

# Health Insurance Estimates From the Current Population Survey

Charles Nelson

U.S. Census Bureau

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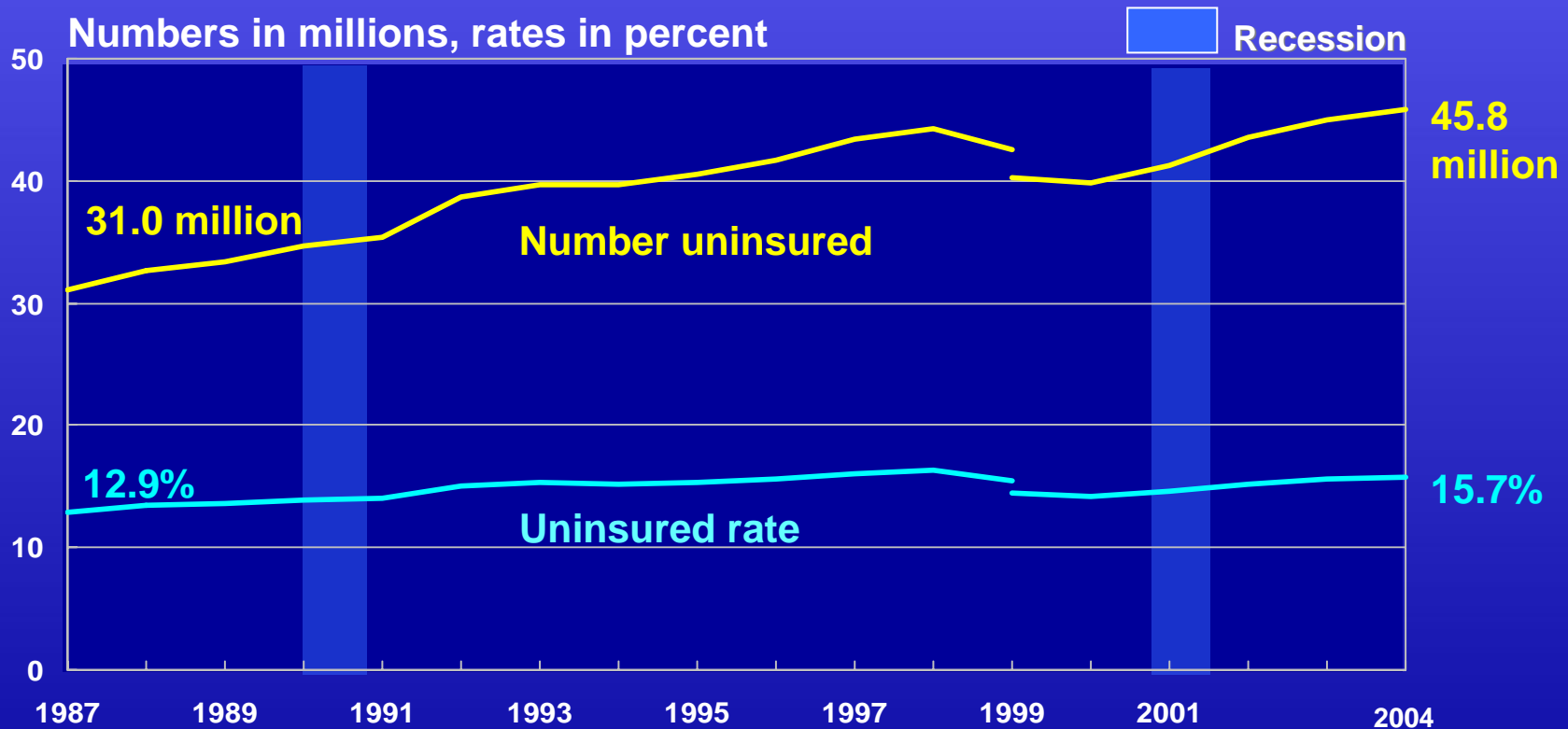
# What Do the New CPS Health Insurance Numbers Show?

- The number of people with health insurance coverage increased from 243.3 million to 245.3 million in 2004.
- The number of people without health insurance coverage increased from 45.0 million to 45.8 million in 2004.
- The uninsured rate for the nation did not change, remaining at 15.7 percent in 2004.

