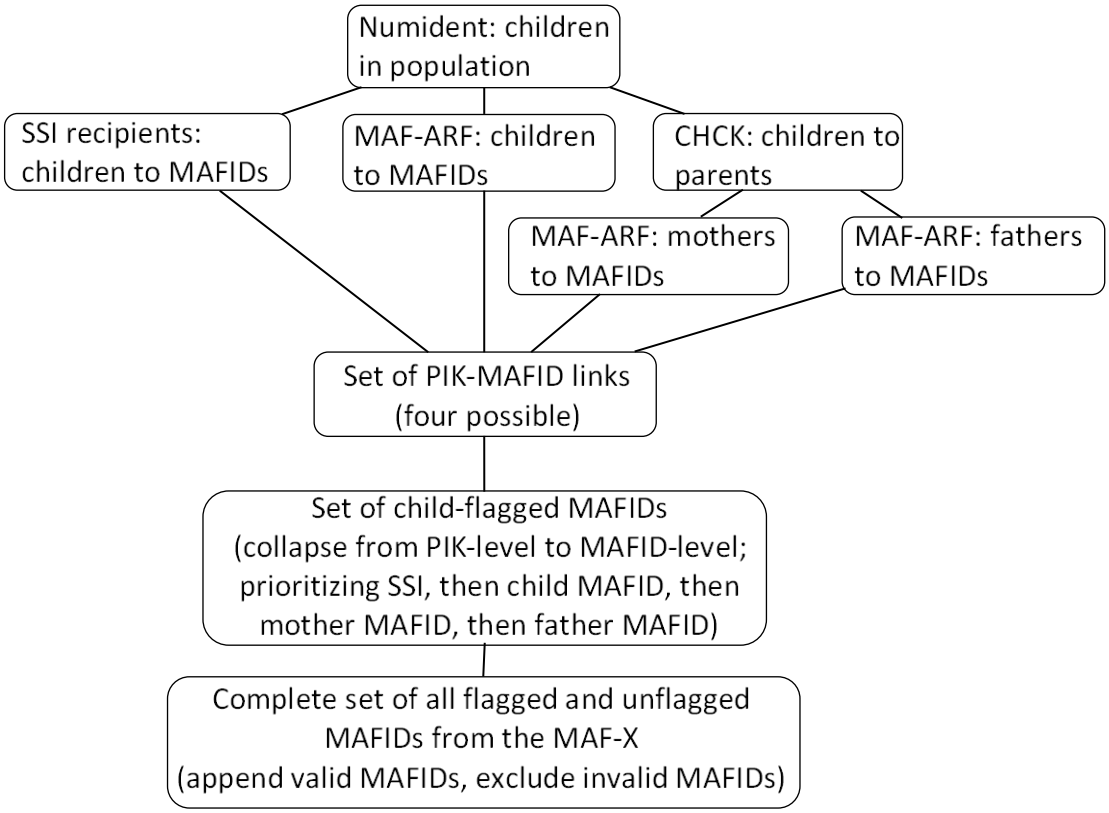


Figure 1 Note: SSI is an acronym for Supplemental Security Income and PIK is an acronym for Protected Identification Keys. CES uses PIKs as anonymous identifiers to link individuals across datasets while protecting their personally identifiable information.

The Numident is based on all individuals who have been assigned Social Security numbers. It is a list of Social Security number applicants with demographic data updated from federal tax data and various administrative records.

To identify and sample households containing children in the Numident, the children in the Numident had to be connected to the households in which they live using the CHCK. The CHCK is a prototype linkage between children and parents based on Census and administrative records. The file uses data from the Decennial Census and federal administrative records to link children Protected Identification Keys (PIKs) to parent PIKs. It identifies the parents of children in the Numident. The source data for the CHCK are the Census Numident, the Decennial Census Unedited File, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 1040 and 1099 files, the Medicare Enrollment Database, the Indian Health Service Database, the Selective Service System, Public and Indian Housing and Tenant Rental Assistance Certification System data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD PIC-TRACS), and National Change of Address data from the United States Postal Service.

The MAF-ARF was used to update household location. It links person identifiers to address identifiers using Decennial Census data and federal administrative data. The source data for the MAF-ARF file are the same as those listed for the CHCK.

For each child observation from the Numident, there were multiple possible MAFIDs: the child to MAF-ARF MAFID, the child-to-CHCK-to-mother-to-MAF-ARF MAFID, and the child-to-CHCK-to-father-to-MAF-ARF MAFID. Using that order, a single MAFID was allocated. The child to MAFID match rate was 88 percent. The 74,100,000 children associated with a MAFID were then collapsed down to 38,850,000 unique MAFIDs.[3] This implies 1.9 children per household for households assigned a flag.

