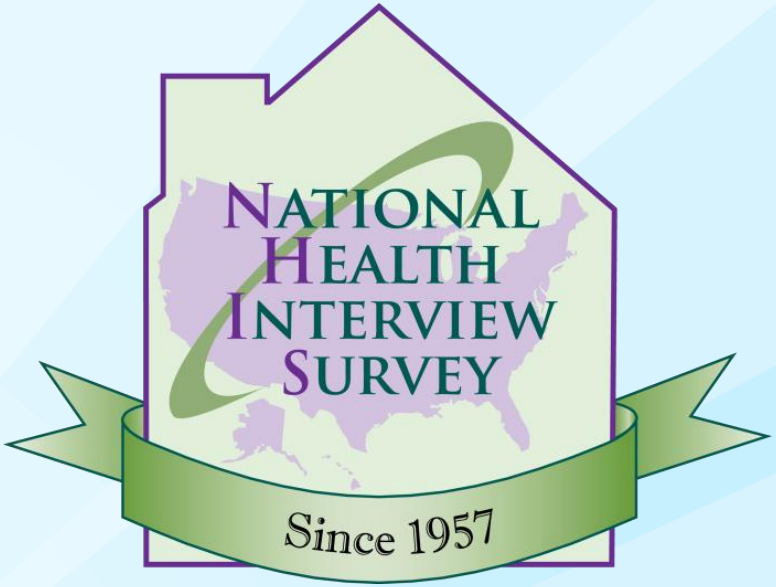
Recent Enhancements to the NHIS that Facilitate Insurance Policy Analyses



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National Health Interview Survey

- **Purpose:** To monitor the health of the US population through the collection and analysis of data on a broad range of health topics
- **Sample:** Multi-stage, clustered national sample of housing units from every state, to be representative of the civilian noninstitutionalized US population
- **Mode:** In-person interviews by Census interviewers
- **Data collection:** Continuous, with annual data files
- **Goal:** Complete interviews for 35,000+ households

Basic Content and Structure of the NHIS Questionnaire Since 1997

- **Family Core**
  - Demographic, general health, and **insurance coverage data**
  - For all family members
  - Proxy responses allowed
- **Sample Adult Core**
  - Health conditions, risk behaviors, and health care utilization data
  - For one randomly selected adult in each family
  - Self-response only
- **Sample Child Core**
  - Health conditions and health care utilization data
  - For one randomly selected child in each family
  - Knowledgeable adult responds for child

Recent Enhancements to the NHIS that Facilitate Insurance Policy Analyses

- Expanded content on health care access and utilization
- Increased survey sample sizes
- Improved timeliness of health insurance estimates

Additions to the NHIS in 2011 Related to Health Care System Changes

- **Related to the affordability of care**
  - Employer or union contribution to premiums (if known)
  - Any problems paying medical bills in past 12 months
  - Any medical bills being paid off over time, on credit cards, or through personal loans
  - Financial barriers to seeing specialists or getting follow-up care
  - Financial barriers to medication use
  - Worry about ability to pay medical bills if sick or in an accident

