

State-Level Estimates of Gains in Insurance Coverage Among Young Adults

Background on ASPE Issue Brief

New results from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) indicate that 3.1 million additional young adults have insurance coverage as of December 2011, due to the provision in the Affordable Care Act that allows 19 through 25 year olds to remain on their parents' insurance plans.

Methods

The NHIS survey is not large enough to allow estimates of how many young adults gained coverage within each State. So to estimate these numbers, analysts from the Department of Health and Human Services used the most recent state-level, Census Bureau data from before the Affordable Care Act provision went into effect. They calculated the number of 19 through 25 year olds who did not have health insurance in each state as of 2009 using the Census Bureau's largest source of state-level data, the American Community Survey. They then divided up the estimated 3.1 million young adults who have gained insurance proportionately across all 50 states and the District of Columbia, based on their baseline number of uninsured adults in this age group.

This approach is only a rough approximation. It assumes that the effect of the Affordable Care Act's provision for young adults was similar across all states. This may not be true for several reasons, including differences in population demographics, parental availability of health insurance, and pre-existing laws in some states that already enabled a portion of young adults to enroll in their parents' plans.

However, it is notable that the pre-existing State laws in this realm did not apply to private self-insured plans, which are covered under the Affordable Care Act's dependent coverage provision. The majority of U.S. workers with insurance (60%) are in self-insured plans not subject to these state laws.^[1]

Additionally, many states had age limits, requirements for student status, or exclusions for married young adults that further limited the impact of these laws. Due to these issues, the vast majority of young adults in the U.S. were not eligible for coverage under pre-existing state laws, which minimized their impact. This conclusion is supported by research published in peer review journals. One study showed that pre-existing state laws produced only a small gain in coverage of roughly three percent,^[2] while two others showed no overall gain in coverage.^{[3], [4]} There is no evidence that any state experienced anything close to the 10 percentage-point gain in coverage due to the Affordable Care Act's dependent coverage provision.

Results

Table 1: Estimated Number of Young Adults (19-25) by State Gaining Health Insurance Due to the Affordable Care Act, through December 2011

State	Total Young Adults Gaining Health Insurance
Alabama	49,000
Alaska	9,000
Arizona	69,000
Arkansas	35,000
California	435,000
Colorado	50,000
Connecticut	23,000
District of Columbia	3,000
Delaware	6,000
Florida	224,000
Georgia	123,000
Hawaii	6,000
Idaho	17,000
Illinois	125,000
Indiana	62,000
Iowa	20,000
Kansas	25,000
Kentucky	48,000
Louisiana	53,000
Maine	9,000
Maryland	46,000
Massachusetts	21,000
Michigan	94,000
Minnesota	35,000
Mississippi	37,000
Missouri	55,000
Montana	12,000
North Carolina	95,000
North Dakota	5,000
New Hampshire	10,000
New Jersey	73,000
New Mexico	26,000
New York	160,000
Nebraska	18,000
Nevada	33,000
Ohio	97,000
Oklahoma	49,000
Oregon	43,000
Pennsylvania	91,000
Rhode Island	9,000
South Carolina	50,000
South Dakota	9,000

Tennessee	59,000
Texas	357,000
Utah	26,000
Vermont	5,000
Virginia	66,000
West Virginia	18,000
Washington	62,000
Wisconsin	43,000
Wyoming	6,000
TOTAL	3,101,000

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[\[1\]](#) Kaiser/HRET Survey of Employer-Sponsored Health Benefits, 1999-2011

[\[2\]](#) Levine PB, McKnight R, Heep S. How Effective are Public Policies to Increase Health Insurance Coverage Among Young Adults? *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 2011;3:129-56.

[\[3\]](#) Blum AB, Kleinman LC, Starfield B, Ross JS. Impact of state laws that extend eligibility for parents' health insurance coverage to young adults. *Pediatrics* 2012;129:426-32.

[\[4\]](#) Monheit AC, Cantor JC, DeLia D, Belloff D. How have state policies to expand dependent coverage affected the health insurance status of young adults? *Health Serv Res* 2011;46:251-67.