



Health Insurance and Access to Care

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective to help us understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Health Insurance and Access to Care

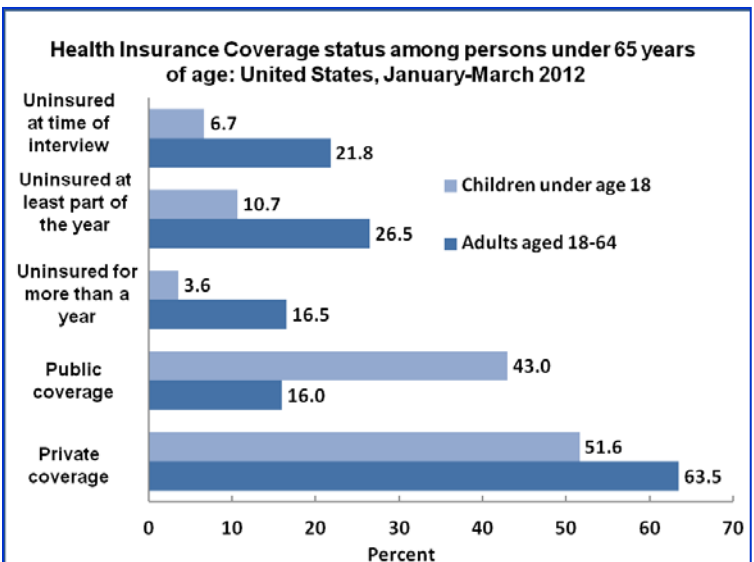
Health insurance coverage is an important determinant of access to health care. Uninsured children and non-elderly adults are substantially less likely to have a usual source of health care or a recent health care visit than their insured counterparts. The major source of coverage for persons under 65 years of age is private employer-sponsored group health insurance. Private health insurance may also be purchased on an individual basis, but it costs more and generally provides less coverage than group insurance. Public programs such as Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program provide coverage for many low-income children and adults.

NCHS' National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) provides three measures of lack of health insurance coverage: currently uninsured, uninsured at least part of the year, and uninsured for more than a year. Some state level insurance coverage measures are also available. In 2012, the NHIS reported state-level estimates of being uninsured at the time of interview, having public coverage, and having private health insurance coverage for 32 states.

Health Insurance Data

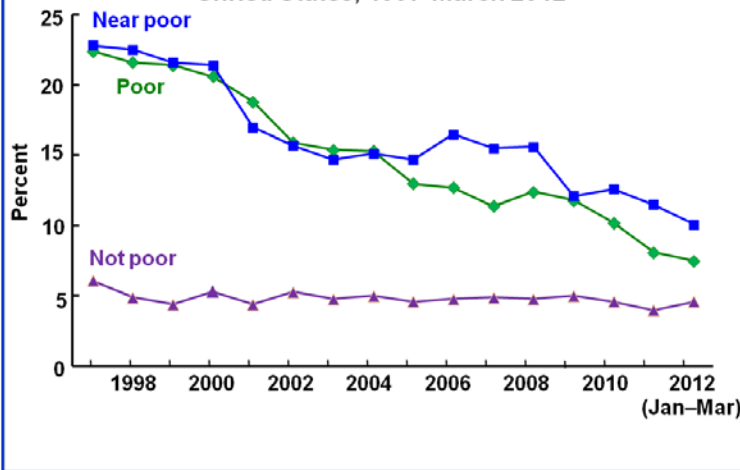
Data from the **National Health Interview Survey** from January-March, 2012 show:

- The percentage of **uninsured persons at the time of interview** was 21.8 percent for persons aged 18-64 years and 6.7 percent for children under age 18.
- A total of 47.3 million persons (15.4 percent) of all ages were **uninsured at the time of the interview**, 59.7 million (19.4 percent) had been **uninsured for at least part of the year** prior to the interview, and 34.6 million (11.3 percent) had been **uninsured for more than a year** at the time of the interview.
- Among adults 19-25 years of age, the percent **uninsured at the time of the interview** decreased from 33.9 percent (10 million persons) in 2010 to 27.5 percent (8.2 million) during the first three months of 2012.



