

CONTACT

Noah Berger 617-426-1228 x102
Nancy Wagman 617-426-1228 x 106
Jeff McLynch 617-426-1228 x103

**LATEST U.S. CENSUS DATA SHOW
PERCENTAGE WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE RISING IN MASSACHUSETTS;
NO IMPROVEMENT IN POVERTY; INCOMES STAGNANT**

BOSTON, MA – Demonstrating the difficulties the Commonwealth continues to face in recovering from the 2001 recession, data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2004 show that the percentage of people without health insurance in Massachusetts has risen, while both the Commonwealth’s median household income – a common benchmark of middle-class economic security – and its poverty rate remained statistically unchanged.

According to the Census Bureau, the percentage of people without health insurance in Massachusetts climbed from 10.3 percent for the 2002-2003 period to 11.2 percent for 2003-2004. (Because of the small size of the sample the Census Bureau uses in its Current Population Survey, it recommends using two-year averages to examine changes within a state over time.) This trend stands in contrast with data for the United States as a whole, where the percentage of people without health insurance held steady at close to 16 percent between 2003 and 2004. Nationally, there were close to 860,000 more people without health insurance in 2004 than in 2003.

“Today’s data from the Census Bureau show troubling increases in the percentage of Massachusetts residents without health insurance,” said Noah Berger, the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center (MBPC). “Although Massachusetts has historically been a leader in protecting access to health care, the recent trend has been in the wrong direction. Without state action to address the problem, more and more people in Massachusetts may find themselves unable to secure health insurance for their families.”

Over the past several years, the Commonwealth has seen no improvement in either its poverty rate or its median household income. For 2003-2004, the poverty rate in Massachusetts was 9.7 percent, a statistically insignificant change from the 2002-2003 rate of 10.1 percent. In constant 2004 dollars, median household income in Massachusetts was \$52,347 for the 2003-2004 period. For the 2002-2003 period, it was \$52,346, a difference so small that it too is not statistically significant. Median household income is a statistical measure indicating the exact middle of the range of all household incomes, such that half of all households have incomes below the median and half have incomes above it.

Median household income was stagnant across the United States as well, with the 2004 mark of \$44,389 representing no statistical change from the 2003 level of \$44,482. However, the poverty rate for the U.S. in its entirety rose for the fourth straight year, climbing from 12.5 percent to 12.7 percent between 2003 and 2004.

Summaries of the Census Bureau’s 2004 poverty, income, and health insurance coverage data for Massachusetts can be obtained at the MBPC’s web site, www.massbudget.org. Complete copies of the U.S. Census Bureau Report, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004*, are available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p60-229.pdf>.