



New Survey Shows that Most Americans Believe the Number of Children Who Are Uninsured Has Increased in the Last Five Years

Nine in Ten Also Believe All Children in Their State Should Have Health Coverage

Georgetown University's Center for Children and Families commissioned a national survey of 1000 adults 18 and older to measure perceptions about the state of children in America today. The survey focused on two issues that impact children: health insurance coverage and poverty. The survey was conducted September 20-22, 2013 by PerryUndem Research and Communication.¹

The survey shows that most Americans believe the last five years have negatively affected children. Specifically, majorities of survey respondents believe the number of children who are uninsured and living in poverty has increased during this time period. This impression is likely caused by the slow economic recovery. However, it is not completely accurate.

While poverty rates for children remain historically high (22.6 percent in 2012), the number of uninsured children has actually declined and is now at 7.2 percent. More than 650,000 children gained health coverage from 2010 to 2012 according to Census Bureau data. Most experts credit Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) with the decline in the number of uninsured children even while more children are living in households below the poverty level. Both programs have been available during difficult economic times to cover children in families who lose their health coverage and who cannot afford to buy coverage on their own.

The overwhelming majority of Americans in the survey responded that they want every child who lives in their state to have health coverage.

Specific findings from the survey include:

- The majority of survey respondents (55 percent) believe the number of uninsured children in their state has increased in the last five years, while three in ten (30 percent) think the number of uninsured children has stayed the same. Only a small number (13 percent) correctly believe the number has decreased.
- About half of survey respondents (51 percent) believe that at least one in five children in their state do not have health insurance. Indeed, almost a quarter of respondents (24 percent) think about one-third of children or more in their state are uninsured. In fact, no state has a rate of uninsured children this high.

- Nearly seven in ten (69 percent) correctly believe that the number of U.S. children living in poverty has increased in the past five years.
- Nearly nine in ten Americans (88 percent) believe that all children in their state should have health insurance. Six in ten (60 percent) feel strongly about this.

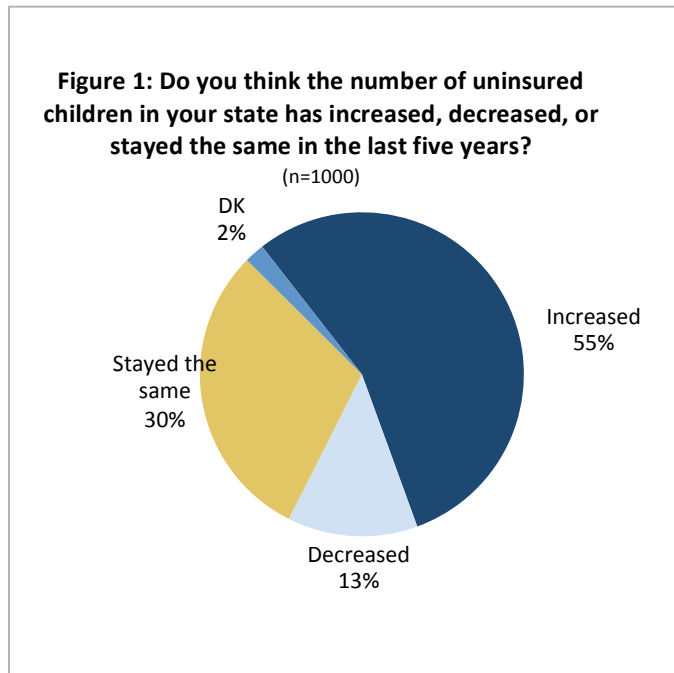
Details about these and other survey findings can be found on the following pages.

Detailed Findings

Few survey respondents seem to know that the number of uninsured children has declined over the last five years.

Most survey respondents believe the number of uninsured children in their state has either increased (55 percent) or stayed the same (30 percent) over the last five years. Only 13 percent believes the number of uninsured children has gone down (see Figure 1),

This perception of rising numbers of uninsured children in states is widespread and cuts across gender, age, race and ethnic background, and political party. The one exception is among younger adults ages 18 to 34. Only 43 percent of this group believes the number of children who are uninsured has increased while 40 percent believe the number has stayed the same.

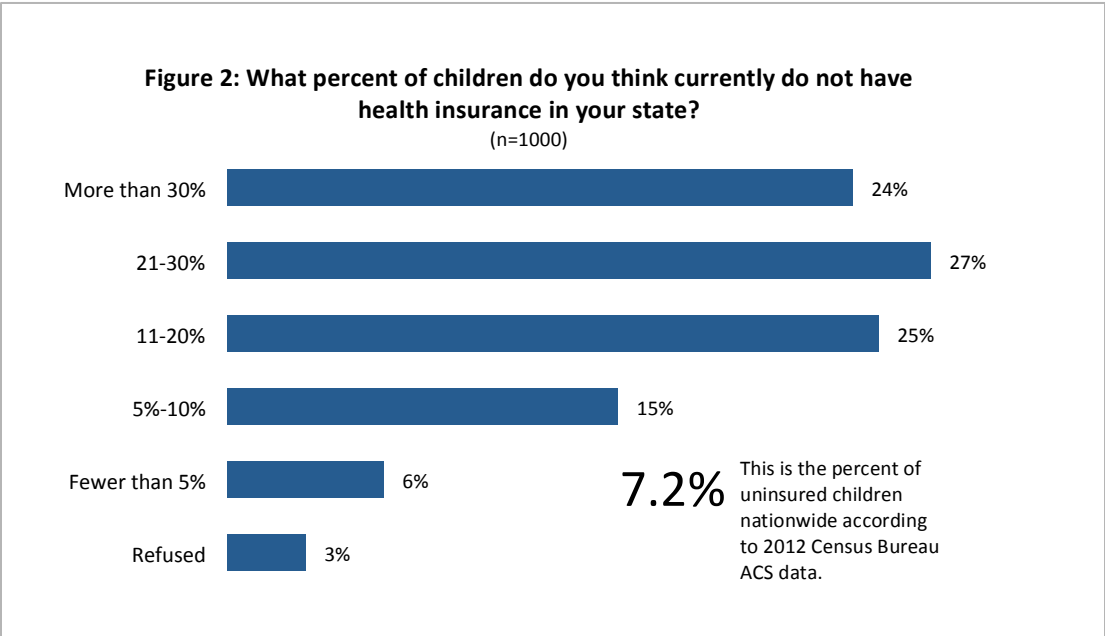


Respondents in the South are most likely to think that the number of uninsured children in their state has increased (60 percent), followed by the Midwest (56 percent), the West (53 percent) and the Northeast (47 percent).²

Most respondents overestimate how many children are uninsured in their states.

Respondents were asked what percentage of children in their state they think do not currently have health insurance. More than half of Americans (51 percent) believe that more than 20 percent of children are uninsured in their state (see Figure 2). While all subgroups greatly overestimate the number of children who are uninsured in their state, there are some differences in the degree to which they overestimate. College-educated, higher-income, and Republican individuals are more likely to believe lower numbers of children are currently uninsured. Meanwhile, individuals 55 to 64 years old, African Americans, individuals with incomes between \$50,000 and 100,000, Democrats, and Independents tend to think higher numbers of children are uninsured.

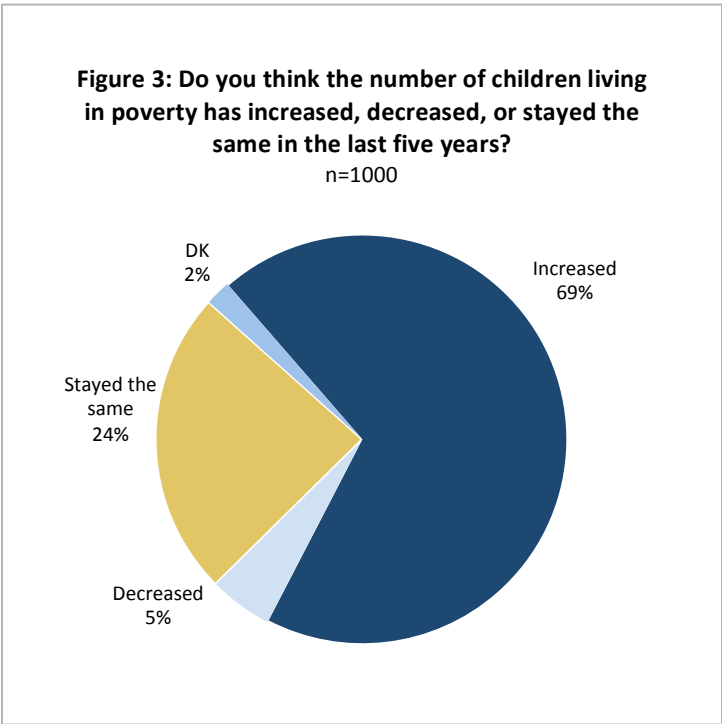
Respondents in the Midwest (58 percent) and South (55 percent) are more likely to think that more than 20 percent of the children in their state are uninsured compared with respondents in the West (48 percent) and Northeast (38 percent).



