

GBPI

Georgia Budget and Policy Institute

STATE HEALTH FACTS

MORE GEORGIANS LACK EMPLOYER COVERAGE; FIND THEMSELVES UNINSURED

GEORGIA'S UNINSURED RATE CONTINUES TO EXCEED NATIONAL AVERAGE

New Census figures released in September 2010 show just how hard the recession hit Georgia individuals and families. The number of uninsured residents in Georgia grew by 175,000 from 2006/07 to 2008/09. As a result, the rate of non-elderly Georgians without health insurance coverage has increased to 20.8 percent, which is more than one in five residents of the state.

Georgia's uninsured rate exceeds the national average by 2.7 percentage points, and the number of Georgians lacking health insurance is the 5th highest in the nation.

The U.S. Census Bureau recommends using 2-year averages for state figures. As a result, these figures may not show the true extent of coverage losses due to the recession, as 2008 figures used in these averages are still in part "pre-recession" figures.

DECLINING EMPLOYER COVERAGE DRIVES INCREASES IN UNINSURED RATES

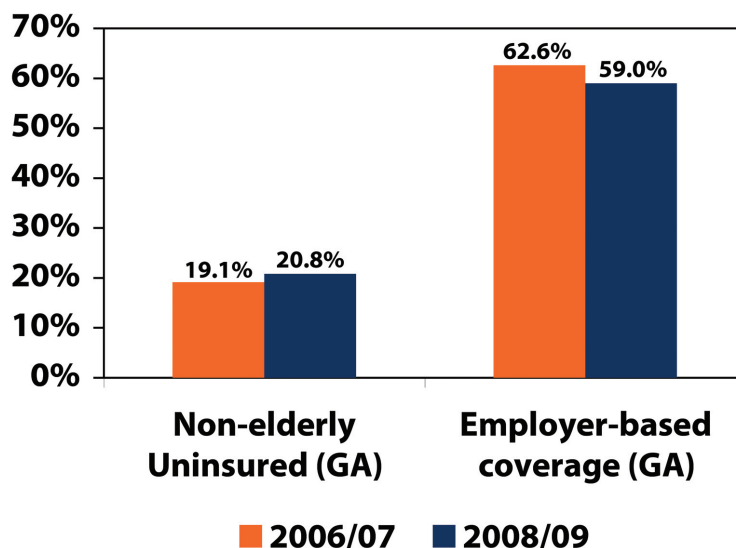
A decline in the percent of Georgians who are insured through an employer sponsored health plan was a key factor driving the increase in Georgia's uninsured rate. From the 2-year period before the recession (2006/07) to the most recent 2-year period (2008/09), the percent of non-elderly Georgians with employer coverage fell from 62.6 percent to just 59 percent.

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

GEORGIA CAN MAKE EXPANDING ACCESS TO HEALTH COVERAGE A PRIORITY: Lawmakers and state leaders should move forward in planning for the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in Georgia so that Georgia's uninsured residents can benefit from new coverage options that will be available in 2014.

New federal funds to expand Medicaid and subsidize private health insurance can make a substantial dent in Georgia's uninsured population, which is currently the 5th largest in the nation.

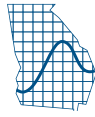
UNINSURED AND EMPLOYER COVERAGE
IN 2006/07 AND 2008/09



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

THOUGHTFUL ANALYSIS...RESPONSIBLE POLICY

100 Edgewood Avenue, Suite 950, Atlanta, GA 30303 | Ph: 404.420.1324 | Fax: 404.420.1329 | www.GBPI.org



CURRENT PROGRAMS KEEPING CHILDREN AND ELDERLY COVERED THROUGH THE RECESSION

Georgia's children and elderly populations have not experienced the same declines in health insurance coverage as have Georgia's working-age adults. In particular, Georgia's Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids programs have enabled children to maintain access to health insurance coverage, while the federal Medicare program helps keep Georgia's uninsured rate for elderly residents below 3 percent.

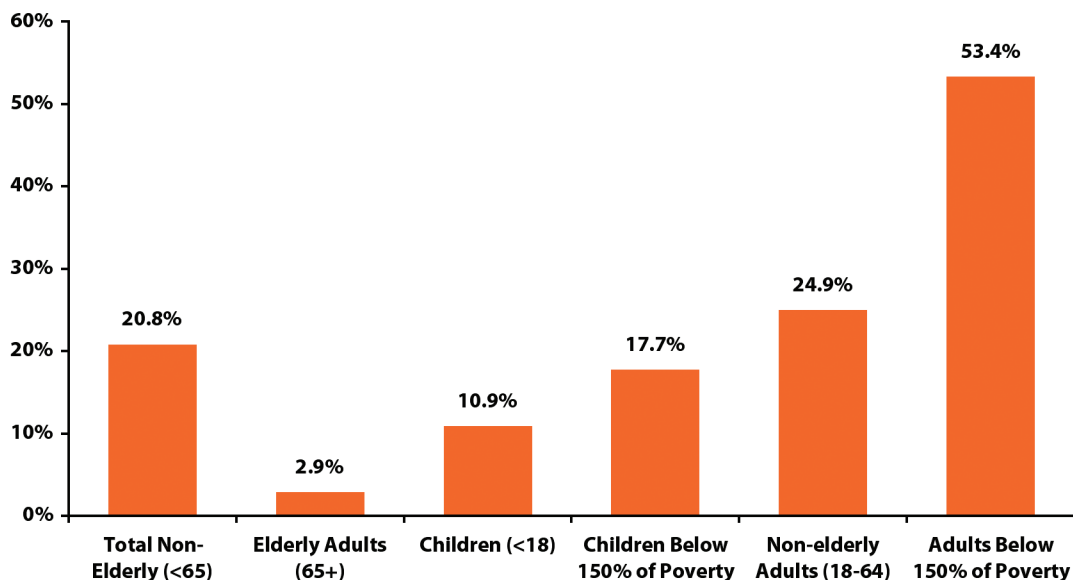
Georgia's low Medicaid eligibility levels for adults, however, help contribute to a much higher rate of uninsurance for Georgia's working-age adult population. In fact, the uninsured rate for adults was more than twice the uninsured rate for children, and the uninsured rate for adults with incomes below 150 percent of poverty was approximately three-times the rate for children from these families.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT PROVISIONS SEEK TO EXPAND COVERAGE TO MORE ADULTS

The Medicaid expansion and the creation of health insurance exchanges (and the accompanying subsidies) included in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will take effect in 2014. These new resources will significantly expand access to affordable coverage for Georgia's adults who currently have few affordable options when coverage is not offered through an employer. The Affordable Care Act also includes new tax credits to help small employers pay for health insurance for their employees.

In total, the new options available through the Affordable Care Act will significantly reduce the number of Georgians without health insurance. Some of these changes do not go into effect for several years, however, so additional efforts will be needed to slow the rate of growth in the uninsured population until these options become available.

GEORGIA'S CHILDREN & ELDERLY MORE LIKELY TO HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE IN 2008/09, COMPARED TO NON-ELDERLY ADULTS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau