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## **New Census data: uninsured rate down in CT despite slow economic recovery**

### ***CT Voices points to success of state and federal health reforms***

The uninsured rate in Connecticut has improved over recent years, despite high unemployment and a slow economic recovery, according to newly-released Census data from the Current Population Survey. Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based policy think tank, attributed this improvement to the success of state and federal policy reforms aimed at improving access to health care.

Based on a comparison of two-year average rates, there was a statistically significant decline in the percentage of people under age 65 who were without health insurance for the entire year, decreasing from 12.7% in 2009-2010 to 9.5% in 2011-2012. Among children under age 18, the share without health insurance declined from 6.5% in 2009-2010 to 4.5% in 2011-2012. (Because of small survey sample sizes at the state level, two-year estimates should be used to evaluate trends over time in Connecticut.)

“These trends demonstrate the success of Connecticut’s efforts to improve access to health coverage for Connecticut children and families, even as our economy is struggling to recover,” said **Ellen Shemitz, Executive Director of Connecticut Voices for Children**. “In 2014, additional state and federal health reforms will enable thousands more Connecticut residents to gain affordable health insurance coverage.”

An estimated 9.2% (276,000) of all Connecticut residents under age 65 in 2012 were without health insurance for the entire previous year in 2012. Among Connecticut children under age 18, 3.6% (29,000) lacked insurance for the entire year.

There has been a decrease in the share of Connecticut children who are uninsured over the last decade, even as fewer children and adults have access to employment-based health insurance.

- Based on a comparison of two-year average rates, there was a statistically significant decline in the percentage of people under age 65 in Connecticut who had employment-based health coverage over the decade, dropping from 76.4% in 2001-2002 to 69.6% in 2011-2012.

There was a similar significant decrease in children who were covered by employment-based insurance – from 76.5% in 2001-2002 to 68.6% in 2011-2012.

- However, over this time period, the percentage of children who were uninsured dropped from 6.1% in 2001-2002 to 4.5% in 2011-2012.

The improvement in the uninsured rate for children over the last decade took place even as child poverty grew in the state. In a preliminary look at poverty trends in the state, estimates from the Current Population Survey indicate the percentage of children in poverty increased from 9.2% in 2001-2002 to 13.6% in 2011-2012. Over the decade, there was also a statistically significant increase in the share of all Connecticut residents in poverty, growing from 7.8% in 2001-2002 to 10.2% in 2011-2012. Over more recent years, there was a significant increase among all residents in poverty, from 8.5% in 2009-2010 to 10.2% in 2011-2012. (On Thursday, September 19, the Census will release more detailed state, county, and city estimates of poverty for Connecticut. Based on a larger sample size than the CPS, these estimates will offer a more reliable and localized picture of poverty in Connecticut.)

Connecticut Voices for Children suggested that a major factor behind the decline in uninsured residents in recent years in the face of persistent poverty, high unemployment, a struggling economy, and less employment-based insurance was the success of state and federal policy reforms aimed at improving access to health care.

- In 2010, Connecticut expanded health coverage under Medicaid to more low-income adults without children, while drawing down new federal funds. Since April 2010, 42,000 more low-income adults have obtained Medicaid coverage, nearly double the number with coverage before the expansion.
- Since 2009, a state law has enabled young adults aged 18 to 26 – the age group with the worst uninsured rates – to remain covered under their parents' health plans. In 2010, federal health reform expanded coverage to even more young adults under their parents' plans.
- Since 2007, state policymakers have increased income eligibility for parents and pregnant women in HUSKY. As a result of these eligibility expansions and the growing need for the program, enrollment of children, parents, and pregnant women in HUSKY increased by about 90,000 (25%) between July 2009 and July 2013.

Looking forward, Connecticut Voices for Children anticipates that more Connecticut residents will obtain health coverage as new opportunities for expanded coverage become available under the federal Affordable Care Act in 2014, including a further expansion of HUSKY coverage for low-income adults, and more affordable private coverage available through the Access Health CT marketplace. Between 100,000 and 130,000 state residents are expected to gain coverage through these initiatives, according to Access Health CT. Connecticut Voices pointed out that most uninsured children in the state are eligible for the HUSKY health insurance program.

“A key to the success of any expansion of health coverage is an informed public,” said **Sharon Langer, Senior Policy Fellow at Connecticut Voices for Children**. “We need to support continued targeted outreach to educate families about their health insurance options and help them navigate the application process.”

“Today’s U.S. Census report once more highlights the progress we’re making in closing the health insurance coverage gap for residents,” said **Frances G. Padilla, president of Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut**. “Our state’s reduction in the number of people without health insurance is a tribute not only to the strength of the social safety net, but also the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.” Padilla said, “Since 2010 we have reduced the number of uninsured residents in Connecticut by 100,000. This is a huge step forward for us as we prepare for the new health insurance exchange open enrollment period starting next month.”

Nationally, the percentage of all Americans without health insurance declined significantly from 15.7% in 2011 to 15.4% (48.0 million) in 2012. Among children in the U.S., 8.9% (6.6 million) were uninsured in 2012, a statistically significant decline from the 9.4% rate in 2011. In addition, the percentage of Americans under age 65 with employment-based health insurance coverage was 58.4%, not significantly changed from the 2011 rate.

National and state-level data on health insurance coverage are available on the U.S. Census Web site at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Health insurance data are drawn from the Current Population Survey (CPS). **See the attached fact sheet for detailed survey results and guidance on using Census data.** This news release and fact sheet are also available on the CT Voices website at [ctvoices.org](http://ctvoices.org).

Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based policy think tank that works to advance public policies that benefit the state’s children, youth and families.

**Note to reporters on other data from Census sources:** National and some state-level poverty and income data are available from the Current Population Survey. However, for several years, the Census Bureau has advised that data from the American Community Survey (ACS) should be used for state-level poverty and income estimates, rather than CPS data. This is because the ACS surveys more people than the CPS and offers a more reliable measure. The Census will publicly release state-level poverty and income estimates from the ACS on Thursday, September 19. Poverty, income, and uninsured estimates will also be available for the eight largest cities in the state, as well as all Connecticut counties. (No city-level estimates for health insurance coverage, poverty, or income are available from the CPS.) CT Voices will summarize these ACS state- and local-level data in a news release on September 19. **CT Voices and the Census Bureau encourage reporters to rely on the ACS poverty estimates on Thursday for a more reliable and localized picture of poverty in Connecticut.** (A summary of CPS poverty and income data is available from CT Voices upon request.)

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