

2019 | DATA USER'S GUIDE: SURVEY FILE PUBLIC USE FILE



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ACRONYM LIST

AAPOR	American Association for Public Opinion Research
ACCESSCR	LDS Survey File Access to Care segment
ACCSSMED	LDS Survey File Access to Care, Medical Appointments segment
ADMNUTLS	LDS Survey File Administrative Utilization Summary segment
ASSIST	LDS Survey File Assistance segment
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
CHRNCOND	LDS Survey File Chronic Conditions segment
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
CSV	Comma-separated values file
DEMO	LDS Survey File Demographics segment
DUA	Data Use Agreement
EVRWGTS	LDS Survey File Ever Enrolled Population Weight segment
FALLS	LDS Survey File Falls segment
FOODINS	LDS Survey File Food Insecurity segment
GENHLTH	LDS Survey File General Health segment
HHCHAR	LDS Survey File Household Characteristics segment
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
HIC	Health Insurance Claim
HISUMRY	LDS Survey File Health Insurance Summary segment
HITLINE	LDS Survey File Health Insurance Timeline segment
INTERV	LDS Survey File Interview Characteristics segment
IRB	Institutional Review Board
LDS	Limited Data Set(s)
MA	Medicare Advantage
MAPLANQX	LDS Survey File Medicare Advantage Plan Questions segment
MCREPLNQ	LDS Survey File Medicare Plan Beneficiary Knowledge segment
MCBS	Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey
NAGIDIS	LDS Survey File NAGI Disability segment
NICOALCO	LDS Survey File Nicotine and Alcohol segment
NORC	NORC at the University of Chicago
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PHI	Protected Health Information
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
PREVCARE	LDS Survey File Preventive Care segment
PSU	Primary Sampling Units
PUF	Public Use File
RXMED	LDS Survey File RX Medications segment
SAS	Statistical Analysis System
SATWCARE	LDS Survey File Satisfaction with Care segment
SSU	Secondary Sampling Units
USCARE	LDS Survey File Usual Source of Care segment
USU	Ultimate Sampling Unit
VISHEAR	LDS Survey File Vision and Hearing segment

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has made it a priority to make more data available, including releasing to the public an unprecedented amount of information on services and procedures provided to Medicare beneficiaries. CMS provides users with multiple ways to access Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) data, and a wide array of documentation is publically available on the CMS MCBS website. MCBS data are made available via two annual Limited Data Set (LDS) releases and an MCBS Survey File Public Use File (MCBS Survey File PUF) based on the Survey File LDS. In addition, in response to the emergence of "coronavirus disease 2019" ("COVID-19") in the United States in 2020, the MCBS has also released three out-of-cycle topic-specific Public Use Files (MCBS COVID-19 Summer 2020 PUF, MCBS COVID-19 Fall 2020 PUF, and MCBS COVID-19 Winter 2021 PUF).

The content of the MCBS Survey File PUF is governed by its central focus of serving as a unique source of information on beneficiaries' health and well-being that cannot be obtained through CMS administrative sources alone. The file includes data related to Medicare beneficiaries' access to care, health status, other information regarding beneficiaries' knowledge of, attitudes toward, and satisfaction with their health care, as well as demographic data and information on all types of health insurance coverage. Disclosure protections have been applied to the file, including de-identification and other methods; as a result, the MCBS Survey File PUF does not require a Data Use Agreement (DUA). In contrast, the MCBS LDS releases contain beneficiary-level protected health information (PHI) and therefore require a DUA. The MCBS Survey File PUF is not intended to replace the more detailed LDS files; rather, it makes available a general-use publically-available alternative that provides the highest degree of protection to the Medicare beneficiaries' PHI.

The main benefits of the MCBS Survey File PUF are:

1. Increased data access for researchers of the MCBS through a free file download that is consistent with other U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) public-use survey files;
2. Increased policy-relevant analyses, by attracting new researchers and policy-makers, for whom the cost and time associated with accessing the MCBS LDS can pose significant deterrents to use.

This user guide contains information about the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF. It contains detailed information about the MCBS and specific background information to help data users understand and analyze the PUF. This guide is updated each time a new set of PUF data are released.

Readers interested in understanding or analyzing the 2019 MCBS data should also familiarize themselves with the content of the *2019 Data User's Guide: Survey File* and the *2019 MCBS Methodology Report* documents in order to obtain an overview of the survey, questionnaires, sample design, and other topics relevant to the MCBS. Data users can access these documents along with other data documentation at: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Codebooks>. Data users interested in a collection of charts and tables presenting estimates from the LDS releases can access the *MCBS Chartbook* at: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Data-Tables>.

What's New in 2019?

Below, data users will note highlights and updates to the MCBS Survey File PUF for the 2019 data year. Detailed information about changes to the 2019 MCBS, sampling, questionnaires, documentation, and data processing is available in the *2019 MCBS Data User's Guide: Survey File*.

1.1 What's New in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF?

The 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF features the following updates:

Nine variables were removed from the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF Fall segment, including items about private health insurance coverage, satisfaction with and access to care, and arthritis, while three variables were added, including an item about lifetime alcohol use. Two colonoscopy/sigmoidoscopy items were also replaced with two new variables.

In addition, two variables were removed and one variable was added to the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF Winter segment about usual source of care doctor's specialty.

Exhibit 1.1.1 presents a comparison between the number of variables in the MCBS Survey File PUF for data years 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 including weights for the seasonal segments.

Exhibit 1.1.1: Number of Variables in the 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF

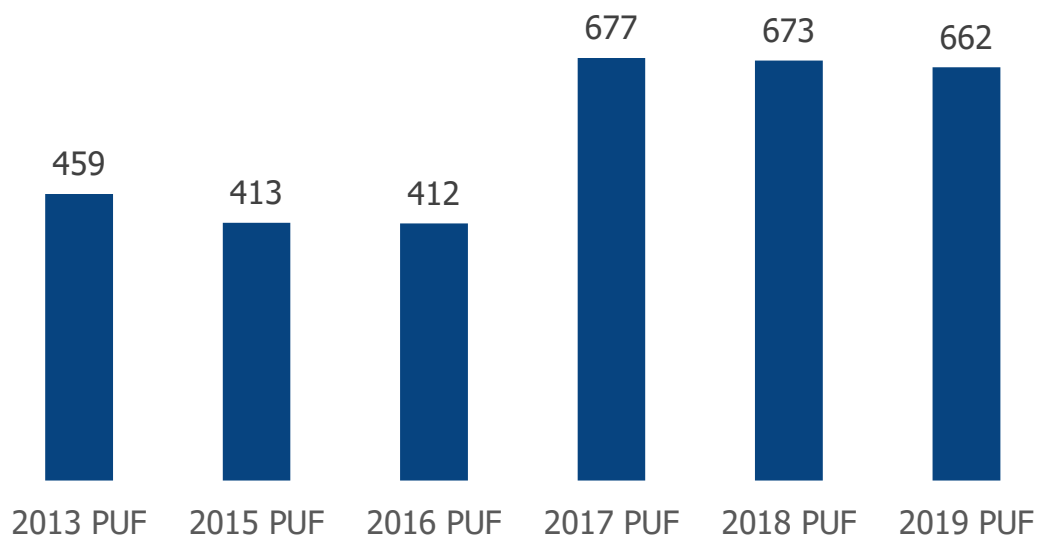


Exhibit 1.1.2 presents a summary of the content updates in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF.

Exhibit 1.1.2: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF Content Updates

Segment	Variable	Variable Label	Description
Fall	INS_PRIVGEN	Private plan covers general insurance	Removed
Fall	ACC_MCDISSFY	Dissatisfied w/ things about med services	Removed
Fall	ACC_MCDRNSEE	Hlth prob thght Dr should see but didn't	Removed
Fall	ACC_MCDRATMP	Attempt to set up Dr appt abt condition	Removed
Fall	ACC_PMNOTGET	Were there prescribed meds didn't get	Removed
Fall	HLT_OCOSARTH	Osteoarthritis (ever)	Removed
Fall	HLT_OCARTHOT	Arthritis, other (ever)	Removed
Fall	PRV_COLSCOPY	Colonoscopy/sigmoidoscopy (ever)	Removed
Fall	PRV_WHENSCOP	How long since colonoscopy	Removed

Segment	Variable	Variable Label	Description
Fall	PRV_EVERSCOP	Colonoscopy/sigmoidoscopy (ever)	Added
Fall	PRV_COLNRCNT	How long since colonoscopy/sigmoid	Added
Fall	RSK_ALCLIFE	Has had at least 12 drinks in life	Added
Winter	ACW_MDSPCLTY	Dr specialty MD visit-excl in home/hosp	Removed
Winter	ACW_MDSPEC	Dr specialty: usual source of care	Removed
Winter	ACW_PVSPEC	Doctor specialty: Usual source of care	Added

2. OVERVIEW OF THE MCBS

Medicare is the nation's health insurance program for persons 65 years and over and for persons younger than 65 years who have a qualifying disability. The MCBS is sponsored by CMS and contains data provided by a representative national sample of the Medicare population. The MCBS is designed to aid CMS in administering, monitoring, and evaluating the Medicare program. A leading source of information on Medicare and its impact on beneficiaries, the MCBS provides important information on beneficiaries that is not otherwise collected through operational or administrative data from the Medicare program and plays an essential role in the monitoring and evaluation of beneficiary health status and health care policy.

