

Oklahoma's Uninsured

According to the Census Bureau's 2012 Current Population Survey, more than 636,000 Oklahomans were uninsured in 2011. Approximately 67,000 of the uninsured Oklahomans were children age 18 and younger.

Uninsured children are caught in an unforgiving gap. Surprisingly, many are not children of Oklahoma's poorest families. In some cases, their parents earn too much for the children to qualify for traditional SoonerCare, but too little to afford the purchase of private insurance and associated costs.

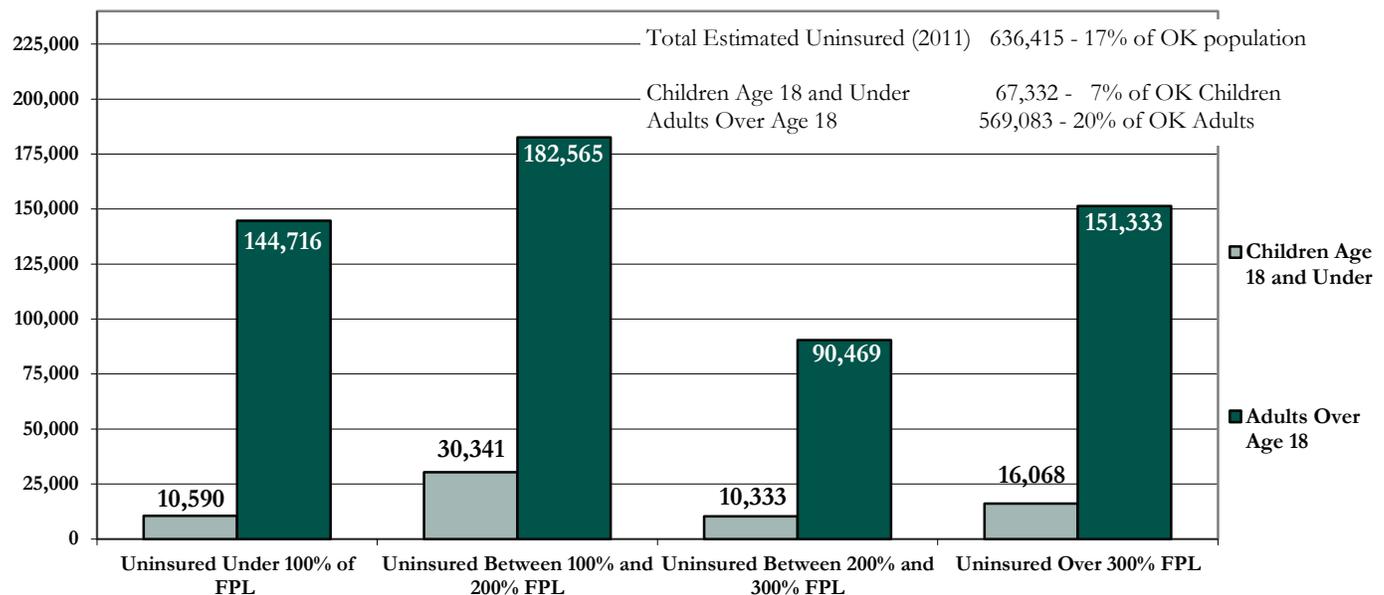
Children without health care insurance have substantially less access to health care services, including preventive care that ensures, childhood immunizations are up to date, routine dental care and vision and hearing screening are provided. Care for uninsured children is far more likely to be delayed due to cost. Unmet health care needs reduce children's ability to learn and to grow into healthy and productive adults.

For adults, being uninsured even on a temporary basis can have serious implications for state economies. Uninsured workers are less likely to receive adequate and timely health care and, as a result, suffer more serious illnesses that often threaten their work productivity and job retention.

Despite access problems and other barriers, uninsured Oklahomans still receive some health care. Studies indicate that, on average, these individuals do not pay for more than half of their health care costs. Obviously, others are stepping in to pick up the tab.

The burden is distributed very unevenly throughout the health care delivery system. Some providers serve very few uninsured people, while others face great cost pressures because they serve very large uninsured populations. Additionally, if people who have access problems could get proper care at a clinic or doctor's office, they would be less likely to go to the emergency room. This would free up emergency rooms to treat life-threatening events and reduce costs.

FIGURE 14 OKLAHOMA UNINSURED ESTIMATES BY FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL



Source: U.S. Census, Current Population Survey (CPS) 2011 Poverty universe data collected 2012.