The MAFID list was then scaled up to the universe of MAFIDs to allow sampling of unflagged households. A merge of the 38,850,000 unique child-flagged MAFIDS with the 2024 MAF-X file matches 38,730,000 MAFIDS with child flags and adds 155,300,000 MAFIDS without child flags. Thus, the sample frame file now had about 194 million valid MAFIDS.[4]

2.1.2.2. Internet-Accessible Household Flag

Since 2012, ACS respondents have been able to submit survey forms over the internet in addition to mailing back a completed paper questionnaire. ACS paradata records whether a respondent chose the online option; this paradata is summarized at the tract level. An internet-accessible household measure for the NSCH was then constructed as a weighted proportion of the respondents that chose to submit the ACS survey over the internet. A tract was considered to have low internet access if the internet accessibility index was in the bottom third of the tract-level distribution.

2.1.2.3. Local-Area Household Income Relative to the Poverty Rate

The CES file also had a set of poverty variables from the 2019-2023 five-year ACS file. These variables measure the proportion of households with household income in an interval defined by the poverty rate. Ultimately, a variable POVERTY was defined as Y or N from the proportion of households in the block group that have household income less than 150 percent of the poverty rate for use in sampling.

2.1.3. *Final 2025 NSCH Sample Frame*

[3] All unweighted counts and estimates in this document are rounded in accordance with the special rounding rules of the Census Disclosure Review Board.
[4] The ACS MAF-X has both valid and invalid records, which is why the resulting file has more records than there are housing units in the United States. Also, counts are rounded.

The data files detailed in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 were merged based on MAFID to create the final sample frame. Only the records that were valid from the file in Section 2.1.1 were eligible.

2.2. Sampling Strata

Each state had mutually exclusive strata defined by CES's child flag as follows:

- Stratum 1 – Households with *explicit links* to at least one child in administrative data.
- Stratum 2a – Households without explicit links to children in administrative data but predicted to be *likely to have children* conditional on administrative data.
- Stratum 2b – Households without explicit links to children in administrative data and predicted to be *unlikely to have children* conditional on administrative data.

To split strata 2a and 2b, child presence in the households without explicit links to children in administrative data was modeled as a function of variables available in administrative data for all households on the MAF-X. The model was estimated with data from the most recent available ACS, in which child presence can be observed. Then, parameter estimates from that model were used to predict the likelihood of child presence for the households. These models were estimated separately for each state, and the threshold for bifurcation was based on an objective of maximizing the size of Stratum 2b while also maintaining 95 percent coverage of households with children in Strata 1 and 2a.

Variable state-level sampling occurred in only Strata 1 and 2a, with no households selected from Stratum 2b since Stratum 2b contained those households deemed very unlikely to have children based on the lack of explicit links to children as well as the modeling results.

2.3. Selection of the Sample Households and Assignment of Incentive

The NSCH sample frame is a listing of the valid housing units from the MAF, appended with several administrative flags. Appendix A provides the calculated expected sample sizes by state and stratum. The production sample for the 2025 NSCH is approximately 360,000 unique addresses nationwide. This includes a base sample of roughly 287,000 unique addresses and state oversamples for Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming that amount to roughly 73,000 additional unique addresses. Approximately 228,000 addresses (63 percent) were selected from Stratum 1 and 132,000 (37 percent) from Stratum 2a.

Base sample sizes were calculated by factoring in the expected valid address rate, expected response rates, and the prevalence of households with children by stratum. Addresses in Stratum 1 were sampled at a higher rate than Stratum 2a to increase the number of households with children in the sample, while limiting the increase in the variance from the differential sampling rates. This oversampling factor (sampling rate for Stratum 1 divided by the sampling rate for Stratum 2a) ranged from two to six across the states. State-level samples were allocated to achieve an equal number of completed interviews in each state for the base

production sample, while the various oversamples had additional requirements to meet the needs of their sponsors. The base sample was expected to yield approximately 750 completed interviews from households with children per state.

2.3.1. *Partner-Funded Oversampling*

To inform state-level decision-making around various priorities, stakeholders in Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia, and Wyoming sponsored an oversample of addresses within their state within the 2025 NSCH. The oversamples are either general statewide oversamples (IL, KS, NE, PA, WV, WY) or a combination of general statewide and substate oversamples (AZ, CA, CO, NM, OH, UT). The general statewide oversamples increased the total number of sample addresses within a given state and were distributed to the geographic areas in the same way as the base production sample. The substate oversamples aimed to reach a higher number of interviews from targeted groups or to produce smaller than state-level estimates in combination with the NSCH base sample. The CA oversample is at a region level (county groupings) and the AZ, CO, NM, OH, and UT substate oversamples are in certain tracts deemed to have higher proportions of certain minority populations.

