



The Impact of TennCare: A Survey of Recipients 2009

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Method

The Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee contracted with the Department of Finance and Administration of the State of Tennessee to conduct a survey of Tennessee residents in order to ascertain their insurance status and use of medical facilities. Given the necessity of obtaining accurate estimates for subpopulations, a target sample size of 5,000 was agreed upon. The survey instrument was prepared in cooperation with personnel from the Bureau of TennCare.

The survey was conducted by telephone between April and June, 2009. The survey was conducted with a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing System, utilizing a random-digit dialing based sample. Four calls were made to each residence, at staggered times, to minimize nonrespondent bias. The design chosen was a "Household Sample," and the interview was conducted with the Head of the Household. The University of Tennessee Social Science Research Institute administered the survey.

Approximately 50 percent of those contacted agreed to participate in the survey. The demographics very closely mirrored those for the state that were obtained from the most recent census estimates except for household income. The large sample size allowed the weighting of responses by income to provide unbiased estimates for the entire population. For all statewide estimates of the uninsured, a correction factor was used to adjust for the degree to which the sample over or under represented Tennesseans grouped by income.

This is a follow-up to previous surveys of 5,000 Tennessee households conducted annually since 1993, the last year of Medicaid before Tennessee adopted TennCare. Throughout this report, comparisons are made to findings from the earlier surveys.

Tennessee Households – Household Income	Proportion in 2000 Census (Percent)	Proportion in 2009 survey (Percent)	Deviation (Percent)
Less \$10,000	12.1	9.5	2.6
\$10,000 - \$14,499	7.4	9.1	-1.7
\$15,000 - \$19,999	7.4	7.2	0.2
\$20,000 - \$29,999	14.4	13.3	1.1
\$30,000 - \$39,999	12.5	12.2	0.3
\$40,000 - \$49,999	11.1	9.0	2.1
\$50,000 - \$59,999	7.6	8.6	-1.0
\$60,000 - \$99,999	19.1	18.0	1.1
\$100,000 +	8.3	13.2	-4.9

Estimates for Insurance Status

Estimates for the number of Tennesseans who are uninsured are presented below (Table 1). The estimated 616,967 uninsured represent almost 10 percent of the 2009 population (6,177,567¹). This is somewhat higher than the 2008 estimate, though the difference is not statistically significant. The uninsured rate for children is 3.7 percent, a decrease of over 1 percent from last year's rate of 4.9 percent, but the rate for adults increased to 11.9 percent from the 2008 rate of 10.6 percent (Table 1a). The substantial decrease in the number of uninsured children can be partially attributed to the CoverKids program and an increase in the number of children covered by TennCare as a result of declining economic conditions.

Table 1: Statewide Estimates of Uninsured Populations (1993–2009)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
State Total	452,232	298,653	303,785	333,268	319,079	335,612	387,584
Percent	8.9	5.7	5.8	6.3	6.1	6.2	7.2

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
State Total	372,776	353,736	348,753	371,724	387,975	482,353	649,479
Percent	6.5	6.2	6.1	6.4	6.6	8.1	10.7

	2007	2008	2009				
State Total	608,234	566,633	616,967				
Percent	10.0	9.3	10.0				

Table 1a: Uninsured Tennesseans by Age (1999–2009)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Under 18 Total	56,332	56,691	56,141	54,552	46,999	67,772	72,387
Under 18 Percent	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.3	4.9	5.0
18+ Total	331,252	316,053	297,595	297,779	324,725	320,203	409,965
18+ Percent	8.2	7.4	6.9	6.9	7.4	7.2	9.1

	2006	2007	2008	2009			
Under 18 Total	82,484	70,096	72,258	54,759			
Under 18 Percent	5.7	4.8	4.9	3.7			
18+ Total	566,955	538,138	494,375	562,208			
18+ Percent	12.1	11.7	10.6	11.9			

¹ United States Census Bureau, Population Division, Interim State Population Projections, 2005.

Reasons for Failure to Obtain Medical Insurance

The underlying reason for a lack of insurance has changed little over the period since TennCare was implemented in 1994, though the percentages have shifted somewhat. The major reason that people report remaining uninsured continues to be their perceived inability to pay (Table 2). In 2009, 92 percent indicate that this is a major reason for not having insurance, a decrease from 2008 but it is the second highest number since TennCare’s inception. Though there is some variation from one year to the next, the difference among income groups has been consistently large, with those in the highest income group considerably less likely to consider it a major reason (Table 3). The lowest two groups show little change from 2008 to 2009, but households with incomes of \$15,000 to \$20,000 place increased importance on cost as a reason for not being insured. Excluding the \$30,000 bracket, all pay brackets over \$20,000 have experienced slight decreases with a 4 percent decrease from the \$20,000 bracket being the largest. While financial pressures continue to limit people from obtaining coverage, 3 percent indicate that they just did not get around to securing it, and 5 percent indicate that a major reason is that they do not need insurance. Both percentages are the lowest obtained for any year.

