

The Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project Fact Sheet

What is the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP)?

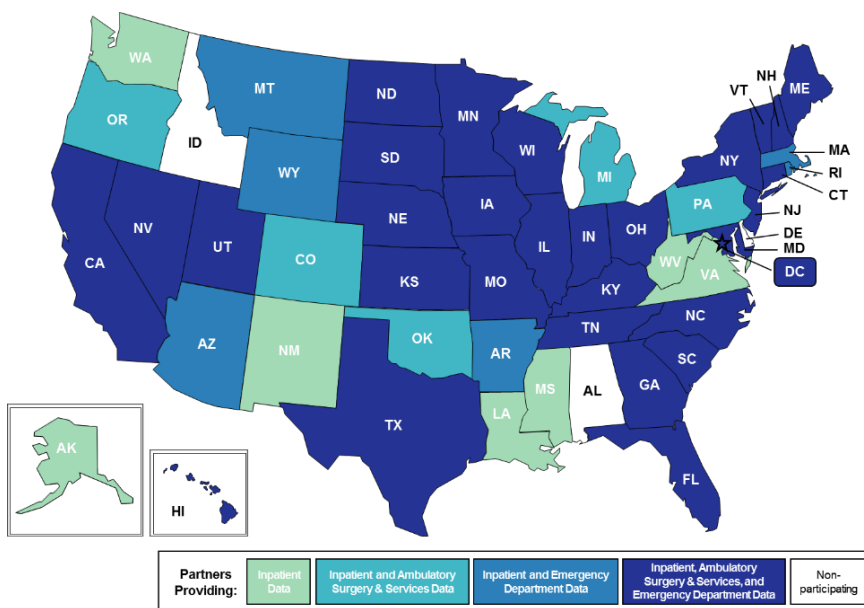
HCUP is a family of health care databases, software tools, supplemental files, reports, and other related products developed through a Federal-State-Industry partnership and sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). The project builds on the data collection efforts of State data organizations, hospital associations, and private data organizations (known as “HCUP Partners”). Without HCUP Partners’ voluntary data contributions, this national resource supporting health services research and policy would not be possible.

Why is HCUP important?

HCUP includes the largest collection of all-payer, encounter-level hospital care data in the United States. HCUP provides reliable, comprehensive information that can be used to answer questions about health care use, access, outcomes, and costs related to hospital inpatient stays, ambulatory surgery and services, emergency department visits, and readmissions. HCUP databases, software tools, and reports enable research on a broad range of current health care issues and trends that are useful to policymakers, researchers, administrators, and consumers.

How are the HCUP databases developed?

HCUP Partners



- AHRQ transforms administrative health care data acquired from HCUP Partners into research-ready, uniform databases with a common set of data elements.
- Currently, 48 Partners (47 States and the District of Columbia) provide HCUP with statewide inpatient data, 35 Partners provide ambulatory surgery and services data, and 37 Partners provide emergency department data. The inpatient data represent 97 percent of inpatient discharges from community hospitals.

What databases are available from HCUP?

- **The National (Nationwide) Inpatient Sample (NIS)** is the largest publicly available all-payer inpatient database in the United States, yielding national estimates of hospital inpatient stays. The NIS approximates 20 percent of the discharges from all U.S. community hospitals and contains data from more than seven million hospital stays each year. Researchers and policymakers use the NIS to identify, track, and analyze national trends in health care utilization, access, charges, quality, and outcomes. The NIS is released yearly.
- **The Kids' Inpatient Database (KID)** is the largest publicly available, all-payer pediatric database in the United States, and was designed to facilitate study of hospital services, outcomes and charges for children and adolescents. It contains a sample of two to three million hospital pediatric discharges per year. The KID database is available every three years from 1997-2012. Because of the ICD-9-CM to ICD-10-CM/PCS coding transition during 2015, the 2015 KID was not produced. The 2016 KID will be the next data year, comprised of ICD-10-CM/PCS data only.
- **The Nationwide Emergency Department Sample (NEDS)** is a unique and powerful database that yields national estimates of emergency department (ED) visits. The NEDS database enables researchers to study a broad range of conditions and procedures related to ED use. It includes approximately 30 million records each year for patients who were either treated in the ED and released or treated in the ED and admitted to the same hospital. The NEDS is released yearly.