2.3.2. *Process of Selecting Households*

The sample was a systematic random sample from an ordered list. The sort, prior to sampling, was by county, POVERTY (the variable described in Section 2.1.2.3), Census tract, Census block, and MAFID, within each state and stratum.

Sampling intervals determined the households sampled and were calculated for each of the sampling strata in each state. The formula was the state-level stratum size on the frame divided by the calculated state-level expected sample size in the stratum.

When determining the random start for each stratum of each state, first a uniform random number between (0,1) was generated. The returned value was then multiplied by the sampling interval to get the random start, or the first record to be in sample for that state and stratum.

2.3.3. *Assignment of Incentive to the Sample Records*

Screener incentives, $0 (control) or $5, were assigned across all sampled households. For the 2025 NSCH, 90 percent of the sample was randomly assigned to receive a $5 incentive and the remaining 10 percent received no incentive to act as a control to monitor the effectiveness of the screener incentive treatment. The inventive assignment for each record was made before any data was collected.

Topical incentives were also assigned for households that returned a Screener with children. In 2025, all addresses received a $5 incentive in the initial topical mailings.

2.4. Selection of the Topical Sample Children

2.4.1. *Determining Each Child's Eligibility*

A child is an eligible child if they are less than 18 years old at the time of interview.

2.4.2. *Determining the Status of each Eligible Child's Special Health Care Needs*

An eligible child in a household is deemed a child with special health care needs (C_CSHCN=1) if one or more of the following five groups have Screener responses of "yes" to all the questions in that group.

If:

Does (child's name) CURRENTLY need or use medicine prescribed by a doctor, other than vitamins? **AND**
Is (child's name)'s need for prescription medicine because of ANY medical, behavioral, or other health condition? **AND**
Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or longer?

If:

Does (child's name) need or use more medical care, mental health, or educational services than is usual for most children of the same age? **AND**
Is (child's name)'s need for medical care, mental health, or educational services because of ANY medical, behavioral, or other health condition? **AND**
Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or longer?

If:

Is (child's name) limited or prevented in any way in his or her ability to do the things most children of the same age can do? **AND**
Is (child's name)'s limitation in abilities because of ANY medical, behavioral, or other health condition? **AND**
Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or longer?

If:

Does (child's name) need or get special therapy, such as physical, occupational, or speech therapy? **AND**
Is (child's name)'s need for special therapy because of ANY medical, behavioral, or other health condition? **AND**

Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or longer?

If:

Does (child's name) have any kind of emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem for which they need treatment or counseling? **AND**
Has their emotional, developmental, or behavioral problem lasted or is it expected to last 12 months or longer?

2.4.3. *Strategies for Selecting the NSCH Topical Sample Children from the Screener Responses*

For both the paper and the web data collection instruments, the sample child was selected randomly from the first four eligible children based on the probabilities of selection listed in Table 1 after sorting by:

- Special health care needs status
  - Age (youngest to oldest)
- Non-special health care needs status
  - Age (youngest to oldest)

Households that had four or more eligible children had a slightly different sorting process. These children were sorted first by their special health care needs status, then by name (A to Z), and then sorted by age (youngest to oldest).

The strategies employed for selecting a single child allowed for an oversample of both CSHCNs and children 0 through 5 years old.

Table 1. Strategies for Selecting the Sample Children for the National Survey of Children's Health

Number of Eligible Children in Household (TOTKIDS_R)	Number of Eligible non-SHCN* (TOTNONSHCN), CSHCN (TOTCSHCN)	Probability of Selection for non-SHCN	Probability of Selection for CSHCN†	Notes
1	1,0 or 0,1	100%		Single child is selected.
2	2,0 or 0,2	• If only one child is aged 0-5, that child's probability of selection is 62% and the other child's probability of selection is 38%. • Otherwise, each child has an equal chance of selection at 50%.		Includes 60% oversampling of children aged 0-5.
2	1,1	36%	64%	Includes 80% oversampling of CSHCN.

