

Demographic analysis indicates the majority of Utahns in the Medicaid coverage gap are working

Link: <http://www.good4utah.com/story/d/story/demographic-analysis-indicates-the-majority-of-uta/11997/pAyQBRPXwUqtVZWFHelOyg>

Video: <http://www.clipsyndicate.com/video/play/5236495>

By Glen Mills

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SALT LAKE CITY, Utah- (ABC 4 Utah) – A new study is putting a face to the numbers behind the Medicaid expansion battle in Utah.

More than 103,000 Utahns fall into the coverage gap.



According to the new demographic analysis more than 60% of them have jobs and are just falling short.

Advocates say that matters, because it counters the perception they are just looking for a freebie.

One time **CEO** at Keller Williams Real Estate, Melanie Soules is now getting ready to file for bankruptcy.

She lost that job after becoming ill.

Two weeks later she was officially diagnosed with a debilitating condition, known as trigeminal neuralgia.

Two weeks after that she lost her health insurance.

It's been a major transition for her and her two children.



"Just recently my daughter cried, because I brought peaches home, I splurged on peaches," said Soules.

She now works when she can cleaning homes and still has no health insurance.

Not only does she not have it, she can't have

it.

She makes too much to qualify for Medicaid and not enough to purchase a plan on healthcare.gov.

"The money is just sitting there and people are suffering," said Soules.

An estimated 103,124 Utahns fall into the coverage gap as a lengthy debate on Medicaid expansion continues in our state.

The new demographic analysis sponsored by local advocacy groups indicates the majority of them work, but can't make ends meet.

"They are worried about groceries, they are worried about their rent, they are worried basically about getting food on the table," said University of Utah Professor of Economics, Norman Waitzman.



He lead the research team that analyzed two years of data from recent Current Population Surveys.

One thing they found is 65% of those in the coverage gap have jobs, 34% work full time, 31% work part time, 26% are not in the labor force and 9 % are unemployed.

"Close to half of them are working part time not by their choice, but because either there's been a cut back in their hours or because they can't find full time jobs even though they want them," said Waitzman.

Soules says the report validates what she has known all along, that thousands of Utahns just like her are doing what they can and remain in limbo as lawmakers fight over a solution.



"It just feels like a failure in leadership and of compassion," said Soules.

Governor Herbert is still negotiating his Healthy Utah Plan with the federal government.

Once he gets approval from the feds he will then have to convince law makers here at home to sign off on it.

[To read the entire demographic analysis click here.](#)