Health Insurance Coverage

Consumer Income

1998

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By Jennifer A. Campbell

An estimated 44.3 million people in the United States, or 16.3 percent of the population, were without health insurance coverage during the entire 1998 calendar year. This number was up about 1 million from the previous year; statistically, the proportion was not different than the 1997 value.

The estimates in this report are based on interviewing a sample of the population. Respondents provided answers to the survey questions to the best of their ability. As with all surveys, the estimates differed from the actual values.

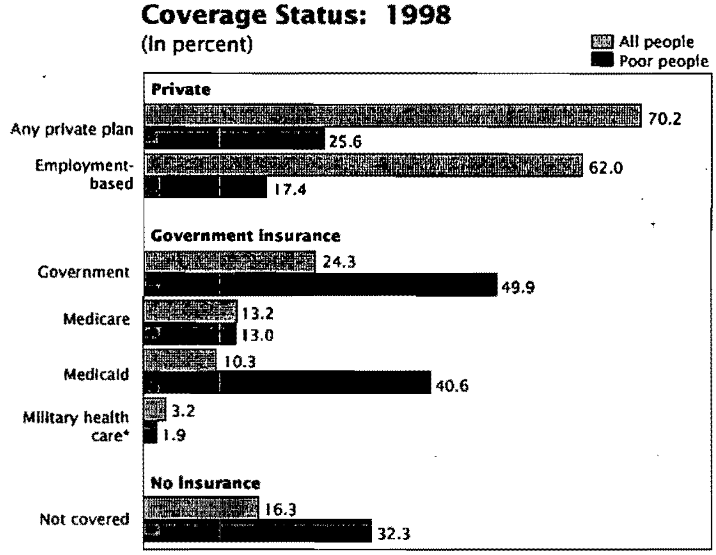
Other highlights are:

(Confidence intervals for estimates are provided in Table 1. The uncertainty in the estimates should be taken into consideration when using these estimates.)

- The number of uninsured children (under 18 years of age) was 11.1 million in 1998, or 15.4 percent of all children. The status of children's health care coverage did not change significantly from 1997 to 1998.
- The medicaid program insured 14.0 million poor people, but 11.2 million poor people still had no health insurance in 1998, representing about one-third of all poor people (32.3 percent).
- The uninsured rate among Hispanics was higher than that of non-Hispanic Whites—35.3 percent compared with 11.9 percent.[1]
- Among the general population 18-64 years old, workers (both full- and part-time) were more likely to be insured than nonworkers, but among the poor, workers were less likely to be insured than nonworkers. About one-half, or 47.5 percent, of poor, full-time workers were uninsured in 1998.
- The foreign-born population was more likely to be without health insurance

[1] Hispanics may be of any race.

Figure 1.
Type of Health Insurance and Coverage Status: 1998
(In percent)



*Military health care includes CHAMPUS (Comprehensive Health and Medical Plan for Uniformed Services)/Tricare, CHAMPVA (Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veteran's Affairs), Veteran's, and military health care.

Note: The estimates by type of coverage are not mutually exclusive; people can be covered by more than one type of health insurance during the year.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