Number of Eligible Children in Household (TOTKIDS_R)	Number of Eligible non-SHCN* (TOTNONSHCN), CSHCN (TOTCSHCN)	Probability of Selection for non-SHCN	Probability of Selection for CSHCN†	Notes
3	3,0 or 0,3	• If only one child is aged 0-5, that child's probability of selection is 44% and each of the other two children have an equal chance of selection of 28%. • If two children are aged 0-5, each has a probability of selection of 38% and the other child has a probability of selection of 24%. • If all three children are aged 0-5 or 6-17, then each child has an equal chance of selection of 33.3%.		Includes 60% oversampling of children aged 0-5.
3	2,1	52%	48%	Includes 80% oversampling of CSHCN.
		• 26% probability of selection for *each* non-SHCN child.		
3	1,2	22%	78%	Includes 80% oversampling of CSHCN.
		• 39% probability of selection for *each* CSHCN.		
4 or more	Any combination	Before the sort, each of the first four children listed has an equal 25% probability of selection.		Simple random selection of one of the first four (sorted) children, regardless of non-SHCN or CSHCN.

* SHCN – Special Health Care Needs

† CSHCN – Children with Special Health Care Needs

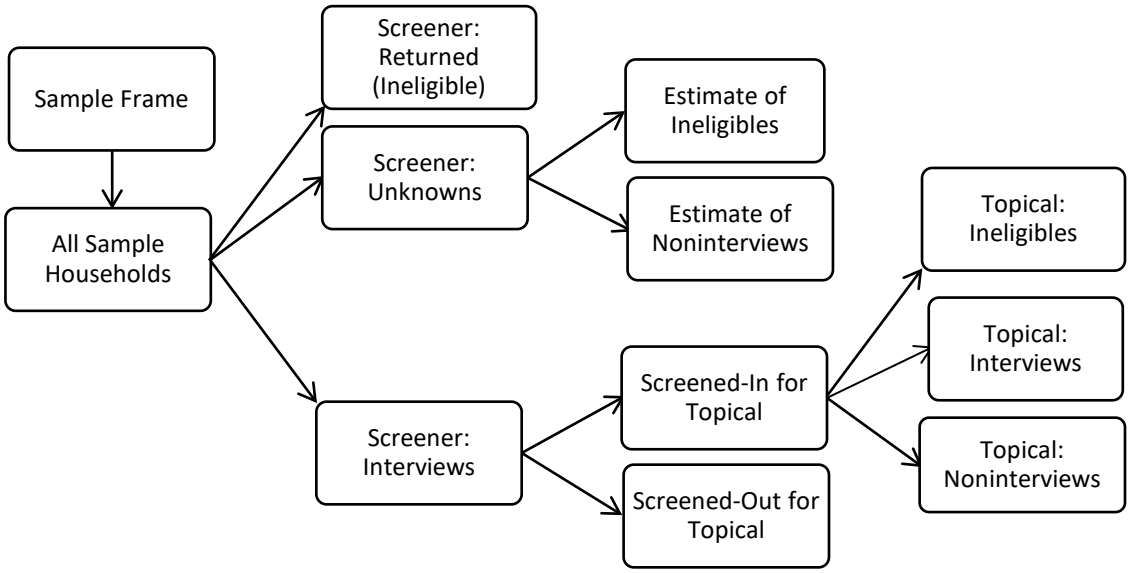
3. **Survey Weights**

For further details on the 2025 NSCH weighting in addition to what is provided in this section, see the 2025 NSCH Methodology Report (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026a).

3.1. Overview of the Weighting Process

Figure 2 provides a framework for the weighting steps. The weighting process used the data from each phase of the data collection, from both the paper and web instruments, to produce final weights for the screened-in households, Screener children, and Topical selected children.

Figure 2. From Sample Frame to Final Outcome: A Framework for the Weighting of the National Survey of Children's Health



The weighting process was done by state, with the District of Columbia treated as a state. Weighting for the interviewed children began with the base weight (BW) for each sample household, followed by a Screener nonresponse adjustment (SNA). Then, the eligible children from the Screener interview cases were raked to population controls (Child-Level Screener Factor=CLSF). A within-household subsampling factor (WHSF) was applied to the Screener interview cases to adjust for the subsampling of a single child, and a Topical nonresponse adjustment (TNA) was applied to the Topical interview cases. As a factor for the final weight for interviewed children, a final raking adjustment (RAK) to various demographic controls was performed. The weighting process for all Screener children was a subset of these six factors. Similarly, the screened-in households received a household-level weight, calculated using BW, SNA, and a household post-stratification adjustment (HPSA).

3.1.1. *Base Weight*

The BW for each sample housing unit was the inverse of its probability of selection for the Screener. Each state had two sampled strata with different probabilities of selection for each. If there had been no nonresponse and the survey frame was complete, using this weight would give unbiased estimates for households with children.

