



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 24, 2014

Official ObamaCare Stats Remain Unknown

Despite assertions that the glitches in the ObamaCare website have been remedied, the federal government is still unable to accurately provide the data related to enrollment. There are no available statistics that relate just how many of the uninsured have been insured as a result of the new healthcare law.



Politico writes, “The Obama administration hasn’t been able to say how many of the 3.3 million people who have signed up for private health insurance coverage, or of the 6.3 million who have been determined eligible for Medicaid, were actually uninsured before — and healthcare experts aren’t sure yet, either.”

There are varying surveys and at least one state, New York, has been tracking how many people were uninsured when they applied for coverage. However, the results of the various surveys are so different from one another that the best guess is that either a small portion were uninsured, or nearly all of them were.

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The lack of statistical data makes it difficult for the Obama administration to honestly tout the benefits of the new healthcare law. Politico explains, “The search for real, trustworthy numbers shows just how hard it is to track how many uninsured people are gaining health coverage in anything close to real time, and even harder to link those changes directly to the ACA.” The best way to have done that would have been to ask consumers at the time of enrollment whether they were currently uninsured, a question that apparently was not posed during the ObamaCare enrollment season. Enrollment questions are worded differently on the paper and online applications, and since they do not specifically ask whether applicants currently have health insurance at the time of enrollment, it is difficult to ascertain the impact of the healthcare law on the uninsured.

Aaron Albright, a spokesman for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, says the administration is “currently evaluating if additional data may be needed to accurately answer this question, and we hope to have this data in the future.”

In addition to this issue, the numbers will not be final until enrollment season ends on March 31. Healthcare analysts predict a final wave of enrollments just before the close of enrollment season, particularly among young people. But the actual number may still be difficult to determine since not everyone who enrolls is likely to pay their premiums, which would result in a lack of coverage.

“It’s going to take some time,” said Edwin Park, vice president for health policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. “I know everyone wants to know, ‘X percent was uninsured,’ but what we know so far is mostly anecdotal, and it’s probably not accurately capturing what’s going on.”



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Some figures reveal that there has been a reduction in the number of uninsured, particularly among young people, but this may be because the law permits young adults up to the age of 26 to remain on their parents' health insurance plans. As a result, an estimated three million young adults have gained coverage, according to the administration.

CBO estimates indicate that by the end of this year, there should be a 13-million drop in the number of uninsured Americans this year, and by 2016, the number should increase to 25 million no longer uninsured.

A January Gallup Poll shows that the uninsured rate dropped from 17.3 percent to 16.1 percent in one month, but those figures may not be a result of ObamaCare enrollment. Park speculates that it could simply mean the economy has improved.

"We're not really going to know very accurately for a long time," said Joe Antos, a healthcare expert at the American Enterprise Institute.

The Avalere health consulting firm assumes approximately 80 percent of the new Medicaid enrollees are people who were uninsured, based on past data, but admits it is a rough estimate.

And whether new people are coming in as a result of ObamaCare is another story. An analysis conducted by Avalere concludes that just 1.1 to 1.8 million people, and not the 6.3 million, signed up because of the healthcare law.

Meanwhile, who is paying for the uninsured to be insured? The taxpayers, of course. Bloomberg News reports that the \$150 billion required over the next decade to help fund ObamaCare is being passed on to the taxpayers.

Bloomberg writes, "Congress passed the insurer tax four years ago to help cover the uninsured under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Now the industry is pushing to include some of the cost in contracts with Medicaid programs for the poor that are jointly funded by state and federal governments."

As the tax takes effect this year, companies managing Medicaid plans are arguing that the added cost should be shifted, with the states seemingly in compliance. The result is "very circular," with the U.S. government raising money from insurers then handing at least part of it back, said Shawn Guertin, [Aetna \(AET\)](#) Inc.'s chief financial officer.

The tax "doesn't make any sense to be levied on the Medicaid HMOs," Thomas Carroll, an analyst at Baltimore-based Stifel Nicolaus & Co., said in a telephone interview. "It's all going to be paid by the taxpayers."

Money Morning indicates that analysts have estimated the cost of Obamacare on the average taxpayer will be approximately \$6,000 per year in extra taxes — taxes such as the investment income surtax, a Medicare payroll tax, and a "tanning tax" on those who use indoor tanning salons.

"Many of those hidden taxes, especially those on hospitals, insurers and medical device manufacturers, will ultimately be passed on through higher health costs," said Michael Tanner, an expert on the healthcare law.

The cost will not simply fall on those making over \$250,000 a year, as promised by President Obama, but will land directly on the backs of the middle class.

The impact on the middle class is worth emphasizing. While incomes for the rich have continued to



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increase this decade, wages for the middle class have either stayed the same or decreased since 2008. Money Morning notes that some of the benefits of the new healthcare law, including the requirement that insurance companies cover pre-existing conditions, “don’t compensate for the bill’s high cost — especially in new taxes.”



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