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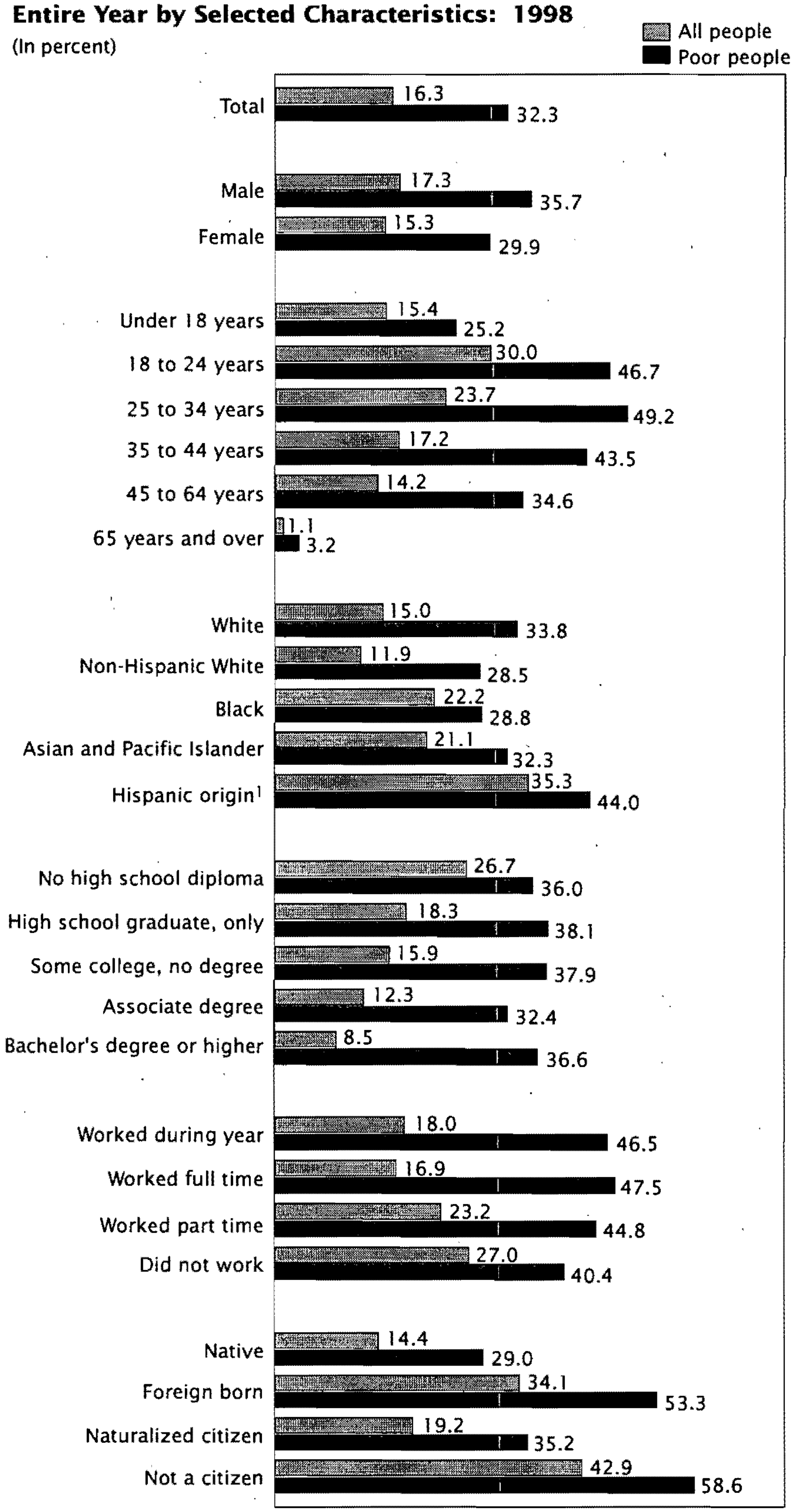
Figure 2.
People Without Health Insurance for the Entire Year by Selected Characteristics: 1998
(In percent)



[1] Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

than natives—34.1 percent compared with 14.4 percent in 1998. Poor immigrants were even worse off—53.3 percent were without health insurance.

- People 18 to 24 years old were more likely than other age groups to lack coverage—30.0 percent were without coverage in 1998. Because of medicare, the elderly were at the other extreme—only 1.1 percent lacked coverage.

Employment remains the leading source of health insurance coverage.

Most people (70.2 percent) were covered by a private insurance plan for some or all of 1998 (a private plan is one that is offered through employment—either one's own or a relative's—or privately purchased). Most private insurance was obtained through a current or former employer or union (see Figure 1).

The government also provided health care coverage (24.3 percent of people had government insurance), including medicare (13.2 percent), medicaid (10.3 percent), and military health care (3.2 percent). Many people carried coverage from more than one plan during the year; for example, 7.6 percent of people were covered by both private insurance and medicare.

The poor and near poor are more likely to lack coverage.

Despite the medicaid program, 32.3 percent of the poor (11.2 million people) had no health insurance of any kind during 1998. This percentage—which was about double the rate for all people—was statistically unchanged from the previous year. The uninsured poor comprised 25.2 percent of all uninsured people.

Table 1. **People Without Health Insurance for the Entire Year by Selected Characteristics: 1998**

[Numbers in thousands]

