

SIPP User Notes

To: SIPP Users

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RE: Set H: Health Insurance Coverage

Date: February 13, 2006

Set H covers health insurance variables, including health insurance coverage from all sources, whether that coverage was in own name or others, employer-provided health insurance and share paid for by an employer, and government health insurance coverage. The variables in this Set are all from the Core data. There are other health variables, including medical expenses, utilization of health care services, employer-provided benefits and health status in various Topical Modules, which are not included in Set H at this time. Researchers who are interested in adding those variables to our Sets are encouraged to talk to CEPR about doing so.

The questions for the key health insurance coverage variables are consistent across panels. We include all the coverage variables from the Core data, including <himth> (health insurance coverage), <privhimth> (private health insurance coverage), <medcarmth> (medicare coverage), <medcaid> (Medicaid coverage), <milmth> (military or veterans coverage), and <empnth> (employer-based coverage). However, the “source of health insurance” recode is inconsistent across the 92/93 and 96/01 panels. We do not believe that this makes a substantial difference in the overall findings, however, users can refer to our program code to see the differences between the questions asked for the <himth> variable across panels.

An example of code for converting these variables into yearly coverage variables is also included in the “clean_h” program.

Consistency with Previous SIPP Findings

Table 1 shows that overall our data is consistent with other reported findings from the SIPP. Nearly 80 percent of individuals – including children and the elderly – had health insurance coverage all year in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The ratio between our analysis and that done by the Census Bureau hovers around one-to-one.

Table 1. Health Insurance Coverage from the SIPP: CEPR and Census Bureau analysis

Panel	Year	Covered all year		Ratio CEPR to Census
		Census	CEPR	
1992	1992	78.4%	76.2%	0.972
	1993	78.0	76.7	0.983
1993	1994	79.0	77.2	0.977
	1995		79.0	
1996	1996	78.2	78.2	1.000
	1997	78.4	78.4	1.000
	1998	79.5	79.3	0.997
	1999	80.4	80.2	0.998
2001	2001		76.4	
	2002		78.3	

Sources: Center for Economic and Policy Research. 2004. *SIPP Uniform Data Files, Version 1.1*. Washington, D.C.; Bhandari, Shailesh and Robert Mills. 2003. *Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Health Insurance 1996-1999*. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau. US Census Bureau. 1998. *Dynamics of Economic Well-Being: Health Insurance 1992 and 1993*.

Consistency with Data from the March Supplement to the Current Population Survey

Tables 2 and 3 show how Set H compares to data from the Current Population Survey's March Supplement (March CPS). This is the survey typically used to report the share of Americans without health insurance. However, this survey only asks whether a respondent went without health insurance all of the previous year, rather than asking whether an individual has health insurance each month, as the SIPP does.

Table 2 shows that respondents in the SIPP report higher rates of health insurance coverage than do respondents in the March CPS. This is consistent with prior research in which researchers have generally found that the SIPP shows higher rates of health insurance coverage than does the CPS. The issue is that underreporting of health insurance coverage has been found to be more of a persistent problem in the CPS than the SIPP (Bennefield 1996). Part of the problem with the CPS data is that the questions are retrospective over the entire year, while the SIPP asks questions every four months.

Table 2. Health insurance at any point during year

SIPP panel	Year	CPS	CEPR	Ratio of CPS to CEPR
1992	1992	85.0%	90.1%	0.943
	1993	84.7	89.4	0.947
1993	1994	84.8	90.4	0.938
	1995	84.6	84.9	0.996
1996	1996	84.4	90.7	0.931
	1997	83.9	91.1	0.921
	1998	83.7	91.5	0.915
	1999	84.5	91.6	0.922
2001	2000	86.0		
	2001	85.4	92.4	0.924
	2002	84.8	92.1	0.921

Sources: Center for Economic and Policy Research. 2004.*SIPP Uniform Data Files, Version 1.1*. Washington, D.C.; US Department of Commerce. Current Population Reports "Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2002", Table A-1

Note: SIPP variable is *hiyr*.

Table 3 compares Medicaid coverage for children from the SIPP and the March CPS. Again, the SIPP shows a higher share of individuals covered, but this is consistent with prior research. The category of "Medicaid" includes the traditional Medicaid program, as well as the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) begun in 1997. Starting in the 2004 SIPP panel, respondents will be asked more specific questions about SCHIP.

Table 3. Medicaid enrollment for children at any point during year

SIPP Panel	Year	CPS	CEPR	Ratio of CPS to CEPR
1992	1992	22.0%	25.9%	0.849
	1993	23.9	29.1	0.821
1993	1994	22.9	28.3	0.809
	1995	23.2	27.3	0.850
1996	1996	21.8	24.8	0.879
	1997	20.5	23.8	0.861
	1998	19.8	22.9	0.865
	1999	20.3	22.9	0.886
	2000	20.9		
2001	2001	22.7	31.0	0.732
	2002	23.9	33.4	0.716

Sources: Center for Economic and Policy Research. 2004.*SIPP Uniform Data Files, Version 1.1*. Washington, D.C.; U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1988 to 2003. Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

Note: SIPP variable is *medcaidyr*.

