

## The Health Care Insecurity Index

**Do you have health care you can count on?  
More than 88 million Americans don't.**

Health insurance reform will end the anxieties Americans face about their health care. It will deliver **stability and security** to the middle class by ensuring that no one can be denied insurance or charged higher premiums for a pre-existing condition. It will also help Americans facing skyrocketing premiums and high out-of-pocket costs. For too many Americans today, health care is insecure or unstable:

- Half of all Americans ages 18 to 64 and their families—88 million Americans—have experienced at least one of the following risk factors that makes their health care insecure:
  - **46 million Americans** have a serious **pre-existing condition**, such as diabetes or a heart problem, which can make it harder or more expensive to get coverage.
    - » 11 million Americans have diabetes.
    - » 10 million have heart disease.
    - » 9 million have battled cancer.
  - **37 million Americans** had a **gap in their insurance** during the last year.
  - **23 million Americans** have **high premiums** that consume more than 1 out of every 8 dollars earned or high out-of-pocket costs.
  - **20 million Americans** have **skipped a doctor's visit** due to costs.
- **42% of Americans** have switched health care plans in the last five years—the majority of them involuntarily.
- **38% of Americans** say they worry about losing coverage in the next five year.
- **54% of Americans** fear that premiums will keep rising until they can no longer afford insurance.
- Health insurance premiums have risen an inflation-adjusted 79% in the last decade. The average cost of a family policy this year is \$13,375 compared to \$7,452 in 1999 (in 2009 dollars). If premiums continue to rise at these rates, a family policy will cost \$23,941 in today's dollars by 2019.



# Notes

## Data sources and methodology

Third Way's analysis of health care insecurity is based on the Centers for Disease Control's 2008 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), which included more than 74,000 people. The annual survey is the main source of information about the health of Americans. It also asks questions about health insurance coverage and access to care.

Based on this survey, we calculated that 88 million working-age citizens ages 18-64 (or 52%) experienced at least one of the four risk factors described above.

Because many people face more than one of these sources of insecurity, the numbers add up to greater than 88 million and 52%.

Polling data comes from a survey by Third Way and Benenson Strategy Group, 1200 likely voters, May 27-June 2, 2009.

## Costs

Our analysis of costs is based on various definitions of affordability in the House and Senate HELP Committee bills. These bills define spending on insurance premiums as "unaffordable" if it exceeds a certain percentage of household income (12% in the House bill and 12.5% in the Senate HELP Committee bill).

Similarly, the House bill defines out-of-pocket costs as "high" if they exceed a percentage of household income, based on a sliding scale. (For example, a family whose income is 350% of the federal poverty line has "high" out-of-pocket costs if those costs exceed 30% of their income, whereas a family whose income is only 150% of the poverty line has "high" costs if those costs exceed 3% of their income.)

## Pre-existing conditions

For purposes of our analysis, pre-existing conditions include the following:

- Body mass index 40+
- Cancer
- Cerebral palsy
- Dementia
- Diabetes
- Epilepsy
- Fibromyalgia
- Heart attack
- Heart disease
- Seizures
- Stroke
- Hepatitis
- HIV/AIDS
- Liver condition
- Lupus
- Macular degeneration
- Multiple sclerosis
- Muscular dystrophy
- Parkinson's disease
- Rheumatoid arthritis