Characteristics	All people					Poor people				
		Uninsured					Uninsured			
	Total	Number	90-percent confidence interval (±)	Percent	90-percent confidence interval (±)	Total	Number	90-percent confidence interval (±)	Percent	90-percent confidence interval (±)
Total	271,743	44,281	458	16.3	0.2	34,476	11,151	548	32.3	1.3
Sex										
Male	132,764	23,014	349	17.3	0.3	14,712	5,247	380	35.7	2.1
Female	138,979	21,266	337	15.3	0.2	19,764	5,904	403	29.9	1.7
Age										
Under 18 years	72,022	11,073	250	15.4	0.3	13,467	3,392	307	25.2	2.0
18 to 24 years	25,967	7,776	211	30.0	0.7	4,312	2,013	237	46.7	4.0
25 to 34 years	38,474	9,127	228	23.7	0.5	4,582	2,256	251	49.2	3.9
35 to 44 years	44,744	7,708	210	17.2	0.4	4,082	1,775	223	43.5	4.1
45 to 64 years	58,141	8,239	217	14.2	0.4	4,647	1,609	212	34.6	3.7
65 years and over	32,394	358	46	1.1	0.1	3,386	107	55	3.2	1.6
Race and Hispanic Origin										
White	223,294	33,588	411	15.0	0.2	23,454	7,922	465	33.8	1.6
Non-Hispanic White	193,074	22,890	349	11.9	0.2	15,799	4,508	353	28.5	1.9
Black	35,070	7,797	207	22.2	0.6	9,091	2,622	270	28.8	2.5
Asian and Pacific Islander	10,897	2,301	124	21.1	1.0	1,360	439	111	32.3	6.7
Hispanic origin[1]	31,689	11,196	190	35.3	0.6	8,070	3,553	314	44.0	2.9
Education (people 18 years and older)										
No high school diploma	34,811	9,294	239	26.7	0.6	8,286	2,984	288	36.0	2.8
High school graduate only	66,054	12,094	271	18.3	0.4	7,242	2,762	277	38.1	3.0
Some college, no degree	39,087	6,211	197	15.9	0.5	3,199	1,212	184	37.9	4.5
Associate degree	14,114	1,730	105	12.3	0.7	828	269	87	32.4	8.6
Bachelor's degree or higher	45,655	3,880	156	8.5	0.3	1,454	533	122	36.6	6.7
Work Experience (people 18 to 64 years)										
Worked during year	137,003	24,655	420	18.0	0.3	8,709	4,053	335	46.5	2.8
Worked full time	113,638	19,244	376	16.9	0.3	5,646	2,680	273	47.5	3.5
Worked part time	23,365	5,411	206	23.2	0.8	3,062	1,373	196	44.8	4.8
Did not work	30,323	8,194	252	27.0	0.7	8,914	3,599	316	40.4	2.8
Nativity										
Native	245,295	35,273	419	14.4	0.2	29,707	8,612	484	29.0	1.4
Foreign-born	26,448	9,008	258	34.1	0.8	4,769	2,539	303	53.3	4.4
Naturalized citizen	9,868	1,891	120	19.2	1.1	1,087	383	118	35.2	8.8
Not a citizen	16,579	7,118	230	42.9	1.1	3,682	2,156	279	58.6	4.9

[1]Hispanics may be of any race.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

Medicaid was the most widespread type of coverage among the poor, with 40.6 percent (14.0 million) of all poor people covered by medicaid at some time during the year. This percentage is down significantly from the previous year, however, when 43.3 percent of poor people were covered by medicaid.[2]

Among the near poor (those with a family income greater than the poverty level but less than 125 percent of the poverty level), 29.9 percent (3.5 million people) were without health insurance.

Key factors influencing the chances of not having health insurance coverage are:

Age—People 18 to 24 years old were more likely than other age groups to lack coverage during all of 1998 (30.0 percent). Because of medicare, the elderly were at the other extreme (only 1.1 percent lacked coverage). Among the poor, adults age 18 to 64 had much higher noncoverage rates than either children or the elderly.

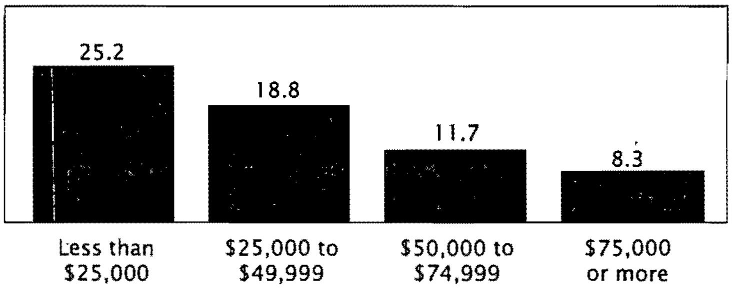
Race and Hispanic origin—Among these groups, Hispanics had the highest chance of not having health insurance coverage in 1998. The uninsured rate for Hispanics was 35.3 percent, compared with 11.9 percent for non-Hispanic Whites. Among the poor, Hispanics also had the highest noncoverage rates, with 44.0 percent of that population uninsured in 1998.[3]

Educational attainment—Among all adults, the likelihood of being uninsured declined as the level of education rose. Among those who were poor in 1998, there were no differences across the education groups.

