



ENDING POVERTY

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NEW DATA SHOWS MOST SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN UNINSURED INDIVIDUALS IN ALMOST A DECADE

Two Million More People Nationwide are Without Health Insurance; Illinois' Poverty Rate Drops

CHICAGO, IL, September 26, 2019 – Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau revealed that health insurance coverage rates **declined throughout the nation for the first time since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA)**. The number of uninsured people climbed by two million people from 25.6 million (7.9%) in 2017 to 27.5 million people (8.5%) in 2018. While Illinois's overall uninsured rate stayed the same as last year, uninsured rates for non-seniors went up from 7.8% in 2017 to 8.1% in 2018. And Illinois saw a decline in Medicaid coverage for over 106,000 non-seniors from 2017 to 2018, a drop of 0.8 percentage points. Almost all of the people who lost Medicaid were in the Chicago six county area. These new data show us that the years of positive trends in increasing coverage seem to have come to an extreme halt.

"The historic gains in health coverage made possible by the Affordable Care Act have slowed and are now reversing," said Katie Buitrago, Director of Research at Heartland Alliance. "These data are deeply concerning and suggest that the unrelenting opposition to the ACA and continuous threats to public programs are taking a toll on those who need these services most."

The repeal of the individual mandate, the gutting of the enrollment assistance programs, and the expansion of low-quality "short-term" health plans have sown confusion throughout communities and contributed to this drop in coverage. But it is not only the executive orders, bureaucratic barriers, and regulatory changes that have resulted in millions more going uninsured—the Trump Administration's anti-immigrant policies have also contributed to coverage losses. **Latino Americans experienced a 1.6 percentage point decline in coverage, with non-citizens experiencing an even higher 2.3 percentage point decline.** This dramatic rise in the uninsured rate strongly suggests that immigrant communities are being discouraged from signing up for health coverage and public benefits. The recent "public charge" rule change that penalizes immigrants seeking to naturalize if they are low-income or use public benefits is a prime example of the policy proposals that lead to this sort of chilling effect.

"These attacks on families are pushing people into poverty and into the shadows," said Dan Rabbitt, Heartland Alliance Health Policy Expert. "Families are being forced, out of fear and necessity, to decide if they should obtain health coverage, and that is not a decision anyone should be forced to make. Our leaders should be working to provide quality, affordable health care to all, reduce out of pocket health costs, and increase coverage options for immigrants, not chipping away at supports that keep our communities healthy."

In addition to this nationwide decline in the number of uninsured, the new data found that the official poverty rate in the United States declined to 11.8 percent, a 0.5 percentage point drop from 2017, and **Illinois' rate dropped to 12.1 percent**. This year marks the first time that the U.S. poverty rate is below pre-recession levels; Illinois lags behind this trend, with its poverty rate just returning to pre-recession levels. While we are pleased to see the poverty rate moving in the right direction, we can't lose sight of the fact that a staggering **38.1 million Americans and 1.5 million Illinoisans are living in poverty and still struggling every day to meet their most basic needs.**

Heartland Alliance Poverty Experts Available for Commentary

Additional findings from the release revealed:

- **Nearly 700,000 Illinoisans are living in extreme poverty**—meaning a family of three is living on less than about \$9,993 per year. It is estimated that a family of three in Illinois needs \$64,000 a year to make ends meet.
- There are **1.5 million people experiencing poverty in Illinois**—just as high as pre-recession poverty rates. Poverty rates are 1.7 to 3 times higher for Illinoisans of color.
- **Illinois median household income stayed the same from 2017 to 2018, and is now \$65,030.** Income is still two percent below its 2007 level. Black households in Illinois were the only major racial/ethnic group to experience an increase in household income. The median income for white households in Illinois is 1.3 to 1.8 times higher than median incomes for Latino and Black households.
- **Poverty rates for children, single-mother families, and communities of color remain dramatically higher than the overall rate.** 40 percent of Illinoisans in poverty work, and 30 percent of Illinoisans in poverty are children. Nearly half (49 percent) of Illinoisans in poverty are Black or Latino.
- 23% of Illinois renter households **pay more than half of their income in rent.**
- Nationwide, **poverty rates for female-headed family households (26.8 percent) dropped to the lowest rate on record** and accounted for a large proportion in the decline of the nation's poverty rate. Despite this positive trend, **poverty rates for female-headed family households are still double those of male-headed families** (13.1 percent) and **five times higher than married-couple families** (5.4 percent).

[Read the fact sheet](#) on Illinois and Chicago region poverty, income, and health insurance trends based on the newly released data.

[Access interactive local data](#) for Chicago Community Areas, all cities and townships in the 6-county Chicago metropolitan region, and all counties in Illinois.

[Access the Census Bureau's local demographic, social, economic, and housing data](#) that were released today for places with populations of 65,000 or more. Contact Heartland Alliance for assistance accessing and interpreting the data.

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Heartland Alliance for Human Rights & Human Needs – Heartland Alliance, one of the world's leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. It provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of health, housing, jobs, and justice – and leads state and national policy efforts, which target lasting change for individuals and society. For more information visit, www.heartlandalliance.org or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/heartlandhelps> or like us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/heartlandalliance>.

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