

2008 WASHINGTON STATE POPULATION SURVEY

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Health Insurance by Race/Ethnicity: 2008

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Using data from the 2008 Washington State Population Survey (WSPS), health insurance status is examined for Washington State's non-elderly population (under 65) by race and ethnicity.

In this brief health insurance status is separated into four categories: public, employer based, other private, and uninsured. Individuals may have more than one type of health insurance plan, but if they receive Medicare, Medicaid, Basic Health, or other type of public health insurance, they are defined as receiving public health insurance. If a person does not receive public health insurance and receives military, employer, or union based health insurance, he/she is defined as receiving employer based health insurance (note: government employees are reported as receiving employer based health insurance coverage). Individuals who have health insurance, which is not public or employer based, are defined as receiving other private health insurance.¹ Finally, individuals who do not receive any type of health insurance are defined as uninsured. Unless otherwise indicated, differences mentioned are statistically significant at least at the five percent level.

Health Insurance Status by Race

Uninsured by Race

The health insurance status of non-elderly Washington State residents by race is shown in Figure 1. The rate of uninsurance for Whites is 12 percent. While the sample sizes for non-White racial groups within the WSPS are small, the following results represent our best estimates for the uninsured by race: 10 percent for Blacks, 23 percent for American Indians/Alaska Natives, 14 percent for Native Hawaiian/Other Asian Pacific Islanders, and nine percent for Asians. Compared to Whites, Asians were significantly less likely to be uninsured and American Indians/Alaska Natives were significantly more likely to be uninsured.

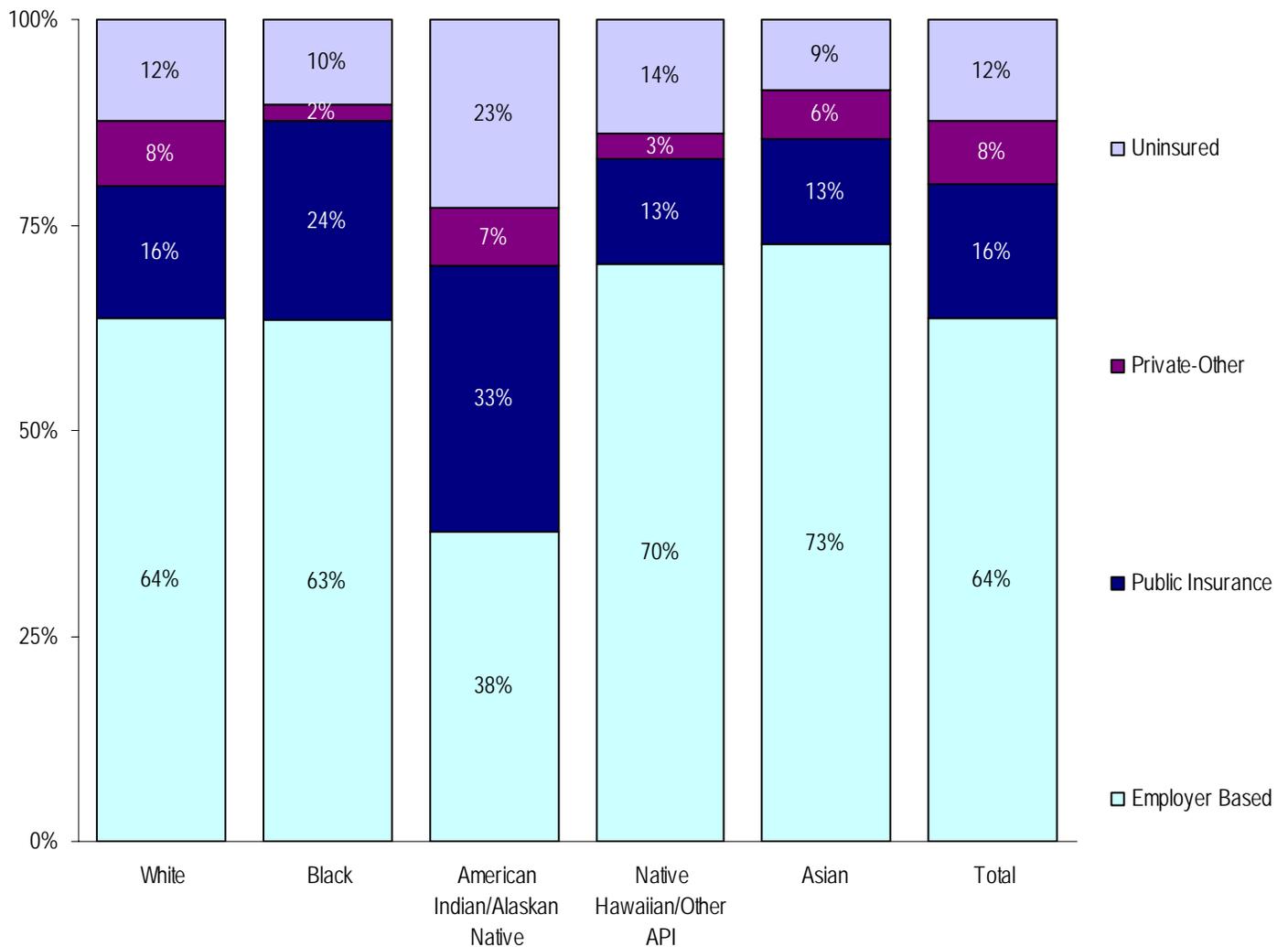
National survey results have shown that Blacks (or non-Hispanic Blacks) are significantly more likely to be uninsured compared to Whites,^{2,3} so in that context the WSPS results are surprising. However, there is evidence to suggest that Blacks living in the West are different from Blacks in the rest of the country. Blacks in Washington and other Western States are less likely to have family incomes under 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and more likely to have some college or more compared to Blacks in the rest of the country.⁴ Blacks residing in Washington, in particular, are more likely to be in the military or working compared to Blacks in the rest of the country.⁴ Like Washington, results from the 2005 California Health Interview Survey show no difference in uninsurance among Whites and Blacks (11.4 percent of Whites and 11.3 percent of Blacks were currently uninsured).⁵