Work experience—Of those 18-64 years old who were employed, part-time workers had a higher noncoverage rate (23.2 percent) than full-time workers (16.9 percent).[4] Among the general population of 18-64 year olds, workers (both full- and part-time) were more likely to be insured than nonworkers. However, among the poor, workers were less likely to be insured than nonworkers. About one-half of poor, full-time workers were uninsured in 1998 (47.5 percent).

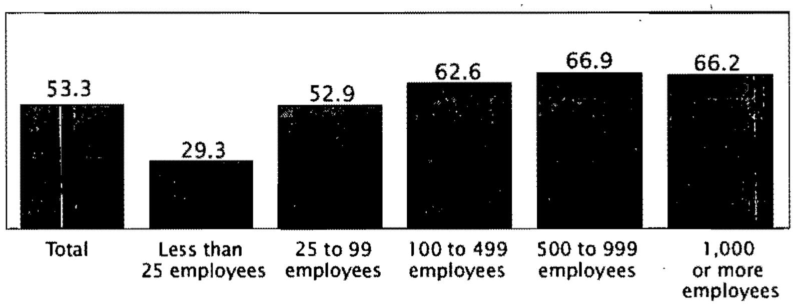
Nativity—In 1998, a higher proportion of the foreign-born population was without health insurance (34.1 percent) compared with natives (14.4 percent).[5] Of the foreign-born, noncitizens were more than twice as likely as naturalized citizens to lack coverage—42.9 percent compared with 19.2 percent. Poor immigrants were even worse off—53.3 percent were without health insurance.

Figure 3.
People Without Health Insurance Coverage by Household Income: 1998
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

Figure 4.
Workers (15 Years Old and Over) Covered by Their Own Employment-Based Health Insurance by Firm Size: 1998
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

[2] Changes in year-to-year medicaid estimates should be viewed with caution. For more information, see the Technical Note on page 6.

[3] The uninsured rates for poor Asian and Pacific Islanders, poor Blacks, and poor non-Hispanic Whites were not statistically different from one another.

[4] Workers were classified as part time if they worked less than 35 hours per week in the majority of the weeks they worked in 1998.

[5] "Natives" are people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or an outlying area of the United States, such as Guam or the U.S. Virgin Islands, and people who were born in a foreign country but who had at least one parent who was a U.S. citizen. All other people born outside the United States are "foreign-born."

Income and firm size play important roles.

Noncoverage rates fall as household income rises. In 1998, the percent of people without health insurance ranged from 8.3 percent among those in households with incomes of $75,000 or more to 25.2 percent among those in households with incomes less than $25,000 (see Figure 3).

Of the 146.3 million total workers in the United States (15 years and older), 53.3 percent had employment-based health insurance policies in their own name. The proportion varied widely by size of employing firm, with workers employed by firms with fewer than 25 employees being the least likely to be covered (see Figure 4). These estimates do not reflect the fact that some workers are covered by another family member's employment-based policy.

Children's health care coverage status was unchanged in 1998.

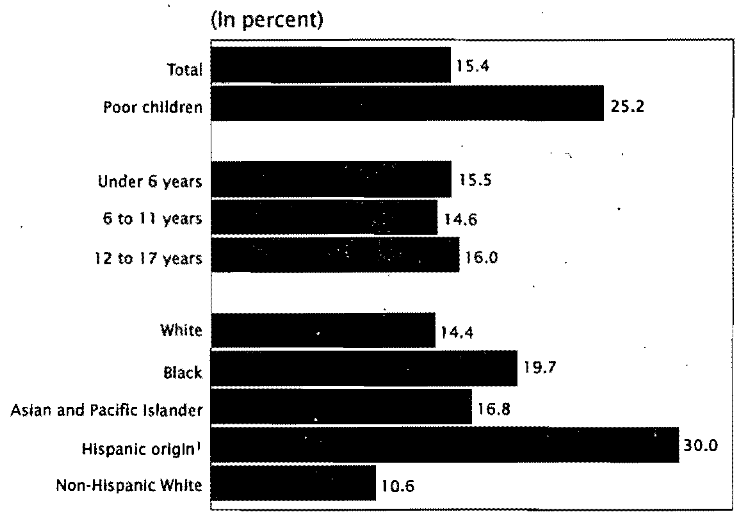
The number of uninsured children (people less than 18 years of age) was 11.1 million (15.4 percent) in 1998; neither the number nor the percentage was significantly different from the previous year.

