Health Insurance Coverage of Young Adults Aged 19 to 25: 2008, 2009, and 2011

American Community Survey Briefs

By Jonathan Rodean

Issued September 2012
ACSBR/11-11

INTRODUCTION

Historically, young adults have been a group with one of the highest uninsured rates.[1] Although individual states had enacted laws that allowed adult children in various circumstances to be dependents on their parents' private family health plans, only in 2010 was there a standardized national law that allowed all adult children under the age of 26 to be covered.[2] Because the change in law occurred mid-year, this report examines the coverage of young adults aged 19 to 25 in the 2 years before the change (2008 and 2009) and in the year after the change (2011). To gain a perspective on what was happening to a similar group of people, the report uses adults aged 26 to 29, who did not have access to their parents' policies, as a comparison group.

Early estimates from the National Health Interview Survey have shown that the uninsured rate for adults aged 19 to 25 declined in the first 6 months of 2011 compared with 2010.[3] In addition, because the provision targets only private health insurance plans, one would expect a similarly patterned increase in private insurance during this period.[4]

Definition

Private health insurance: Health insurance provided through an employer or a union, a plan purchased by an individual from an insurance company, or TRICARE or other military health coverage.

COVERAGE OF YOUNG ADULTS AGED 19 TO 25 IN THE UNITED STATES

From 2008 to 2009, young adults aged 19 to 25 followed a similar trend as those aged 26 to 29 in the percentage with health insurance (see Figure 1). Although the older group had a statistically higher rate of insurance coverage than the younger group in 2008 (72.3 percent and 69.5 percent, respectively), both age groups experienced a similar decrease in coverage over that period. The insured rate for the 26-to-29 year age group dropped 1.1 percentage points in 2009, while the rate for the 19-to-25 group decreased 1.2 percentage points, a number not statistically different from the change of the older group (see Table 1). The same pattern holds for private insurance: the size

[1] National Center for Health Statistics, *Health, United States, 2008 With Special Feature on the Health of Young Adults*, Hyattsville, MD, 2009.

[2] Cantor, J. C., D. Belloff, A. C. Monheit, D. DeLia, and M. Koller (2012), "Expanding Dependent Coverage for Young Adults: Lessons From State Initiatives," *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law*, Vol. 37(1), pages 99–128.

[3] Cohen, Robin A. and Micheal E. Martinez, *Health Insurance Coverage: Early Release of Estimates From the National Health Interview Survey, 2011*, National Center for Health Statistics, June 2012.

[4] The National Defense Authorization Act of January 2011 brought TRICARE into compliance with the other dependent provision laws.

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

United States Census Bureau

of the decrease in the privately insured rate of the younger group (2.3 percentage points) is not statistically different from the rate of those aged 26 to 29 (2.2 percentage points).

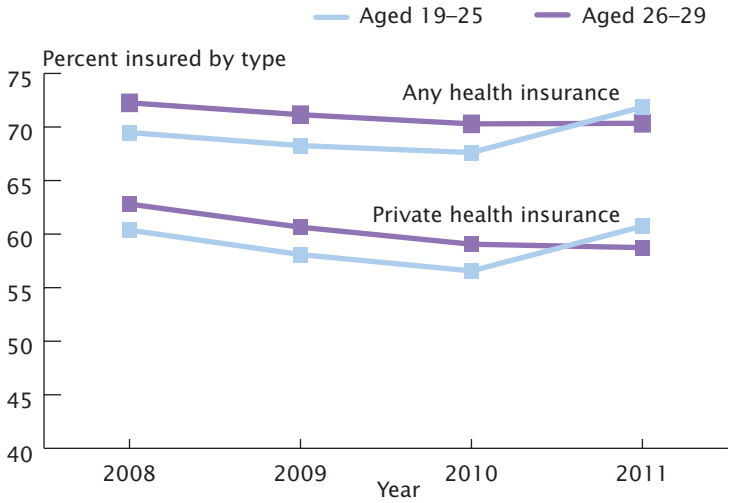
After the dependent provision went into effect, the two groups experienced different changes in coverage from 2009 to 2011. As expected, the insured rate of adults 19 to 25 years old, those targeted by the dependent provision, increased from 68.3 to 71.8 percent. The insured rate of those aged 26 to 29 continued to decrease, from 71.1 percent to 70.3 percent.[5]

