

New insured numbers show tug-of-war between economy and health care reform

September 14 2011, By Jessica Martin

The estimates of the population without health insurance in the United States remained unchanged in 2010, as compared to 2009, reflecting the counteracting effects of not only the sluggish economic recovery but also the preliminary benefits of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), says Timothy McBride, PhD, leading health economist and associate dean of public health at the Brown School at Washington University in St. Louis.

According to estimates released Sept. 13 by the U.S. [Census Bureau](#), the percentage without [health coverage](#) in 2010 - 16.3 percent - was not statistically different from the rate in 2009.

"This number could have been much worse considering the number of people in poverty in the U.S. rose 2.6 million in the last year." McBride says.

"The one bright spot is that the percentage of people in the 18-24 age group without health insurance dropped by 2 percentage points. This group was specifically targeted for coverage expansions by the provisions of the ACA," McBride added.

The most significant impacts of the ACA will not be felt until 2014, when almost all of the provisions are implemented, including expansions of coverage for low-income persons and the creation of health insurance exchanges.

The estimates released by the Census Bureau Sept. 13 also reflect a large number of changes in the methods used to compute the number of people without health insurance in the U.S.

McBride has been active in testifying before Congress and consulting with important policy constituencies on Medicare, insurance and health policy issues. He is a member of the Rural Policy Research Institute Health Panel that provides expert advice on rural health issues.

More information: [Read McBride's health policy brief on 2011 insured numbers in Mo. and Ill.](#)

Provided by Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis

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