3.1.2. *Screener Nonresponse Adjustment Factor*

The SNA increased the weights of the households responding to the Screener to account for all the households not responding to the Screener.

The count of Screener noninterviews was an estimate of the expected number of eligible households from those cases for which nothing was received. The term eligible here refers to the address belonging to an occupied, residential household. The expected number of eligible cases was estimated by taking the eligibility rate among the known cases and applying it to the unknown cases.

Screener weighting cells were defined by the sampling stratum (STRATUM), an indicator of the likelihood of households to respond by paper (WEBGROUP), a block-group poverty measure (yes/no) variable indicating the proportion of households with income less than 150 percent of the poverty rate, and a Metropolitan Area Flag (located within vs. outside of a metropolitan area).

Within each resultant Screener weighting cell, the SNA was defined as:

$$\text{SNA} = \left(\frac{\text{weighted sum of Screener interviews } + \text{S_NONINT}}{\text{weighted sum of Screener interviews}}\right)$$

where S_NONINT =

$$\left(\frac{\text{weighted sum of Screener interviews}}{\text{weighted sum of Screener interviews + weighted sum of Screener ineligible households}}\right) \times$$

$$(\text{weighted sum of households with unknown Screener eligibility})$$

This was the last of the weight processing for Screener households for which there was no Screener interview or for interviewed households that indicated having no eligible children.

3.1.3. *Household Post-Stratification Adjustment Factor*

All households that indicated on the Screener that there were eligible children present (also called screened-in households) were given a household-level weight. In addition to the BW and SNA, there was an HPSA applied to achieve the final screened-in household weight. This factor consisted of ratio adjustments to population controls attained from ACS data.
Households were put into one of 357 cells depending on their state and the Hispanic origin and race of the youngest child. Cells were collapsed as necessary. Within each cell, the HPSA was calculated as the control for the cell divided by the cell's weighted total.

3.1.4. *Child-Level Screener Factor*

All eligible children (at most four) from the Screener interviewed households were given a child-level Screener weight to eventually produce state-level estimates. This was accomplished through iterative raking to population controls obtained from ACS estimates.

Raking to the population controls was accomplished using the following two analytical domains of interest: (Cells were collapsed as necessary.)

- Dimension #1 – State by Child's Race/Hispanic Origin[5]
- Dimension #2 – State by Child's Sex by Child's Age Group

Each iteration consisted of two ratio adjustments. Ratio adjustments control the weights to the respective dimension control totals and each ratio adjustment is called a rake. The first rake used the most recent intermediate weight (BW × SNA) as the child's input weight in the raking process. All subsequent rakes used the resulting weight from the previous rake as the input weight. The iterative raking process was continued until the absolute difference between the sum of the weights within each raking cell of all three dimensions and the control total associated with each raking cell was less than 0.01 percent of the control.

At the end of the process, the CLSF was calculated as the weight after the final iteration divided by the weighted total prior to raking.

Households where a child was selected from a completed Screener to receive a Topical interview but became ineligible to complete a Topical were not assigned any further nonzero weighting factors. Examples may include households for which the Screener was received after the final Topical mailing, the child is no longer a resident of the household, etc.

3.1.5. *Within-Household Subsampling Factor*

Weights of the remaining eligible cases were adjusted for the subsampling of a single child within each of the households. The value of the adjustment was the inverse of the probability of selection for the selected child. Probabilities varied by the number of children in the household, the presence of children aged 0 through 5, and the presence of CSHCNs. Details in Table 1 show these probabilities of selection for each possible scenario. The weights for the selected children now represented all children (at most four) in the household and considered oversampling for CSHCNs and young children.

3.1.6. *Topical Nonresponse Adjustment Factor*

Like the SNA, the TNA increased the weights of the households responding to the Topical to account for all the households not responding to the Topical. These households returned a Screener and went through the subsampling process to select a single child to be the subject of the Topical. If the respondent reached Section H of the questionnaire[6] and answered at least 50 percent of key items, then it was considered a Topical interview. A returned Topical that did not meet these conditions was considered a Topical noninterview.

[5] In previous years, there were separate dimensions for race and Hispanic origin. Beginning in 2022, the dimensions are combined in both the Child-Level Screener Factor and the later Raking Adjustment Factor.
[6] Section H is the eighth section of the Topical questionnaire and is titled "About You and This Child".

Households were put into one of 16 cells depending on WEBGROUP (paper or web), tenure (owner occupied or not), imputed poverty/non-poverty (yes/no), and presence of SHCN of the selected child.