The MCBS is a continuous, multi-purpose longitudinal survey, representing the population of beneficiaries aged 65 and over and beneficiaries aged 64 and below with certain disabling conditions, residing in the United States. Most interviews were traditionally conducted in-person in households and facilities using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection switched to phone-only interviews in March 2020 and throughout 2021. Fieldwork for the first round of data collection began in September 1991; since then, the MCBS has continued to collect and provide essential data on the costs, use, and health care status of Medicare beneficiaries. The MCBS has been continuously conducted since 1991, completing more than 1.2 million interviews provided by thousands of respondents.

The MCBS primarily focuses on economic and beneficiary topics including health care use and health care access barriers, health care expenditures, and factors that affect health care utilization. As a part of this focus, the MCBS collects a variety of information about the beneficiary, including demographic characteristics, health status and functioning, access to care, insurance coverage and out of pocket expenses, financial resources, and potential family support. The MCBS collects this information in three data collection periods, or rounds, per year. Over the years, data from the MCBS have been used to inform many advancements to the Medicare program, including the creation of new benefits such as Medicare's Part D prescription drug benefit.

This *Data User's Guide* uses the following definitions for beneficiary and respondent:

- Beneficiary refers to a person receiving Medicare services who may or may not be participating in the MCBS. Beneficiary may also refer to an individual selected from the MCBS sample about whom the MCBS collects information.¹
- Respondent refers to a person who answers questions for the MCBS; for Community interviews, this person can be the beneficiary or a proxy.

For questions or suggestions on this document or other MCBS data-related questions, please email MCBS@cms.hhs.gov.

¹ <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/MedicareGenInfo/index.html>.

3. TECHNICAL AND PROGRAMMING INFORMATION

3.1 General Information

The 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF is divided into three segments (Fall, Winter, and Summer), which allows for the release of data collected in all rounds. The Fall segment includes data for 14,167 sampled beneficiaries. The samples for the Winter and Summer segments are subsets of the Fall segment sample. The Winter segment includes data for 10,933 sampled beneficiaries, and the Summer segment includes data for 8,843 sampled beneficiaries. All three segments include survey weights that allow for analysis that is nationally representative of the population of beneficiaries ever enrolled in Medicare at any point in 2019.

All records begin with a PUF_ID, a unique number for each beneficiary in the public use file. This PUF_ID serves to identify records in the three 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF segments only and cannot be used for linking to MCBS data files other than the MCBS Survey File PUF. The PUF_ID does link a beneficiary between the three 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF segments. Each beneficiary's PUF_ID is randomly generated each year, so it is not possible to link a beneficiary's data between years, and the value of the PUF_ID does not provide any information about the beneficiary.

All variables in the MCBS Survey File PUF are in numeric or integer formats. Formats and values for each variable are available in the MCBS Survey File PUF codebook.

Variable groups contain prefixes to help users identify these groups by topic area. Exhibits 3.1.1 – 3.1.3 include information about these variable prefixes and the locations of the corresponding variables in the Survey File LDS data segments (i.e., the 2019 LDS Survey File individual files).

Exhibit 3.1.1: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF Fall Segment Variable Prefixes, Number of Variables, Descriptions, and Related LDS Survey File Segments

MCBS Survey File PUF Variable Prefix	Description	Number of PUF Variables in Grouping	LDS Survey File Data Segments
INS_	Insurance status, coverage, and type	11	HISUMRY, HITLINE
ADM_	Administrative data	22	ADMNUTLS, HISUMRY, HITLIN
INT_	Interview characteristics	2	INTERV
DEM_	Age, sex, and race groups	11	DEMO
ACC_	Access to, use, and satisfaction with health care	19	ACCESSCR, SATWCARE, ASSIST
HLT_	Health conditions and limitations in activities of daily living	86	GENHLTH, VISHEAR, NAGIDIS, CHRNCND
PRV_	Preventive care and physical activity	24	PREVCARE, NAGIDIS
RSK_	Health behavior risk factors	6	NICOALCO
FAL_	Falls	12	FALLS
HOU_	Housing characteristics	30	HHCHAR
MA_	Medicare Advantage supplement	6	MAPLANQX
PUFF	PUF ever enrolled weights (fall)	101	EVRWGTS

Exhibit 3.1.2: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF Winter Segment Variable Prefixes, Number of Variables, Descriptions, and Related LDS Survey File Segments

MCBS Survey File PUF Variable Prefix	Description	Number of PUF Variables in Grouping	LDS Survey File Data Segments
ACW__	Access to care (winter round)	86	ACCSSMED, USCARE
KNW_	Medicare knowledge	8	MCREPLNQ
PUFW	PUF ever enrolled weights (winter)	101	N/A

Exhibit 3.1.3: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF Summer Segment Variable Prefixes, Number of Variables, Descriptions, and Related LDS Survey File Segments

MCBS Survey File PUF Variable Prefix	Description	Number of PUF Variables in Grouping	LDS Survey File Data Segments
FIS_	Food insecurity	4	FOODINS
RXS_	Prescription medication use and access	29	RXMED
PUFS	PUF ever enrolled weights (summer)	101	N/A

3.2 Data File Information

Detailed information about variables in the MCBS Survey File PUF can be found in the PUF codebooks. The codebook includes SAS variable names, labels, a note to indicate which beneficiaries were eligible for the question, the question number for the question that was asked in the survey, and a label which summarizes the question text. Certain variables in the PUF were recoded due to disclosure concerns so the categories in the PUF codebook may differ from the categories in the questionnaire specifications (e.g., "no usable vision" for variable HLT_ECTROUB and "deaf" for HLT_HCTROUB both reflect such recoding). Other variables were created by combining two variables, and their variable label indicates a recoded variable (e.g., HLT_ALZDEM).

For each variable, the formats and format values are included in the codebook:

- Values of .R indicate "refused" and .D indicate "don't know."
- All values of "inapplicable" have been combined with missing values.
- Unweighted frequencies of most variables included in the MCBS Survey File PUF are provided in the accompanying codebook file.

The MCBS Survey File PUF datasets are saved as SAS export files. Directions and sample SAS code are given below and also in Appendix B to help users read the datasets into SAS.

Assume the MCBS 2019 Survey File PUF export files (e.g., PUF20YY_1_FALL.xpt) are downloaded into the folder "C:\MCBS\DOWNLOAD". The "YY" in "PUF20YY" refers to the data year of the MCBS Survey File PUF. The following SAS code can then be used to import the Survey File PUF Fall segment into SAS:

```
LIBNAME PUFLIB 'C:\MCBS\SASDATA';
FILENAME F "C:\MCBS\DOWNLOAD\PUF20YY_1_FALL.XPT";
PROC CIMPORT LIBRARY=PUFLIB INFILE=F;
RUN;
```

Likewise, the SAS code above could be altered to import the Survey File PUF Winter segment (SAS export file PUF20YY_2_WINTER.xpt) or Survey File PUF Summer segment (SAS export file PUF20YY_3_SUMMER.xpt) into SAS. Additionally, a comma-separated values (CSV) file is available for use with other statistical software packages such as R® and STATA®.

A text file with SAS programming code to import the .xpt files, create formats, and apply SAS labels is provided for users.

3.3 Comparison to the LDS

The MCBS Survey File PUF differs from the MCBS Survey File LDS, because it has been evaluated for disclosure risk and additional steps were taken to protect beneficiary confidentiality. The 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF contains data for 14,167 sampled beneficiaries and 662 variables, which is similar to the number of beneficiaries contained in the community-only 2019 MCBS Survey File LDS segments, but with fewer variables. Many Survey File LDS variables that posed a disclosure risk were dropped or recoded to create the variable set for the MCBS Survey File PUF.