Source: National Health Interview Survey, January-March 2012

Percent of children under age 18 without health insurance at the time of interview, by poverty status: United States, 1997-March 2012



Source: National Health Interview Survey, January-March 2012

NHIS data on health insurance coverage for children under 18 years of age show:

- There was a decline in the percent of U.S. children (under 18 years of age) without health insurance coverage at the time of interview from 1997 through March 2012.
- The percent of poor children without health insurance at the time of interview decreased from 1997 through March 2012.

Access to Care Data

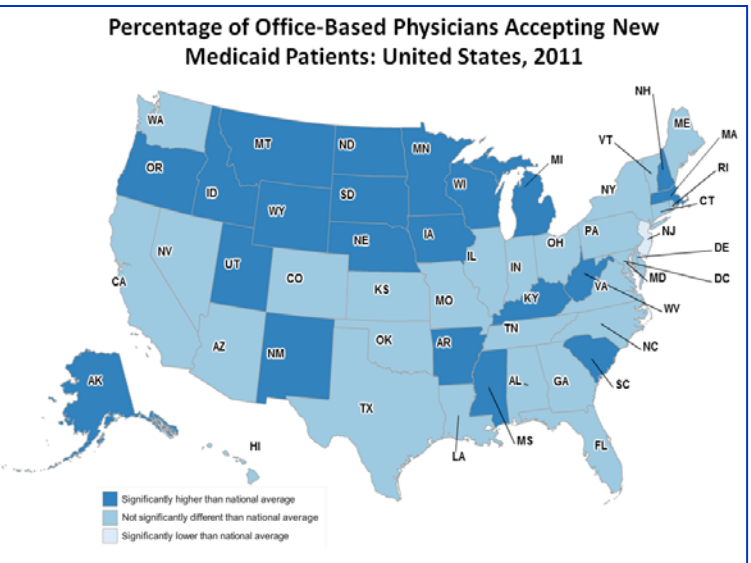
Clinical experts note that with access to timely and appropriate ambulatory care, patients may be able to prevent illnesses, control acute episodes, or manage chronic conditions to avoid exacerbation or complications of those conditions.

While health insurance coverage levels provide a strong indication of American’s access to health care, other measures enhance our understanding of this issue and point to solutions to improve access. The NHIS obtains data on the financial burden of medical care including problems paying medical bills, paying medical bills over time and having medical bills that cannot be paid at all.

Office-based Physician Practices

Data from NCHS’ National Health Care Surveys can be used to provide insights into access to care. The percentage of physicians accepting new patients – which varies by type of payment – serves as a measure of physician workforce capacity. In 2011, 82 percent of physicians reported that they accepted new patients with private insurance, compared with 69 percent who accepted new patients with Medicaid.

Physician acceptance of new patients with Medicaid varies by state. In 2011, 21 states had physician acceptance rates for new Medicaid patients that were higher than the national average of 69 percent. The percentage of physicians accepting new Medicaid patients in New Jersey was the nation’s lowest - 40 percent. A previous study using NCHS data found that higher state Medicaid-to-Medicare fee ratios were correlated with greater acceptance of new Medicaid patients.



Source: National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey Electronic Medical Record Supplement, 2011

Health Insurance and Access to Care Data Sources

NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- **National Health Interview Survey** – obtains information on the nation’s health status through confidential household interviews that measure: health status and disability, selected conditions, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations, health behaviors, injury, and the ability to perform daily activities. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>)
- **National Health Care Surveys** - a family of health care provider surveys, obtaining information about the facilities that supply health care, the services rendered, and the characteristics of the patients served. Sites surveyed include: hospitals, office-based physician practices, emergency and outpatient departments, ambulatory surgery centers, nursing homes, and home health and hospice agencies. (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhcs.htm>)

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>, or call the Office of Planning, Budget and Legislation at 301-458-4100.

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