Table 2: Reasons for Not Having Insurance (1995–2009) (Percent)

Reason Year	Can’t Afford			Didn’t Get to It			Don’t Need		
	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
1995	70	11	19	7	17	77	6	16	79
1996	73	7	20	12	18	69	9	14	77
1997	79	7	14	15	18	67	9	15	76
1998	73	10	17	12	17	72	13	13	74
1999	71	10	19	15	22	63	10	16	74
2000	76	8	16	6	21	73	7	12	81
2001	78	9	13	11	20	69	12	16	72
2002	74	10	17	11	16	74	8	14	78
2003	82	8	10	10	20	70	8	15	77
2004	82	7	11	8	19	73	8	16	76
2005	82	7	10	9	16	75	8	15	77
2006	87	4	9	12	14	74	12	14	74
2007	89	6	4	9	11	79	5	13	82
2008	93	4	4	7	11	82	5	8	87
2009	92	3	4	3	15	81	5	10	85

Table 3: “Cannot Afford” Major Reason for No Insurance: by Income (1996–2009) (Percent)

Major Reason	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Less \$10,000	77	83	79	75	76	82	82	86	97	90	92	93	97	96
\$10,000 - \$14,499	73	87	86	76	84	84	90	84	88	82	96	95	97	96
\$15,000 - \$19,999	87	74	80	75	84	89	77	93	92	91	87	93	88	93
\$20,000 - \$29,999	69	69	73	69	80	74	70	83	87	81	90	89	96	92
\$30,000 - \$39,999	75	65	78	64	80	82	72	84	84	78	76	90	88	90
\$40,000 - \$49,999	70	80	63	73	45	69	62	82	70	64	84	88	93	92
\$50,000+	55	46	46	39	47	46	36	67	47	67	68	76	81	80

Evaluations of Medical Care and Insurance Coverage

The quality of care ratings for TennCare remain high, with about three-fourths of heads of households rating their care “good” or “excellent” and almost 90 percent rating their children’s care “good” or “excellent.” Tennesseans’ overall perception of the quality of care they and their children have been receiving has been relatively stable in recent years but is up considerably since 1995. There were positive changes from 2008 to 2009 among the population of all heads of households (Tables 4 and 5). Ratings of health care quality for the TennCare head of household population gradually increased from TennCare’s inception in 1994 to 2005, and ratings are considerably better again in 2009 after a setback in 2006; 76 percent rate their quality as “good” or “excellent.” Perceptions of quality for their children made progress in 2009, with fewer rating the quality of care as “fair” or “poor” and more rating the quality as “excellent,” leading to an overall increase in favorable ratings. Both Tennesseans in general and Medicaid/TennCare recipients are reporting quality ratings that are at their highest since TennCare’s inception.

Table 4: Quality of Medical Care Received by Heads of Households (1994–2009) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Excellent	26	20	22	22	23	21	22	22	25	25	26	29	28	28	28	32
Good	45	51	52	51	52	50	50	48	51	50	50	48	48	47	46	46
Fair	22	23	22	22	22	22	21	23	19	19	18	17	18	18	18	16
Poor	7	6	4	5	3	7	7	7	5	6	6	6	7	7	8	6
Medicaid/TennCare	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Excellent	17	14	15	19	18	18	18	20	21	21	23	28	21	23	24	29
Good	40	48	49	47	42	47	43	41	46	45	47	40	43	44	43	47
Fair	27	28	28	26	31	25	27	28	24	25	23	26	27	27	25	18
Poor	16	10	8	8	9	10	12	11	9	9	7	6	10	6	8	6

Table 5: Quality of Medical Care Received by Children of Heads of Households (1994–2009) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Excellent	32	28	30	30	30	30	33	30	34	36	36	38	39	35	34	39
Good	47	51	50	50	51	51	48	50	51	48	48	49	47	48	51	49
Fair	17	17	17	15	15	15	15	16	12	13	12	9	11	12	11	9
Poor	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3
Medicaid/TennCare	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Excellent	22	27	21	27	27	29	25	24	28	32	31	34	39	30	32	41
Good	45	44	55	48	49	49	47	50	48	45	47	49	38	49	49	48
Fair	23	21	19	19	18	18	20	19	17	17	16	12	17	19	14	8
Poor	10	8	6	6	7	4	8	7	7	6	5	5	6	2	6	3

Satisfaction with Insurance Coverage

TennCare recipients continue to show high levels of satisfaction with TennCare (Table 6), and the 92 percent expressing satisfaction (responding “somewhat satisfied” or “very satisfied”) is an increase from 2008’s 89 percent. This is below the 2005 high of 93 percent satisfaction, but exceeds by 10 percent the satisfaction reported by Medicaid recipients in 1993 and is considerably higher than when TennCare began in 1994.