Due to disclosure concerns, the MCBS Survey File PUF includes only beneficiaries living in the community for at least one interview during the data collection year, and thus excludes all beneficiaries who were in a health care facility during all interviews that year (n=1,713). Variables that were only created for facility residents are excluded.² Additionally, the MCBS Survey File PUF contains no health care utilization, cost, or payment data (including Medicare claims data) for individual beneficiaries.

The MCBS Survey File PUF is free and available for download on the CMS website. For users interested in the MCBS Survey File and Cost Supplement File LDS, more information on the LDS process can be found at: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS>.

A summary of the differences between the two data products is presented in Exhibits 3.3.1.a and 3.3.1.b.

² Facilities are defined as nursing homes, retirement homes, domiciliary or personal care facility, distinct long term units in a hospital complex, mental health facility and centers.

Exhibit 3.3.1.a: Comparison between the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF and 2019 MCBS Survey File LDS

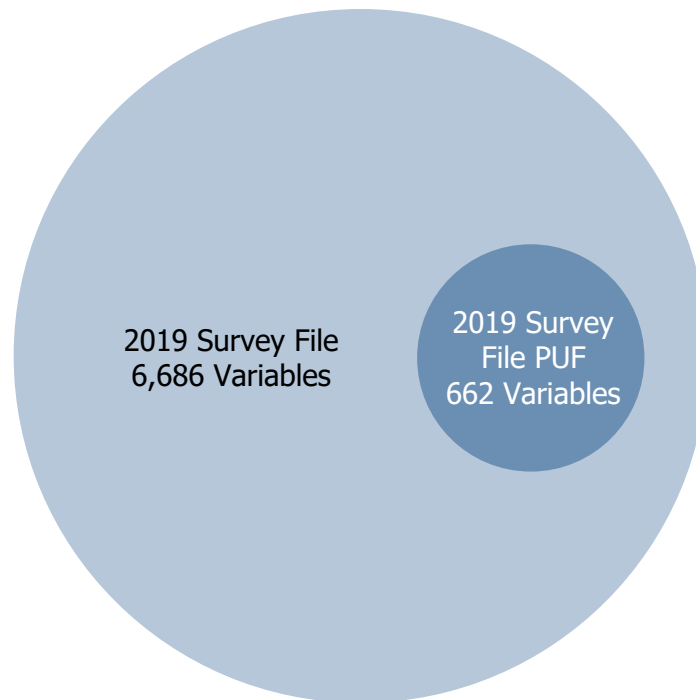


Exhibit 3.3.1.b: Comparison between the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF and 2019 MCBS Survey File LDS

Domain	MCBS Survey File PUF	MCBS Survey File LDS
Population	Community	Community and facility
Number of variables	662 variables across three data segments	Over 6,000 ³ variables across 41 data segments
ID	PUF_ID; Randomly generated, can't be linked back to BASEID, changes each year	BASEID; Randomly generated, can't be linked back to Medicare Beneficiary Identifier (MBI), consistent between years
Date fields	NO	YES
Geographic identifiers	NO	YES
Cost/payment data	NO	YES
Demographic data	YES; All variables are categorical, limited age categories	YES; Continuous, all age variables available
Insurance coverage	YES; Summarized to annual level	YES; Monthly level
Identifiable plan-related information for MA or Part D	NO	YES
Population weights	Ever enrolled weights only	Both ever enrolled and continuously enrolled weights

³ Note that the 2018 Survey File LDS included over 4,000 variables. The large increase from 2018 to 2019 is due to the addition of two topic-specific LDS segments on data collected from the MCBS COVID-19 Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 Community Supplements. These segments were released with the 2019 Survey File LDS because the population that was administered those COVID-19 Community Supplements aligns with the 2019 Survey File population. Data collected from the COVID-19 Community Supplements were also made available in individual standalone COVID-19 PUFs. These data are not included in the 2019 Survey File PUF.

Exhibit 3.3.2 details the socio-demographic variables and values available in the MCBS Survey File PUF and the MCBS Survey File LDS, for comparison purposes. Variables in the MCBS Survey File LDS, which do not have an equivalent in the MCBS Survey File PUF, are noted below the exhibit.⁴

Exhibit 3.3.2: Comparison of Socio-demographic Variables and Values in the MCBS Survey File PUF and MCBS Survey File LDS

Socio-demographic Characteristic	MCBS Survey File PUF Variables and Values	MCBS Survey File LDS Variables and Values
Gender	DEM_SEX (Gender): Male; Female	ROSTSEX (Gender): Male; Female
Age	DEM_AGE (Age group): <65 years; 65-74 years; ≥75 years	D_STRAT (MCBS Sample age stratum): 0-44 years; 45-64 years; 65-69 years; 70-74 years; 75-79 years; 80-84 years; ≥ 85 years H_AGE (Age of beneficiary): Age of beneficiary in years
Armed Services	DEM_ARMED (Ever served in armed forces (AF)): Yes; No	SPAFEVER (Ever served in AF): Yes; No SPAFVIET: Served in AF during Vietnam era; SPAFKORE: Served in AF during Korean conflict; SPAFWWII: Served in AF during WWII; SPAFGULF: Served in AF during Gulf War; SPAFIRAF: Served in AF during Iraq/Afghanistan conflict; SPAFPEAC: Served in AF during peace time; SPNGEVER: Ever active in National Guard/Reserve; SPNGALL: All active duty spent in National Guard SPNGDSBL: Disability from service
Education	DEM_EDU (Highest grade completed): Less than high school; High school or vocational, technical, business, etc.; More than high school	SPAVARATE: Current VA disability rating SPDEGRCV (Highest grade sampled person (SP) completed): No schooling; Nursery to 8 th grade; 9 th to 12 th grade, but no diploma; High school graduate; Vocational, technical, business, etc.; Some college, but no degree; Associate's degree; Bachelor's degree; Graduate or professional degree
Income	DEM_INCOME (Income group of SP and Spouse): <\$25,000; ≥\$25,000	INCOME (Income range of SP and spouse): <\$5,000; \$5,000 - <\$10,000; \$10,000 - <\$15,000; \$15,000 - <\$20,000; \$20,000 - <\$25,000; \$25,000 - <\$30,000; \$30,000 - <\$40,000; \$40,000 - <\$50,000; ≥\$50,000 INCOME_H (SP and spouse total income last year): Range of values

⁴ The MCBS Survey File LDS contains additional socio-demographic information, including location of residence, rural-urban commuting area details, the number of living children the beneficiary has, employment status, status of Social Security Administration (SSA) check, and English proficiency, which do not have corresponding variables available in the MCBS Survey File PUF. Please note that additional race/ethnicity variables from administrative sources are included in the MCBS Survey File LDS.

Socio-demographic Characteristic	MCBS Survey File PUF Variables and Values	MCBS Survey File LDS Variables and Values
Interview Language or Language Spoken at Home	INT_LANG (Language of interview): English; Spanish	INTLANG (Language of interview): English; Spanish WHATLANG (Language spoken at home): Spanish; French; German; Italian; Tagalog; Chinese; Polish; Korean; Russian; Greek; Filipino; Arabic; Vietnamese; Portuguese; More than one language/dialect; Other OTHLRANG (Language other than English spoken at home): Yes; No
Marital Status	DEM_MARSTA (Marital status): Married; Widowed; Divorced/separated; Never married	SPMARSTA (Marital status of SP): Married; Widowed; Divorced; Separated; Never married
Metro Status	DEM_CBSA (Metro status): Metro area; Non-metro area	H_CBSA (Type of CBSA as designated by CBSA): Metropolitan area-population of ≥50,000; Micropolitan area-population between 10,000 to 50,000; Non-CBSA
Race/Ethnicity	DEM_RACE (Race/ethnicity group): Non-Hispanic White; Non-Hispanic Black; Hispanic; Other	D_RACE2 (Race of SP): Asian; African American; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; White; American Indian or Alaska Native; More than one RACEAS: Asian; RACEASAI: Asian Indian; RACEASCH: Chinese; RACEASFI: Filipino; RACEASJA: Japanese; RACEASKO: Korean; RACEASVI: Vietnamese; RACEASOT: Other Asian; RACEAA: Black or African-American; RACENH: Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; RACEPIHA: Native Hawaiian; RACEPIGU: Guamanian Chamorro; RACEPISA: Samoan; RACEPIOT: Other Pacific Islander; RACEWH: Caucasian; RACEAI: American Indian or Alaska Native HISPORIG (Is SP of Hispanic or Latino origin?): Yes; No HISPORMA: Mexican/Mex American/Chicano; HISPORPR: Puerto Rican; HISPORCU: Cuban; HISPOROT: Other Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin

