About NCHS

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation’s principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS uses a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides a broad perspective on the population’s health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Health insurance data

The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) has been collecting comprehensive data on health insurance coverage since 1959. Estimates on the percentage uninsured, with public coverage, or with private coverage at the time of the interview are provided on a quarterly basis. Data are also provided on enrollment through the Health Insurance Marketplace and state-based exchanges. In January 2019, NHIS launched a redesigned questionnaire. The new design collects health insurance information from one randomly selected adult and child from each household in the survey.

- In 2019, 14.7% of adults aged 18–64 were uninsured at the time of the interview, 20.4% had public coverage, and 66.8% had private health insurance coverage.
- In 2019, 5.1% of children aged 0–17 years were uninsured, 41.4% had public coverage, and 55.2% had private health insurance coverage.

Health insurance

Health insurance coverage is an important determinant of access to health care and health status. Uninsured children and nonelderly adults are substantially less likely than their insured counterparts to have a usual source of health care or a recent health care visit. The major source of coverage for persons under age 65 is private employer-sponsored group health insurance. Individual and family private health insurance coverage can also be purchased either directly or through the Health Insurance Marketplace or state-based exchanges. Public programs, such as Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, provide coverage for many low-income children and adults.

To develop policies and programs that improve health insurance coverage, it is important to obtain timely and accurate information on the number of persons who lack health insurance coverage and the number of persons with different types of coverage.
Additional selected NHIS findings from 2019 show:

- A total of 33.2 million persons of all ages (10.3%) were uninsured at the time of interview. In the second half of 2019, 35.7 million persons of all ages (11.0%) were uninsured—significantly higher than the first 6 months of 2019 (30.7 million, 9.5%).
- Among adults aged 18–64, Hispanic adults (29.7%) were more likely than non-Hispanic black (14.7%), non-Hispanic white (10.5%), and non-Hispanic Asian (7.5%) adults to be uninsured.
- Among adults aged 18–64, 4.4% (8.7 million) were covered by private health insurance plans obtained through the Health Insurance Marketplace or state-based exchanges.
- Among children aged 0–17 years, 5.1% were uninsured, 41.4% had public coverage, and 55.2% had private health insurance coverage.
- In 2019, among persons under age 65, 3.7% were covered by exchange-based coverage.
- Exchange-based coverage did not vary significantly by sex or race and ethnicity.
- Exchange-based coverage was higher among those who were near poor (5.3%) compared with those who were poor (3.0%) and those who were not poor (3.2%).

Percentage of persons under age 65 who had exchange-based private health insurance coverage at the time of interview, by selected characteristics: United States, 2019

Health insurance data source

NHIS collects information on the health of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population through personal household interviews. Topics include functioning and disability, selected conditions, health insurance coverage, health care access and use, and health-related behaviors.