Table 6: Percent Indicating Satisfaction with TennCare (1993–2009) (Percent)

1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
82	61	75	82	81	83	81	78	79	85	83	90
2005	2006	2007	2008	2009							
93	87	90	89	92							

Behavior Relevant to Medical Care

Each respondent was asked a series of questions regarding his or her behavior when seeking medical care (Table 7). The proportion of TennCare heads of households seeking care at hospital emergency rooms in 2009 is lower than 2008, matching the lowest rate for emergency room usage since the inception of TennCare in 1994. It is clear that TennCare continues to have some impact on choices that people make in seeking care, and the impact is in the desired direction. A similar pattern exists when TennCare recipients seek care for their children. In 2009, the percentage using hospital emergency rooms is essentially zero and at its lowest since the beginning of TennCare (Table 8). The share of adults initially seeking care at a doctor's office is the same as the general population at 83 percent which is the highest percentage since TennCare's inception. More adults initially seeking care at a doctor's office results in a comparable decrease in initial visits to a hospital. The change in the share initially seeking care at a doctor's office for their children is even greater, where the increase is from 67 percent in 1994 to 85 percent in 2009. The proportion seeking care at hospitals has been reduced by over half since 1994 (11 percent) for heads of household and has been eliminated for children on TennCare.

Table 7: Head of Household: Medical Facilities Used When Medical Care Initially Sought (1994–2009) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Doctor's Office	82	80	82	81	81	81	83	81	84	85	85	83	83	83	83	83
Clinic	11	11	11	12	12	12	11	12	10	9	9	11	11	11	11	12
Hospital	7	7	6	6	6	6	5	6	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
Other	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Medicaid/TennCare	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Doctor's Office	70	71	73	74	74	78	76	78	77	80	77	78	76	79	80	83
Clinic	18	18	18	17	19	15	17	14	15	12	14	14	15	15	13	12
Hospital	11	10	9	7	6	6	6	7	7	7	8	7	7	4	6	4
Other	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	<1	1

Table 8: Children: Medical Facilities Used When Medical Care Initially Sought (1994–2009) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Doctor's Office	80	81	82	81	83	81	84	81	85	85	85	86	87	88	88	86
Clinic	13	12	13	13	13	12	12	14	10	9	11	10	10	9	10	10
Hospital	6	5	5	5	4	6	3	4	4	5	3	3	3	2	2	3
Other	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	<1	1	<1	<1
Medicaid/TennCare	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Doctor's Office	67	74	68	75	76	79	76	77	77	80	78	79	82	83	83	85
Clinic	21	18	24	17	18	15	17	16	17	12	16	13	12	14	14	15
Hospital	12	7	8	7	5	5	6	7	5	7	6	8	6	3	3	0
Other	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	<1	0

A similar change has occurred over the past decade in the frequency of visits to physicians. TennCare recipients continue to see physicians on a more frequent basis than under Medicaid or than the average Tennessee household. Eight-seven percent of TennCare heads of households see a physician at least every few months (Table 9), as do 69 percent of TennCare children (Table 10). This represents a slight decrease for children where 72 percent reported they visited a doctor at least every few months in 2008; the figure remained the same for heads of households. Only 48 percent of adults saw a physician this often prior to TennCare’s inception in 1994. The increase in visits is much less pronounced for children than for TennCare adults. More frequent usage of physicians may indicate increased preventative medical care through annual visits but may also reflect that the population of TennCare adults is one that has greater need for medical services.

Table 9: Frequency of Visits to Doctor for Head of Household (1994–2009) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Weekly	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2
Monthly	9	8	8	10	11	12	11	13	11	11	11	11	12	13	12	12
Every Few Months	32	33	36	39	39	41	39	41	41	42	44	46	44	46	46	49
Yearly	29	33	31	27	27	25	27	25	27	27	26	26	25	23	22	22
Rarely	28	22	23	22	21	20	21	19	19	17	16	15	18	16	17	15
Medicaid/TennCare	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Weekly	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	7	6	8	7	6	7	8	7	6
Monthly	23	15	20	24	21	25	26	24	24	29	28	30	30	33	33	30
Every Few Months	32	36	37	39	44	45	41	44	44	42	46	46	45	45	47	51
Yearly	16	20	21	14	14	13	13	12	14	10	9	11	8	6	8	7
Rarely	25	20	18	19	19	12	15	13	13	12	10	7	10	8	4	6

