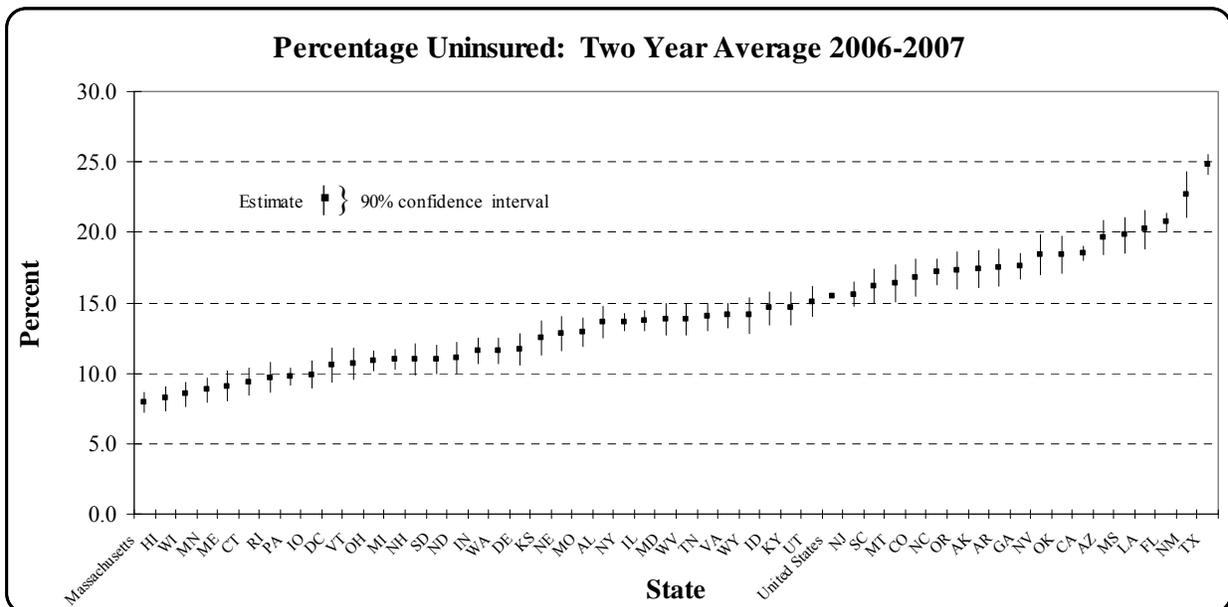




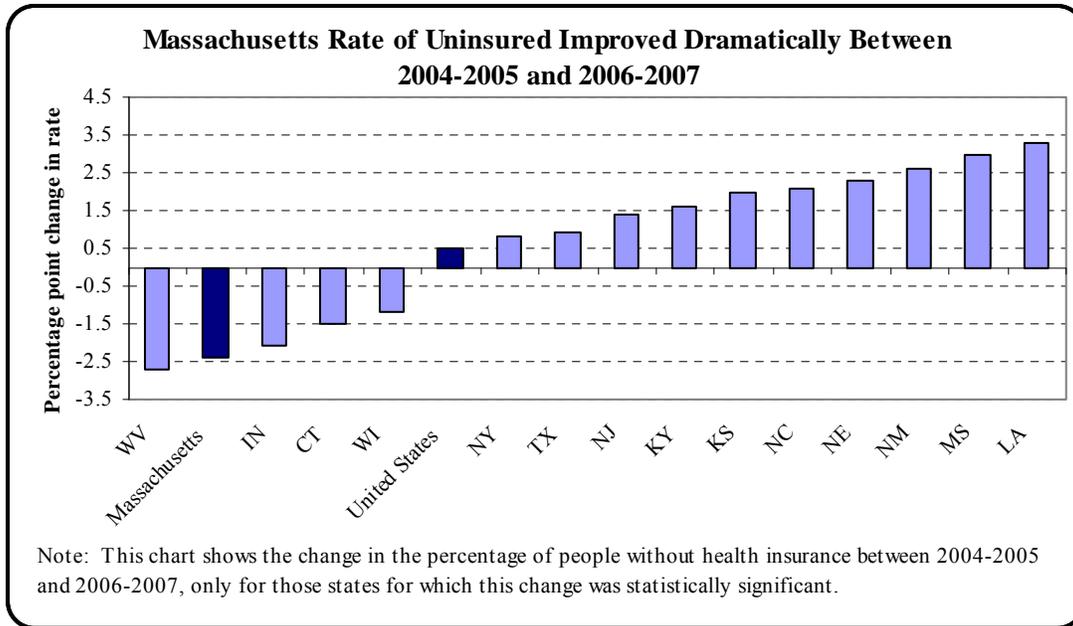
Census Bureau Estimates Confirm State’s Claims of Significant Drop in the Number of Uninsured in the Commonwealth