Among poor children, 3.4 million (25.2 percent) were uninsured in 1998, also statistically unchanged from the previous year. Poor children made up 30.6 percent of all uninsured children in 1998.

Other findings concerning children:

- Children 12 to 17 years of age were slightly less likely to have health care coverage than those under age 12—16.0 percent were uninsured compared with 15.1 percent (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.
Uninsured Children by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1998
Children under 18



[1] Hispanics may be of any race.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

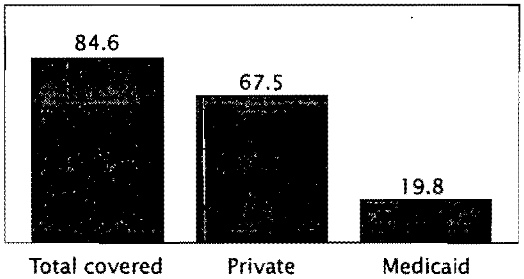
- Hispanic children were far more likely to be uninsured (30.0 percent) than children in other racial or ethnic groups. The rates were 19.7 percent for Black children, 16.8 percent for Asian and Pacific Islander children, and 10.6 percent for non-Hispanic White children.
- While most children (48.6 million) were covered by an employment-based or privately purchased plan in 1998, about one-fifth (14.3 million) were covered by medicaid (see Figure 6).
- In 1998, Black children were more likely to be covered by medicaid than children of any other race or ethnic group. Medicaid provided health insurance for 38.8 percent of Black children, 29.8 percent of Hispanic children, 12.5 percent of non-Hispanic White children, and 19.2 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander children (see Figure 7).

Some states have higher noncoverage rates than others.

Uninsured rates ranged from 8.7 percent in Hawaii to 24.4 percent in Texas, based on 3-year averages for 1996, 1997, and 1998 (see Table 2). We advise against using these estimates to rank the states, however. For example, the high noncoverage rate for Texas was not statistically different from that in Arizona (24.3 percent), while the rate for Hawaii was not statistically different from Wisconsin (9.4 percent) or Minnesota (9.6 percent), as shown in Figure 8.

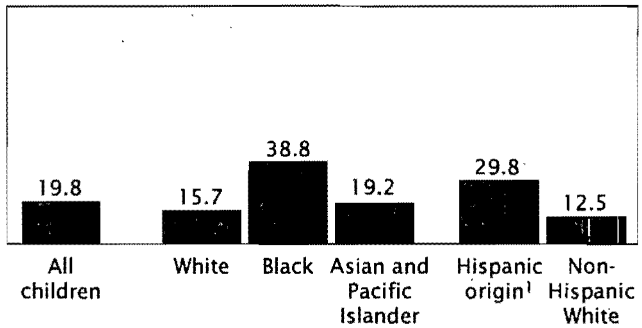
Comparisons of 2-year averages (1997-1998 versus 1996-1997) show that noncoverage rates fell in eight states: Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Tennessee. Meanwhile, noncoverage rates rose in 16 states: Alabama, Alaska, California, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, North

Figure 6.
Children by Type of Health Insurance and Coverage Status: 1998
Children under 18
(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

Figure 7.
Children Covered by Medicaid by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1998
Children under 18
(In percent)



[1] Hispanics may be of any race.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, March 1999.

Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

Technical Note

This report presents data on the health insurance coverage of people in the United States during the 1998 calendar year. The data, which are shown by selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as by state, were collected in the March 1999 Supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS).

In the Current Population Survey (CPS), medicare and medicaid coverage are underreported compared with enrollment and participation data from the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA).[6] A major reason for the lower CPS estimates is that the CPS is not designed primarily to collect health insurance data; instead, it is largely a labor force survey, with relatively little training of interviewers on health insurance concepts. Data from HCFA represent the actual number of people who were enrolled or participated in these programs and are a more accurate source of data on levels of coverage. Also, many people may not be aware that they or their children are covered by a health insurance program and, therefore, do not report coverage.

Changes in medicaid coverage estimates from one year to the next should be viewed with caution. Because many people who are covered by medicaid do not report that coverage, the Census Bureau assigns coverage to those who are generally regarded as "categorically eligible" (those who received some other benefits, usually public assistance payments, that make them eligible for medicaid). Since the number of people receiving public assistance has been dropping and the relationship between medicaid and public assistance has changed significantly over the past few years, this imputation process may have resulted in a downward bias in the most recent medicaid estimates compared with those from previous years.

