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Census releases first-ever city and county uninsured estimates for Connecticut

CT Voices calls for Congressional action on health insurance reform

For the first time ever, the U.S. Census Bureau has released city-, county- and Congressional district-level estimates for health insurance coverage in Connecticut. Estimates for Connecticut city residents who were uninsured at the time they were surveyed for the American Community Survey in 2008 range from 11.8% in Waterbury to approximately 20% in Stamford, Bridgeport, and Danbury. In Connecticut, 9.0% (310,597) of all people in Connecticut were without health insurance at the time of the survey. Estimates for uninsured children range from 3.5% in New Haven to 13.4% in Danbury. In Connecticut, an estimated 4.9% of children under 18 (39,578) were uninsured at the time of the survey. In response to the findings, Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based policy think tank, called for Congressional action on health insurance reforms that would increase access to affordable health insurance for families.

“These new estimates bring the national problem of our broken health care system down to the local level,” said Sharon Langer, “We need action on health care reform from Congress before our economic downturn makes Connecticut’s health insurance problems even worse.”

Connecticut Voices pointed to the lower uninsured rates for children as compared to all residents as evidence of the state’s success in enrolling uninsured children in the state’s HUSKY health insurance program. The HUSKY program is funded by state and federal funds.

Estimates of uninsured rates varied significantly across Connecticut’s cities: Bridgeport (20.0%), Danbury (19.7%), Hartford (14.9%), New Britain (13.1%), New Haven (13.4%), Norwalk (14.6%), Stamford (20.0%), and Waterbury (11.8%). The percentage of children under 18 who were without health insurance in Connecticut cities was also reported: Bridgeport (10.8%), Danbury (13.4%), Hartford (6.4%), New Britain (9.2%), New Haven (3.5%), Norwalk (7.1%), Stamford (9.2%), and Waterbury (8.3%). Uninsured estimates are only available for cities with populations over 65,000. The American Community Survey also provided uninsured estimates for Connecticut’s counties and Congressional districts (summarized in the attached fact sheet).

In 2008, 15.1 % (45.1 million) of Americans were uninsured at the time of they were surveyed, according to the American Community Survey. Among children in the U.S., 9.9% (7.3 million) were uninsured.

“SustiNet, the universal health reform plan passed in the Connecticut General Assembly in July, will begin to address issues of the broken system in our state such as uninsurance,” said Juan A. Figueroa, president of Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut. “But we still need bold action in Washington to help Connecticut realize its goal of quality, affordable health care all we can all count on.”

“Uninsured rates as high as 20 percent in some Connecticut cities speaks to the crisis in our health care system,” commented Jim Horan, Executive Director of the Connecticut Association for Human Services. “Lack of access to affordable, quality health care hurts our families, our businesses, and in the long run, our economy.”

“The recession and job loss started in cities like Bridgeport well over a year ago. With job loss comes the loss of health insurance. We are deeply concerned about the consequences of the lack of health insurance for children and parents. National health reform, particularly a public option, is critical to ensure that all residents have equal access to affordable health care,” commented Barbara Edinberg, Acting Director of the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition.

Also, the median household income in Connecticut in 2008 was an estimated \$68,595, according to the Census data. There was no statistically significant change in median income in Connecticut from 2007.

This survey marks the first time the US Census Bureau included a question on health insurance coverage in its annual American Community Survey (ACS). The question asks whether the respondent is **currently covered by any type of insurance**. Since 2008 was the first year the ACS gathered this data, evaluating change over time in this measure is not yet possible. This “point in time” uninsured question in the ACS is different from the health insurance question asked in the Census Bureau’s 2008 Current Population Survey (CPS), released on September 10, 2009. The CPS asks whether respondents were **uninsured for the entire previous year**. CPS estimates of the uninsured are available only at the national and state levels. (See the attached fact sheet for more details on the surveys and methodological differences.)

Links to additional national, state, and local data on demographic, social, and housing indicators from the American Community Survey are available through the CT Voices site at www.ctkidslink.org/census.html. **See the attached CT Voices fact sheet for detailed survey results for Connecticut, its counties, Congressional districts, and cities; evaluation of the statistical significance of changes in state and national median household income estimates over time; and background on the measures.** Note: **Unless a change in Census estimates over time is statistically significant, it is not accurate to say that median family income has increased or declined in a city, county, or state.** The Census Bureau has not yet posted information on whether changes in median income estimates between 2007 and 2008 for Connecticut cities, Congressional districts, and counties were statistically significant. This news release and fact sheet are also available on the CT Voices Web site at www.ctkidslink.org.

Connecticut Voices for Children is a research-based policy think tank that works to advance strategic public investment and wise public policies to benefit our state's children, youth and families.

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