

Contact: John MacDonald, EBRI, (202) 775-6349, macdonald@ebri.org

Cost Key Reason Workers Give for Being Uninsured

WASHINGTON—What are the reasons uninsured workers give for not having health care coverage?

By far, cost is the number one reason: About 85 percent of uninsured workers reported that they did not have coverage because it was either too expensive or they could not afford it, according data published in a recent study by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI).

Lack of availability was reported by about 29 percent of uninsured workers: They reported that they did not have access to coverage through their own employer, a spouse's employer, or a parent's employer. Nine percent were uninsured because they had not been working at their job long enough to be eligible for coverage. Otherwise, less than 5 percent reported that they did not have coverage because of unemployment, ineligibility due to number of hours worked, or that they are healthy and do not need coverage.

The percentage of uninsured workers reporting cost as a reason for not having coverage was for the most part unchanged during 2007, staying at around 85 percent. It dropped to about 77 percent by May 2008, and has increased since then, according to the study in the May 2010 *EBRI Issue Brief*, available at www.ebri.org

**Reasons Why Uninsured Workers Do Not Have Health Insurance, Wage and Salary
Workers Ages 18–64, Monthly Average, January 2007—March 2009**

Too expensive, can't afford health insurance	84.5%
No health insurance offered by employers of self, spouse, or parent	29.8
Not working at a job long enough to qualify	9.2
Job layoff, job loss, or any reason related to unemployment	2.0
Not eligible because working part time or temporary job	3.7
Have been healthy, not much sickness in the family, haven't needed health insurance	3.3
No longer covered by parents' policy	1.1
Other	3.9
Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute estimates from Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 and 2008 Panels.	

The EBRI study also pointed out that there were very few differences in the percentage of uninsured workers reporting cost was a factor in why they were uninsured or that a lack of access to coverage was the reason for being uninsured. However, there were differences by *age* and *education*: Between September 2007 and April 2009, the percentage reporting cost was a reason increased among younger workers, and decreased among older workers. It also decreased among workers with a graduate degree.

In addition, job characteristics also made a difference: The percentage of uninsured workers reporting that cost was a reason for not having health coverage fell between September 2007 and April 2009 among federal government workers and workers with earnings of \$80,000 or higher.

Fast Facts from EBRI is issued by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute to highlight benefits information that may be of current interest. Established in 1978, EBRI is an independent nonprofit organization committed exclusively to data dissemination, policy research, and education on economic security and employee benefits. EBRI does not take policy positions and does not lobby.