The divergence of the trends also occurred for private coverage, where the rate for young adults

[5] The 3.6 percentage point change in the insured rate of young adults aged 19 to 25 is statistically larger than the –0.8 percentage point change in the insured rate of those aged 26 to 29.

Figure 1.
Percentage With Health Insurance Coverage by Age Group and Type: 2008–2011

(Civilian noninstitutionalized population 19 to 29 years. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf*)



* Dependent provision went into effect mid-year.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 American Community Survey.

Table 1
Health Insurance Coverage by Age Group and Type: 2008, 2009, and 2011

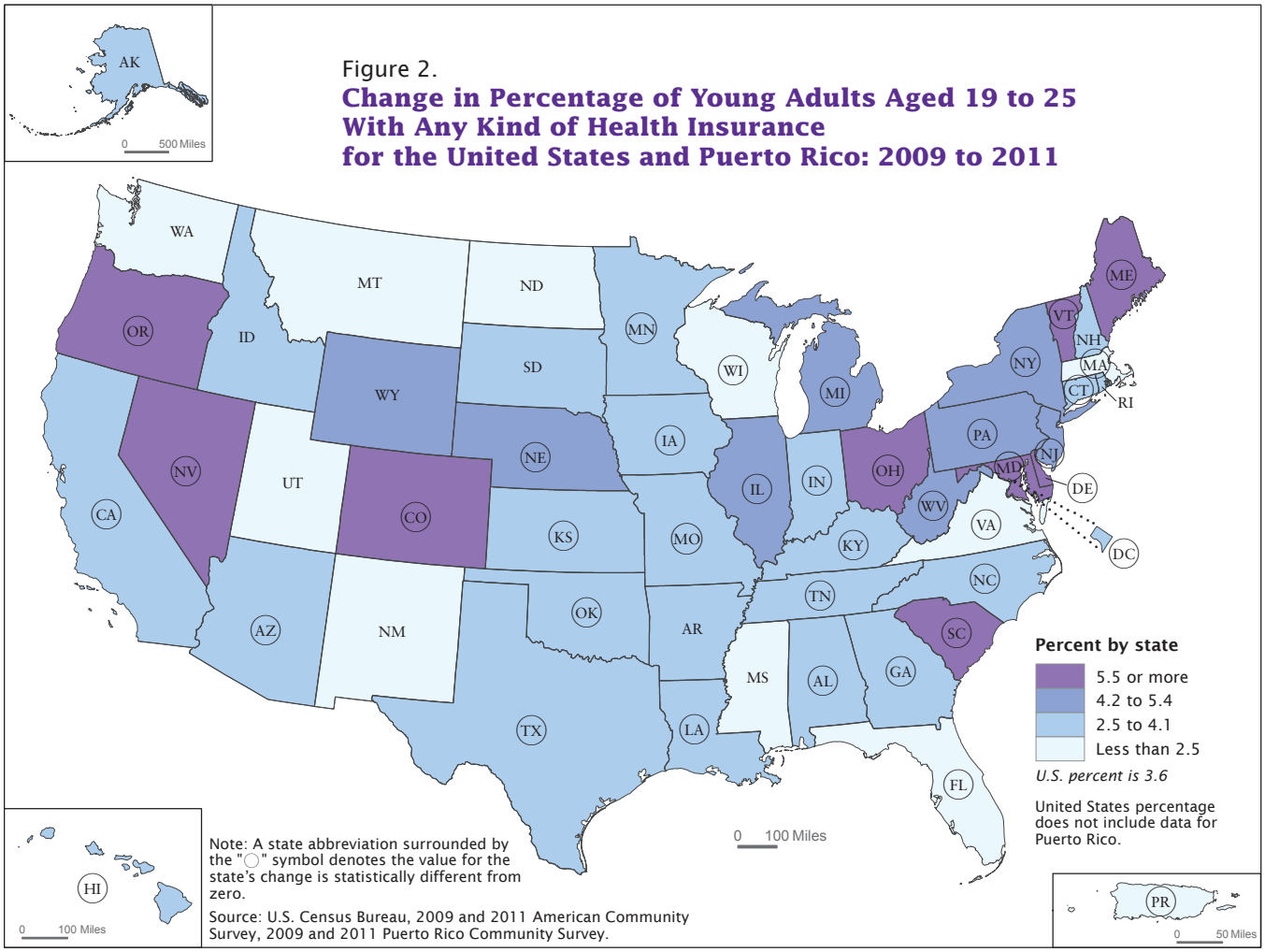
(Civilian noninstitutionalized population. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf*)