- **The Nationwide Readmissions Database (NRD)** supports analyses of repeat hospital visits in a year, addressing the need for nationally representative information on hospital readmissions for all ages and payers, including the uninsured. The NRD is released yearly.
- **The State Inpatient Databases (SID)** contain a powerful collection of hospital inpatient discharge information. The SID can be used to investigate questions that are unique to one State or to compare data from two or more States.
- **The State Ambulatory Surgery and Services Databases (SASD)** include encounter-level data for ambulatory surgery and other outpatient services from hospital-owned facilities. Some States provide data for ambulatory surgery and outpatient services from nonhospital-owned facilities.
- **The State Emergency Department Databases (SEDD)** contain discharge information on all ED visits that do not result in a hospital admission.

Additional information about these databases is available at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/databases.jsp.

How do researchers obtain HCUP databases?

Restricted-Access Public Release Nationwide Databases and Select State Databases (States permitted by HCUP Partners) may be purchased through the HCUP Central Distributor at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/tech_assist/centdist.jsp. The nationwide databases are delivered via secure digital download. The State-specific databases include data elements approved by each participating State while excluding data that might directly or indirectly identify a person. State-specific databases are delivered via hard copy media (DVD). All purchasers and users of HCUP data must complete a brief online Data Use Agreement (DUA) training course and sign a DUA.

What software tools and supplemental files are available from HCUP?

- **Software Tools and Supplemental Files** are developed and maintained by AHRQ to enhance the value of the HCUP databases. HCUP tools also can be used with HCUP data as well as with non-HCUP hospital administrative databases. HCUP tools include Clinical Classifications Software (CCS), the Chronic Condition Indicator (CCI), Elixhauser Comorbidity Software, Procedure Classes, Surgery Flags, and Utilization Flags. All tools are free of charge and available for download from the HCUP User Support (HCUP-US) Web site. HCUP also offers several supplemental files that are designed for use with and add value to HCUP databases, including the Revisit Analysis Variables, Cost-to-Charge Ratio Files (CCR Files), Hospital Market Structure Files (HMS Files), American Hospital Association (AHA) Linkage Files, NIS Hospital Ownership Files, and NIS and KID Trend Weight Files. Additional information is available at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/tools_software.jsp.
- **HCUPnet** is a free, online query system that uses HCUP data to provide quick access to statistical information about hospital inpatient and ED utilization. HCUPnet delivers statistics at the national level and, for States that have agreed to participate, at the State, region, and community levels. Users can generate tables and graphs with HCUPnet's easy-to-use, step-by-step query system. This interactive tool can be accessed at www.hcupnet.ahrq.gov/.
- **AHRQ Quality Indicators (QIs)** are measures of health care quality associated with processes of care that occur in the inpatient setting. The AHRQ QIs consist of four modules measuring various aspects of quality: Prevention Quality Indicators (PQIs), Inpatient Quality Indicators (IQIs), Patient Safety Indicators (PSIs), and Pediatric Quality Indicators (PDIs). The QIs are analyzed with free software available from AHRQ that is designed to be used with HCUP and other administrative data. Additional information is available at www.qualityindicators.ahrq.gov/.
- **HCUP Fast Stats** provides easy access to the latest HCUP-based statistics on health care information topics. HCUP Fast Stats uses visual statistical displays in stand-alone graphs, trend figures, or simple tables to convey complex information at a glance. Information is updated quarterly or annually, as newer data become available. Additional information is available at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/faststats/landing.jsp.

What reports does HCUP produce?

- **HCUP Statistical Briefs** – short, focused reports with descriptive statistics on hospital use and cost topics
- **HCUP Infographics** – visual representations of Statistical Brief data
- **HCUP Methods Series Reports** – helpful reports addressing methodological issues for users of HCUP databases, tools, and supplemental files

Additional information is available at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/reports.jsp.

What support services are offered to HCUP users?

Technical Support is available to facilitate use of HCUP. The user-friendly HCUP-US Web site, www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov, contains extensive documentation about the project. Online [FAQs](#) answer many user questions. Self-directed [HCUP online tutorials](#) teach a range of HCUP use topics. HCUP presentations at professional conferences and HCUP training workshops educate users. User questions are responded to by experienced technical support staff by telephone at 866-290-HCUP and email at hcup@ahrq.gov. More information is available at www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/techassist.jsp and www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/news/events.jsp.