Socio-demographic Characteristic	MCBS Survey File PUF Variables and Values	MCBS Survey File LDS Variables and Values
Race/Ethnicity by Age Group	DEM_RE_AGE (Race/ethnicity age group): Non-Hispanic White, <65 years; Non-Hispanic White, 65-74 years; Non-Hispanic White, 75-84 years; Non-Hispanic White, 85+ years; Non-Hispanic Black, <65 years; Non-Hispanic Black, 65-74 years; Non-Hispanic Black, 75-84 years; Non-Hispanic Black, 85+ years; Hispanic, <65 years; Hispanic, 65-74 years; Hispanic, 75+ years; Other, <65 years; Other, 65-74 years; Other, 75+ years	Note: An MCBS Survey File LDS user could construct a similar race/ethnicity by age variable using D_RACE2, HISPORIG, and D_STRAT.
Income Poverty Ratio Medicare Threshold	DEM_IPR_IND (Income Poverty Ratio Medicare Threshold): <=100% of the Federal Poverty Level; >100% and <=120% of the Federal Poverty Level; >120% and <=135% of the Federal Poverty Level; >135% and <=200% of the Federal Poverty Level; >200% of the Federal Poverty Level	IPR_IND (Income Poverty Ratio Medicare Threshold): <=100% of the Federal Poverty Level; >100% and <=120% of the Federal Poverty Level; >120% and <=135% of the Federal Poverty Level; >135% and <=200% of the Federal Poverty Level; >200% of the Federal Poverty Level

4. SURVEY OVERVIEW

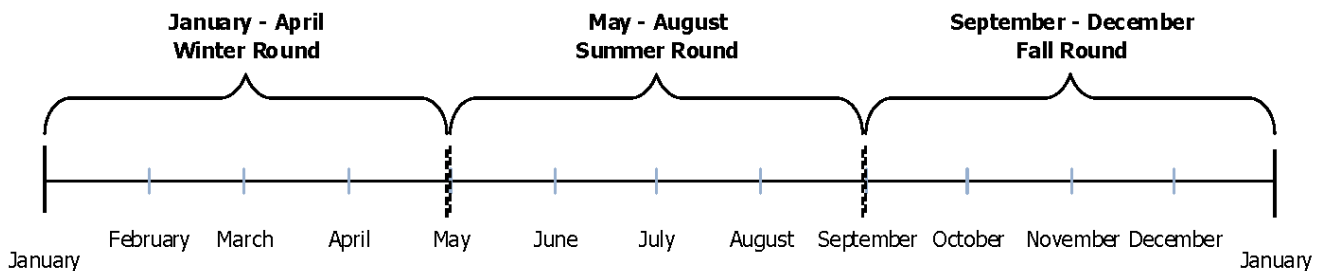
4.1 Design of MCBS

In its initial design, the MCBS was to serve as a traditional longitudinal survey of the Medicare population. There was no predetermined limit to the duration of time a beneficiary, once selected to participate, was to remain in the sample. However, beginning in 1994, participation of beneficiaries in the MCBS was limited to no more than four years.

Although participation in the survey is limited to four years, MCBS data collection is continuous throughout the year with three distinct seasons (i.e., rounds) of data collection per year. In general, the three rounds are: winter (January through April); summer (May through August); and fall (September through December). The primary reason for the round to round design is to create shorter recall periods during the year to capture more complete and accurate health care costs and utilization for beneficiaries.

The 2019 MCBS data releases reflect data collected from January 2019 through early January 2020 (see Exhibit 4.1.1), as well as Topical sections, income and assets data, and chronic pain information collected through the Summer 2020.⁵ Exhibit 4.1.1 depicts an MCBS data collection year and the typical span of the rounds.

Exhibit 4.1.1: Typical MCBS Data Collection Year

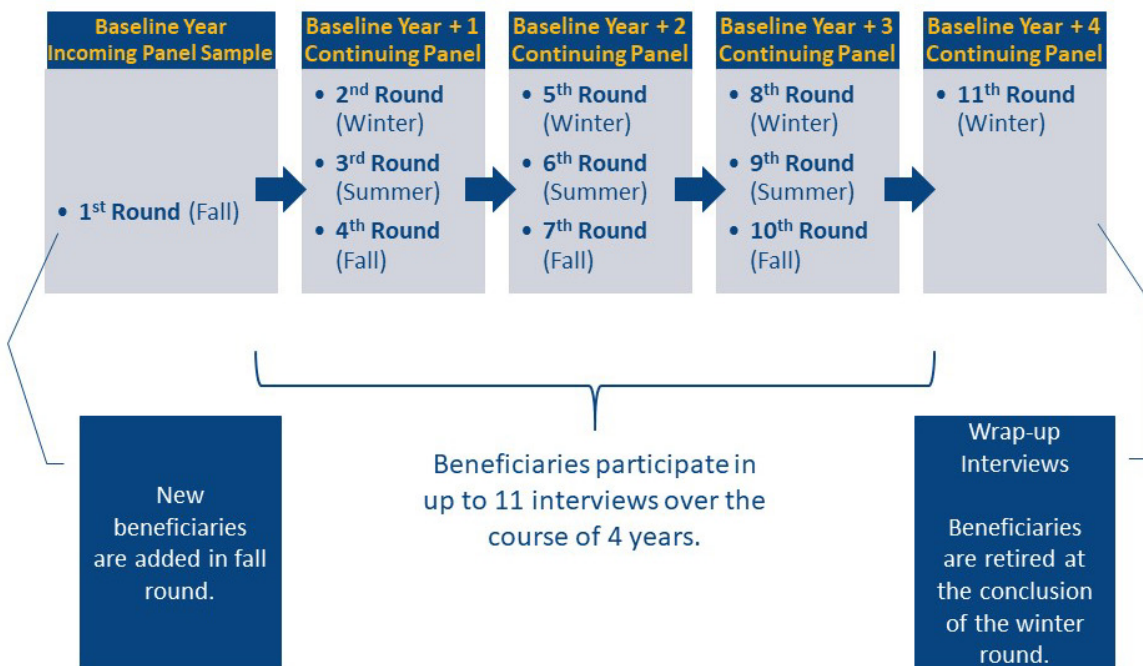


The initial interview of newly-selected beneficiaries takes place in the fall round. Since 2016, the fall round begins early (in late July or early August) to allow more time to locate and conduct outreach to the new survey respondents.

Subsequent rounds, which occur every four months, involve the re-interviewing of the same beneficiary (or appropriate proxy respondents or facility staff) over a four year period (up to 11 interviews in total). Exhibit 4.1.2 depicts the timeline of participation for beneficiaries selected to be in the MCBS sample.

⁵ Due to the nature of some survey items, PUF data for each data year may include data pulled forward from a prior data collection year and/or data added from a future data collection year due to the specific reference period.

Exhibit 4.1.2: MCBS Beneficiary Participation Timeline



4.2 Sample Design

The MCBS uses a rotating panel sample design, covering the population of Medicare beneficiaries residing in the continental U.S. (48 states and the District of Columbia) for the survey year.⁶ Each MCBS panel, an annual statistical sample of all Medicare enrollees, is interviewed up to three times a year over a four year period creating a continuous profile of selected beneficiaries' health care experiences.⁷ One panel is retired at the conclusion of each winter round, and a new panel is selected to replace it each fall round (see Exhibit 4.2.1). The size of the new panel is designed to provide a stable number of beneficiaries across all panels participating in the survey annually.

⁶ Alaska and Hawaii are not included among the states from which the sample is selected due to the high cost of data collection in those areas; however, they are included in control totals for weighting purposes. Beginning in 2017, sampling from Puerto Rico was discontinued. Beginning in 2018, all data collection in Puerto Rico was discontinued.

⁷ The three rounds per year are referred to seasonally. Respondents are interviewed in the winter round, the summer round, and the fall round each year.

Exhibit 4.2.1: 2016-2019 MCBS Rotating Panel Design

Data Collection Schedule			Panel			
Calendar Year	Season	Round#	2016	2017	2018	2019
2016	Winter	74				
	Summer	75				
	Fall	76				
2017	Winter	77				
	Summer	78				
	Fall	79				
2018	Winter	80				
	Summer	81				
	Fall	82				
2019	Winter	83				
	Summer	84				
	Fall	85				

The MCBS employs a three-stage cluster sample design. Primary sampling units (PSUs) are made up of major geographic areas consisting of metropolitan areas or groups of rural counties. Secondary sampling units (SSUs) are made up of census tracts or groups of tracts within the selected PSUs. Medicare beneficiaries, the ultimate sampling units (USUs), are then selected from within the selected SSUs. The final 2019 MCBS Panel was drawn from 104 PSUs, which contained 685 SSUs. The MCBS sample is annually “supplemented” during the fall round to account for attrition (deaths, dis-enrollments, refusals) and current-year enrollees. Each annual supplement is referred to as the Incoming Panel sample.