Type and age group	2008		2009		2011		Difference 2009–2008	Difference 2011–2009
	Percent	Margin of error	Percent	Margin of error	Percent	Margin of error	Percent	Percent
Any health insurance								
Age 19–25	69.5	0.2	68.3	0.2	71.8	0.2	*–1.2	*3.6
Age 26–29	72.3	0.2	71.1	0.2	70.3	0.3	*–1.1	*–0.8
With private insurance								
Age 19–25	60.4	0.2	58.1	0.2	60.8	0.2	*–2.3	*2.7
Age 26–29	62.8	0.3	60.6	0.3	58.7	0.3	*–2.2	*–1.9

* Statistically different from zero at the 90 percent confidence level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008, 2009, and 2011 American Community Survey.

Figure 2.
Change in Percentage of Young Adults Aged 19 to 25 With Any Kind of Health Insurance for the United States and Puerto Rico: 2009 to 2011



aged 26 to 29 increased by 2.7 percentage points. For the older age group, the decrease in private coverage continued. The decrease in private coverage among the older age group was 1.9 percentage points, greater than the decrease in the rate with any type of health insurance (0.8 percentage points).[6]

COVERAGE OF YOUNG ADULTS AGED 19 TO 25 AMONG STATES

For young adults aged 19 to 25, no state experienced a decrease in the insured rate from 2009 to 2011. While 37 states and the District of Columbia had an increase in coverage, 13 states did not have a statistically significant change (see Figure 2 and Table 2). Vermont had the highest increase in coverage in the young adult age group, increasing from an insured rate of 75.2 in 2009 to 89.1 in 2011. In addition, Vermont was 1 of only 9 states whose increase was greater than the national average.[7] Six states had a change in the insured rate that was less than the national average.[8]

Like the total insured rate, no state showed a decrease in the rate of private insurance from 2009 to 2011 for young adults aged 19 to 25. While the private insurance rate showed a statistically significant increase in 37 states and the District of Columbia, 13 states had no significant change (see Figure 3 and Table 2). Six states and the District of Columbia had a change in rate above the national average.[9] Vermont had the largest increase in private insurance at 10.5 percentage points.[10] Only 4 states had changes in the privately insured

[6] The 2.7 percentage point change in the privately insured rate of young adults aged 19 to 25 is statistically larger than the –1.9 percentage point change in the insured rate of those aged 26 to 29.

[7] The nine states whose change in the insured rate was greater than the national average were Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Vermont.

[8] The six states whose change in the insured rate was less than the national average were Florida, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

[9] The six states whose change in the rate of private insurance was greater than the national average were Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Vermont.

[10] The change in rate of Vermont was not significantly different from that of Delaware, the District of Columbia, or Wyoming.

Table 2.

