



New Census data show effects of recession in Iowa *Iowa findings show 9.3 percent uninsured, income down, poverty up*

A greater share of Iowans were uninsured, with poverty up and median household income down in 2010 from the 2008 recession year, according to data released Thursday by the Census Bureau.

The data released Thursday showed Iowa to have an uninsured rate of 9.3 percent in 2010, up from 8.7 percent in 2008, which was when the 2007 recession started showing its Iowa effects in job declines.

The data are significantly different from information released last week because the report comes from a separate, larger Census survey that is considered more reliable for state-level data.

“The common thread between the two different surveys is that Iowans are economically in worse shape as the result of the recession. While this is not surprising, it is important to see the magnitude of those effects,” said Noga O’Connor, research associate for the nonpartisan Iowa Policy Project (IPP).

“We know, for example, that no matter which measure you use, at least 1 in 11 Iowans were without insurance in 2010. This presents policy makers with important information at a time some are talking about cuts in Medicaid and Medicare. Even without cuts, more people lack coverage.”

The separate survey released last week showed a two-year average figure of 13 percent for 2009-10. However, that survey excluded Iowans over age 65, most of whom have coverage, and used a substantially smaller sample.

“More important than differences between surveys is the fact that both reports show a significant increase in the uninsured rate from early in the recession,” said O’Connor, who analyzed the data for the Iowa Fiscal Partnership (IFP).

She noted the decline in health coverage comes before the 2010 health-reform law has fully taken effect and now faces political and court challenges.

Thursday’s release from the American Community Survey (ACS) provides one-year estimates on various measures of economic well-being. The Current Population Survey (CPS), released last week, required two-year averages of state data because its samples are too small for individual state analysis.

Among findings from Thursday’s release of 2010 ACS data:

- The share of Iowans without health insurance jumped to 9.3 percent in 2010 (279,454 Iowans) from 8.7 percent in 2008.
- Poverty rose in Iowa to 12.6 percent from 11.6 percent two years earlier.
- Median household income in Iowa dropped to \$47,961 from \$49,454 in 2008. This 3 percent drop was less than the two-year drop of 4.7 percent in the U.S. median to \$50,046 in 2010, from \$52,488.

About the numbers

The data released today by the Census Bureau are from the American Community Survey (ACS), one of two Census surveys that are commonly cited about poverty and income in the United States. Last week, Census released and IFP reported on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), which covers a smaller portion of U.S. households.

Census recommends use of ACS data for state-level estimates of poverty and income. CPS data are considered good for national data and state historical trends. As a result, Iowa-specific observations drawn from ACS data today are considered better point-in-time data for state-level and smaller geographical level analysis.

In addition, the data showed a bright spot, in child health insurance coverage, as Iowa's 4 percent uninsured rate among those under 18 was sixth-lowest in the country, and down from 5.1 percent in 2008. The 4 percent uninsured among children includes 7,114 children under age 6, and 21,932 ages 6 to 17.

"The data last week indicated growth in the share of children receiving insurance through public programs," said Mike Crawford, senior associate at the Child & Family Policy Center (CFPC) in Des Moines, which is part of the Iowa Fiscal Partnership. "This would appear to be one more sign that Iowa's strides in children's health coverage are making a positive impact."

Child poverty, however, rose over the two years to 16.3 percent from 14.4 percent.

"Iowa's recovery in the job market has been slow, and the child poverty figures are cause for concern. Will policy makers in Washington step up to meet the needs of these children?" said Crawford, who is also director of CFPC's Iowa Kids Count project. CFPC is also part of the Iowa Fiscal Partnership.

The ACS information also noted the importance of public services to vulnerable Iowans, with 10.8 percent receiving SNAP (formerly Food Stamps). In addition, 4 percent received Supplemental Security Income. Both percentages were significantly higher than any year since 2006.

By congressional district

- **Income:** State median was \$47,961; **District 1** – \$46,704; **District 2** – \$48,387; **District 3** – \$51,542; **District 4** – \$47,317; **District 5** – \$46,031.
- **Poverty:** State poverty level was 12.6 percent; **District 1** – 13.7 percent; **District 2** – 13.2 percent; **District 3** – 11.3 percent; **District 4** – 12.3 percent; **District 5** – 12.4 percent.
- **Child poverty:** State child poverty level was 16.3 percent; **District 1** – 19.2 percent; **District 2** – 15.2 percent; **District 3** – 14.9 percent; **District 4** – 15 percent; **District 5** – 17.2 percent.
- **Health insurance:** State rate of uninsured was 9.3 percent; **District 1** – 8.4 percent; **District 2** – 9.3 percent; **District 3** – 9.6 percent; **District 4** – 8.7 percent; **District 5** – 10.7 percent.

Comparison to other states

- At 9.3 percent, Iowa's uninsured rate was seventh-lowest nationally. All nine states in the region saw statistically significant increases from 2008.
- Iowa's overall poverty rate (12.6 percent) was lower than the national average (15.3) and all states in the region except Minnesota (11.6 percent). All states in the region saw an increase in the poverty rate in 2010 from 2008. Missouri and Indiana were highest in the region, at 15.3 percent.
- At \$47,961, Iowa's median household income in 2010 was below the national average of \$50,046, and below that of all states in the region except Indiana, South Dakota and Missouri, which was low at \$44,301. Minnesota was highest at \$55,459. Only Minnesota and Illinois (\$52,972) topped the national average.

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