



EBRI News

2121 K St. NW • Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20037-1896
(202) 659-0670 • www.ebri.org • Fax: (202) 775-6312

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
CONTACT:

Oct. 3, 2006
Paul Fronstin, EBRI, 202-775-6352, fronstin@ebri.org
John MacDonald, EBRI, (202) 775-6349, macdonald@ebri.org

New Research from EBRI:

Study Details Key Determinants of Health Care Coverage: Work Status, Income, Age, Gender, Firm Size, and Others

WASHINGTON—Do you have a job? What is your income? How old are you? What is your occupation? How large is the firm where you work?

The answers to these questions—and a few others—go a long way to determining whether U.S. residents are likely to have health insurance, according to a study published today by the nonpartisan Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). The study appears in the October *EBRI Issue Brief*, “Sources of Health Insurance and Characteristics of the Uninsured: Analysis of the March 2006 Current Population Survey,” available at www.ebri.org

“Work status and income play a dominant role in determining an individual’s likelihood of having health insurance,” writes Paul Fronstin, director of the EBRI health research and education program and author of the study. In addition, age, gender, firm size, hours of work, industry, and location are all important determinants of an individual’s likelihood of having coverage—as are race and ethnicity, Fronstin says.

As the study notes, the impact of these indicators varies widely. Here is some of what the study says about each of the indicators for U.S. residents under age 65 in 2005:

- **Work status:** Workers are more likely to have insurance than nonworkers. Nearly 71 percent of workers had employment-based health benefits, compared with nearly 37.7 percent of nonworkers.
- **Income:** Workers with low earnings are much less likely to be insured than those with high earnings. One-third of workers with earnings of less than \$20,000 were uninsured, compared with 5.4 percent of workers with earnings of \$75,000 or more.
- **Age and gender:** Younger adults are more likely than older adults to be uninsured. Nearly 40 percent of men ages 21–24 and 30.6 percent of women ages 21–24 were uninsured. This compares with 15.8 percent of men ages 45–54 and 14.8 percent of women ages 45–54 who were uninsured.
- **Hours worked:** Part-time and seasonal workers are less likely to have employment-based health benefits than full-time, full-year workers. Part-time or part-year workers accounted for 30.2 percent of the employed population, but accounted for 41.4 percent of uninsured workers.
- **Industry:** Workers employed in agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, and construction are disproportionately more likely to be uninsured, with 36.9 percent uninsured. This compares

with 14.6 percent uninsured among workers in the manufacturing sector, 18.5 percent in wholesale and retail trade, and 22.1 percent in the service sector.

- **Firm size:** Nearly 63 percent of all uninsured workers are either self-employed or working in private-sector firms with fewer than 100 employees. Nearly 27 percent of self-employed workers are uninsured, compared with 18.8 percent of all workers. More than 35 percent of workers in private-sector firms with fewer than 10 employees are uninsured, compared with 13.4 percent of workers in private-sector firms with 1,000 or more employees.
- **Location:** The proportion of the population with and without health insurance varies by location. In 12 states—generally in the south-central United States—the uninsured averaged close to 20 percent of the population during 2003–2005. States with a relatively low percentage of uninsured individuals include Minnesota, Hawaii, Wisconsin, Iowa, and New Hampshire.
- **Race and ethnic origin:** While 64.7 percent of the population under age 65 is white, whites comprise 47.6 percent of the uninsured. Individuals of Hispanic origin are more likely to be uninsured than other groups (34.3 percent).

The study discusses each of these factors in detail and provides more than 25 charts that provide a full statistical picture of those who have health insurance (along with the sources of coverage) and those who do not.

As the study notes, the proportion of uninsured working-age Americans rose slightly to 17.9 percent in 2005, and the overall percentage of the population under age 65 with health insurance declined in 2005 to a post-1994 low of 82.1 percent. Declines in health insurance coverage have been recorded in all but three years since 1994.

The study also reports that the segment of the U.S. population under age 65 with employment-based health insurance dropped from 64.4 percent in 1994 to 62 percent in 2005, the latest year for which statistics are available. The change was small from 2004 to 2005 (0.4 percentage points), but share of the population under age 65 with employment-based health insurance has declined significantly since 2000, when the number was 66.8 percent. Even after the drop in coverage, employment-based health benefits remain by far the most common source of coverage in the United States.

EBRI is a private, nonprofit research institute based in Washington, DC, that focuses on health, savings, retirement, and economic security issues. EBRI does not lobby and does not take policy positions. www.ebri.org