Health Insurance Coverage of Young Adults Aged 19 to 25 by State and Puerto Rico: 2009 and 2011

(Civilian noninstitutionalized population. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see *www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf*)

Area	Any health insurance coverage					Private health insurance				
	2009		2011			2009		2011		
	Percent	Margin of error (±)[1]	Percent	Margin of error (±)[1]	Difference	Percent	Margin of error (±)[1]	Percent	Margin of error (±)[1]	Difference
United States	**68.3**	**0.2**	**71.8**	**0.2**	***3.6**	**58.1**	**0.2**	**60.8**	**0.2**	***2.7**
Alabama	68.0	1.3	71.8	1.4	*3.8	58.6	1.3	63.2	1.4	*4.6
Alaska	61.4	4.2	64.7	3.4	3.3	55.5	4.1	53.2	3.6	–2.3
Arizona	66.1	1.2	70.1	1.5	*4.0	50.6	1.4	51.6	1.5	1.0
Arkansas	60.6	2.1	63.1	1.8	2.5	50.2	2.0	54.4	1.8	*4.1
California	63.7	0.5	67.0	0.5	*3.3	53.3	0.5	55.1	0.5	*1.8
Colorado	68.2	1.3	73.9	1.5	*5.7	61.6	1.4	65.4	1.6	*3.8
Connecticut	79.3	1.4	83.2	1.3	*3.8	68.6	1.6	69.4	1.6	0.8
Delaware	75.8	3.1	82.4	2.5	*6.6	58.9	4.1	66.4	2.6	*7.5
District of Columbia	87.5	2.3	91.6	2.0	*4.1	66.8	3.4	74.6	2.7	*7.8
Florida	59.3	0.8	61.2	0.9	*1.8	51.2	0.8	52.0	0.9	0.8
Georgia	60.6	1.2	63.9	1.4	*3.3	53.5	1.2	55.8	1.4	*2.3
Hawaii	82.7	2.0	86.1	1.7	*3.4	70.5	2.5	71.8	2.4	1.3
Idaho	67.6	2.1	70.3	2.6	2.7	61.3	1.9	62.7	2.8	1.4
Illinois	69.9	0.8	74.6	0.8	*4.7	59.6	0.8	64.1	0.8	*4.5
Indiana	69.7	1.2	73.1	1.0	*3.4	60.6	1.2	64.3	1.1	*3.7
Iowa	80.1	1.3	83.2	1.1	*3.1	71.2	1.5	74.6	1.3	*3.4
Kansas	73.2	1.6	77.1	1.5	*3.9	67.5	1.7	71.5	1.5	*4.0
Kentucky	65.8	1.4	69.3	1.1	*3.5	55.9	1.3	60.0	1.3	*4.1
Louisiana	64.6	1.7	68.0	1.4	*3.3	54.0	1.9	55.5	1.4	1.6
Maine	74.1	2.2	81.4	1.8	*7.3	56.3	2.5	61.1	2.5	*4.8
Maryland	75.0	1.3	81.7	1.0	*6.7	66.8	1.3	70.7	1.2	*3.8