Beginning with the publication of the 1997 Health Insurance Coverage report, as a result of consultation with health insurance experts, the Census Bureau has made a modification in the definition of the population without health insurance in the Current Population Survey. Previously, people with no coverage other than access to Indian Health Service were considered to be part of the insured population. Beginning with the 1997 Health Insurance Coverage report, that is no longer true; instead, these people are considered to be uninsured. The effect of this change on the overall estimates of health insurance coverage is negligible.

Accuracy of the Estimates

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and meet Census Bureau standards for statistical significance. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified.

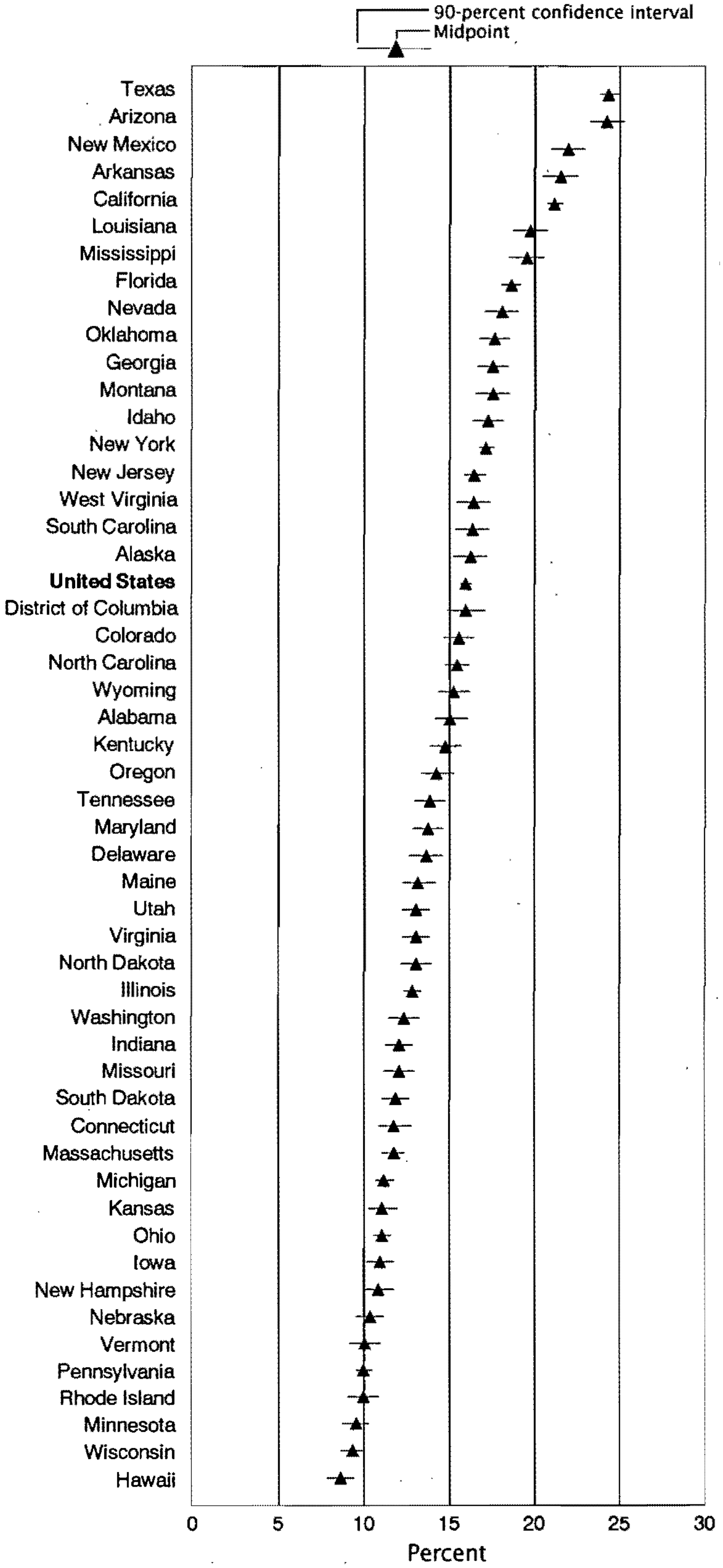
[6] HCFA is the federal agency primarily responsible for administering the medicare and medicaid programs at the national level.

