



NYC Vital Signs

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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New Yorkers Without Health Care Coverage Are Not Getting the Care They Need

Every major survey has found low health care coverage rates in New York City (NYC) compared to the rest of New York State and to the nation as a whole. Over the past 2 years, estimates of the number of New Yorkers age 18 to 64 with no health coverage have ranged from 700,000 to 1.6 million, depending on the questions asked and the study design. In this report, we focus on the impact of health coverage on the ability to access care.

Most New Yorkers without coverage do not have a personal doctor and are much less likely than those with coverage to get the care they need. Particularly high proportions of individuals without coverage are

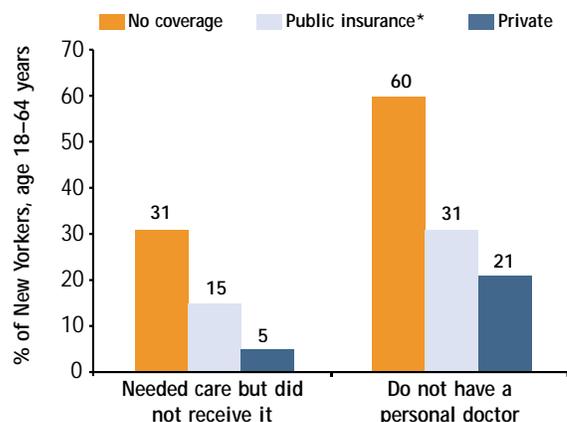
found among foreign-born populations, Asians and Hispanics, young adults, low-income households, and the unemployed. However, 61% of those lacking coverage are employed. Compared to people with health coverage, those without are much less likely to get essential check-ups, screenings, and preventive care. As a result, treatable medical conditions often go undetected, ultimately leading to avoidable emergency department visits and hospital stays. Increasing access to care for all New Yorkers, including those with no health care coverage, is a vital component of improving the health of city residents.

Note: This report, like other NYC Vital Signs, is based on the 2002 New York City Community Health Survey, in which approximately 10,000 adults were interviewed by telephone about their health and the health of their families. For full survey details, see: <http://www.nyc.gov/health/survey>.

Many New Yorkers are not getting the medical care they need

- 1 More than half a million New Yorkers reported needing medical care in the past 12 months, but not receiving it.
- 1 31% of adults with no health coverage were unable to get necessary health care when they needed it—twice the rate of publicly insured people and 6 times that of people with private insurance.
- 1 1.4 million New Yorkers do not have a personal doctor. 60% of those without health care coverage did not have a doctor, twice the rate of people with public insurance, and 3 times the rate of those with private insurance.
- 1 Surprisingly, nearly 70% of adults without a personal doctor *did* have health coverage.

New Yorkers without health coverage are more likely to go without needed medical care

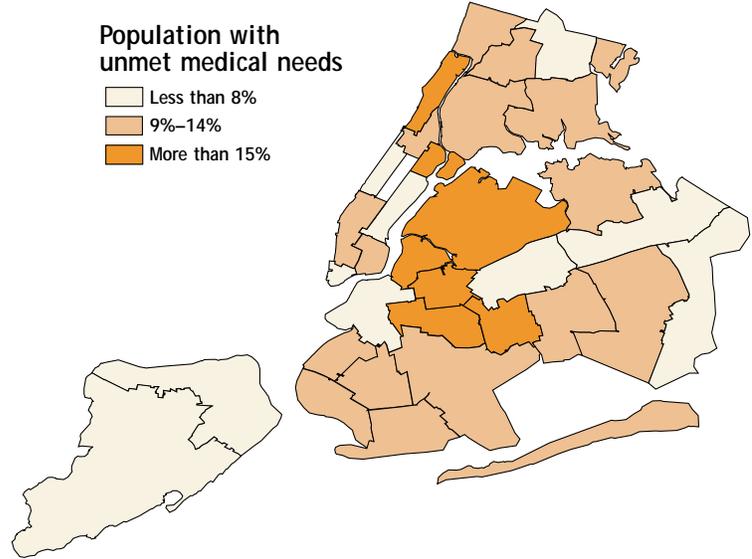


*Public insurance includes Medicaid, Medicare, Child and Family Health Plus, and the Prenatal Care Assistance Program

The ability to get needed care varies by neighborhood

The proportion of those who reported not receiving medical care when they needed it in the past 12 months was especially high in the following neighborhoods:

- Brooklyn:** East New York, Williamsburg-Bushwick, Greenpoint, Bedford Stuyvesant-Crown Heights
- Manhattan:** Washington Heights, East Harlem
- Queens:** West Queens-Long Island City-Astoria



Who lacks health coverage?

- 1 People without coverage tend to be younger. More than half are under 35.
- 1 While Hispanics make up the largest proportion of people without coverage, Asians are at highest risk.
- 1 Almost two-thirds (63%) of New Yorkers without health care coverage were born outside of the United States.
- 1 Most New Yorkers without coverage are employed (61%). However, the unemployed people are at the highest risk.
- 1 New Yorkers with household incomes less than \$25,000 a year are less likely to have current health coverage. However, there are many New Yorkers whose incomes are too high to qualify for Medicaid or Family Health Plus, but who still cannot afford health care coverage.