# What Do the New CPS Health Insurance Numbers Show? Cont.

- The percentage of children without health insurance did not change, remaining at 11.2 percent in 2004.
- The percentage of persons 18-24 without coverage increased from 30.2 to 31.4 percent in 2004.
- The percentage of workers 18-64 without coverage increased from 18.6 to 19.0 percent in 2004.
  - Part-time workers without coverage increased from 23.8 to 25.0 percent.
  - Full-time workers without coverage (17.8 percent) did not change.

# Number of People Not Covered by Health Insurance and Uninsured Rate: 1987 to 2004



Note: Data for 1999 reflect implementation of follow-up verification questions.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 1988 to 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

# Coverage by Type of Health Insurance: 2004



| Type of Health Insurance      | Coverage Rate (percentage) | Percentage Point Change from 2003 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Employment-based private plan | 59.8                       | - 0.6                             |
| Direct-purchase private plan  | 9.3                        | No Change                         |
| Medicare                      | 13.7                       | No Change                         |
| Medicaid/SCHIP                | 12.9                       | + 0.5                             |
| Military health care          | 3.7                        | + 0.2                             |
| Uninsured                     | 15.7                       | No Change                         |

Note: SCHIP - State Children's Health Insurance Program.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2004 and 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplements.

# Uninsured Rates of Children by Selected Characteristics: 2004



# Health Insurance Coverage by State: 2003-2004 Average Compared With 2002-2003 Average

| Uninsured Rate  |          |               |                |   |
|---|----------|---------------|----------------|---|
|  | Idaho    | Delaware      | New Hampshire  |  |
|   | New York | Florida       | Oklahoma       |   |
|   | Wyoming  | Massachusetts | South Carolina |   |
|   | Montana  | Tennessee     |                |   |

# Background on CPS Questions

- Congress directed the Census Bureau to ask questions to gauge effect of noncash benefits on income and poverty.
- Health benefit questions first added to the questionnaire in 1980.
- DHHS paid Census Bureau to add question on direct-purchase plans, allowing computation of overall coverage rates.
- Health research community accepted the CPS figures as reasonable. Census Bureau first published uninsured estimates -- 1991 CPS income report.

# CPS: Characteristics

- Based on approx. 100,000 addresses yielding approx. 78,000 households interviewed in February-April, either in person or over the phone.
- Sample is state-representative, and multi-year state averages are published annually.
- Questions ask about any coverage in previous calendar year.
- Initial screening questions are household-based.

# CPS: Strengths

- Long time series
- Data, reports, and tabulations are released quickly
- Large, state-representative sample
- Very high quality data on economic well-being, types of income and benefits, work experience, and labor force status
- Data file is easy to use
- High response rate

# CPS: Limitations

- Health insurance is not a survey focus
- Long (14-16 month) recall period
- Compared to other estimates based on shorter reference period (SIPP, MEPS), CPS annual estimates of the uninsured are generally higher
- Little flexibility for adding new content

# What Do Comparisons Between CPS and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) Tell Us?

- Building an annual coverage rate from multiple interviews yields higher annual coverage rates than those based on annual recall.
- Differences in reporting of private coverage accounts for more of the difference than differences in public coverage reporting.
- CPS annual coverage rates are very close to SIPP average monthly coverage rates.

# CPS Research

- Imputation research
- Questionnaire research
  - Recent cognitive research, with support from ASPE
- Administrative record research
  - CPS/CMS Medicaid administrative record analysis

# Improvements Based on Past Research

- **1988:** questionnaire changes resulted in large change in number of uninsured
- **1995:** questionnaire changes resulted in large shifts in the types of coverage reported
- **2000:** addition of “verification” question resulted in noticeable drop in estimates of the uninsured—mostly due to additional employment-based coverage

# For More Information:

- **CPS 2004 income/poverty/health insurance report:**

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/hlthin04.html>

- **Census Bureau paper on CPS/SIPP health insurance coverage differences:**

<http://www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/workpapr/wp243.pdf>

- **Effect of CPS verification question:**

<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/verif.html>