Table 2. **Percent of People Without Health Insurance Coverage Throughout the Year by State: 1996 to 1998**

State	1998		1997		1996		3-year average 1996 to 1998		Average 1997-1998		Average 1996-1997		Difference in 2-year moving averages 1997-98 less 1996-97	
	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error	Percent	Standard error
United States	16.3	0.1	16.1	0.1	15.6	0.1	16.0	0.1	16.2	0.1	15.9	0.1	*0.3	0.1
Alabama	17.0	0.9	15.5	0.8	12.9	0.8	15.1	0.6	16.2	0.7	14.2	0.6	*2.0	0.6
Alaska	17.3	0.9	18.1	0.9	13.5	0.8	16.3	0.6	17.7	0.7	15.8	0.7	*1.9	0.6
Arizona	24.2	0.9	24.5	0.9	24.1	0.9	24.3	0.6	24.3	0.7	24.3	0.7	-	0.6
Arkansas	18.7	0.9	24.4	1.0	21.7	0.9	21.6	0.6	21.5	0.8	23.1	0.8	*–1.5	0.6
California	22.1	0.4	21.5	0.4	20.1	0.4	21.2	0.3	21.8	0.3	20.8	0.3	*1.0	0.2
Colorado	15.1	0.8	15.1	0.8	16.6	0.9	15.6	0.6	15.1	0.6	15.9	0.7	–0.8	0.6
Connecticut	12.6	0.9	12.0	0.8	11.0	0.8	11.8	0.6	12.3	0.7	11.5	0.6	0.8	0.6
Delaware	14.7	0.9	13.1	0.9	13.4	0.9	13.7	0.6	13.9	0.7	13.3	0.7	0.6	0.6
District of Columbia	17.0	1.0	16.2	1.0	14.8	0.9	16.0	0.7	16.6	0.8	15.5	0.8	1.1	0.7
Florida	17.5	0.5	19.6	0.5	18.9	0.5	18.7	0.3	18.5	0.4	19.3	0.4	*–0.7	0.3
Georgia	17.5	0.8	17.6	0.8	17.8	0.8	17.6	0.5	17.5	0.6	17.7	0.6	–0.2	0.5
Hawaii	10.0	0.8	7.5	0.7	8.6	0.7	8.7	0.5	8.8	0.6	8.1	0.6	0.7	0.5
Idaho	17.7	0.8	17.7	0.8	16.5	0.8	17.3	0.6	17.7	0.7	17.1	0.6	0.6	0.6
Illinois	15.0	0.5	12.4	0.4	11.3	0.4	12.9	0.3	13.7	0.4	11.9	0.3	*1.8	0.3
Indiana	14.4	0.8	11.4	0.7	10.6	0.7	12.1	0.5	12.9	0.6	11.0	0.6	*1.9	0.5
Iowa	9.3	0.7	12.0	0.8	11.6	0.7	11.0	0.5	10.7	0.6	11.8	0.6	*–1.1	0.5
Kansas	10.3	0.7	11.7	0.8	11.4	0.7	11.1	0.5	11.0	0.6	11.6	0.6	–0.5	0.5
Kentucky	14.1	0.8	15.0	0.8	15.4	0.8	14.8	0.5	14.6	0.6	15.2	0.6	–0.6	0.6
Louisiana	19.0	0.9	19.5	0.9	20.9	0.9	19.8	0.6	19.2	0.7	20.2	0.7	–1.0	0.6
Maine	12.7	0.8	14.9	0.9	12.1	0.8	13.2	0.6	13.8	0.7	13.5	0.7	0.3	0.6
Maryland	16.6	0.9	13.4	0.8	11.4	0.8	13.8	0.6	15.0	0.7	12.4	0.6	*2.6	0.6
Massachusetts	10.3	0.5	12.6	0.6	12.4	0.6	11.8	0.4	11.4	0.5	12.5	0.5	*–1.1	0.4
Michigan	13.2	0.5	11.6	0.5	8.9	0.4	11.2	0.3	12.4	0.4	10.3	0.4	*2.2	0.3
Minnesota	9.3	0.7	9.2	0.7	10.2	0.7	9.6	0.5	9.2	0.5	9.7	0.6	–0.5	0.4
Mississippi	20.0	0.9	20.1	0.9	18.5	0.9	19.6	0.6	20.1	0.7	19.3	0.7	0.8	0.6
Missouri	10.5	0.7	12.6	0.8	13.2	0.8	12.1	0.5	11.6	0.6	12.9	0.6	*–1.3	0.6
Montana	19.6	0.9	19.5	0.9	13.6	0.8	17.6	0.6	19.5	0.7	16.6	0.7	*3.0	0.6
Nebraska	9.0	0.7	10.8	0.7	11.4	0.7	10.4	0.5	9.9	0.5	11.1	0.6	*–1.2	0.5
Nevada	21.2	0.9	17.5	0.9	15.6	0.9	18.1	0.6	19.3	0.7	16.6	0.7	*2.8	0.6
New Hampshire	11.3	0.8	11.8	0.8	9.5	0.8	10.9	0.6	11.5	0.7	10.7	0.6	0.9	0.6
New Jersey	16.4	0.6	16.5	0.6	16.7	0.6	16.5	0.4	16.5	0.5	16.6	0.5	–0.1	0.4