Beneficiaries for the MCBS are sampled from the Medicare Administrative enrollment data. The beneficiaries included in the MCBS Survey File PUF represent a randomly selected cross-section of all beneficiaries who were ever enrolled in either Part A or Part B of the Medicare program for any portion of 2019.⁸ The MCBS Survey File PUF represents four separate MCBS panels identified by the year in which the panel was selected and first interviewed (i.e., for the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF, the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 Panels). Exhibit 4.2.2 shows the distribution of each of the four panels included in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF.

For more information on the sample design, please see the *Survey File Data User's Guide* at: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Codebooks>.

Exhibit 4.2.2: 2019 MCBS Composition of Panels in the MCBS Survey File PUF

Data Year (Fall)	Number of Beneficiaries Selected
2016	2,274
2017	2,668
2018	3,424
2019	5,801

⁸ While beneficiaries included in the LDS releases represent both the ever enrolled and continuously enrolled Medicare population, the MCBS Survey File PUF solely represents the ever enrolled population.

4.3 Eligibility

4.3.1 Medicare Population Covered by the 2019 LDS and MCBS Survey File PUF

Beginning in 2015, beneficiaries who became eligible for Medicare Part A or B and enrolled anytime during the sampling year were eligible to be sampled as part of the annual panel. This is a substantial change in practice; prior to 2015, only beneficiaries enrolled in Medicare by January 1 of the sampling year were eligible to be sampled in an annual panel.

4.4 Case Types

MCBS beneficiaries are classified by their phase of survey participation (i.e., Incoming or Continuing) and interview participation (i.e., Community or Facility), which is determined by residence status. Although they appear in the MCBS LDS releases, beneficiaries for whom only Facility interviews were conducted during the data collection period are not included in the MCBS Survey File PUF. Researchers interested in the population of beneficiaries living in facilities will need to use the MCBS LDS, as discussed in Section 3.3.

4.4.1 Incoming and Continuing Cases

Every fall round of data collection, a new panel of sampled beneficiaries is added to the total sample to replace the panel of sampled beneficiaries completing a final interview and exiting the MCBS in the prior winter round. Newly selected MCBS beneficiaries begin in the fall round and are referred to as Incoming Panel cases. After the initial interview, they are referred to as Continuing cases.

4.4.2 Community Interviews

Approximately 90 percent of the interviews are held with the beneficiaries or proxies in their own residence or in a neutral interview location, such as a library or public venue. These interviews are called Community interviews; the remaining 10 percent of the interviews are administered for beneficiaries living in a facility, and these beneficiaries are not included in the MCBS Survey File PUF.

Over the course of a four-year period, however, it is not uncommon for beneficiaries to enter long-term care facilities (e.g., nursing homes) or to go back and forth between community and facility settings. In order to obtain an accurate representation of the experiences of all Medicare beneficiaries, the MCBS includes beneficiaries wherever they reside, even if they enter or reside in a facility for the duration of their four years with the study. The MCBS Survey File PUF excludes those beneficiaries who were in a facility for each interview, due to disclosure concerns.

4.5 Interviewing and Training Procedures

4.5.1 Overview of Data Collection

CMS contracts with NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) to administer the MCBS. A national team of specially trained and certified NORC field interviewers conduct either interviews with MCBS beneficiaries or their designated proxies or they conduct interviews with Facility administrators on behalf of beneficiaries. The first interview conducted for an Incoming Panel beneficiary is relatively short, as it does not collect health care utilization or cost data. Continuing interviews are longer, as field interviewers collect information about the beneficiary's health care utilization and associated costs.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CMS and NORC decided to pause all in-person data collection for Community interviews on 3/22/2020. Testing data collection by phone using the CAPI questionnaires ensued, and on 4/9/2020 NORC and CMS determined it was feasible to continue conducting interviews via phone only. Therefore, Community Questionnaire items asked at the end of Winter 2020 or in Summer 2020 that are pulled back into 2019 segments as a result of their reference period were collected by phone instead of in-person. Mode effects are discussed in further detail in the *2019 MCBS Methodology Report*.

4.5.1.1 Overview of Recruitment of Beneficiaries and Scheduling Procedures

Medicare beneficiaries selected to participate in the MCBS receive a letter and a brochure in the mail, introducing the study and explaining that an interviewer from NORC will contact them to schedule an appointment. For Incoming Panel interviews, initial contact is typically made in person; for Continuing interviews, outreach to set an appointment is most often made by phone. If beneficiaries are unable to answer questions or require language assistance, they can enlist the help of an assistant, such as a family member, to help complete the interview; a proxy can also respond on behalf of the beneficiary if the beneficiary is incapacitated or unable to complete the interview. For Spanish speaking respondents, a Spanish version of the Community Questionnaire is available, and bilingual interviewers conduct the interview.

4.5.1.2 Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)

Field interviewers complete MCBS interviews using a CAPI instrument loaded on a laptop. The CAPI program automatically guides the field interviewer through the questions, records the answers, and contains logic and skip flows that increase the output of timely and high quality data. The CAPI also contains follow-up questions where data were missing from the previous interview. When the interview is completed, the CAPI system allows the field interviewer to transmit the data electronically to the NORC central office in a secure manner.

4.5.2 Interviewer Training

Nationally, the MCBS employs an average of approximately 200 field interviewers,⁹ who participate in a combination of several targeted training initiatives and careful coaching and monitoring activities throughout data collection. Each training is customized to the level of experience of the interviewer (new to MCBS or MCBS-experienced), the type of interview (Community or Facility), the type of sample (Incoming Panel or Continuing), and the unique requirements of each round (changing questionnaire sections or data collection protocols). Field interviewers also participate in continuous online refresher training. Weekly field memos issued to all field managers and field interviewers cover important data collection tips, provide answers to interviewer questions, and offer reminders about how to handle complicated scenarios.

4.5.3 Privacy and Data Security

Field interviewer training stresses the importance of maintaining privacy, and project protocols are documented within the field interviewer manual. Field outreach and contacting procedures also maintain and ensure confidentiality. These procedures include the utilization of standard computer security protocol (dual authentication password protection for each interviewer laptop) and restrictions on submitting personally identifiable information (PII) through electronic mail. All MCBS survey staff directly involved in data collection and/or analysis activities are required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement and a confidentiality agreement.

NORC and CMS are committed to protecting respondent confidentiality and privacy, and both organizations diligently uphold provisions established under the Privacy Act of 1974, the NORC Institutional Review Board (IRB), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Federal Information Security Management Act of

⁹ The fall round starts with a higher number of field interviewers which, over the course of the year, is reduced due to staff turnover. Each summer, a small cohort of new interviewers is hired for the MCBS.

2002. As stated in the MCBS OMB documentation, the information collected for MCBS is protected by NORC and by CMS. Respondent data are used only for research and statistical purposes. As required under the Privacy Act of 1974, identifiable information is not disclosed or released without the consent of the individual or the establishment, except to those involved in research (Public Law 93-579). The MCBS is authorized by section 1875 (42 USC 139511) of the Social Security Act and is conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The OMB Number for this survey is 0938-0568.

5. QUESTIONNAIRES

5.1 Overview

The MCBS Questionnaire structure features two components (Community and Facility), administered based on the beneficiary's residence status. Within each component, the flow and content of the questionnaire varies by interview type and data collection season (fall, winter, or summer). There are two types of interviews (Baseline, Continuing) containing two types of questionnaire sections (Core and Topical). See Exhibit 5.1 within the *Survey File Data User's Guide* for a depiction of the MCBS Questionnaire structure:

<https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Codebooks>.

- **Community Component:** Survey administered for beneficiaries living in the community (i.e., not in a long-term care facility such as a nursing home) during the reference period covered by the MCBS interview. An interview may be conducted with the beneficiary or a proxy.
- **Facility Component:** Survey administered for beneficiaries living in facilities, such as long-term care nursing homes or other institutions, during the reference period covered by the MCBS interview. Interviewers conduct the Facility component with staff members located at the facility (i.e., facility respondents); beneficiaries are not interviewed if they reside at a facility.

Within each component, there are two types of interviews – a Baseline interview and a Continuing interview.