The WSPS results show that Asians in Washington have rates of uninsurance that are lower than Whites. National surveys and the 2005 California Health Interview Survey show Asians having higher rates of uninsurance.^{2,3,5} Explanations for the different findings might include differences between Washington's Asian population and California's or the Asian population of the US, sample variations, and the different definitions of the Asian population used in the surveys.⁶

Source of Health Insurance by Race

While Whites, Blacks, and Native Hawaiians/Other Asian Pacific Islanders have similar rates of uninsurance, the source of their health insurance coverage is different. In addition, Whites’ source of health insurance is also different from Asians’ and American Indians’/Alaskan Natives’ source of health insurance. Non-elderly Asians were insured through the military and/or their employer/union at a rate of 73 percent compared to 70 percent for Native Hawaiian/Other Asian Pacific Islander, 64 percent of Whites, 63 percent of Blacks, and 38 percent of American Indian/Alaskan Natives. Looking at the differences between Whites and other races, American Indians/Alaskan Natives were significantly less likely and Asians were significantly more likely to have health insurance from the military and/or employer/union.

Figure 1: Health Insurance Status of the Non-Elderly Population by Race: 2008
 Universe: Washington Residents Aged 0-64



Sixteen percent of Whites had some form of public insurance. Blacks and American Indian/Alaskan Natives were significantly more likely to be covered by public insurance and Asians were significantly less likely to be covered by public insurance compared to Whites.

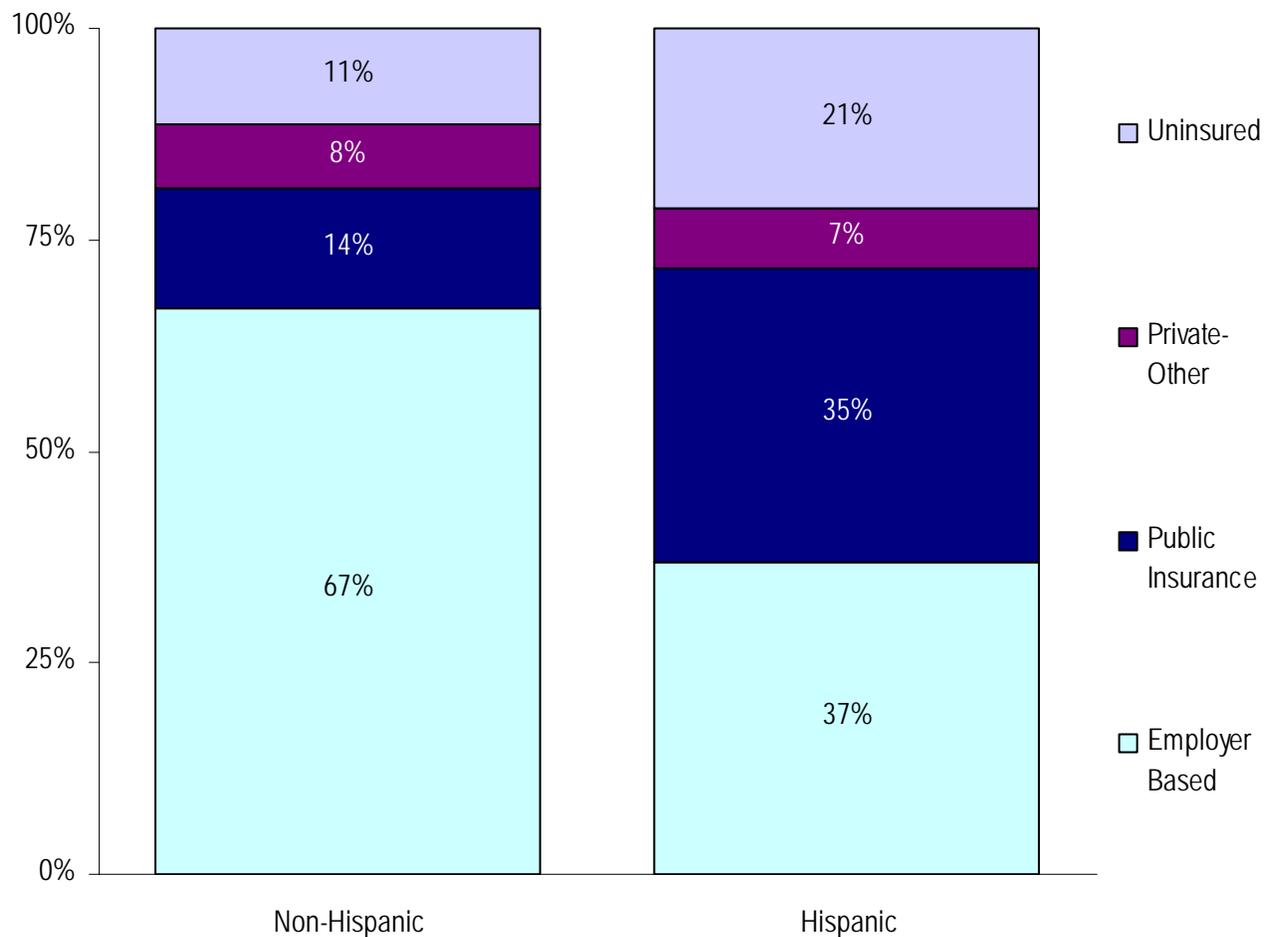
Whites were more likely to have non-employer based private insurance¹ compared to Blacks.

