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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: NEW CENSUS DATA TO BE RELEASED IN SEPTEMBER ON HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE, POVERTY, AND INCOME

Throughout September, the Census Bureau will release data on poverty, income, and the number of uninsured. For the first time, the data will be released over the course of several days. Further complicating the release, similar data released on these different days from different surveys will likely yield somewhat different numbers.

The Center for Public Policy Priorities is a Texas-based non-profit, non-partisan research organization that will be available to the press on the day of the data releases to help provide context and interpretation to the numbers. Based on our own analyses of the surveys and recommendations from the Census Bureau, we provide the following guidance for media to help make sense of the barrage of data to come.

For National and State-level Health Insurance Coverage Data, We Recommend:

September 10ths Current Population Survey (10th is official release date to media and public)

- Data only available for U.S. and States
- Asks: whether the person had health insurance at any time during 2008
 - “Uninsured” = no health insurance for all of 2008
 - “Insured” = had health insurance at any point in the year, even for a short period of time. Could specify if insurance through:
 - Employer
 - purchased it directly from an insurance company, or
 - enrolled in military or other public coverage.
- Data over time: 1987-2008

For Health Insurance Data for Geographic Areas of 65,000 or More, We Recommend:

September 22nds American Community Survey (22nd is official release date to public; media embargo from Census begins Sept. 17th)

- Health insurance coverage 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 Metropolitan Areas)
- Asks: whether the person had health insurance at the time they were surveyed
 - “Uninsured” = didn’t have insurance at the time survey was completed
 - “Insured” = had insurance at the time survey was completed

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- Could specify if insurance through:
 - employer
 - purchased it directly from an insurance company, or
 - enrolled in military or other public coverage.
 - New question: 2008 data ONLY!

Apples and Oranges

Although the data will be similar, you should not compare the CPS data to the ACS data (i.e., do not compare local uninsured rates from the ACS to statewide uninsured rates from the CPS)! They are different questions asked at different times of the year to different populations.

For National, State, and Local-level Poverty and Income Data, We Recommend: September 22nd's American Community Survey (22nd is official release date to public; media embargo from Census begins Sept. 17th)

The 2008 American Community Survey will contain the full complement of social, economic, and housing data, including:

- Population data
 - Average family size
 - Poverty rates by age, race/ethnicity, gender, and educational attainment
 - Median income for families or non-family households, and by race/ethnicity or age
 - Housing costs as a percentage of income
- Data available for the state, 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 Metropolitan Areas
- Data over time: 2001-2008

Use CPPP as a resource

CPPP will send out press releases by noon (central) on the day of each release, highlighting and providing context for the data. If you have questions regarding the methodology or what kinds of detail (geographic, changes over time, etc.) data prior to or on the day of the release, please contact our Communications Director, Derrick Crowe, at (512) 320-0222 ext. 112 or crowe@cphp.org.