

Health Insurance Estimates

Guidance on When to Use Each Survey

When should you use health insurance estimates from the American Community Survey? When should you use ones from the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement instead?

For the most comprehensive and latest national data: Use the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement

For 2018 national figures, we recommend using the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC), as it is the U.S. Census Bureau's most comprehensive and detailed source of health insurance coverage data.

The U.S. Census Bureau implemented improvements to the CPS ASEC over several years, using a two-step process. Questionnaire design changes first were incorporated between 2014 and 2016, followed by more recent improvements to the data processing system to take advantage of the detailed information from the redesigned questionnaire. For information on these changes, see www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-asec-design.html.

Due to differences in the processing system and the availability of data on new measures of coverage, estimates for calendar year 2018 should only be compared with calendar year 2017 estimates from the 2018 CPS ASEC Bridge File or with subsequent estimates, and **not** with estimates for previous years. For more information see Appendix A, *Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2018*.

For national historical time series data and for states: Use the American Community Survey

The American Community Survey provides annual national and subnational estimates of health insurance coverage back to 2008. Also, this survey makes it possible to analyze dynamics in health insurance coverage at a finer level of geography. Use American Community Survey one year estimates for analysis of health insurance trends for states, counties, and cities with populations of 65,000 or more, and for congressional- districts. Due to the improvements to the CPS ASEC discussed above, use American Community Survey data for analysis of national health insurance across a longer time period (2008 to 2018).

For local areas: Use the American Community Survey

There are two different American Community Survey data sets available (one-year and five-year), each covering different time frames and different geographic areas based on population size. The size of the areas being compared will determine which of these data sets you should use. Single-year health insurance estimates back to 2008 are available for all areas with a

population of 65,000 or more, including counties, cities and all congressional districts. Five-year estimates are available for the nation's smallest areas, such as census tracts and block groups.

When making comparisons, always use the same data set for all geographies, even if some areas qualify for more than one data set. For example, if only some counties in a state have one-year data but all have five-year data, use the five-year data for all. More guidance on comparisons can be found on the American Community Survey website at [<www.census.gov/programssurveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data.html>](http://www.census.gov/programssurveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data.html).

For more information on when to use each survey, please see the [Health Insurance in Two Surveys](#) blog.