

'Obamacare' helping young adults get health insurance: report

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Trend largely due to letting them stay on parents' plans longer, experts say.

(HealthDay)—More young adults have health insurance now than three years ago. And many of them are getting that coverage under a provision of the Affordable Care Act that allows them to stay on their parents' health policies until they turn 26, U.S. health officials reported Wednesday.

From the last six months of 2010, when the law took effect, through the last six months of 2012, the percentage of those aged 19 to 25 with [private health insurance](#) rose from 52 percent to nearly 58 percent, according to researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

An early provision of the health-reform law allowed children to remain

covered by their parents' plan for the longer period. This benefit of the Affordable Care Act, which is sometimes called "Obamacare," appears to account for most of the increase in the number of young adults with private health insurance.

The CDC undertook the study because, although there was anecdotal evidence of an increase in the number of young adults being covered, there wasn't much proof.

"The assumption is that the ability of young adults to stay on their parents' plans [is responsible for the increase], but there is not really a lot of research providing evidence for that. We really wanted to dig into it," said Whitney Kirzinger, a statistician at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics and lead author of the report.

"We found young adults were less likely to obtain coverage in their own name and more likely to obtain coverage in another family member's name," Kirzinger said.

The findings are published in the December issue of the CDC's *NCHS Data Brief*.

Obamacare has gotten off to a rocky start, with a rash of problems plaguing the launch of the HealthCare.gov website. But in general, the young adult-insurance provision has been among the more popular items within the Affordable Care Act.

Other highlights of the new report include the following:

- From 2008 to 2012, the rate of young adults who had a gap in coverage dropped from 10.5 percent to 7.8 percent. However, the gap increased in the first half of 2011.
- From the last half of 2010 through 2012, the percentage of

young adults who had insurance in their own name dropped from nearly 41 percent to slightly more than 27 percent.

- During that same time period, the percentage of young adults who had insurance through their employers rose from 85.6 percent to 92.5 percent.

"Although we have heard stories of many young adults acquiring coverage through their parents' plan, this really documents that trend and shows us that the Affordable Care Act is actually providing new and good options for many young adults," said Kathleen Stoll, director of health policy at Families USA, a health care advocacy group.

Sara Collins, vice president of the [health care coverage](#) and access program at the Commonwealth Fund, agreed that the increase in those staying on their parents' plans is a hopeful sign.

"This adds more evidence to prior research of how successful this provision has been in the Affordable Care Act, allowing young adults to join their parents' plans," Collins said.

"This is the first time we have seen a decline in number of uninsured young adults. This provision has exceeded expectations," she added.

Stoll said that as more young adults age out of eligibility for their [parents'](#) plans, they are likely to get their own plans through health marketplaces such as HealthCare.gov.

Moving forward, many young adults will be eligible for financial assistance in the form of a tax cut to help them buy a private [health insurance plan](#), she noted.

"That tax credit will be quite robust for many young adults, who often don't have a lot of income as they launch their careers," Stoll said.

Some young adults don't see the need to pay for [health insurance](#), because they think they're "invincible," Stoll pointed out.

"But many [young adults](#) have experienced, in their own life or among their peers, how quickly health can deteriorate. A sudden illness or unexpected injury can leave you vulnerable, not only physically but financially. It can put you back for years. Medical debt can really change a young person's options," she said.

Young adults do have to be educated about the benefits of being insured and the tax cuts that will make it affordable, Stoll said.

More information: To learn more about the Affordable Care Act, visit [Families USA](#).

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