Additions to the NHIS in 2011 Related to Health Care System Changes

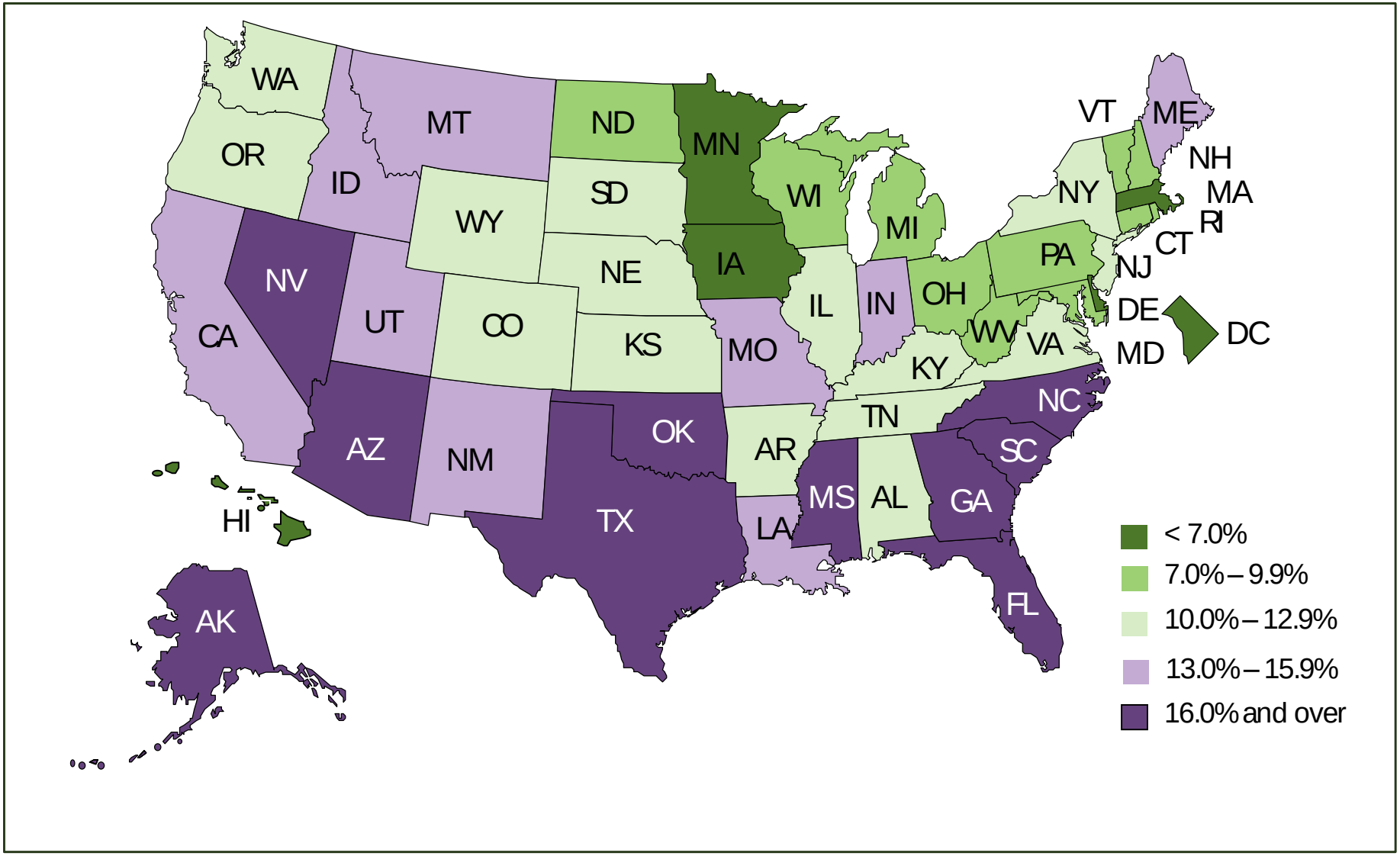
- **Related to the expansion of coverage to dependents through age 25**
  - For young adults living in the household, relationship of any policyholders who do not live in the household
  - Insurance coverage on anyone outside of the household

- **Related to concerns about the availability of providers**
  - Sources for all routine care
  - Wait times for appointment and/or being seen
  - Trouble finding a provider
  - Reasons for not having a regular provider
  - Reasons for any ER visits

