

A Brief History of the National Health Interview Survey and Plans for Its Future

2012 National Conference on Health Statistics

Jacqueline Wilson Lucas, B.A., M.P.H.,
National Center for Health Statistics
Division of Health Interview Statistics

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Early health surveys in the U.S.

- Focused on control of infectious disease, mortality
- Not a source of continuous health data on health, morbidity
- Revealed the need for quantifiable data on disease prevalence, disability, health behaviors, and health care utilization
- 1935-36 National Health Survey

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National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

- Created by 1956 National Health Survey Act, Public Law 652; signed by President Eisenhower
- Went into the field first time: July 1957
- Represents noninstitutionalized civilian U.S. population
- Fielded continuously (noted exceptions)

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How has the NHIS changed over time?

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Changes in survey content/structure

Then...

- Detailed medical care use
- Family unit health characteristics

...Now

- Health status, health-related behaviors, general access to and utilization of health care
- Each family member + sample child + sample adult

Changes in sample/survey design

Then...

- Estimates only for total national population
- Ask about individual body systems

...Now

- Estimates for subpopulation groups to assess health disparities through oversampling
- More holistic approach – mental health, functioning, quality of life

Changes in data collection procedures

Then...

- Paper and pencil questionnaire
- Collect race/ethnicity by observation, then only for adults

...Now

- Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI)
- Collect detailed respondent-reported race and ethnicity, including multiple race

Changes to selected questionnaire items

Then...

- Income questions with high non-response
- Missing data on SSN, critical for linkage to other data

...Now

- Testing of new methodology led to lower non-response on income
- Collect last 4 digits of SSN

Other survey changes

Then...

- Relative stability in sample sizes in early years; gradual decline
- Only more recent years of data available online

...Now

- After sample cuts 2002-2008 (except 2005), recent increases for state-based estimates
- Release of public use microdata files back to 1962-63

What's next for the NHIS?

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Selected 2012 NHIS Supplements

Topic	Sponsor	Approx # of minutes
Complementary & Alternative Medicine (Adult & Child)	NIH/NCCAM	6
Internet & Email Usage*	ASPE	1
Food Security *	USDA	2
Enhanced Health Care Access and Utilization - ACA*	HHS	5

* Also to be fielded in 2013

Selected 2013 NHIS Supplements

Topic	Sponsor	Approx # of minutes
Hepatitis C	NCHHSTP/CDC	1
Epilepsy	NCCDPHP/CDC	1
Arthritis	NCCDPHP/CDC	3
Asthma (adult and child)	NCEH/CDC, NIAID & NHLBI/NIH	3
ABCs of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention*	NCHS/CDC	1

* Also fielded in 2012

More future plans for the NHIS

- **Web-based query system for use with in-house and public use data**
- **Sample redesign in 2016**
- **Field testing of A-CASI technology for possible use in survey**
- **Exploration of collecting limited biomarker data**

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For more information:

NHIS Website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>

- Survey content
 - Data releases
- Data from Early Release program
 - Much more!

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