Within each of the 16 Topical weighting cells, collapsed as necessary:

$$\text{TNA} = \left(\frac{\text{weighted sum of Topical interviews + weighted sum of Topical Noninterviews}}{\text{weighted sum of Topical interviews}}\right)$$

Households for which there was no Topical interview were not assigned any further nonzero weighting factors.

3.1.7. *Raking Adjustment Factor*

This final step of the weighting process was accomplished through iterative raking to population controls obtained from ACS estimates. Since the process was similar to that of the CLSF, details are omitted in this section. The only significant differences were the addition of trimming, a convergence criterion of one percent, and different dimensions.

The following dimensions were used in this raking process:

- Dimension #1 – State by Household Poverty Ratio
- Dimension #2 – State by Household Size
- Dimension #3 – State Groupings by Respondent's Education
- Dimension #4 – State by Selected Child's Race/Hispanic Origin
- Dimension #5 – State by Selected Child's Age Group
- Dimension #6 – National Selected Child's Race/Hispanic Origin
- Dimension #7 – National Selected Child's Sex by Single Age

3.1.7.1. Trimming Extreme Weights

At the end of each iteration, the weights were checked for extreme values. For the first iteration of RAK, an extreme value was a weight that exceeded the median weight plus six times the interquartile range (IQR) of the weights in each state. For all subsequent iterations, the cutoff was one plus the median plus six times the IQR (1 + median + 6*IQR) in each state. The increase of one is to help with convergence. Extreme weights were trimmed to the cutoff. Then, the weights were checked for convergence, which required each cell's weighted total to be within one percent of the control for the cell. If convergence had not been achieved, the RAK raking steps were applied again and the new resulting weights were rechecked for extreme values and trimmed as before, continuing as necessary until convergence was reached. In 2025, convergence to controls was met for all raking cells after the 10^{th} iteration of the raking. At the end of the process, the RAK was calculated as the weight after the final iteration and trimming divided by the weighted total prior to raking.

3.2. Final Weights Produced

Selected Child Weight (Topical) = FWC = BW × SNA × SC_CLSF × WHSF × TNA × RAK
Child Weight (Screener) = C_FWS = BW × SNA × C_CLSF
Household Weight (Screener) = FWH = BW × SNA × HPSA

3.3. Population Controls

The 2025 NSCH used the 2024 single-year ACS child population estimates as controls. The ACS is an ongoing national survey that provides vital information on a yearly basis about our nation and its people. The survey covers the resident population of the United States and Puerto Rico for people living in housing units and group quarters (note that the NSCH weighting cells only used the resident population of the United States for people living in housing units). It produces critical information for small areas and small population groups – it is the only source of information for many of its topics in these small areas.

The ACS samples approximately 3.5 million housing unit addresses annually with a response rate[7] of 82.9 percent in 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). These data are collected continuously throughout the year to produce annual population and housing estimates. Two different sets of estimates with weights are released each fall in the form of single-year (12 months of data) and five-year (60 months of data) datasets.

4. **Accuracy of Survey Estimates**

A sample survey estimate has two types of error: sampling and nonsampling. The accuracy of an estimate depends on both types of error. The nature of the sampling error is known given the survey design; the full extent of the nonsampling error is unknown.

4.1. Sampling Error

The NSCH estimates are based on a sample; they may differ from the figures that would have been obtained if a complete census had been taken using the same questionnaire and instructions. This difference is known as sampling error and can be estimated from the survey data. While the simplest calculations of sampling error assume simple random sampling, these will underestimate the sampling error for the NSCH. This is because different sampling rates were used across the sampled strata, as well as across states, resulting in a complex sample design.

Standard errors indicate the magnitude of the sampling error and can be used to construct confidence intervals around the survey estimates. By calculating the confidence intervals for a

[7] Survey Response Rate (state x, year y) = (initially weighted estimate of interviews in state x in year y / initally weighted estimate of cases eligible to be interviewed in state x for year y) * 100

particular sample, one can say with a specified confidence that the average estimate derived from all possible samples is included in the confidence interval.

4.1.1. *Estimating Sampling Errors for the National Survey of Children's Health*

Standard errors for the NSCH estimates can be obtained using the Taylor Series approximation method, which is available in software packages such as SAS, Stata, and SUDAAN. The sampling strata are identified by state and the child stratum flag, and the Primary Sampling Unit (PSU) is the household.

For SAS, the following statements are used:

proc surveyfreq (or proc surveymeans or proc surveyreg)
strata FIPSST and STRATUM
cluster HHIDS (for the Screener) or HHID (for the Topical)
weight FWH (household weight, Screener) or C_FWS (child weight, Screener) or FWC (selected child weight, Topical)

For Stata, the following statements are used:

svyset strata FIPSST and STRATUM
svyset psu HHIDS (for the Screener) or HHID (for the Topical)
svyset pweight FWH (household weight, Screener) or C_FWS (child weight, Screener) or FWC (selected child weight, Topical)

Note: For Stata, the stratum variables need to be combined into a single variable.