Significant Increases in Sample Size

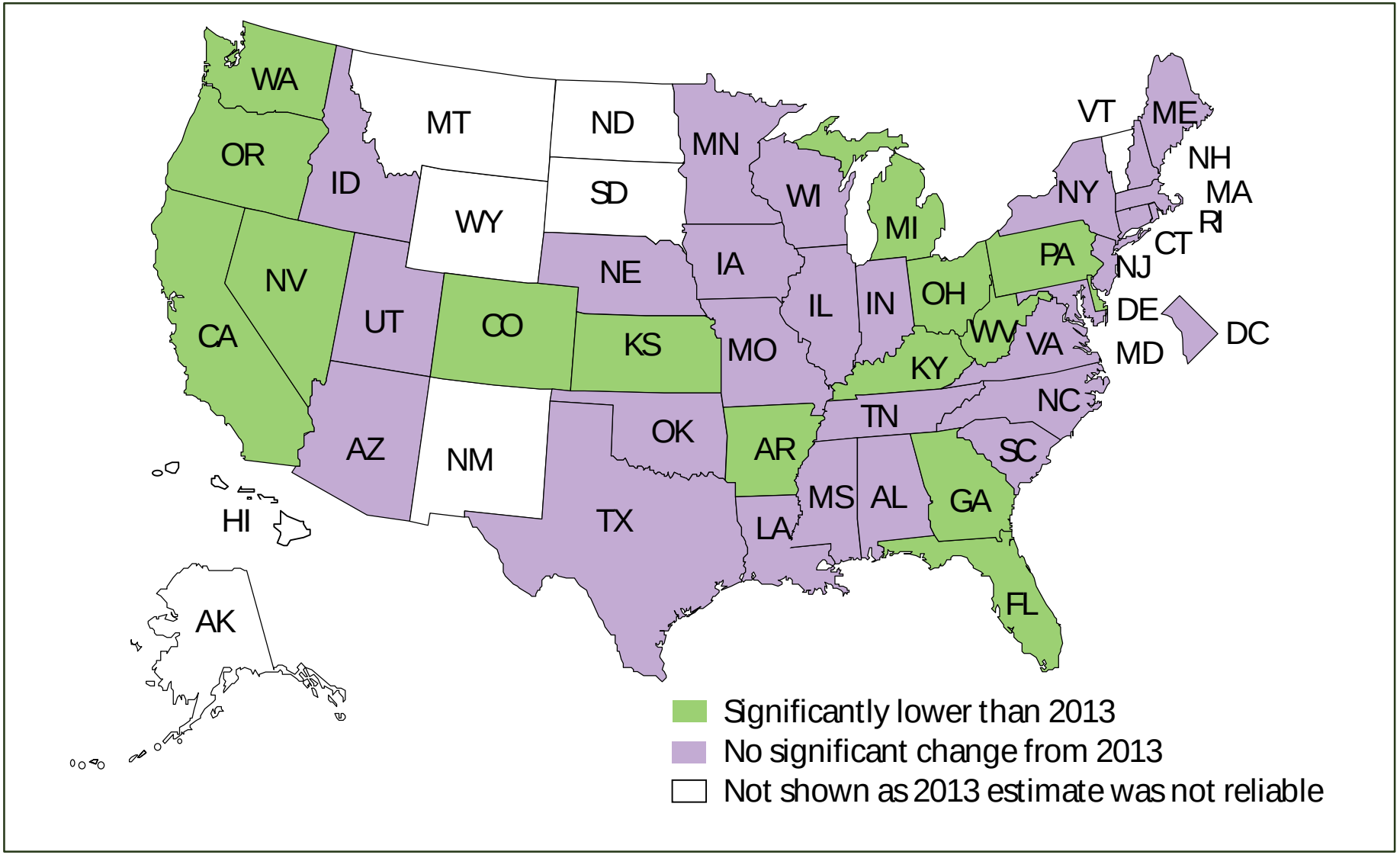
Selected Counts	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Augmented?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
# Households	34,329	39,509	42,366	41,335	44,552
# Persons	89,976	101,875	108,131	104,520	112,053
# States with reliable estimates for insurance coverage (all ages)	20	32	43	43	51

Uninsured at the time of interview for persons under age 65, by state: United States, 2014



NOTE: Data are based on household interviews of a sample of the civilian noninstitutionalized population.
DATA SOURCE: CDC/NCHS, National Health Interview Survey, 2014, Family Core component.

Uninsured at the time of interview—Change in the percentage of uninsured for persons under age 65 between 2013 and 2014: United States



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National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) Early Release (ER) Program

- **NHIS is conducted throughout the year based on monthly random samples.**
- **Annual files released six months after the completion of data collection.**
- **Early Release Products are developed prior to final processing and weighting to provide early access to the most recent information.**
- **Every three months, the ER Program produces:**
  - A report on 15 key health indicators
  - A report on health insurance coverage
  - Web tables with quarterly health insurance estimates
  - Preliminary microdata file used for these reports

Preliminary Quarterly Microdata Files

- Data are available in the NCHS Research Data Center (RDC).
- The RDC provides a mechanism for researchers to access data not released to the public because of nondisclosure or confidentiality reasons.
- Access is provided either on site (Hyattsville, Atlanta, and the Census RDCs) or via a remote system.

Early Release Health Insurance Estimates Represent an Average Over the Months Included

- September release is based on answers collected between January through March
- December release is based on January–June
- March release is based on January–September
- June release is based on January–December

Early Release Health Insurance Estimates and Data Files Will Be Released One Month Earlier

- **August** release was based on answers collected between January through March
- **November** release will be based on January–June
- **February** release will be based on January–September
- **May** release will be based on January–December

Challenges for the Near Future

- Implementation of the 2016 sample redesign
- Decreased funding for sample size increases and content expansions
- 2018 content redesign and the need for a streamlined questionnaire
- Maintaining the high quality of the estimates