

US says 129 million people have health woes

January 18 2011

As many as 129 million people in the United States, or almost half of those under 65, have a pre-existing condition that could bar them from health insurance, a government report said Tuesday.

The report was issued by the Department of Health and Human Services just as lawmakers were poised to debate a Republican-backed bill that aims to repeal President Barack Obama's healthcare reform law, signed last year.

Between 50 to 129 million Americans under 65 have a condition, such as asthma, [high blood pressure](#), arthritis or cancer, which could be considered a pre-existing condition by [private health insurance](#) companies, the report said.

More specifically, the study said 25 million people under 65 with a pre-existing condition are currently not insured.

Obama's law, which is being enacted in stages and comes fully into force in 2014, would make it illegal for [insurance companies](#) to discriminate against people by denying coverage to those with health problems.

"The [Affordable Care](#) Act is stopping insurance companies from discriminating against Americans with pre-existing conditions and is giving us all more freedom and control over our health care decisions," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

"The new law is already helping to free Americans from the fear that an

insurer will drop, limit or cap their coverage when they need it most," she said.

The study also noted that "15 to 30 percent of people under age 65 in perfectly good health today are likely to develop a pre-existing condition over the next eight years."

Critics of Obama's [healthcare reform](#) package dismissed the report as pure politicking.

"I just don't believe the Department of Health and Human services, which is putting out left-wing propaganda," Republican and former House speaker Newt Gingrich told ABC news.

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