

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 2017 national figures, we recommend using the Current Population Survey, as it is the U.S. Census Bureau's most comprehensive and detailed source of health insurance coverage data.

Data for 2013 and later years have been collected using consistent methodology, ensuring a strong baseline for examining year-to-year changes in coverage rates over this period. The calendar year 2013 or later survey data are not comparable to the survey data from prior years due to the redesign of health insurance questions.

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 at the state, county, city and congressional-district levels.

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/programs-surveys/acs/guidance/comparing-acs-data.html.

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

