

HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE DATA

Frequently Asked Questions

Upcoming Census Bureau Health Insurance Coverage Data Releases

Q: When is the Census Bureau scheduled to release the latest health insurance coverage data?

A: Each September, the Census Bureau releases data on health insurance coverage from national surveys of individuals and households. The Census Bureau is scheduled to release 2012 health insurance coverage data on the following dates:

- Current Population Survey (CPS) — **Tuesday, September 17, 2013**
- American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year estimates — **Thursday, September 19, 2013.** An embargoed release of the ACS data is scheduled for 3 p.m. on September 17, 2013.

Q: Didn't the Census Bureau just release new health insurance coverage estimates within the last month?

A: Yes. The Census Bureau recently released 2011 county-level Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) for individuals under 65. Later this month (September 2013), the Census Bureau will release new state-level estimates based on data gathered in 2012 — the latest available.

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Data Sources for Kansans with Health Insurance Coverage and Uninsured Kansans

Q: How many Kansans are uninsured?

A: For 2010–2011, about 365,000 Kansans — or 13.1 percent of Kansans — were uninsured based on the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. It's important to know that this number is different than other estimates published by the Census Bureau, such as those in the American Community Survey.

Q: How many different estimates of uninsured Kansans does the Census Bureau publish?

A: The Census Bureau publishes health insurance coverage estimates based on two primary data sources: The Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS) and the American Community Survey (ACS). The Census Bureau also publishes county- and state-level uninsured model-based estimates for those under 65 as part of its Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE) program.

Q: So which survey is right?

A: All surveys are subject to some error, and the rate of uninsured Kansans changes over time. For most state estimates we recommend using ACS data. ACS estimates are based on more recent responses from a larger number of Kansans than the CPS. KHI is going to use the ACS as the primary source to report the most recent rate of uninsured Kansans. This doesn't mean the CPS estimates are wrong; it just means the ACS numbers are somewhat more recent and more accurate.

Q: Why are the numbers so different?

A: Both the ACS and CPS indicate around 13 percent of the population was uninsured in 2011 (2010–2011 for the CPS). So from a statewide overall perspective the numbers aren't terribly different. Where the numbers do differ, there are several reasons:

- How the data are reported. For example, the CPS uses a two-year average to report the uninsurance rate versus year-by-year rates from the ACS.
- Reference period. The surveys ask different questions about health insurance coverage. The CPS asks respondents to recall what coverage they had during the last calendar year versus the ACS asking about health insurance coverage when surveyed.
- Timing of data collection. CPS gathers data from February to April of each year, while ACS gathers data year-round.
- Other methodological differences, such as the number of people surveyed, the phrasing of survey questions and handling of missing data.

Q: So which estimates should I use?

A: For state-level estimates, as well as for smaller areas of the state and for smaller demographic groups, ACS estimates are preferred because the ACS is based on a much larger number of surveys than the CPS. Now

that the ACS has become an established survey of health insurance coverage, ACS estimates are typically preferred over estimates from the CPS or other state-level health insurance coverage estimates.

Q: So why does the Census Bureau conduct two large, national surveys about health insurance coverage?

A: The CPS health insurance coverage questions have been around a lot longer, have been studied in more depth and are therefore understood much better by the health research community. The ACS health insurance coverage questions are relatively new — just reaching five years-worth of data this year. The data from each survey offers certain advantages to researchers and policymakers at the federal, state and, in some cases, local levels.

Q: What about estimates of state-level health insurance coverage from other sources?

A: There are several other entities that routinely publish state-level health insurance estimates — i.e., the Kaiser Family Foundation, State Health Access Data Assistance Center (SHADAC) and the Census Bureau's Small Area Health Insurance Estimates (SAHIE). Data from these sources — particularly analyses by federal poverty level — may differ from the survey results published by the Census Bureau. These differences occur due to specific adjustments made to the original survey data.

Primary Sources of State or Sub-State Level Health Insurance Coverage Estimates

