

Vermont Household Health Insurance Survey Response to House Health Care Committee Questions

- **Why the Commonwealth Fund calculation for VHHIS?**

The Commonwealth Fund is an organization that is a trusted source and is well known for their research and analysis. There aren't a huge number of measures on this topic, and given the quality of the Commonwealth Fund's work in the area of health policy their measurement of underinsurance was a good fit.

The Health Department spoke with Market Decisions to understand why premiums are not included in the underinsurance calculation. Their thoughts are below:

- Premiums are not medical costs. They're a step or two removed and don't really show people's potential or actual medical costs.
- Underinsurance is most often applied to individuals on the private insurance market. The private market is completely dominated by employer-sponsored plans, who frequently absorb large parts of the premium as an employee benefit. As a result, including premiums into the calculation might have the effect of making individuals with \$0-to-individual premium ESI plans (that still have high deductibles and out-of-pocket costs) appear better insured than they are.
- Premiums are the measure of cost which most consumers use to judge affordability. Underinsurance is supposed to represent a 'hidden cost' - a measure of something which consumers cannot accurately factor into their decision making in many cases. Including premiums dilutes the utility of underinsurance when trying to understand the inadequacies of the current insurance market.

Income on the VHHIS is measured using pre-tax income.

- **Did we ask anything about medical services that aren't covered separately? Like acupuncture.**

No. We didn't specifically ask about things like acupuncture, chiropractic's etc. The only things that were directly asked about that would have been covered under a general health plan were visits to the doctors office, ED visits, and mental health visits.

- **Why is the 25-34 age group so much more likely to be uninsured.**

- The top 3 most common reasons 25-34 year olds gave for being uninsured were:
 - That the person lost or became ineligible for Medicaid or Dr. Dynasaur (41% of uninsured 25-34 year olds)
 - They were not interested in insurance (27% of uninsured 25-34 year olds)
 - Person or family could no longer afford the cost of premiums for health insurance through an employer (23% of uninsured 25-34 year olds)

- Uninsured rate by Federal Poverty Level (FPL), among those 25-34 years of age:
 - <139%: 7%
 - 139%-150%: **Sample Size Too Small To Report**
 - 151%-200%: 18%
 - 201%-250%: 17%
 - 251%-300%: **Sample Size Too Small To Report**
 - 301%-350%: 12%
 - 351%-400%: **Sample Size Too Small To Report**
 - >400%: 9%
- **Are there other reasons for why people did not get insurance?**
 - Yes, the full list of response options for reasons why uninsured individuals did not get insurance is:
 - Person without insurance lost job
 - Employer cut person back to part time/temp status
 - Employer stopped offering coverage
 - Waiting period for coverage
 - Person changed employers and not eligible for insurance
 - Person changed employers and new employer does not offer insurance
 - Person with health insurance quit job
 - Got divorced or separated/death of spouse or parent
 - Person cut themselves back to part time status
 - Cost is too high, cost increased, cost of premium, cannot afford
 - Insurance company refused coverage, terminated coverage
 - Not eligible/no longer qualify for Medicaid or Dr. Dynasaur (specify)
 - Don't need insurance
 - Not worth the cost
 - Other (specify)
 - None

This question was a “select all that apply” style question, meaning that respondents can select more than one response and may be counted in more than one category. The 2018 VHHIS report and presentation include the most commonly mentioned reasons for not having insurance.

- **What income group is the most underinsured.**

Vermonters under age 65 living at less than 139% of the federal poverty level (FPL) are most likely to be underinsured (62%). Similarly, those under age 65 with private insurance and living at less than 139% FPL are most likely to be underinsured (94%).

Additional information about underinsurance by federal poverty level can be found on page 25 of the [full report](#).