

Number of uninsured in California counties grew during recession

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A new fact sheet from the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research provides detailed county-by-county estimates of the number of California residents who have lost health insurance during the economic downturn.

Following on a statewide estimate published earlier this year, the new analysis finds that the number of Californians without [health insurance](#) grew in all counties and that 37 counties — from Imperial to Kern to Shasta — saw uninsured rates increase to nearly one-third of their total non-elderly population (ages 0-64) for all or part of 2009.

Loss of health insurance was concentrated in counties in Southern California (Imperial, Riverside and San Bernardino), the San Joaquin Valley (all counties) and the Northern/Sierra areas (every county but Sutter and Humbolt), all of which had 2009 uninsured rates that were above the statewide average of 24 percent.

The losses were due to sharp increases in local unemployment and corresponding drops in both household income and job-based coverage, the report's authors said.

The authors also noted that major elements of the national health care reform legislation aimed at helping middle- and lower-income families will not go into effect until 2014. Included among these provisions are federal subsidies for purchasing health insurance through a state-based health insurance exchange and a federally funded expansion of Medi-

Cal.

"[Health care reform](#) is several years away, but families are dealing with health problems right now," said Shana Alex Lavarreda, lead researcher on the fact sheet. "Every effort should be made to help families in need even sooner than 2014."

The county estimates were based on a [simulation model](#) that predicted changes in county-level uninsurance using data from the 2007 California Health Interview Survey adjusted with 2009 county unemployment rates, and taking into account simultaneous decreases in household income. The model also included county-level increases in public health insurance from 2007 to 2009, based on administrative data from Medi-Cal and Healthy Families enrollment counts.

More information: View the fact sheet, "California's Uninsured by County." [www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/News ... seDetails.aspx?id=61](http://www.healthpolicy.ucla.edu/News...seDetails.aspx?id=61)

Provided by University of California - Los Angeles

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