

# Survey Confirms Significant Drop In California's Uninsured

By Barbara Feder Ostrov | August 19, 2015

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The number of uninsured California adults under the age of 65 dropped by more than 15 percent between 2013 and 2014 because of the Affordable Care Act, including California's Medi-Cal expansion, according to data released Tuesday.

"We're seeing the biggest drop in the uninsured population in a generation," said David Dexter, communications coordinator for the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, an advocacy group.

But racial and ethnic disparities remain: Latino and Asian Californians are less likely to be insured than non-Hispanic whites.

The findings come from a wealth of new data on California adults and children released Tuesday by the [California Health Interview Survey](#), the nation's largest state health survey.

According to the survey, enrollment in Medi-Cal shot up as California expanded eligibility for the low-income health insurance program. Nearly 20 percent of adults under 65 were enrolled in 2014, up from 13 percent in 2013, the survey showed. Still, an estimated 4 million California adults remain uninsured.

Researchers, policymakers and health advocates use the survey data to understand the overall health of Californians, identify disparities, develop public health programs and examine the impact of health policies, including the Affordable Care Act, also known as

## Obamacare.

The percentage of uninsured African-American adults under 65 dropped significantly, from 18.4 percent in 2013 to 10.8 percent in 2014.

Yet Latinos remain uninsured at higher rates than non-Hispanic whites, African Americans and Asians: about 19 percent of Latinos of all ages reported having no health insurance in 2014, compared to about 6 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 7 percent of African Americans and 10.6 percent of Asians. Efforts to enroll Latinos in California's health exchange, Covered California, have [proved challenging](#), although recent outreach has been [more effective](#).

Dexter noted that the health insurance disparities are largely due to the number of Latinos who are ineligible for Medi-Cal or plans on California's health insurance exchange because they are not living in the country legally. In the coming years, it's likely that California's [remaining uninsured mostly will be people of color and people who lack legal immigration status](#) if no government action is taken, he noted.

The 2014 survey data also show that Californians continue to delay care because of cost or lack of insurance, although at a slower rate than before. About 51 percent of all state residents reported delaying care in 2014, down slightly from nearly 55 percent in 2013.

About 59 percent of Latinos reported delaying care in 2014 compared to 49 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 38 percent of African-Americans, and 39 percent of Asians.

Nearly 9 percent of Californians reported delaying or forgoing medication prescriptions in 2014, down slightly from more than 10 percent in 2013.

More than 23,000 Californians participated in the 2014 survey, answering questions by landline and cellphone on hundreds of health topics in English and other languages

including Spanish, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Mandarin, Tagalog and Korean. The survey program, based at the University of California, Los Angeles is funded by state and federal health agencies, foundations, health care providers and advocacy groups. From now on, it will release data every year instead of every other year.

Other findings from the California Health Interview Survey:

Screen and sedentary time: About 46 percent of children ages 2 to 11 reported spending two or more hours on weekdays in sedentary activities including watching TV, playing computer games or talking with friends. About 70 percent of children reported the same levels of sedentary activity on weekends.

Teens and cigarettes: About 2 percent of teens considered themselves smokers of either traditional or e-cigarettes in 2014, compared to about 6.5 percent in 2005.

Adult smoking: Nearly 12 percent of adults 18 and older are smokers, which may include traditional or e-cigarettes, but about 70 percent of those smokers have thought about quitting in the next 6 months.

Birth control: The “pill” remains the most popular method of family planning among women. Of nearly 2 million women ages 18 to 44 who received birth control from a doctor, nearly 57 percent were on the pill. Nearly 34 percent used intrauterine devices, implants and other hormonal methods.

[barbarafederostrov@gmail.com](mailto:barbarafederostrov@gmail.com)

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