

WEB EXCLUSIVES

Census Bureau Estimates May Undercount Medicaid Recipients, Overcount Uninsured

Widely cited estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau likely overstate the number of uninsured people and understate the number of people with Medicaid coverage because of an inability of people to recall their insurance status accurately from the previous year, according to a study published today on the *Health Affairs* Web site.

The Current Population Survey (CPS), administered in February, March, and April each year, asks respondents whether they had health insurance coverage (including Medicaid) at any point in the previous calendar year. However, the CPS's long recall period (fourteen to sixteen months) can lead to inaccurate responses, report lead author Jacob Klerman, a principal associate at Abt Associates in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and coauthors.

According to Klerman and his colleagues, CPS responses are most inaccurate for those whose periods of Medicaid coverage in the previous year were relatively short and relatively early in the year, because those are the hardest to recall. The researchers say that similar recall problems may affect CPS estimates of those covered by other types of health insurance in addition to Medicaid, and they call for research into whether other surveys, such as Census's American Community Survey, could provide better estimates of the uninsured.

You can read the article by Klerman and coauthors at <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/abstract/hlthaff.28.6.w991>

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Proposed health reform legislation would make sweeping changes in the way health care is financed, organized, and delivered in the United States. Currently, there is significant focus on three key areas in particular: the role of the federal government; the potential impact of reform on lowering the growth rate of Medicare spending; and provisions in a bill approved by three committees of the U.S. House of Representatives that would pay physicians and other qualified health care practitioners to counsel Medicare beneficiaries on advance care planning, as well as to collect information on quality measures for end-of-life care.

[The latest Health Policy Brief](#) from *Health Affairs* and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers basic facts about the status quo and about how major pieces of reform legislation might affect the picture. In each of the areas described above, the Brief describes what's true now, and what could change under health reform.

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