



NEWS RELEASE

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Census: More Alabamians Had Health Coverage in 2012 Despite High Poverty

Affordable Care Act's Coverage Provisions for Young Adults Contribute to Trend, Forrister Says

The share of Alabamians without health insurance decreased in 2012, even as the state continued to suffer from one of the nation's highest poverty rates, U.S. Census Bureau data released Thursday show. The data suggest Medicaid and other public insurance coverage played a significant role in holding Alabama's uninsured rate steady, ACPP executive director Kimble Forrister said, as did provisions of the Affordable Care Act that extend coverage to young adults.

More than one in eight Alabamians under age 65, or 13.3 percent, lacked health insurance in 2012, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. That share was down from 14.3 percent in 2011. Among children, the uninsured rate fell from 5.3 percent in 2011 to 4.1 percent in 2012.

Provisions of the Affordable Care Act likely helped in holding down Alabama's uninsured rate. Though much of the law will not be implemented until next year, a provision that requires insurers to allow young adults under age 26 to stay on their parents' insurance plans took effect in 2011. In 2012, two years into the requirement, about 26,800 fewer Alabamians between the ages of 18 and 24 were uninsured than in 2010.

"The Affordable Care Act has provided vital access to quality medical care for Alabama's young adults who are just starting out in life," ACPP's Forrister said. "The Census data underscore just how much Alabama could strengthen our health care protections by fully implementing the act, including the Medicaid expansion that would start next year."

Alabama's improving insurance trends came despite persistently high poverty rates. Almost one in five Alabamians, or 19 percent, lived in poverty in 2012. More than one in four Alabama children, or 27.3 percent, lived in households below the poverty line. Alabama's overall poverty rate was seventh worst in the nation, while its child poverty rate was the country's fifth worst. Both rates were significantly worse than 2007 levels, before the Great Recession took its toll on the state's economy. Alabama's median household income of \$41,574 was the nation's fourth lowest in 2012.

"With millions of Alabamians still struggling to get by, now is the time for our state's leaders to step up their efforts to help our friends and neighbors achieve economic security," Forrister said.

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Arise Citizens' Policy Project is a nonprofit statewide coalition comprising 145 congregations and organizations that promote public policies to improve the lives of low-income Alabamians.