

How to Start Searching for U.S. Health Data and Statistics

A Guide to Government Sources for Beginners

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USC Libraries

Background

The U.S. President heads the executive branch of the government and directs departments for vital areas of the federal government. The main department responsible for health is the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Under the HHS, are the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which are major producers of health data and statistics. The following highlights key sources and tools from these agencies and the U.S. Census Bureau, the federal government's largest statistical agency; along with the outreach conducted at USC to promote these resources.

Administrative Data

Data collected by government agencies, businesses and other organizations purely for transactional purposes and not initially collected for research.

Vital Statistics

A record of the life cycle that includes statistics on births, marriages, divorce, deaths of citizens, hospitalizations and communicable diseases.

National Vital Statistics System	www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/index.htm
Vital Statistics Online Data Portal	https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data_access/vitalstatsonline.htm
CDC Wonder: Interactive Database	https://wonder.cdc.gov

Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project

Longitudinal hospital care data with trends in medical practice and hospital inpatient statistics from state data organizations, hospital associations, private data and the federal government.

HCUPnet tool	www.hcupnet.ahrq.gov
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Survey Data

Data collected through surveys by an interviewer in-person, on the phone, online, or paper questionnaire.

Survey	Agency	What Data Does it Collect?	How to Access it?
Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)	CDC	A telephone survey on questions related to health-related risk behaviors, chronic health conditions, preventive services and health insurance.	www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.html
Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)	CDC & AHRQ	A set of large-scale surveys on the specific health services used by Americans and the cost and scope of health insurance held by U.S. workers.	www.meps.ahrq.gov
National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)	CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS)	An in-person household survey related to physical and mental health status, asthma, diabetes, disability, chronic pain, demographics on prescription opioid use, access to and use of health care services, and health insurance coverage.	www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/index.htm
American Community Survey (ACS)	U.S. Census Bureau	Online monthly survey sampling the U.S. population and collecting data on disability status, fertility, health insurance, and health industry, demographic data and more.	Data.census.gov
Current Population Survey (CPS)	U.S. Census Bureau	Sample survey conducted in-person and via telephone with questions related to insurance health coverage and fertility.	www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html

Outreach

The Data and Visualization Workshop Series at the Library for International & Public Affairs provides data support for USC students, staff, and faculty in the social sciences, sciences and engineering through curated workshops.



libguides.usc.edu/datavizworkshops

During Fall 2020, considering the effects of Covid-19 on businesses, the economy and other interests of social science researchers, I developed the following workshop: **Essential Resources for U.S. Health Data and Statistics for the Social Sciences.**

Slides: tinyurl.com/ushealthdata

This workshop examined public government sources, along with library databases for U.S. health data and statistics for students, staff and faculty new to health research.