Employer-Provided Health Insurance Coverage¹

Set H includes a number of different employer-provided health insurance variables:

<emp_{pmth}> indicates individuals who have employer-based coverage in their own name. This includes only individual's whose coverage is in their own name and they do not refer to someone else as the provider of their health insurance plan.

<dep__{himth}> indicates individuals who have health insurance coverage in someone else's name as a dependent. By construction, health care dependents have to (1) have health insurance coverage, (2) refer to another person as their health care coverage unit, and (3) report that they are covered by someone else or by someone else and themselves.

<anyemp_{pmth}> indicates employer-provided health insurance that an individual receives from either his or her own employer or as a dependent on another family member's employer. Individuals with this variable equal to one will have either <emp_{pmth}> or <dep__{himth}> also equal to one.

Set H also includes a file called "Set H2" to assist researchers who wish to evaluate health insurance "providers" and "dependents." Set H2 links individuals who have employer-provided health insurance and provide coverage to other family members living in their home with their dependents. In Set H2, each provider has one observation per dependent per month. This file can be used to examine health insurance providers; information may be merged onto this file using the standard <id wave srefmon> for providers, or by <dep__{id} wave srefmon> for dependents, changing the name of the id variable from other sets to <dep__{id}> to facilitate the merge. We've maintained this dataset for researchers who are interested in the finer characteristics of providers and their dependents.

References

Bennefield, Robert L. 1996. "A Comparative Analysis of Health Insurance Coverage Estimates: Data from CPS and SIPP". U.S. Bureau of the Census, No. 9608. Washington, DC. August 6.

¹ This employer-provided coverage discussion is only relevant for the 1996 and 2001 panels, because the health insurance coverage units, <rcuow58*>, are not in the earlier panels.

Appendix: Variable List

variable	label
Merging Variables (appear on every Set)	
id	Unique ID
srefmon	Reference month
wave	Wave of data collection
age	Age in this month
Variables in this set only	
anyemphi	EPHI from any source
both_cov*	Covered by own and someone else's plan (dummy from ehiowner)
ehemply	Source of health insurance
ehicost	Employer/union paid all or part of health insurance premium
ehiolddk#	Coverage of older child (20+) outside the household (yes=1)
ehiothr	Coverage of other person(s) outside the household (yes=1)
ehiowner	Covered by own plan, someone else's, both, or none
ehirsn01#	Reason not covered: too expensive (yes=1)
ehirsn02#	Reason not covered: HI not offered (yes=1)
ehirsn03#	Reason not covered: not at job long enough (yes=1)
ehirsn04#	Reason not covered: job layoff (yes=1)
ehirsn05#	Reason not covered: not eligible(yes=1)
ehirsn06#	Reason not covered: poor health (yes=1)
ehirsn07#	Reason not covered: don't believe in HI (yes=1)
ehirsn08#	Reason not covered: haven't needed HI (yes=1)
ehirsn09#	Reason not covered: covered by VA or military (yes=1)
ehirsn10#	Reason not covered: covered by other (yes=1)
ehirsn11#	Reason not covered: no longer covered (yes=1)
ehirsn12#	Reason not covered: some other reason (yes=1)
ehispse#	Coverage of spouse outside the household (yes=1)
ehiunt1	First health insurance coverage unit
ehiunt2	Second health insurance coverage unit
ehiunt3	Third health insurance coverage unit
ehiyingkd#	Coverage of younger child (under 2) outside the household (yes=1)
enonhh#	Covered by plan owned by someone outside the household (yes=1)
ephi	Has employer provided coverage this month
Hifam	HI covers all family members
himth*	Has any HI this month
Hisrc	Source of health insurance
Hitype	Is this an individual or group plan
medcaidmth*	Has Medicaid this month
medcarmth*	Has Medicare this month
Milmth	Has Military coverage this month
oth_cov*	Covered by someone else's plan (dummy from ehiowner)
othboth*	HI coverage through (other) or (self and other)
own_cov*	Covered by own plan (dummy from ehiowner)
Ownboth*	HI coverage through (self) or (self and other)
Privhimth*	Has Private HI coverage this month
rcuow58a	First health insurance coverage unit (96 and 01)
rcuow58b	Second health insurance coverage unit (96 and 01)
rcutyp57	Medicaid coverage flag (96 and 01)
rcutyp58	HI coverage flag (96 and 01)
rmedcode	Type of Medicare coverage
rprvhi	Recode for all types of health insurance coverage (96 and 01)

Note: * These variables are constructed by CEPR. All other variables are SIPP raw variables. See the Cross Walk for clarification on how the names for certain raw variables change between panels.

Variables are available in all panels except where noted