



Common Cents

New Hampshire Fiscal Policy Institute Blog

More Access to Healthcare, But Little Progress on Fighting Poverty

September 18, 2015

The latest pieces of the puzzle regarding New Hampshire's economic health reveals a mixed bag. According to data released yesterday by the [US Census Bureau](#), more residents have health insurance, yet household incomes are barely rising and poverty reduction remains elusive.

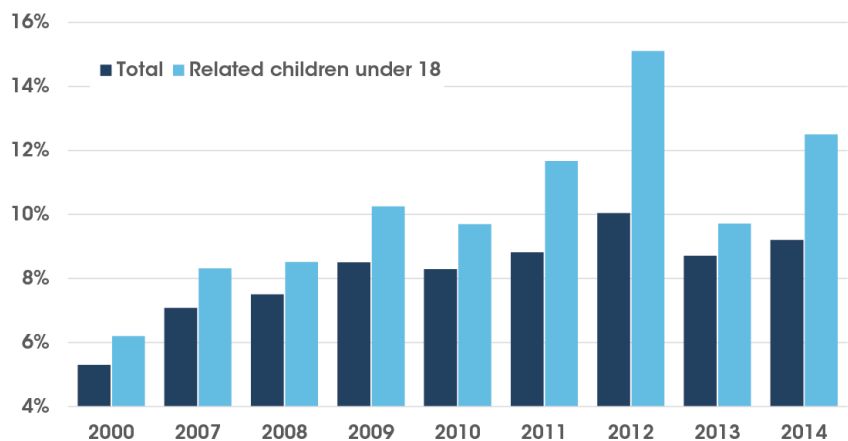
Following two years with very little change, in 2014, the number of New Hampshire residents without health insurance fell by nearly 20,000, from 140,252 to 120,456. A decline was reasonably expected given that New

Hampshire began enrollment in its [Health Protection Program](#), which expands health insurance access for low-income adults, in August 2014. Previously released telephone survey results from [Gallup](#) corroborate today's Census findings. For context, 9.2 percent of the state population is estimated to not have health insurance. This places New Hampshire in the middle of the pack among states, with Massachusetts (3.3 percent) and Texas (19.1 percent) being the states with the lowest and highest shares of its residents without health insurance.

Additionally, the Census data does not fully capture the effects of expanded Medicaid in the New Hampshire because the state began the program mid-year. In contrast, respondents to the American Community Survey, the tool the Census Bureau uses to

Elevated Poverty Rate Persists in Granite State

Share of total population and of related children under 18 living in poverty, 2000, 2007-2014



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

capture this information, received the survey at various points throughout calendar year 2014. Thus, if a resident received a survey in March and was uninsured, but then obtained a policy in August through the Health Protection Program, they would still be counted by the Census Bureau as uninsured. Consequently, this time next year, a further decline in the number of uninsured is probable.

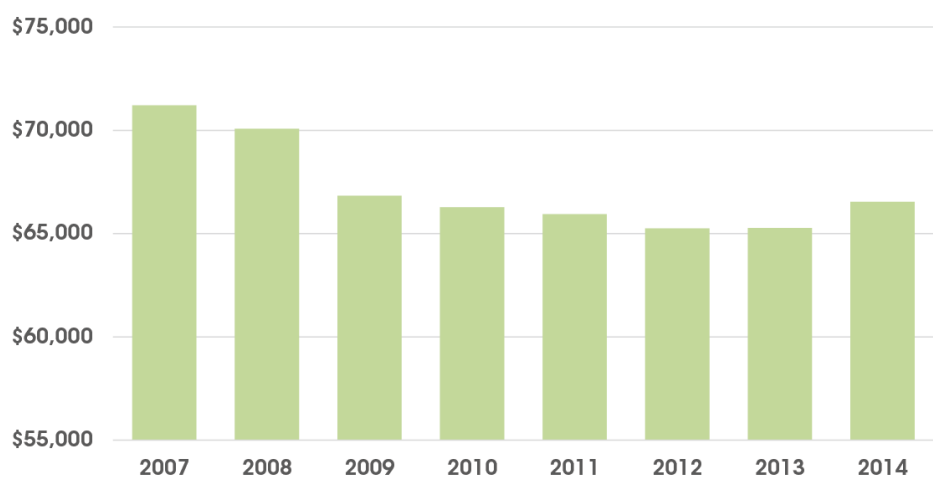
On the other hand, New Hampshire residents continue to struggle with exiting poverty, especially those in households with children. Between 2013 and 2014, the total number of Granite Staters in households with income below the poverty line rose from 111,495 to 117,983. While this increase is not statistically significant, it does indicate that our least fortunate residents are making minimal headway in climbing the economic ladder. Notably, New Hampshire’s poverty rate of 9.2 percent is the lowest in the nation. Mississippi, at 21.5 percent, has the highest share of its population living in poverty. Nevertheless, the issue of households not earning enough for basic needs has become more pervasive since the turn of the century, with the number of New Hampshire residents living in poverty having almost doubled since the year 2000.

For households with children, the situation appears to have worsened again. In 2014, 12.5 percent or nearly 32,900 related children under age 18 lived in households with incomes below the poverty line. This is a statistically significant rise from 2013, when it was estimated that 9.7 percent or nearly 25,600 children were in households earning less than the official poverty level.

Finally, in 2014, the state’s median household income – the income level representing the middle of all the state’s households – was \$66,532. While it is encouraging that this figure, adjusted for inflation, has stabilized over the last two years, the fact remains that the purchasing power, or ability to buy goods and services, of the median income household is about 7 percent lower than it was in 2007.

Income Growth Just Covering Inflation

Median household income in New Hampshire, in constant 2014 dollars, 2007-2014



Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey