

New Data on Enrollment and Uninsured Rates

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2021 Exchange Enrollment

On June 5th, 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released a series of reports on enrollment in the ACA Exchanges and Medicaid Expansion programs, as well as the uninsured rate. This brief examines key takeaways from the new reports.

2021 Effectuated Enrollment

The first report released by HHS is the 2021 Effectuated Enrollment report.¹ It measures the number of people who are currently enrolled in the Exchange (the previously released Open Enrollment Report only captures the number of people who selected a plan). Some key highlights from the report include:

- On-Exchange enrollment increased about 6% between February 2021 and February 2020. Interestingly, unsubsidized enrollment (up 9%) increased more than subsidized enrollment (up 5%).
- While enrollment was up overall, there was significant variation between states. Several southern states (Texas, Florida, Georgia) have seen enrollment growth in excess of 10%, while several New England states (Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts) saw fairly sizeable declines. Generally, states that did not expand Medicaid grew faster than states that did.
- Enrollment in CSR plans continues to decline (most notably 73% variants). 2021 enrollment as of February has only 48% of enrollees in CSR plans. Before the federal government stopped direct payments for CSRs (i.e., pre-silver loading), enrollment in CSRs was around 57%.
- Per member per month Premiums (-0.3%) and Advanced Premium Tax Credits (-1.2%) were down from 2020 to 2021.
- These data are before the implementation of the American Rescue Plan or the open Special Enrollment Period (SEP). CMS typically releases an updated effectuation report later in the year.

¹ <https://www.cms.gov/document/Early-2021-2020-Effectuated-Enrollment-Report.pdf>

Uninsured Rate and Medicaid Enrollment

HHS also released new data on the uninsured rate. They found that the uninsured rate actually declined over the first half of 2020.² HHS stated that about 30 million people were uninsured during the first half of 2020, or an uninsured rate of about 11.1%. While not the lowest on record (that was achieved in 2016), uninsured rates today are far lower than before the passage of the Affordable Care Act when the uninsured rate was significantly higher. HHS notes that these findings include some of the effects of the COVID pandemic, in which millions of people lost their jobs. Partly the answer for the lack of change in the uninsured rate is the existence of the Medicaid Expansion program. Medicaid Expansion enrollment reached an all-time high as of December 2020.³ The lack of redetermination in the Medicaid program as a result of the Families First Act maintenance of effort requirements is a significant contributor to the increase in Medicaid enrollment.⁴

Trends to Monitor

While the data released by HHS released provides good insight into the health coverage in the United States in the early part of 2021, the situation has rapidly changed. The enactment of the American Rescue Plan, an open SEP that has enrolled over a million people, and changes in the economy could result in a different picture later in the year. Furthermore, while a Public Health Emergency (PHE) remains in effect, Medicaid programs have limited abilities to have redetermination. When the PHE ends, enrollment and uninsured rate trends may look very different.

Please contact Michael Cohen at michael.cohen@wakely.com with any questions or to follow up on any of the concepts presented here.

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² <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/265041/trends-in-the-us-uninsured.pdf>

³ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/265671/ASPE%20Issue%20Brief-ACA-Related%20Coverage%20by%20State.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.healthmanagement.com/wp-content/uploads/States-Medicaid-and-Economic-Hard-Times.pdf>