Health Insurance Status by Ethnicity

Figure 2 shows the health insurance status of Washington State’s non-elderly population by Hispanic ethnicity. Hispanic residents are almost two times more likely to be uninsured, two and a half times more likely to be publicly insured, and less likely to be insured through the military or an employer/union.

Figure 2: Health Insurance Status of the Non-Elderly Population by Ethnicity: 2008

Universe: Washington Residents Aged 0-64



Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Uninsured

Table 1 shows both the number of uninsured and the composition of the uninsured by race and ethnicity. The distribution of Washington's uninsured Whites, Blacks, and Native Hawaiian/Other Asian Pacific Islander roughly mirrors the distribution of the population by race (i.e. they are not significantly different), however, there are disproportionately more American Indians/Alaskan Natives uninsured and disproportionately fewer Asians uninsured. Eighty-seven percent or roughly 623,000 of the uninsured are White. At just over four percent, Asians make up the second largest racial group in the uninsured followed by American Indian/Alaska Natives (also four percent), Blacks (just over three percent), and Native Hawaiian /Other Asian Pacific Islander (about two percent).

Hispanics are disproportionately represented among the uninsured compared to non-Hispanics. Roughly 10 percent of Washington's non-elderly population is Hispanic, but 18 percent or approximately 126,000 of the uninsured are Hispanic.

**Table 1: Non-Elderly Uninsured Washington Residents
by Race/Ethnicity: 2008**

		% of Uninsured	Number Uninsured (in 000s)	% of Total Population
Race				
	White	86.5%	620.8	86.1%
	Black	3.4%	24.3	4.0%
	American Indian/Alaskan Native	4.1%	29.6	2.2%
	Native Hawaiian/Other API	1.7%	12.5	1.6%
	Asian	4.3%	30.6	6.1%
Total		100%	717.8	100%
Ethnicity				
	Non-Hispanic	82.4%	591.6	89.8%
	Hispanic	17.6%	126.2	10.2%
Total		100%	719.2	100%

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1. Those with other private health insurance have purchased their own health insurance, received health insurance from outside the family, and/or received health insurance from “other” source.
 2. U.S. Census Bureau. (2008). “Table 7: People Without Health Insurance Coverage by Race and Hispanic Origin Using 2- and 3-Year Averages: 2004-2005 and 2006-2007.” (http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/hlthin07/p60no235_table7.pdf)
 3. Sing, Merrile. (2008) “Characteristics of Non-Hispanic Asian and Non-Hispanic White Adults Uninsured for 6 to 12 Months during a Year, 2002-2005.” Statistical Brief No. 225. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, Md. (<http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/>)
 4. Using data from the: 2000 Five Percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) Files (<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>)
 5. Source: 2005 California Health Interview Survey. Estimates were obtained from the “Ask CHIS” data query system using the following parameters: state level, currently insured, race-Census 2000, and age 0-64 (<http://www.chis.ucla.edu/>)
 6. Many surveys combine the racial category Native Hawaiian/Other Asian Pacific Islander into the larger category of Asian.

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