- **Baseline:** The initial questionnaire administered in the fall round of the year the beneficiary is selected into the sample (interview #1).
- **Continuing:** The questionnaire administered as beneficiaries progress through the study (interviews #2-11).

Depending on the interview type and data collection season (fall, winter, or summer), the MCBS Questionnaire includes Core and Topical sections:

- **Core:** These sections are of critical purpose and policy relevance to the MCBS, regardless of season of administration. Core sections collect information on beneficiaries' health insurance coverage, health care utilization and costs, and operational management data such as locating information.
- **Topical:** These sections collect information on special interest topics. They may be fielded every round or on a seasonal basis. Specific topics may include housing characteristics, drug coverage, and knowledge about Medicare.

See Sections 5.2 and 5.3 within the *Survey File Data User's Guide* for additional detail on the 2019 Core and Topical sections: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Codebooks>.

6. SAMPLING

6.1 Medicare Population Covered by the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF

The MCBS data releases are a reflection of enrolled Medicare beneficiaries residing in the continental United States.¹⁰ The sample for the MCBS is drawn from a subset of the Medicare enrollment data, which is a list of all Medicare beneficiaries. Excluded are residents of foreign countries and U.S. possessions and territories. The MCBS Survey File PUF further excludes Medicare beneficiaries who only provided facility-based interviews during the data year. The MCBS data releases include two overlapping but differing populations:

- The ever enrolled population represents individuals who were enrolled in Medicare at any time during the calendar year. This population includes beneficiaries who enrolled during the calendar year 2019 as well as those who dis-enrolled or died prior to their fall interview.¹¹ The ever enrolled population includes beneficiaries who were enrolled in Medicare for at least one day at any point during 2019.
- The continuously enrolled population represents only those individuals continuously enrolled in Medicare from January 1, 2019 up to and including their fall interview; this specifically excludes beneficiaries who enrolled during the calendar year 2019 and those who dis-enrolled or died prior to their fall interview. The concept of continuously enrolled is consistent with the concept of being exposed or “at risk” for using services up to and including their fall interview.

The MCBS Survey File PUF includes weights that represent the ever enrolled population, whereas the MCBS LDS releases include separate sets of weights that represent both the ever enrolled and continuously enrolled Medicare population.

Exhibits 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 present estimates of the size of the ever enrolled Medicare population living in the community by race and age (as of December 31, 2019), by sex in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF. Exhibit 6.1.3 presents the aggregated estimates of the size of the ever enrolled Medicare population living in the community overall and by sex and race.

Exhibit 6.1.1: Estimated Number of Male Community Medicare Beneficiaries by Race and Age, in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF*

Race	Age as of 12/31/2019	Weighted Count
White non-Hispanic	Under 65 years	2,530,141
	65-74 years	10,513,769
	75+ years	6,792,729
Black non-Hispanic	Under 65 years	698,809
	65-74 years	1,338,726
	75+ years	558,911
Hispanic	Under 65 years	467,437
	65-74 years	1,010,653
	75+ years	604,170

¹⁰ Prior to 2017, Puerto Rico was also included as part of the MCBS sampling geography. Beginning in 2017, Puerto Rico was removed, and only beneficiaries living in the continental U.S. were eligible to be sampled for the MCBS. Beginning in 2018, all data collection in Puerto Rico was discontinued. The decision to remove Puerto Rico from the sample was based largely on the fact that Medicare in Puerto Rico is very different and difficult to compare to (or combine analytically with) Medicare in the U.S.

¹¹ Note that data collection for beneficiaries who enrolled during 2019 and died in 2019 after enrollment but before their fall interview was still pursued through attempts at conducting proxy interviews.

Race	Age as of 12/31/2019	Weighted Count
Other†	Under 65 years	367,518
	65-74 years	1,090,063
	75+ years	627,274

SOURCE: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF, weighted counts.

*Weighted counts may not sum to the total of beneficiaries living in the community in the U.S. due to missingness.

†The 'Other' race category includes other single races not of Hispanic origin, two or more races, and unknown races. See the Glossary entry for race/ethnicity information.

Exhibit 6.1.2: Estimated Number of Female Community Medicare Beneficiaries by Race and Age, in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF*

Race	Age as of 12/31/2019	Weighted Count
White non-Hispanic	Under 65 years	2,590,971
	65-74 years	11,990,125
	75+ years	8,962,159
Black non-Hispanic	Under 65 years	759,120
	65-74 years	1,581,503
	75+ years	1,048,567
Hispanic	Under 65 years	437,263
	65-74 years	1,397,750
	75+ years	975,864
Other†	Under 65 years	273,877
	65-74 years	1,079,496
	75+ years	689,608

SOURCE: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF, weighted counts.

*Weighted counts may not sum to the total of beneficiaries living in the community in the U.S. due to missingness.

†The 'Other' race category includes other single races not of Hispanic origin, two or more races, and unknown races. See the Glossary entry for race/ethnicity information.

Exhibit 6.1.3: Estimated Number of Community Medicare Beneficiaries by Race and Age, in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF*

Group	Subgroup	Weighted Count
Overall Total		58,386,502
Sex	Male Total	26,600,201
	Female Total	31,786,302
Race	White non-Hispanic Total	43,379,894
	Black non-Hispanic Total	5,985,636
	Hispanic Total	4,893,135
	Other Total†	4,127,836

SOURCE: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF, weighted counts.

*Weighted counts may not sum to the total of beneficiaries living in the community in the U.S. due to missingness.

†The 'Other' race category includes other single races not of Hispanic origin, two or more races, and unknown races. See the Glossary entry for race/ethnicity information.

6.2 Targeted Population and Sampling Strata

Historically, the targeted population for the MCBS consisted of persons enrolled in one or both parts of the Medicare program, that is, Part A or Part B, as of January 1 of the applicable sample-selection year, and whose address on the Medicare files is in one of the 48 contiguous states (excludes Alaska and Hawaii), the District of Columbia, or Puerto Rico. Beginning in 2015, the targeted population for the MCBS consisted of Part A and/or Part B enrollees as of December 31 of the sample-selection year. For example, for Fall Rounds 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 (the four rounds in which the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 Panels, included in the 2019 MCBS data, were selected), the targeted population included those individuals enrolled as of December 31 of 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 respectively. Beginning in 2017, Puerto Rico was removed from the MCBS sample; thus, the MCBS sample was selected entirely from the continental U.S. and the District of Columbia beginning with the 2017 Panel.

For more information on the sampling strata, please see Section 6 of the *Survey File Data User's Guide*: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Codebooks>.

Exhibit 6.2.1 displays the number of beneficiaries included in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF, by age and ethnicity.

Exhibit 6.2.1: 2019 Panel of Selected Beneficiaries by U.S. Hispanic and U.S. Non-Hispanic Ethnicity Classification and Age Category*

Age Category as of 12/31/2019	TOTAL Sample Size	TOTAL Weighted	Hispanic Sample Size	Hispanic Weighted	Non-Hispanic Sample Size	Non-Hispanic Weighted
Under 65 years	2,497	8,125,136	495	1,457,929	2,002	6,667,207
65-74 years	4,737	30,002,085	423	2,920,229	4,314	27,081,856
75+ years	6,933	20,259,282	532	1,607,478	6,401	18,651,804
Total	14,167	58,386,502	1,450	5,985,636	12,717	52,400,866

SOURCE: 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF.

*Weighted counts may not sum to the total of beneficiaries living in the community in the U.S. due to missingness.

6.3 Primary and Secondary Sampling Units

All of the panels in the 2019 data releases are distributed across the subset of 104 non-Puerto Rican PSUs from the redesigned sample of 107 PSUs selected in 2001.¹² These PSUs are a representative, national sample of beneficiaries who are geographically dispersed throughout metropolitan areas and groups of non-metropolitan counties. Recall that SSUs are census tracts or groups of contiguous tracts within the selected PSUs.

6.4 Sample Selection

The MCBS sampling design provides nearly self-weighting (i.e., equal probabilities of selection) samples of beneficiaries within each of the 14 sampling strata. Within the selected PSUs and SSUs, a systematic sampling

¹² An original set of 107 PSUs was selected at the start of the MCBS in 1991; the current PSUs were selected in 2001 with a focus on maximizing overlap with the original set of PSUs. With the rotating panel design, the PSU redesign is transparent to data users and no special processing is required. For more details on the PSU redesign, see Lo, A, A Chu, and R Apodaca. "Redesign of the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey Sample," Proceedings of the Survey Research Section of the American Statistical Association 2002.

scheme with random starts is employed for selecting beneficiaries.¹³ For each Continuing beneficiary, the survey questions corresponding to the Survey File data release are administered in the fall of the data collection year. Similarly, for beneficiaries new to the MCBS, the survey questions are administered as part of the initial fall Baseline interview.