New Mexico	21.1	0.9	22.6	0.9	22.3	0.9	22.0	0.6	21.9	0.7	22.5	0.7	–0.6	0.7
New York	17.3	0.4	17.5	0.4	17.0	0.4	17.2	0.3	17.4	0.3	17.3	0.3	0.1	0.2
North Carolina	15.0	0.6	15.5	0.6	16.0	0.6	15.5	0.4	15.2	0.5	15.8	0.5	–0.5	0.4
North Dakota	14.2	0.8	15.2	0.8	9.8	0.7	13.1	0.5	14.7	0.7	12.5	0.6	*2.2	0.6
Ohio	10.4	0.4	11.5	0.5	11.5	0.4	11.1	0.3	11.0	0.4	11.5	0.4	*–0.5	0.3
Oklahoma	18.3	0.9	17.8	0.8	17.0	0.8	17.7	0.6	18.1	0.7	17.4	0.6	0.7	0.6
Oregon	14.3	0.8	13.3	0.8	15.3	0.9	14.3	0.6	13.8	0.7	14.3	0.7	–0.5	0.7
Pennsylvania	10.5	0.4	10.1	0.4	9.5	0.4	10.0	0.3	10.3	0.3	9.8	0.3	*0.5	0.3
Rhode Island	10.0	0.8	10.2	0.8	9.9	0.8	10.0	0.5	10.1	0.6	10.1	0.6	-	0.6
South Carolina	15.4	0.9	16.8	0.9	17.1	0.9	16.4	0.6	16.1	0.7	17.0	0.7	–0.8	0.7
South Dakota	14.3	0.8	11.8	0.7	9.5	0.7	11.9	0.5	13.1	0.6	10.7	0.6	*2.4	0.5
Tennessee	13.0	0.8	13.6	0.8	15.2	0.8	13.9	0.5	13.3	0.6	14.4	0.6	*–1.1	0.5
Texas	24.5	0.5	24.5	0.5	24.3	0.5	24.4	0.3	24.5	0.4	24.4	0.4	0.1	0.4
Utah	13.9	0.7	13.4	0.7	12.0	0.7	13.1	0.5	13.7	0.6	12.7	0.6	*1.0	0.5
Vermont	9.9	0.8	9.5	0.8	11.1	0.8	10.1	0.5	9.6	0.6	10.3	0.6	–0.7	0.5
Virginia	14.1	0.8	12.6	0.7	12.5	0.7	13.1	0.5	13.4	0.6	12.6	0.6	0.8	0.5
Washington	12.3	0.8	11.4	0.8	13.5	0.8	12.4	0.5	11.8	0.6	12.4	0.6	–0.6	0.6
West Virginia	17.2	0.8	17.2	0.8	14.9	0.8	16.5	0.6	17.2	0.7	16.1	0.6	*1.2	0.6
Wisconsin	11.8	0.7	8.0	0.6	8.4	0.6	9.4	0.4	9.9	0.5	8.2	0.5	*1.7	0.5
Wyoming	16.9	0.9	15.5	0.8	13.5	0.8	15.3	0.6	16.2	0.7	14.5	0.6	*1.7	0.6

-Represents zero. *Statistically significant at the 90-percent confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Surveys, March 1997, 1998, and 1999.

Figure 8.
Percent of People Without Health Insurance by State (3-Year Average): 1996-1998



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Surveys, March 1997, 1998, and 1999.

The Census Bureau employs quality control procedures throughout the production process—including the overall design of surveys, the wording of questions, review of the work of interviewers and coders, and statistical review of reports.

The Current Population Survey employs ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but how it affects different variables in the survey is not precisely known. Moreover, biases may also be present when people who are missed in the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than the categories used in weighting (age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin). All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on statistical standards and the computation and use of standard errors, contact John Finamore of the Demographic Statistical Methods Division on the Internet at dsmd_s&a@ccmail.census.gov.

Contact:

Jennifer A. Campbell
301-457-3242