For SUDAAN, the following statements are used:

proc…[8] design = WR
nest FIPSST STRATUM (HHIDS for the Screener or HHID for the Topical) / psulevel=3
weight FWH (household weight, Screener) or C_FWS (child weight, Screener) or FWC (selected child weight, Topical)

Note: For SUDAAN, the data file needs to be sorted by FIPSST and STRATUM, and then HHIDS (for the Screener) or HHID (for the Topical). HHID, HHIDS, FIPSST, and STRATUM must be converted from character to numeric variable type.

The Taylor series method for estimating variances via the above software packages is simple to implement and takes into account the complex sample design, but it is less accurate than some other methods. An assumption must be made that households are sampled with replacement when they are not. The method also does not fully capture the impact of all weighting steps on the variances, particularly the effect of adjustments using external control totals which are

[8] The procedures for descriptive and analytical statistics in SUDAAN are DESCRIPT, CROSSTAB, and RATIO.

expected to reduce the variance. Variance estimates using the Taylor Series method can be considered generally more conservative.

4.2. Nonsampling Error

For a given estimator, the difference between the estimate that would result if the sample were to include the entire population and the true population value being estimated is known as nonsampling error. There are several sources of nonsampling error which may occur during the development or execution of the survey. For the NSCH, it can occur because of circumstances created by the respondent, the survey instrument, or the way the data are collected and processed.

For example, errors could occur because of:

- Measurement Error – The respondent provides incorrect information, estimates the requested information, or an unclear survey question is misunderstood by the respondent.
- Coverage Error – Individuals which should have been included in the survey frame were missed.
- Nonresponse Error – Responses are not collected from all those in the sample or the respondent is unwilling to provide information.
- Imputation Error – Values are estimated imprecisely for missing data.
- Processing Error – Forms may be lost, data may be incorrectly keyed, coded, or recoded.

The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process, including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, and the statistical review to minimize these errors (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026b). However, since the full extent of the nonsampling error is unknown, one should be particularly careful when interpreting results based on small differences between estimates. The Census Bureau recommends that data users incorporate information about nonsampling error into their analyses, as nonsampling error could impact the conclusions drawn from the results.

Although nonsampling error cannot be measured directly, nonresponse and coverage are two types whose potential effects can be examined to a limited extent.

4.2.1. *Nonresponses*

The effect of nonresponse cannot be measured directly, but one indication of its potential effect is the nonresponse rate. For the 2025 NSCH, the weighted proportion of households that completed a Screener is 38.8 percent and the weighted proportion of households with children that completed a Topical is 24.1 percent. The weighted overall survey response rate is 34.7 percent.

A separate nonresponse bias analysis will be conducted to assess nonresponse bias in the 2025 NSCH.

4.2.2. *Coverage*

Coverage errors occur when the total population that could be selected for a sample differs from the survey's target population. Missed housing units and missed people within sample households create undercoverage, which adds bias to survey estimates if the missed population differs from those interviewed on key survey items.

A common measure of survey coverage is the coverage ratio, calculated as the estimated population before post-stratification divided by the independent population control. Table 2 shows the 2025 NSCH coverage ratios by age groups for certain race/ethnicity groups. The coverage ratios are calculated using NSCH sampling weights of all Screener children that are adjusted for nonresponse but not adjusted to match independent controls. A coverage ratio of one indicates that the survey estimate perfectly matches the independent control. A coverage ratio less than one indicates undercoverage, and a coverage ratio greater than one indicates overcoverage.

Table 2. 2025 National Survey of Children's Health Coverage Ratios, Before Post-Stratification

Demographic Category	Age 0-5	Age 6-11	Age 12-17
Overall	0.60	0.65	0.73
Hispanic	0.40	0.42	0.48
Non-Hispanic White Alone	0.81	0.85	0.94
Non-Hispanic Black Alone	0.32	0.40	0.45
Non-Hispanic Other Race	0.59	0.67	0.76

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025 National Survey of Children's Health internal data

As seen in Table 2, the coverage ratios for Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black alone for all age groups and Non-Hispanic Other and Overall for children aged 0-5 and 6-11 are below the Census Bureau standard of 0.7 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2026b). These low coverage ratios will be addressed in a forthcoming 2025 NSCH Nonresponse Bias Analysis, but they can generally be attributed to the following:

- Response was lower for areas with larger non-White populations.
- Excluding Stratum 2b from sampling lowered coverage ratios of households with children in general.
- Very young children can be difficult to detect in administrative records (like the ones used to form our frame and strata).
- Screener data from the paper instrument is collected on at most four children in a household and only those children receive weights; the web instrument collects up to 99 children on the Screener, but only the first four are reported on and weighted.