¹³ The MCBS 2019 Panel was drawn by systematic random sampling with probability proportional to probabilities of selection with an independently selected random start within each PSU. For more information on this sampling method, please see the *MCBS Methodology Report*, available at: <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Research/MCBS/Codebooks>.

7. TECHNICAL NOTES ON USING THE DATA

7.1 Weights and Variance Estimation

The sample design of MCBS includes stratification, clustering, multiple stages of selection, and disproportionate sampling. Furthermore, the MCBS sampling weights reflect adjustments for survey nonresponse. These survey design and estimation complexities require special consideration when analyzing MCBS data (i.e., it is not appropriate to assume simple random sampling).

To obtain accurate estimates from MCBS data, for either descriptive statistics or more sophisticated analyses based on multivariate models, the survey design complexities need to be taken into account by applying MCBS weights to produce estimates and using an appropriate technique to derive standard errors associated with the weighted estimates.

Each segment of the MCBS Survey File PUF includes ever enrolled, full sample cross-sectional weights (Fall: PUFFWGT; Winter: PUFWWGT; Summer: PUFSWGWT). The MCBS Survey File PUF segments do not include the continuously enrolled cross-sectional weights in order to protect the confidentiality of the beneficiaries. The continuously enrolled cross-sectional weights are available, however, in the LDS.

The ever enrolled cross-sectional weights apply to both the Continuing sample (beneficiaries sampled between 2016-2018) and to the Incoming Panel sample (beneficiaries sampled in 2019). These weights are intended for use in cross-sectional statistics involving the total (combined) Fall 2019 sample. Each weight is greater than zero for all beneficiaries on the file. The ever enrolled cross-sectional weights should be used to make estimates of parameters for the Medicare population who were enrolled at any point in 2019 (i.e., the ever enrolled population).

To generate estimates using the data from merged seasonal segments, the data user must always use the weights that correspond to the segment that is the smaller subset of the other. The samples for the Winter and Summer segments are subsets of the Fall segment sample. Thus, when generating estimates from a merged Summer segment and Fall segment analytic file, the data user must use the Summer segment weights. There are no weights that support joint analysis between the Summer segment and Winter segment, as each segment has a different set of beneficiaries included. To permit the calculation of random errors due to sampling, a series of replicate weights were computed. Unless the complex nature of the MCBS is taken into account, estimates of the variance of a survey statistic may be biased downward. The replicate weights included in the MCBS Survey File PUF can be used to calculate standard errors of the sample-based estimates. The replicate cross-sectional weights in the Fall segment are labeled PUFF001 through PUFF100 corresponding to the ever enrolled weight PUFFWGT. The replicate cross-sectional weights in the Winter segment are labeled PUFW001 through PUFW100 corresponding to the ever enrolled weight PUFWWGT. The replicate cross-sectional weights in the Summer segment are labeled PUF001 through PUF100 corresponding to the ever enrolled weight PUFSWGWT.

Most commercial software packages today include techniques to accommodate the complex design, through replicate weight approaches. Among these are STATA®, SUDAAN®, R®, and the complex survey procedures in SAS®. When using the replicate weight approach to variance estimation, the variance estimation method of balanced repeated replication (BRR) using Fay's adjustment of 0.3 is recommended. Sample code in SAS, STATA, and R for estimating statistics can be found in Appendix B. Analysis of subgroups should utilize the domain functions within the statistical package of the data user's choice (e.g., the DOMAIN statement in SAS, or the OVER function in STATA); restricting the sample to the subgroup and then performing an analysis would lead to slightly biased point estimates and estimates of variance.

7.2 Item Non-Response

As in any other survey, some respondents could not, or would not, supply answers to some questions.¹⁴ Item non-response rates are generally low in the MCBS data, but the researcher still needs to be aware of the missing data and be cautious about patterns of non-response.¹⁵ The calculation of the study-wide response rates generally follows the guidelines specified in the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) and OMB. For the ever enrolled cross-sectional sample represented by the MCBS 2019 Survey File, the calculated overall response rate was 65.7%. This rate includes non-response for persons in facilities, as the response rates are not calculated separated by questionnaire component. Therefore, this may not reflect exactly the response rate for the sample represented in the 2019 MCBS Survey File PUF, which excludes beneficiaries for whom only Facility interviews were conducted during the data collection year.

7.3 Subgroup Analysis

When analyzing survey data, researchers are often interested in focusing their analyses on specific subgroups of the full population sample (e.g., Medicare beneficiaries age 65 and over, Hispanics, or females). A common pitfall when performing sub-group analysis of survey data when variance estimation methods such as Taylor-series are used is to delete or exclude observations not relevant to the subgroup of interest. Standard errors for MCBS estimates are most accurate when the analytic file includes all beneficiaries. However, when replicate weights are used for variance estimation, deleting observations not relevant to the subgroup of interest prior to analyzing the subgroup will still produce unbiased standard errors. Almost all statistical packages provide the capability to limit the analysis to a subgroup of the population.

The Taylor Series linearization method of variance estimation is not recommended for subgroup analysis with MCBS data because accidentally excluding any observation in the sample while conducting the subgroup analysis using this variance estimation method will result in biased standard error estimates. Variance estimation using the Taylor Series linearization method for subgroup analyses requires a “domain” or “subgroup” statement (available in most statistical packages) to account for estimated domain sizes (i.e., uncertainty in the denominator). The recommended method of variance estimation for subgroup analysis is the BRR method; which does not require any special subgroup considerations. The BRR method allows the researcher to subset data to a subgroup of interest and still produce unbiased standard error estimates.

7.4 Example Research Questions

Exhibit 7.4.1 presents example research questions by topic, differentiating between those that can be addressed by the MCBS Survey File PUF or MCBS Survey File LDS, and those that can only be addressed by the MCBS Survey File LDS. These research questions are intended to illustrate the types of analyses researchers can perform using either the MCBS Survey File PUF or MCBS Survey File LDS, and are not meant to be a comprehensive list of possible research questions that can be answered with these data. The variables that are unique to the MCBS Survey File LDS and not contained in the MCBS Survey File PUF are italicized below.

¹⁴ This is different from when an individual refuses to participate in the survey altogether, which is called unit non-response. Unit non-response is discussed in detail in the *MCBS Methodology Report*, Section 9.

¹⁵ In the LDS files, item non-response types are indicated by missing type codes in SAS, including refusal to answer, don't know the answer, and invalid skip. The code .D represents a “don't know” response, the code .R represents a “refused” response, and .N represents an “invalid skip” response.

Exhibit 7.4.1: Example Research Questions That Can be Answered Using the MCBS Survey File PUF or MCBS Survey File LDS

Topic	Example Research Questions Addressed Using the MCBS Survey File PUF or MCBS Survey File LDS	Example Research Questions Addressed Using the MCBS Survey File LDS
Quality of Patient Experience	Are there differences in Medicare beneficiaries' quality of patient experience across socio-demographic characteristics?	Are there differences in Medicare beneficiaries' quality of patient experience between those with <i>limited English proficiency</i> and those who are proficient in English?
Access to Care	Among Medicare beneficiaries, are there differences in access to care by income (below or above \$25,000) and level of education?	Among Medicare beneficiaries, are there differences in access to care by <i>employment status</i> ?
Preventive Care	Are there differences in receipt of preventive care (e.g., pneumococcal vaccination) by age?	Are there differences in receipt of preventive care (e.g., pneumococcal vaccination) by <i>patient activation</i> ; that is, the degree to which beneficiaries actively participate in their own health care and decisions concerning that health care?
Cost and Utilization	Among Medicare beneficiaries, are there differences in the average number of inpatient hospital stays between 2013 and 2019 (MCBS Survey File PUF data were first available in 2013)?	Are there changes in Medicare beneficiaries' <i>out-of-pocket costs over the last 10 years</i> (between 2009 and 2019)?
Health Behaviors or Social Determinants of Health	Are there differences in the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who smoke cigarettes or consume excessive amounts of alcohol by socio-demographics?	Are there differences in the percentage of Medicare beneficiaries who have <i>used e-cigarettes</i> by socio-demographics?
Health Status and Functioning	Which disease conditions are more common among Medicare beneficiaries who had falls requiring medical help?	Are there differences in the disease conditions associated with falls <i>between 2009 and 2019</i> ?
Housing Characteristics	What is the profile (e.g., socio-demographic characteristics and disease conditions) of Medicare beneficiaries with accessibility modifications (e.g., a ramp, bathroom modification and/or railing) in the house?	Are <i>specific IADL or ADL limitations</i> associated with accessibility modifications among Medicare beneficiaries?

