The Next Generation Data Platform

Linking Administrative Data from State-Level USDA Nutrition Assistance Programs with Census Household Surveys and Administrative Records from Other State and Federal Programs

Making the Most of Federal Data: Combining Data for Economic Analysis
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The Next Generation Data Platform

• A strategic partnership between USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and Economic Research Service (ERS), and the U.S. Census Bureau (Census)

• A long-term effort to acquire state-level administrative data on USDA nutrition assistance programs
  – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  – The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Woman, Infants, and Children (WIC)
Next Gen Data Platform (cont.)

• Links person-level administrative records with Census household survey data
  – American Community Survey (ACS)
  – Current Population Survey (CPS)
    • March Annual and Social Economic Supplement (ASEC)
    • December Food Security Supplement [coming soon!]
  – Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP)

• Expanding number of States
  – 20 State SNAP agencies have signed data-sharing agreements
  – 11 State WIC agencies

• Adding Federal Partners
GROWING THE PARTNERSHIP

State SNAP and WIC agencies participating in the Next-Generation Data Platform (June 1, 2017)

- SNAP agency only
- Both SNAP and WIC agencies
- WIC agency only
Benefits of Next-Gen Data Platform

• Replaces error-prone measure of SNAP receipt in Census surveys

• Augments administrative records with richer individual- and household-level information from survey data

• Supplements administrative records with information on (potentially eligible) non-participants from survey data
Benefits of Next-Gen Platform (cont.)

- Enhances survey measures of SNAP receipt
  - Number (and timing) of months of program receipt over survey reference period
  - Dollar amount of program benefits received
  - Identify which individuals in the survey household received benefits
Research Possibilities

• Revisiting old research questions with more accurate measures of SNAP receipt
• Revisiting old research questions with more data
  – e.g., examine SNAP participation dynamics over a longer time period than is possible with Census survey data
• Doing more with existing data
  – Enhancing measure of SNAP in ACS
Research using the Next-Gen Platform

• How well does SNAP reach households with the lowest (annual) income?
• Prior study relied on ACS alone, measuring ever-in-the-year SNAP receipt
• Linked ACS data that measured “intensity of receipt” (total benefits, number of months) showed better targeting to poorer households
Research (cont.)

- Who does SNAP reach—and not reach—at the sub-state level?
- Estimated household SNAP eligibility using the ACS
- SNAP participants identified using linked admin records
- Linked microdata allowed us to derive participation rates for detailed demographic subgroups
Challenges

• Biggest challenge has been acquiring state data
  – Project relies on the willingness of states to share their admin records

• Record Linkage
  – We benefit from Census’ expertise in record linkage; they benefit from our program expertise
  – Census uses PII on admin records to create a Protected Identification Key (PIK) for each individual in the records
    • SNAP records contain SSNs, which ensures high PIK rate (~98-99%)
    • Census household surveys do not, so PIK rates are lower on the survey side (~90%)
Summary

• Unique data linkage that brings together data, resources, and expertise from multiple federal and state partners
• Yield data products valued by policymakers and program stakeholders
• Project is scaling up to more states and programs
• Academic researchers can apply for data access through Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDCs)
Questions?
escherpf@ers.usda.gov