Massachusetts	90.3	0.7	92.1	0.6	*1.7	73.0	1.1	75.0	1.0	*2.0
Michigan	71.2	0.8	76.3	0.9	*5.1	56.6	1.0	61.5	0.9	*4.9
Minnesota	78.8	0.9	82.6	0.9	*3.8	66.5	1.1	69.3	1.0	*2.9
Mississippi	62.8	1.9	64.3	1.6	1.5	50.0	1.7	52.7	1.7	*2.7
Missouri	71.4	1.3	74.2	1.1	*2.8	62.7	1.5	65.5	1.2	*2.7
Montana	66.1	3.1	66.4	3.1	0.3	59.7	3.3	59.1	3.3	–0.7
Nebraska	72.4	1.8	76.9	1.7	*4.5	66.9	1.7	71.1	2.0	*4.2
Nevada	55.2	2.1	61.7	2.1	*6.5	51.6	2.1	55.2	2.4	*3.6
New Hampshire	77.2	2.5	80.3	2.2	3.1	71.1	2.8	75.8	2.3	*4.7
New Jersey	69.9	1.0	74.6	1.0	*4.7	63.0	1.0	65.9	1.0	*2.9
New Mexico	61.4	2.2	60.6	2.0	–0.8	47.1	2.6	45.7	2.4	–1.4
New York	74.5	0.7	79.7	0.5	*5.2	58.4	0.6	61.1	0.7	*2.7
North Carolina	66.9	0.9	69.6	1.1	*2.7	55.8	1.1	58.7	1.0	*2.9
North Dakota	81.6	2.8	82.5	2.0	0.9	74.9	2.8	74.9	2.3	–
Ohio	72.4	0.8	77.9	0.6	*5.6	59.8	1.0	65.0	0.7	*5.2
Oklahoma	61.7	1.6	64.9	1.6	*3.2	54.2	1.7	56.5	1.6	*2.4
Oregon	64.6	1.5	70.2	1.5	*5.6	57.5	1.5	59.9	1.7	*2.4
Pennsylvania	75.9	0.7	80.9	0.7	*5.0	64.8	0.8	68.6	0.8	*3.8
Rhode Island	74.5	2.5	77.7	2.1	3.2	66.2	2.8	69.1	2.3	2.9
South Carolina	63.9	1.5	70.1	1.3	*6.3	53.4	1.4	58.9	1.4	*5.5
South Dakota	72.1	2.8	75.6	2.5	3.5	64.0	2.6	68.2	2.8	*4.1
Tennessee	69.4	1.1	72.7	1.2	*3.3	55.1	1.2	58.3	1.2	*3.2
Texas	56.5	0.6	59.3	0.6	*2.7	50.4	0.5	52.1	0.5	*1.8
Utah	75.1	1.5	77.0	1.4	1.9	71.0	1.6	72.3	1.6	1.3
Vermont	75.2	3.1	89.1	1.7	*13.9	59.2	3.1	69.7	2.4	*10.5
Virginia	73.5	1.0	75.5	1.0	*1.9	67.8	1.1	69.6	1.0	*1.8
Washington	69.4	1.2	70.8	1.1	1.4	60.7	1.3	62.8	1.2	*2.1
West Virginia	65.1	2.2	69.5	2.4	*4.4	54.5	2.2	59.9	2.3	*5.4
Wisconsin	77.3	1.0	79.4	0.9	*2.1	65.6	1.1	68.1	1.0	*2.5
Wyoming	70.2	3.6	74.6	2.8	4.4	63.1	3.8	67.7	3.4	4.6
Puerto Rico	85.6	1.1	87.2	1.2	*1.7	38.4	1.5	35.8	1.4	*–2.6