Massachusetts leads the nation with its high percentage of residents with health insurance according to the latest data released by the Census Bureau.

- The Census Bureau estimates that 7.9 percent of the Commonwealth’s population did not have health insurance during the 2006-2007 period. This is a 2.4 percentage point drop from the rate in 2004-2005. The national uninsurance rate was 15.5 percent in 2006-2007.



- The Census Bureau estimates an average of 498,500 persons without health insurance in Massachusetts during the 2006-2007 period. It is important to remember that this average includes an estimate from both 2006 prior to the implementation of the state’s health reform initiative, as well as estimates from 2007 once health reform was under way. It is likely that the next year’s Census Bureau estimates will show an even greater decline in the rate of uninsured.
- Massachusetts was one of fifteen states that showed a statistically significant change in the rate of uninsured, and was one of only five states that showed an improvement in the number of people with health insurance. In most states, the percentage of the population without health insurance increased.



- In 2007, the Census Bureau estimates that 45.7 million people went without health insurance in the United States, down from about 47.0 million in 2006. This represents a drop from 15.8 percent of the population without health insurance in 2006 to 15.3 percent without health insurance in 2007.
- Massachusetts is one of 32 states with health insurance rates better than the U.S. as a whole. The highest uninsurance rate is in Texas, where close to one in four residents is without health insurance.

The Census Bureau estimates are different from the single-year estimates released last week by the Massachusetts Division of Health Care Finance and Policy, but show exactly the same trend. The state survey estimated that the uninsurance rate in Massachusetts in 2007 was 5.7 percent, or 355,000 persons, down from 6.4 percent in 2006. This estimate is from 2007 only (rather than the Census Bureau's use of a two-year average).

The state survey has advantages over the Census Bureau numbers. It surveys a larger sample, and is therefore more likely to generate an accurate estimate, and its primary focus is on health insurance coverage.

On the other hand, the Census Bureau data are the only reliable sources for comparisons across states, and can be the best source for information about long-term trends. Even so, the Census Bureau has itself changed its survey methodology, so that certain comparisons across years have only limited reliability.

Methodological Notes

- Because of the small size of the sample the Census Bureau uses in its Current Population Survey (CPS), the Bureau uses two-year averages to present its data about health insurance rates in the individual states. Furthermore, each estimate is actually the center of a range, based around a 90 percent “confidence interval.” The 7.9 percent uninsured rate is actually the middle of a range estimating that the percent uninsured in Massachusetts during this period could be anywhere from 7.2 percent to 8.6 percent.
- Measuring health insurance coverage is particularly tricky. The CPS asks respondents whether they were covered by health insurance at any time during the previous year. “Health insurance” for these purposes includes any type of private or publicly-funded health insurance plan, including health insurance provided by a place of employment, purchased individually, or provided by a government entity. People were counted as “insured” if they indicated that they had any type of coverage during the year. The Census Bureau warns that their methodology tends to under-report the rate of health insurance, i.e. overstate uninsurance. (See Appendix C “Estimates of Health Insurance Coverage” p.59 in *Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007*, available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/p60-235.pdf>) For a discussion of the differences in the various survey methodologies, see Comm. of Mass., Division of Health Care Finance and Policy, “Estimates of the Uninsurance Rate in Massachusetts from Survey Data: Why Are They So Different?” August 19, 2008 available at http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dhcfp/r/pubs/08/est_of_uninsur_rate.pdf.