

Center for Public Policy Priorities Recommends:

Best uses for the Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey

CPS

versus

ACS

Release: **SEPT. 10, 2019**

Release: **SEPT. 26, 2019**

BEST FOR: National data

BEST FOR: Comparing states and sub-state areas of 65,000 or more

Key Facts: CPS Data

- Data available for U.S. and states
- National sample size: 60,000 households each month
- Households interviewed in rotation 8 times over the course of 16 months; asks questions about the previous 12 months

Health Insurance Data

- Asks whether the person had health insurance at any time during 2018
- “Uninsured” = no health insurance for all of 2018
- “Insured” = had health insurance at any point in 2018, even for a short period of time.
- Subcategories include:
 - *Private insurance* = employment-based coverage, union-based coverage, or insurance purchased independently from an insurance company.
 - *Government insurance* = purchased through public insurance programs (i.e. Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP), or military-based health care (i.e. TRICARE, VA, or other)
- Data over time: * 1987-2013, * 2013-2018

Population, Income and Poverty Data

- Official source of national poverty data
- Includes alternative poverty estimates that consider non-cash benefits and tax credits
- Data over time: * 1987-2013, * 2013-2018

**Change in methodology.*

Key Facts: ACS Data

- Data for states, as well as geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or more (*including 50 Texas counties, all U.S. Congressional Districts, and all 25 Texas metro areas*)
- National sample size: 3.5 million households contacted; 2.1 million participate
- The survey is collected throughout year; it asks questions about the previous 12 months

Health Insurance Data

- Asks whether individuals had health insurance at the time the survey was completed
- “Uninsured” = no health insurance at time of survey
- “Insured” = had insurance at time of survey
- Sub-Categories include:
 - *Private* = employment or union-based coverage, insurance purchased independently from an insurance company, or TRICARE or other active military health care coverage
 - *Public* = coverage through public insurance programs (i.e. Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP) or through the Dept. of Veterans Affairs)
- Data over time: 2008-2018

Population, Income and Poverty Data

- Population data = Avg. family size; poverty rates (by age, race/ethnicity, gender, education); median income (for families/non-family households and by race or age); housing costs as percentage of income
- Data available for the state + geographic areas w/ population of 65,000 or more, including 50 Texas counties, all U.S. Congressional Districts, and all 25 Texas metro areas
- Data over time: 2002-2018

What about the 2020 Census? *The Census Bureau is a federal government agency and the nation’s leading provider of quality data about its people and economy. To do this, it conducts multiple surveys across a wide range of time frames, including the CPS, ACS, and the 2020 Census (aka the Decennial Census). The CPS and ACS provide a closer look at income, poverty and health insurance coverage. The Bureau is also preparing for the 10-year population count known as the Decennial Census. That data will be collected in the spring of 2020 and will focus on achieving a full and accurate count of the U.S. population. To learn more about the 2020 Census, visit <http://bettertexasblog.org/2020-census-tx/>*