	% of New Yorkers without coverage (estimated population: 679,000)	% of New Yorkers publicly insured (estimated population: 843,000)	% of New Yorkers privately insured (estimated population: 3,381,000)
Sex			
Men	54	40	49
Women	46	60	51
Age (years)			
18–34	52	42	41
35–49	32	33	35
50–64	16	25	24
Race/Ethnicity			
Hispanic	32	43	19
White	25	18	45
Asian/Other	24	11	13
Black	19	27	23
Birthplace			
U.S.	37	54	62
Foreign-born	63	46	38
Employment Status			
Employed	61	37	77
Unemployed	18	18	7
Homemaker/Student	20	45	15
Income			
Less than \$25,000	52	71	20
\$25,000 – \$49,999	35	23	35
\$50,000 – \$74,999	7	3	19
\$75,000 or more	5	3	26

Note: figures may not sum to 100 due to rounding

New Yorkers without coverage do not get important check-ups, screenings, and medicine

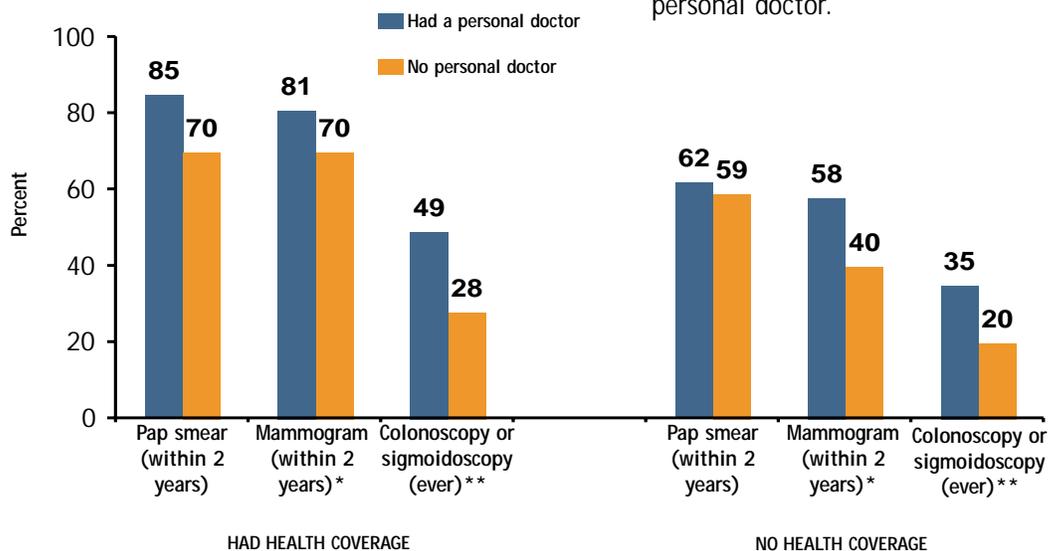
- 1 Among people with high blood pressure, those who lack coverage are far less likely to be on medication (26%) than those with either public (63%) or private (58%) insurance.
- 1 Only 49% of women without coverage received a timely mammogram, compared to 79%–80% of covered women.
- 1 People with health care coverage see dentists and get their flu shots more regularly, and have better access to aids to help them quit smoking, than persons who have no coverage.

	% of New Yorkers without coverage	% of New Yorkers publicly insured	% of New Yorkers privately insured
Had blood pressure checked this year	69	92	91
<i>If diagnosed with high blood pressure, on medication</i>	26	63	58
Had cholesterol checked within 5 years	49	68	78
<i>If diagnosed with high cholesterol, on medication</i>	7	35	28
Had a Pap smear this year or last (women)	61	80	83
Had a mammogram this year or last (women ages 40–64)	49	80	79
Ever had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy (ages 50–64)	27	38	48
Got a flu shot this year (ages 65 and over)	33	65	62
If diabetic, had blood A1c checked this year	58	68	74
Saw a dentist this year	49	67	75
Current smoker	28	30	22
<i>Of those who tried to quit, used an aid to help</i>	25	38	34

New Yorkers with public insurance appear to receive preventive health services at a rate comparable to, and sometimes even better than, people with private insurance. This is a tribute to the effectiveness of public insurance programs (such as Medicaid and Family Health Plus) and the care of doctors, clinics, and hospitals that treat some of New York City's most disadvantaged populations.

Having a personal doctor improves access to care

- 1 Regardless of health coverage, New Yorkers with a personal doctor are more likely to receive needed cancer screening than those without a personal doctor.



*Among women ages 40–64

** Among all adults ages 50–64

Recommendations

3 All New Yorkers should have a personal doctor.

- 1 People without insurance can receive preventive care at public hospitals, child health clinics, and community health centers.

3 Many uninsured families and individuals do not realize they are eligible for free or low-cost health insurance.

- 1 Most adult immigrants and ALL children and pregnant women are eligible if they meet the income criteria.

To find out if you qualify for
free or low-cost health insurance, call 311.

A report from the New York City Community Health Survey



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125 Worth Street, CN-6, New York, NY 10013

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NYC Vital Signs features information on critical aspects of public health in New York City.
To contact NYC Vital Signs, e-mail survey@health.nyc.gov.

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