Although only a small proportion of the responding households report more than four children, they do not receive weights.

These effects were largely mitigated once the weights were controlled to independent population totals. The coverage ratios when using final Topical weights are in Table 3.

Table 3. 2025 National Survey of Children's Health Coverage Ratios Using Final Topical Weights

Demographic Category	Age 0-5	Age 6-11	Age 12-17
Overall	1.00	1.00	1.00
Hispanic	0.98	1.00	1.03
Non-Hispanic White Only	1.05	1.03	0.95
Non-Hispanic Black Only	0.89	0.98	1.13
Non-Hispanic Other Race	0.98	0.92	0.98

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025 National Survey of Children's Health internal data

5. References

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). "American Community Survey Sample Size and Data Quality." Retrieved July 1, 2026, from https://www.census.gov/acs/www/methodology/sample-size-and-data-quality/response-rates/.

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Appendix A: 2025 National Survey of Children's Health Estimated State Sample Sizes by Stratum

Table A1. 2025 National Survey of Children's Health Estimated State Sample Sizes by Stratum

State	FIPSST	Total Sample	Stratum 1 Sample	Stratum 2A Sample
Alabama	01	**6,500**	4,200	2,300
Alaska	02	**8,200**	4,300	3,800
Arizona	04	**8,700**	5,300	3,400
Arkansas	05	**6,500**	4,000	2,500
California	06	**17,500**	12,000	5,700
Colorado	08	**14,500**	9,700	4,900
Connecticut	09	**4,400**	2,900	1,500
Delaware	10	**6,100**	4,100	2,000
District of Columbia	11	**5,700**	3,600	2,200
Florida	12	**6,700**	4,200	2,500
Georgia	13	**6,700**	4,500	2,200
Hawaii	15	**5,400**	2,800	2,600
Idaho	16	**4,800**	3,000	1,800
Illinois	17	**10,000**	6,300	3,800
Indiana	18	**5,000**	3,300	1,700
Iowa	19	**4,400**	2,800	1,600
Kansas	20	**18,500**	12,500	6,000
Kentucky	21	**5,900**	3,700	2,200
Louisiana	22	**8,400**	5,300	3,100
Maine	23	**4,900**	3,300	1,500
Maryland	24	**4,700**	3,200	1,500
Massachusetts	25	**4,600**	2,900	1,700
Michigan	26	**4,700**	3,100	1,600
Minnesota	27	**3,400**	2,500	850
Mississippi	28	**8,400**	5,300	3,100
Missouri	29	**5,000**	3,200	1,800
Montana	30	**5,200**	3,200	2,100
Nebraska	31	**7,300**	4,800	2,400
Nevada	32	**8,300**	5,000	3,300
New Hampshire	33	**4,800**	3,100	1,700
New Jersey	34	**4,500**	3,100	1,500
New Mexico	35	**12,500**	5,900	6,500
New York	36	**5,800**	3,400	2,400
North Carolina	37	**5,900**	3,700	2,200
North Dakota	38	**5,800**	3,600	2,200
Ohio	39	**10,500**	6,800	3,700
Oklahoma	40	**6,900**	4,200	2,700
Oregon	41	**4,500**	2,900	1,600
Pennsylvania	42	**9,300**	6,500	2,800
Rhode Island	44	**6,100**	3,900	2,200

State	FIPSST	Total Sample	Stratum 1 Sample	Stratum 2A Sample
South Carolina	45	**6,300**	3,900	2,300
South Dakota	46	**5,200**	3,100	2,000
Tennessee	47	**5,500**	3,600	1,900
Texas	48	**6,800**	4,600	2,100
Utah	49	**8,800**	6,200	2,600
Vermont	50	**4,400**	2,800	1,600
Virginia	51	**4,500**	3,000	1,500
Washington	53	**4,500**	2,900	1,700
West Virginia	54	**11,500**	6,700	5,000
Wisconsin	55	**4,000**	2,600	1,400
Wyoming	56	**11,000**	6,500	4,700

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2025 National Survey of Children's Health internal data

Note: All numbers in Table A1 have been rounded according to the Census Bureau Disclosure Review Board rules. Rounded state values may not sum to the correct national total.