

UTAH HEALTH POLICY PROJECT

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CENSUS ESTIMATES SHOW UTAH MOVING IN WRONG DIRECTION ON UNINSURED, A REMINDER OF NEED FOR REFORMS WITH STRONG AFFORDABILITY MEASURES

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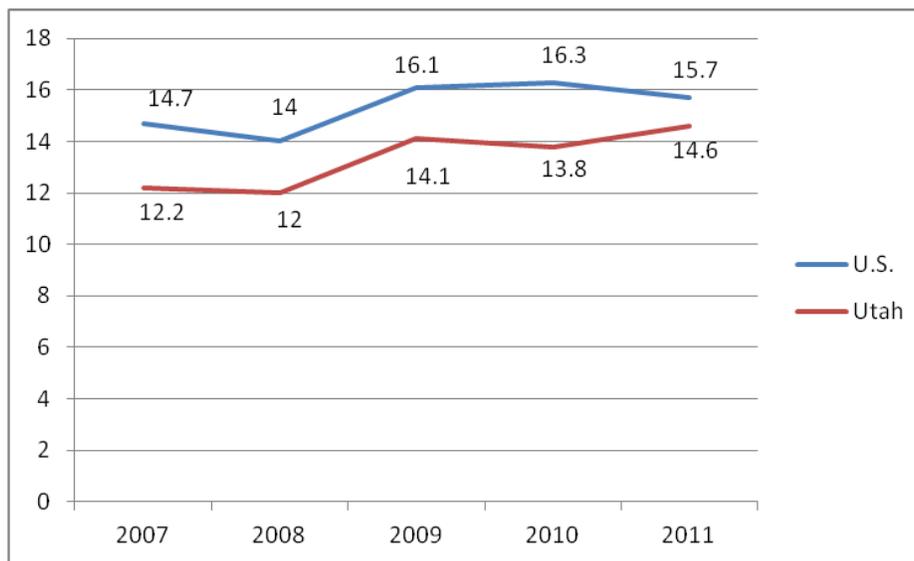
Utah Health Policy Project

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Salt Lake City – According to [Census estimates](#) released just minutes ago, 48.6 million people (15.7%) in the US did not have any sort of health insurance coverage in 2011. This compares favorably to last year (2010) when 49.9 million Americans (or 16.3%) were uninsured. By the same estimates Utah appears to be moving in the opposite direction: 411,926 (14.6%) did not have any sort of health insurance coverage in 2011, compared to 380,921 (13.8%) in 2010. This is despite the fact that state reform efforts have been underway since 2008.

Percent Uninsured, U.S. and Utah (2007-2011)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau,

http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/news_conferences/20120912_ip_newsconf.html

“These numbers affirm the need to fully implement federal health reform in Utah. While some pockets of the population have benefited from implementation of the ACA’s early provisions—like young adult staying on their parents’ insurance until age 26—we need *full implementation* of the law to turn this trend around,” says Shelly Braun, Reform Initiatives Director at the Utah Health Policy project. UHPH can only speculate as to why the state is moving in the opposite direction compared to the U.S. average. The decrease in the national uninsured rate has been attributed to increase in coverage for young adults who, thanks, to

the Affordable Care Act, can stay on their parents' coverage through age 26. Utah had this provision in place, though it did not apply to students, married couples, and to large employers. "What we *can* say more definitively than before is that state reform efforts are not making a dent in the crisis of the uninsured," says Hilman, E.D. of UHPP. Few (30%) of the 1,866 who gained coverage through the Utah Health Exchange as of April 2012 were previously uninsured, according to UHPP. This itself is a generous estimate, because it is likely that even though their employer did not previously offer health insurance some of those individuals did have coverage in the individual market or through a spouse's place of employment (for details see UHPP's [State of Utah Health Exchange](#)).

Today's Census estimates of Utah's uninsured are higher than the recently released state [estimates](#). Last month the Utah Department of Health released its own estimate of the state's uninsured using new methodology. By this count 377,700 Utahns, or 13.4% of Utah's population did not health insurance of any kind. "But the state's tool tells us more about who makes up the uninsured population—information we can use for decision making on ACA implementation," says Judi Hilman, Executive Director of UHPP. For example, 56% percent of Utah's uninsured adults are employed—and almost all of them stand to benefit from the implementation of federal health reform. Most of the uninsured live in low-income households, "a timely reminder of why affordability measures are at the heart of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)," adds Hilman.

- 95% of the uninsured in Utah are in households with incomes less than 400% FPL, meaning if they buy private health insurance in the new individual health insurance exchange they will qualify for the ACA premium tax credits.
- 76% are in households with incomes less than 200% of poverty, meaning they would potentially be eligible for the Basic Health Plan if Utah chooses to adopt it, or if they are children, they are eligible for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).
- 57% are in households with incomes below 133% of poverty meaning they will potentially be eligible for Medicaid if Utah chooses to expand the program to 138% FPL (for details see UHPP's [new discussion paper](#)).

"The new uninsured estimates remind us why we are in the business of reforming health care—and why our focus needs to start at the lower end of the income scale," says Judi Hilman, Executive Director of UHPP.

"Insurance, whether private or public, is the door we walk through to get health and medical care in the U.S. But the number of uninsured in Utah keeps going up," says Braun. "Utah's reform efforts so far have not turned around the uninsured trend in Utah. It's time for Utah's leaders get serious about implementing the reforms that will make it possible for Utah's uninsured to get coverage—95% of the people in Utah who don't have health insurance will benefit from implementing the full Affordable Care Act. What are we waiting for?"

UHPP can introduce reporters to individuals who will be helped by the provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

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