

## Implementation of Health Care Law Expanding Coverage to More Young Adults

---

By Linda Barlow | May 23, 2013

For the first time in nearly a decade, the number of 19-25 year-olds gaining access to health insurance is on the rise, according to the [Commonwealth Fund](#) 2012 Biennial Health Insurance Survey. Researchers point to a provision in the [2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act \(PPACA or ACA\)](#), which allows young adults to stay on their parents' health insurance until age 26, as a likely cause of this groundbreaking trend.

“The early provisions of the Affordable Care Act are helping young adults gain coverage and improving the affordability of health care during difficult economic times for American families,” said Sara Collins, Ph.D., a Commonwealth Fund vice president and lead author of the Biennial Survey’s report, [Insuring the Future: Current Trends in Health Coverage and the Effects of Implementing the Affordable Care Act](#).

The improvements in young adult health coverage are significant, according to the Biennial Survey:

- Nearly eight in 10 (79 percent) of Americans ages 19-25 reported that they were insured at the time of the survey in 2012, up from 69 percent in 2010, or a gain in health insurance coverage for an estimated 3.4 million young adults.
- The share of young adults in this same age group who were uninsured for any time during the year prior to the survey fell from 48 percent in 2010 to 41 percent in 2012 – an estimated decline of 1.9 million, from 13.6 million uninsured young adults in 2010 to 11.7 million in 2012.

Of the estimated 3.1 million young adults who are now covered through the ACA, 60 percent are leveraging it for mental health, substance abuse, or pregnancy treatment, according to a [study](#) from the Employee Benefits Research Institute

(EBRI). For one large, national employer profiled in the study, the newly-covered young adults used about \$2 million in health care services in 2011 – about 0.2 percent of the employer’s total health spending.

Access is a major barrier to care for young adults, who were previously terminated from their parents’ plans when they turned 19. According to the [Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation](#) (KFF), young adults typically face difficulties obtaining their own coverage because they work in entry-level, low-wage or temporary jobs that are less likely to provide health insurance. Lack of insurance makes it harder for young adults to receive adequate medical care – a problem that plagued one in five young adults before the ACA began to take effect.

“Young adult women have additional health needs and are particularly vulnerable when they are uninsured, as they are at an age when they require reproductive health services,” noted Karyn Schwartz and Tanya Schwartz, authors of KFF’s Issue Paper, [How Will Health Reform Impact Young Adults?](#) “Having health insurance and consistent access to the medical system may increase the likelihood that they receive timely pre-natal care if they become pregnant.”

Meanwhile, some [skeptics are expressing concerns](#) about key aspects and implications of the Act, from objecting to young single males being required to purchase a plan including maternity benefits and well-baby coverage – to others saying that full implementation of the ACA in 2014 will mean much [higher premiums](#) for young adults. Many have [challenged these assertions](#), however, noting that the ACA’s age-based pricing requirements are largely in line with premiums individuals are paying now.

Although the news for young adults is mostly good, the survey also found that 84 million people – nearly half of all working age U.S. adults – went without health insurance in 2012, or faced out-of-pocket costs that were so high relative to their income that they were considered “underinsured.”

The survey did indicate that 87 percent of the 55 million uninsured Americans in 2012 are eligible for subsidized health insurance through the insurance marketplaces or expanded Medicaid under the ACA. Up to 85 percent of the 30 million uninsured adults also might be eligible for either Medicaid or subsidized health insurance plans with reduced out-of-pocket costs.

Click [here to learn more about pricing options](#) for young adults seeking health insurance coverage.

Now it's your turn. Does rollout of the ACA mean more accessible and affordable health insurance coverage, or will it drive up costs, particularly for younger Americans? Get the conversation started.

**To read this post on RWHC Blog, [click here](#).**