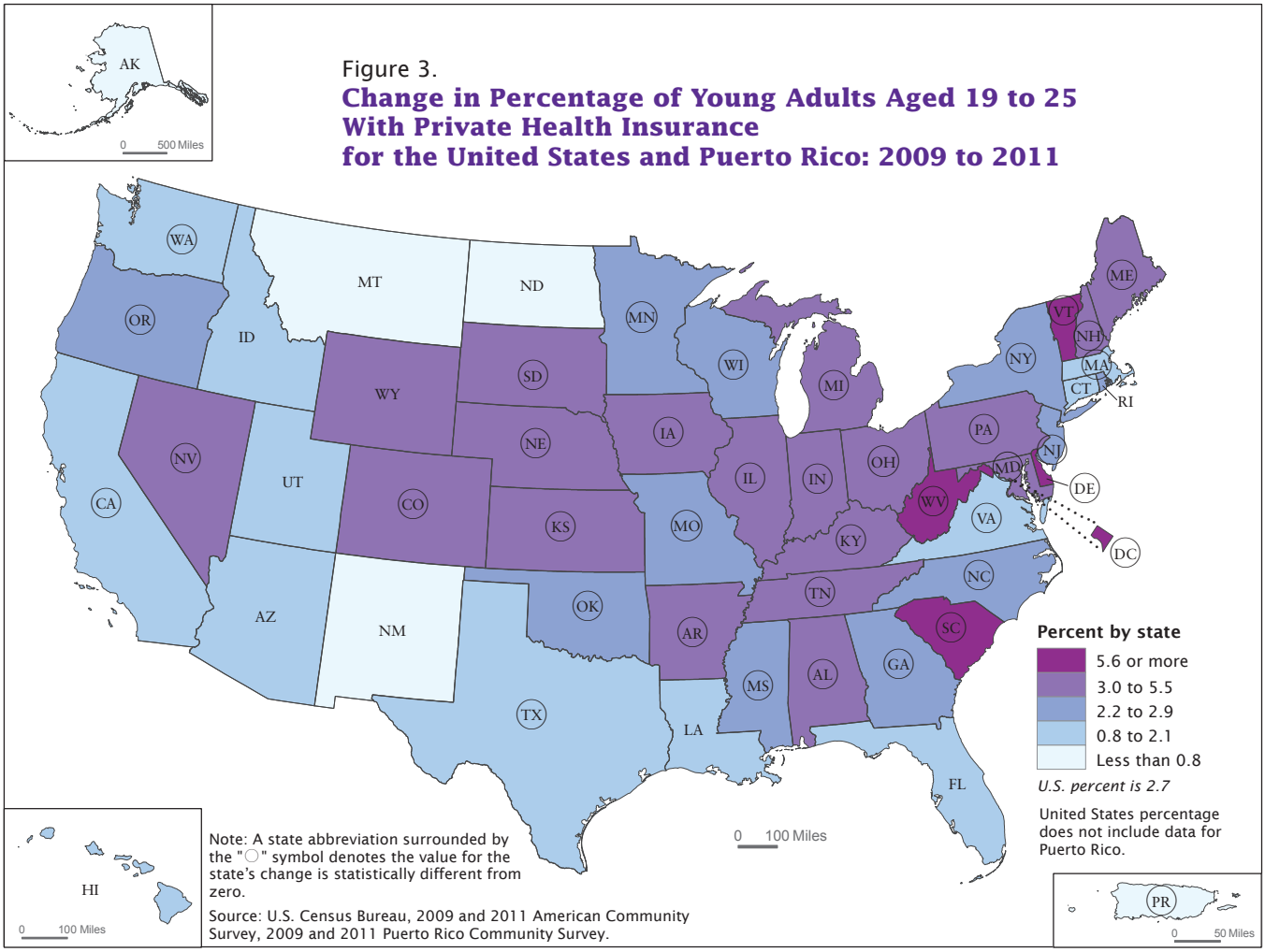
– Represents or rounds to zero.

* Statistically different from zero at the 90 percent confidence level.

[1] Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error is in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. This number when added to and subtracted from the estimate forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Surveys, 2009 and 2011 Puerto Rico Community Surveys.

Figure 3.
Change in Percentage of Young Adults Aged 19 to 25 With Private Health Insurance for the United States and Puerto Rico: 2009 to 2011



Note: A state abbreviation surrounded by the "○" symbol denotes the value for the state's change is statistically different from zero.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 and 2011 American Community Survey, 2009 and 2011 Puerto Rico Community Survey.

rate that were below the national average: California, Florida, New Mexico, and Texas.

Although the same number of states showed no change in the total insured rate and the privately insured rate (13), not all states showed a lack of change for both types of insurance. Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Hawaii, and Louisiana saw increases in the overall insured rate but not in the private health insurance rate, while Arkansas, Mississippi, New Hampshire, South Dakota, and Washington had increases in the privately insured rate but not in the overall insured rate. The states that did not show a change in either type of insurance rate were Alaska, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wyoming.

What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <www.census.gov/acs/www>.

SOURCE AND ACCURACY

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2011. The estimates based on this sample approximate the actual values and represent the entire household and group quarter population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based in a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for all estimates included in this report. All comparative statements in this report have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing, reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at <www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf>.