

WASHINGTON STATE HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH PROJECT

First Year Impact of ACA on Washington State's Health Coverage

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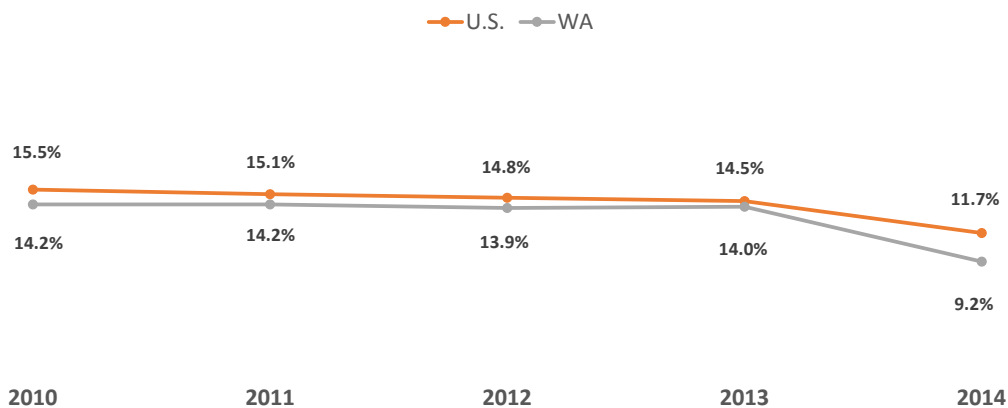
Introduction

In 2014, key provisions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) to reduce the number of individuals without health coverage were implemented. Recently released American Community Survey (ACS) data provide evidence that indeed the number of uninsured individuals in Washington state — and the nation — declined in 2014.

Uninsured rates prior to 2014¹

In the four years prior to the implementation of the ACA, the uninsured rate in Washington fluctuated very little, hovering around 14 percent of the total population². In the same period, the U.S. uninsured rate was roughly 1 percentage point higher, about 15 percent, and also fluctuated very little.

Washington and U.S. Uninsured Rates: Total Population, 2010-14



Uninsured rates in 2014

In 2014, the share of the population in Washington without health coverage dropped to 9.2 percent. The single-year decline in the uninsured rate is unprecedented in the state's recent history. It also outpaced the decline of the U.S. uninsured rate, which dropped from 14.5 in 2013 to 11.7 in 2014.

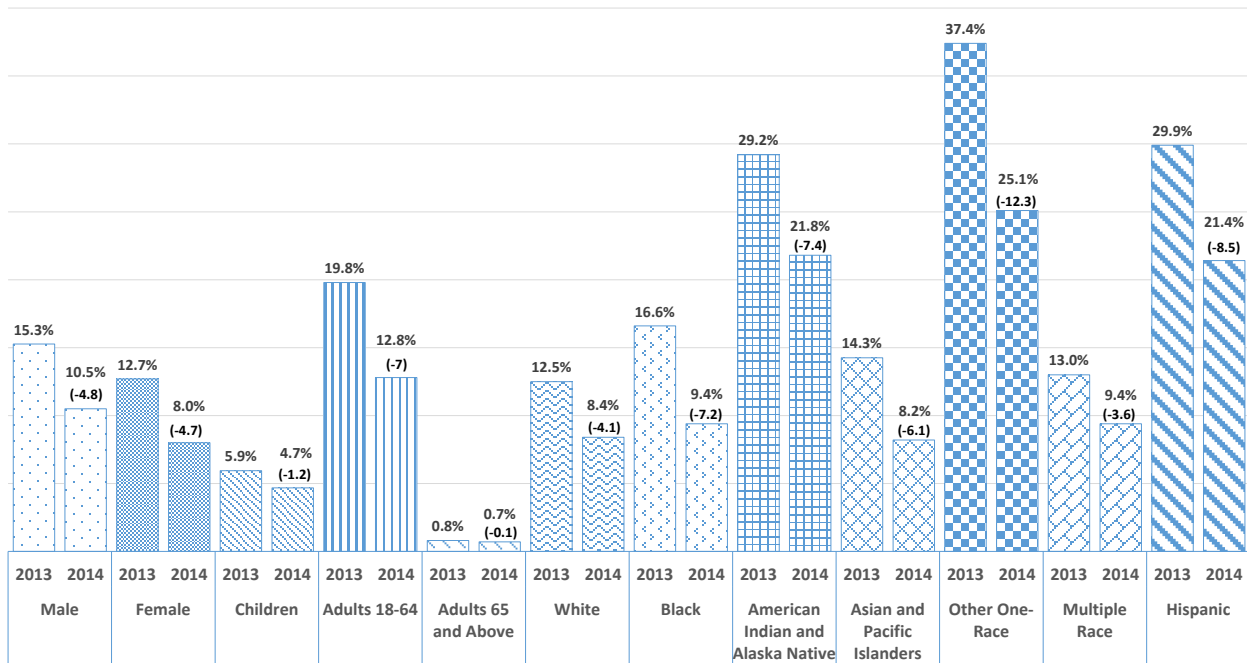
¹ The concept of health coverage is measured in the ACS as having any medical coverage (e.g., Medicare, Medicaid, coverage through an employer) at the time of the interview. This measure provides a "point-in-time" snapshot.

² Estimates in this brief, unless noted otherwise, are derived from Summary Files of the ACS. ACS is an ongoing population survey of U.S. households conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Changes in uninsured rates among Washington’s demographic groups

Washington’s decline in uninsured rates from 2013 to 2014 is seen in all population groups as defined by gender, age and race/ethnicity. Some groups, however, experienced greater declines than others. Adults in the 18–64 age group experienced a greater reduction than children and adults 65 and older — 7, 1.3 and 0.1 percentage points, respectively. Males and females experienced about the same amount of decline, — 4.8 and 4.7 percentage points, respectively. Among the racial and ethnic groups, the “Other One-Race” group experienced the largest decline in the uninsured rates, with a 12.3 percentage point reduction. The other racial and ethnic groups experienced a reduction of uninsured rates ranging from 3.6 to 8.5 percentage points.

Percentage Uninsured by Demographic Characteristics: 2013 and 2014



Looking ahead

Washington’s uninsured rates experienced sizable declines in the first year following the implementation of key coverage expansion provisions of the ACA. The uninsured rates in Washington are expected to continue declining into 2015 as the ACA entered its second year of operation. In fact, early data from Gallup show that only 6.4 percent of Washington’s adult population aged 18 and older remained uninsured as of mid-July 2015. That rate represents a 4 percentage point drop from mid-July 2014 (10.7 percent) and a 10 percentage point drop from 2013 (16.8 percent)³.

³ Data source: Gallup.

(1) http://www.gallup.com/poll/184514/uninsured-rates-continue-drop-states.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_content=morelink&utm_campaign=syndication.

(2) http://www.gallup.com/poll/174290/arkansas-kentucky-report-sharpest-drops-uninsured-rate.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=syndication&utm_content=morelink&utm_term=All%20Gallup%20Headlines.