8. REFERENCES

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Lo, A, A Chu, and R Apodaca. "Redesign of the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey Sample." *Proceedings of the Survey Research Section of the American Statistical Association* (2002): 2139-44.

APPENDICES

9. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Glossary

Baseline interview: The initial questionnaire administered in the fall round of the year the beneficiary is selected into the sample (interview #1).

Beneficiary: Beneficiary refers to a person receiving Medicare services who may or not be participating in the MCBS.¹⁶ Beneficiary may also refer to an individual selected from the MCBS sample about whom the MCBS collects information.

Community component: Survey administered for beneficiaries living in the community (i.e., not in a long-term care facility such as a nursing home) during the reference period covered by the MCBS interview. An interview may be conducted with the beneficiary or a proxy.

Continuing interview: The questionnaire administered as beneficiaries progress through the study (interviews #2-11).

Continuously enrolled (aka always enrolled): A Medicare beneficiary who was enrolled in Medicare from the first day of the calendar year until the fall interview and did not die prior to the fall round. This population excludes beneficiaries who enrolled during the calendar year 2019, those who dis-enrolled or died prior to their fall interview, residents of foreign countries, and residents of U.S. possessions and territories other than Puerto Rico.

Core sections: These sections of the MCBS Questionnaire are of critical purpose and policy relevancy to the MCBS. They may be fielded every round or on a seasonal basis.

Crossover: A beneficiary who enters a long-term care facility setting (e.g., nursing homes) or who alternates between a community and a facility setting.

Ever enrolled: A Medicare beneficiary who was enrolled at any time during the calendar year including people who dis-enrolled or died prior to their fall interview. Excluded from this population are residents of foreign countries and of U.S. possessions and territories other than Puerto Rico.

Facility component: Survey administered for beneficiaries living in facilities, such as long-term care nursing homes or other institutions, during the reference period covered by the MCBS interview. Interviewers conduct the Facility component with staff members located at the facility (i.e., facility respondents); beneficiaries are not interviewed if they reside at a facility.

Incoming Panel sample (formerly known as Supplemental Panel): A statistically sampled group of beneficiaries that enter the MCBS in the fall round of a data collection year. One panel is retired at the conclusion of each winter round, and a new panel is selected to replace it each fall round. Panels are identified by the data collection year (e.g., 2019 Panel) in which they were selected.

Long-term care facility: A facility that provides rehabilitative, restorative, and/or ongoing skilled nursing care to patients or residents in need of assistance with activities of daily living.

¹⁶ <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Medicare-General-Information/MedicareGenInfo/index.html>.

Medicare: Medicare is the federal health insurance program for people who are 65 or over, certain younger people with disabilities, and people with End-Stage Renal Disease (permanent kidney failure requiring dialysis or a transplant, sometimes called ESRD). The different parts of Medicare help cover specific services:

- Hospital Insurance (Part A): covers inpatient hospital stays, care in a skilled nursing facility, hospice care, and some home health care.
- Medical Insurance (Part B): covers certain doctors' services, outpatient care, medical supplies, and preventive services.
- Medicare Advantage (Part C): an alternative to coverage under traditional Medicare (Parts A and B), a health plan option similar to a Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) or Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) administered by private companies.
- Prescription Drug Coverage (Part D): additional, optional coverage for prescription drugs administered by private companies.

For more information, please visit the Medicare.gov website at <https://www.medicare.gov/sign-up-change-plans/decide-how-to-get-medicare/whats-medicare/what-is-medicare.html>.

Medicare Advantage (MA): Medicare Advantage Plans, sometimes called "Part C" or "MA Plans," are offered by private companies approved by Medicare. An MA provides, or arranges for the provision of, a comprehensive package of health care services to enrolled persons for a fixed capitation payment. The term "Medicare Advantage" includes all types of MAs that contract with Medicare, encompassing risk MAs, cost MAs, and health care prepayment plans (HCPPs).

Medicare beneficiary: See Beneficiary.

Panel: See Incoming Panel sample.

Primary Sampling Unit (PSU): Primary sampling unit refers to sampling units that are selected in the first (primary) stage of a multi-stage sample ultimately aimed at selecting individual elements (Medicare beneficiaries in the case of MCBS). PSUs are made up of major geographic areas consisting of metropolitan areas or groups of rural counties.

Proxy: Beneficiaries who were too ill, or who could not complete the Community interview for other reasons, were asked to designate a proxy, someone very knowledgeable about the beneficiary's health and living habits. In most cases, the proxy was a close relative such as the spouse, a son or daughter. In a few cases, the proxy was a non-relative like a close friend or caregiver. In addition, a proxy was utilized if a beneficiary had been reported as deceased during the current round's reference period or if a beneficiary who was living in the community in the previous round had since entered into a long-term care facility. Proxy interviews are only used for the Community interview, as the Facility interview is conducted with a staff member located at the facility (see definition of "Facility component").

Race/ethnicity: Hispanic origin and race are two separate and distinct categories. Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race or combination of races. Hispanic origin includes persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central and South American, or Spanish origin. For the MCBS, responses to beneficiary race and ethnicity questions are reported by the respondent. More than one race may be reported. For conciseness, the text, tables, and figures in this document use shorter versions of the terms for race and Hispanic or Latino origin specified in the Office of Management and Budget 1997 Standards for Data on Race and Ethnicity. Beneficiaries reported as white and not of Hispanic origin were coded as white non-Hispanic; beneficiaries reported as black/African-American and not of Hispanic origin were coded as black non-Hispanic; beneficiaries reported as Hispanic, Latino/Latina, or of Spanish origin, regardless of their race, were coded as Hispanic. The "other" race category includes other single races not of Hispanic origin (including American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander), two or more races, or unknown races.

Respondent: Respondent refers to a person who answers questions for the MCBS; this person can be the beneficiary, a proxy, or a staff member located at a facility where the beneficiary resides (i.e., the facility respondent).

Round: The MCBS data collection period. There are three distinct rounds each year; winter (January through April); summer (May through August); and fall (September through December).

Secondary Sampling Unit (SSU): SSUs are made up of census tracts or groups of tracts within the selected PSUs.

Topical sections: Sections of the MCBS Questionnaire that collect information on special interest topics. They may be fielded every round or on a seasonal basis. Specific topics may include housing characteristics, drug coverage, and knowledge about Medicare.

Ultimate Sampling Unit (USU): USUs are Medicare beneficiaries selected from within the selected SSUs.

Appendix B: Technical Appendix – Sample Code and Output

Please note that the code examples below use the Survey File PUF Fall segment weights, which begin with the prefix "PUFF." The data user should use the Survey File PUF Fall segment weights only if they are using data from the Survey File PUF Fall segment that have not been merged with data from any other segment. If the data user is analyzing data from the winter, summer, or a combination of Survey File PUF segments, please see the discussion in section 7.1 of this document as to which weights should be used.

SAS Analysis Statements

Cross-tabulations

```
proc surveyfreq data=<Analytic dataset> VARMETHOD = brr (fay=.30);
  table <Var name> / row chisq lrchisq;
  weight PUFFWGT;
  repweight PUFF001 - PUFF100;
run;
```

Subgroup Analysis

```
proc surveyfreq data=<Analytic dataset> VARMETHOD = brr (fay=.30);
  table <Var name> * <Subgroup variable> / row chisq lrchisq;
  weight PUFFWGT;
  repweight PUFF001 - PUFF100;
run;
```

Stata Analysis Statements

Declare dataset as survey sample with replicate weights

```
svyset _n [pweight= PUFFWGT ], brrweight(PUFF001 - PUFF100) fay(.3) vce(brr) singleunit(missing)
```

For categorical variables, use:

```
svy brr, fay(.3) : tabulate <Var name> <Var name>
```

For subgroup analysis use:

```
svy brr, subpop(if <Subgroup>) fay(.3) : tabulate <Var name>, over(<Var name>)
```

R Analysis Statements

Declare MCBS survey design object with replicate weights

```
mcbs <- svrepdesign(
  weights = ~PUFFWGT,
  repweights = "PUFF[001-100]+",
  type = "Fay",
  rho = 0.3,
  data = <Source dataset>,
  combined.weights = TRUE
)
```

For categorical variables, use:

```
svytable(~<Var name>, design=mcbs)
```

For subgroup analysis use:

```
mcbs_subgrp <- subset(mcbs, <Subgroup criteria>)
svytable(~<Var name>, design=mcbs_subgrp)
```