

Health Insurance Advertising 2013-2018
Wesleyan Media Project
Release Version 1.0 (January 2021)

This collection provides detailed tracking data on when and where health insurance TV ads aired 2013-2018. It covers all broadcast television stations in all media markets in the United States.

CITATION

Publications based on this data collection should acknowledge this source by means of bibliographic citation. The bibliographic citation for this data collection is:

Fowler, Erika Franklin, Sarah E. Gollust, and Laura M. Baum. 2021. "Health Insurance Advertising 2013-2018." Version 1.0 [dataset]. Middletown, CT: The Wesleyan Media Project, Wesleyan University.

In addition, here is sample language to be used in any acknowledgements of use of these data: "These data were obtained from the Wesleyan Media Project, and include media tracking data from Kantar/Campaign Media Analysis Group in Washington, D.C. These data are made available by a grant from Russell Sage Foundation Grant Number 1808-08181 and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation State Health Access Research and Evaluation (SHARE) program Grant Number 72179. The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Wesleyan Media Project, Russell Sage Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation or any of its affiliates."

DATA COLLECTION AND CODING

The source for the ad data is Kantar/CMAG. This commercial firm specializes in providing detailed, real-time tracking information to corporate and political clients. These tracking data represent the most comprehensive and systematic collection on the content and targeting of health insurance advertisements. The data include two types of information. First, frequency information tells when and where ads aired. It contains precise and detailed information on the date, time, market, station, and television show of each airing. Second, the data provide information about each ad's content in the form of a video file for each unique creative or individual ad.

CMAG gathers such data by using a market-based tracking system, deploying "Ad Detectors" in each media market in the U.S. In addition to all local advertising activity, these detectors track advertisements on the major national networks, as well as national cable networks. The system's software recognizes the electronic seams between programming and advertising and identifies the "digital fingerprints" of specific advertisements. When the system does not recognize the fingerprints of a particular spot, the advertisement is captured and downloaded. Thereafter, the system automatically recognizes and logs that particular commercial wherever and whenever it airs. Studies that examine advertisers' "buy sheets" obtained from television stations and compare them with this CMAG data find that the company's system is highly reliable in tracking the universe of ads aired.

After receiving the data from CMAG, the Wesleyan Media Project processes and codes the ad tracking data. In this process, using videos of ads captured by CMAG, project staff first research the entity responsible for airing each ad. Finally, the Wesleyan Media Project codes the content of ads on a set of questions using a web-based content analysis platform.

A NOTE ABOUT THE DATA

The Wesleyan Media Project is providing these data as a courtesy to the academic community, and not as a polished commercial product. The nominal fee you pay is for administrative expenses. We've worked hard to clean the data that we've coded, but as with all datasets this large, there may be some errors that remain. We do not have information on how CMAG variables are collected/coded.

Depending on resource availability, we do occasionally update the data files to correct errors and issues brought to our attention by users. If you notice issues with the data, feel free to share the information with us at mediaproject@wesleyan.edu.

VARIABLES

Provided by CMAG

creative: name of specific advertisement

market: media market where ad aired

dma: media market ID

l: length of ad in seconds

station: name of television station

affiliate: name of television affiliate

airdate: date on which ad aired

airtime: time at which ad aired

media: television medium

daypart: time of day during which ad aired

program: television program during which ad aired

programtype: type of television program during which ad aired

category: type of ad, all are labeled "INSURANCE"

sponsoremag: ad sponsor

est_cost: estimated cost of ad airing

WMP Variables

domstateabbr: State that has the majority of the media market's population

instype: Sponsor type (six categories).

This variable was coded at the sponsor-level, not the ad level

1 Enrollment advocate

The advertisement is informational and sponsored by a group whose objective is to encourage enrollment in a health insurance plan but is NOT directly selling insurance. Health insurance exchanges may be mentioned, but specific plans or providers are not endorsed. Examples: 211cleveland.org, getcoveredamerica.org, a television station sponsoring an announcement promoting enrollment.

2 Federal

The advertisement is based solely around health insurance from the Federally-facilitated Marketplace. Example: healthcare.gov

3 Other

Ads from sponsor not described by one of the other categories

4 Private

The advertisement is selling health insurance from a private provider or broker, which may be for-profit, non-profit, a cooperative, or part of a larger health care entity. Refers to any non-state non-federal health insurance plan or health system. Examples: AARP, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Arches Health Plan, Group Health

5 State – Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP)

The advertisement is exclusively about enrollment via the Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP) component of a State-based health insurance exchange. The target audience is small business owners or self-employed individuals only. Example: Kynect Small Business

NOTE: no ads in this data set have this value

6 State – individual

Advertisements from these sponsors focus on enrollment in individual health insurance plans from a State-based Marketplace. There may be mention of small business insurance, but it is not the main focus of the ad. Example: Access Health Connecticut

instype_4cat: Sponsor type (four categories)

This variable was coded at the sponsor-level, not the ad level

1 Federal

2 State (collapses the two State categories from instype)

3 Private

4 Other (collapses Other and Enrollment advocate categories from instype)

mcare: Is Medicare mentioned or the focus of the ad?

**Note, not all of the ads in the data set have this variable coded. Ads were coded for several different projects over an extended time period. Some ads were only coded for whether there was a Mention (but Focus was not asked). Other ads were coded for just Focus but not for whether Medicare was merely mentioned. The codes 98 and 99 account for instances where only Mention or only Focus were coded for.*

. Ad was not coded for this variable

0 Not mentioned

1 Mention

2 Focus

98 Definitely not focus, could be a mention

99 Definitely a mention, not sure if focus

mcaid: Is Medicaid mentioned or the focus of the ad?

***Note, not all of the ads in the data set have this variable coded. Ads were coded for several different projects over an extended time period. Some ads were only coded for whether there was a Mention (but Focus was not asked). Other ads were coded for just Focus but not for whether Medicaid was merely mentioned. The codes 98 and 99 account for instances where only Mention or only Focus were coded for.*

. Ad was not coded for this variable

0 Not mentioned

1 Mention

2 Focus

98 Definitely not focus, could be a mention

99 Definitely a mention, not sure if focus

spanish: Spanish-language ad

0 No

1 Yes

vidfile: Expected filename of corresponding .wmv/.mp4 video (if a file exists). Filename generated by WMP based on creative name. Actual filenames may vary (they were generated by CMAG).