Most survey respondents also believe more children are living in poverty today than five years ago.

Nearly seven in ten (69 percent) survey respondents believe the number of children living in poverty has increased and one-quarter (24 percent) believe the number has stayed the same. Only five percent think the number has decreased. These numbers likely reflect respondents' views of the still struggling economy and how it is affecting families and children (see Figure 3).

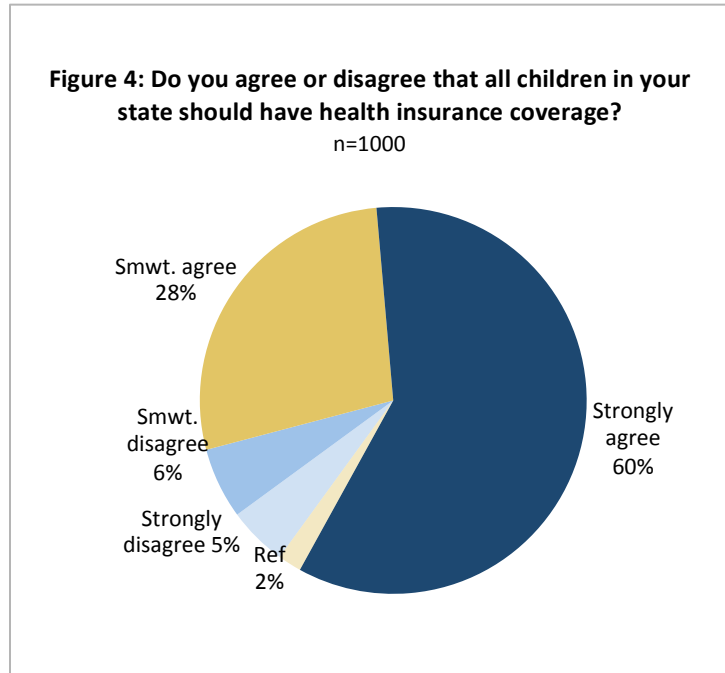
Once again, these perceptions are widely shared. Majorities of all subgroups and individuals across different party lines and regions of the country believe the number of children in their state living in poverty has increased over the last five years.



Nearly nine in ten survey respondents agree that all children in their state should have health insurance.

As many surveys have shown in the past, this new survey shows that the vast majority of Americans think all children should have health coverage. Nearly nine in ten agree with this idea, with 60 percent feeling strongly this way. Meanwhile 11 percent of respondents do not feel that all children in their state should have health insurance (see Figure 4).

Support for all children having health insurance cuts across political ideology: Democrats (99 percent agree), Independents (87 percent), and Republicans (78 percent). Similarly, all other subgroups and regions of the country show strong support for this concept.



Conclusion

This brief survey was intended to capture Americans’ perception of how children are faring on two key measures – health insurance coverage and poverty. The survey results show that the majority of Americans believe things are worse for children today than they were five years ago. While their worries about children living in poverty are well founded – the number of children living in households below the poverty level remains at historic highs – they seem unaware that the number of uninsured children has actually been going down. Most vastly overestimate how many uninsured children there are in their state. This is understandable – they know the economic recovery is moving slowly and so they assume there are still many families without insurance. But most are unaware that Medicaid and CHIP have been there for these children, driving down the number of uninsured children nationwide even during these turbulent economic times.

This is an important finding because most uninsured children in the U.S. (70 percent³) are already eligible for Medicaid or CHIP but are not enrolled. Building awareness of the success of these programs covering children, along with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act to help cover millions more uninsured Americans (including 18 million parents⁴), should continue to drive the rate of uninsured children down in the coming months and years. And reducing the number of uninsured children is important to Americans – nine in ten want all children in their state to have health coverage.

¹ The survey of 1000 U.S. residents 18 years and older was fielded by Knowledge Networks using a nationally representative online panel. The margin of error for the survey is $\pm 3.1\%$.

² Following is the breakout of the regions: Midwest (Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, and Iowa), Northeast (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey), South (Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana) and West (Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii).

³ Kenney, G., Lynch, V., Huntress, M., Haley, J., and Anderson, N., "Medicaid/CHIP Participation Rates Among Children and Parents," Urban Institute (December 2012).

⁴ Heberlein, M., Huntress, M., Kenney, G., Alker, J., Lynch, V. & Mancini, T. "Medicaid Coverage for Parents Under the Affordable Care Act," Georgetown University Center for Children and Families (June 2012).