Table 10: Frequency of Visits to Doctor for Children (1994–2009) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Weekly	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1
Monthly	11	10	12	12	11	11	11	11	11	12	10	11	10	11	9	9
Every Few Months	52	49	55	52	55	54	52	52	51	52	53	53	52	50	50	51
Yearly	23	26	21	23	22	24	24	24	23	26	26	23	28	27	29	31
Rarely	13	11	10	12	10	9	11	11	13	8	10	11	10	10	10	8
Medicaid/TennCare	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Weekly	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	3	2	2	4	1	1
Monthly	19	15	19	15	12	14	16	14	17	17	14	21	16	14	16	18
Every Few Months	53	48	58	54	57	56	53	56	56	53	53	49	51	54	55	50
Yearly	13	20	12	16	19	18	18	16	17	17	22	17	23	16	21	27
Rarely	11	11	7	12	9	8	10	11	9	8	9	11	8	11	7	4

Appointments

The time required to obtain an appointment is comparable to the 2008 findings, with more reporting a wait of less than a week and fewer reporting two weeks or more. The percent of TennCare recipients obtaining a doctor appointment on the same day that the request is made or the next day increased to 41 percent in 2009. Also, the proportion of TennCare heads of household being able to obtain an appointment within one week increased slightly to 66 percent. The number reporting having to wait longer than three weeks is 20 percent (Table 11). TennCare recipients are waiting 52 minutes on average to see their physicians once they reach the office (Table 12). This is a slight increase from the 2008 time of 50 minutes, and is consistent with previous wait times in the TennCare era, excluding the high in 2006.

Table 11: Time between Attempt to Make Appointment and First Availability of Appointment: TennCare Heads of Household (1995–2009) (Percent)

When you last made an appointment to see a primary care physician for an illness in 2004, how soon was the first appointment available?	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Same day	32	32	29	26	23	22	19	22	20	20	21	22	22	21	18
Next day	22	27	17	21	18	19	15	18	16	17	17	27	20	17	23
1 week	23	23	28	27	27	31	31	29	29	33	31	22	30	27	25
2 weeks	9	8	11	10	12	11	12	9	11	11	10	10	8	10	9
3 weeks	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	4	4	4	4
Over 3 weeks	11	5	11	11	15	15	18	18	18	15	16	16	15	22	20

Table 12: Wait for Appointments: TennCare Heads of Household (1995–2009) (Minutes)

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Number of minutes wait past scheduled appointment time?	62	52	52	49	52	64	61	64	50	63	57	80	57	50	52
Number of minutes to travel to physician's office?	42	22	21	21	22	24	23	23	22	27	32	30	21	25	24

TennCare Providers

The largest number of TennCare recipients (41 percent) continues to report being signed up with Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BlueCare) as their TennCare MCO. A newer MCO, AmeriChoice, also accounted for a large percent of the TennCare recipients (26 percent). Other respondents were scattered among the other providers, with AmeriGroup, TLC, PHP, TennCare Select, Omnicare, and John Deere managing many of the remaining TennCare recipients (Table 13).

Table 13: Company Managing TennCare Plan (1996–2009) (Percent)*

What company manages your TennCare plan?	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Blue Cross / Blue Shield	57	48	48	50	50	50	40	42	39	36	31	35	37	
VSHP - BlueCare														41
AmeriChoice														26
AmeriGroup														8
Health Net	7	7	8	2	1									
John Deere (Heritage)	2	2	3	4	5	4	7	7	6	9	6	7	4	1
TLC (Memphis Managed Care)	2	4	4	4	3	5	12	12	13	13	11	7	9	2
Phoenix (Advantage Care)	2	4	6	13	8									
Preferred Health Partner	4	8	6	7	7	4	8	12	10	10	11	8	6	2
Prudential (Prudential)	1	0	1	1	1									
Access Med Plus	17	19	18	20	22	23	5	3	1	1		2	3	<1
Total Health Plus (THP)	<1	1	1	0	0									
Vanderbilt Health Plan	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	<1		
Omnicare (Affordable)	2	3	3	4	2	2	7	6		6	9	7	5	2
Xantus Health Plan					9	8	9	10				<1		
Universal Care						2	9	4	1		1	1	1	
Better Health Plans						1	3	4	2	2	3	1	1	<1
TennCare Select									21	21	18	6	7	10
Premier Behavioral									1		1		<1	
Tennessee Behavioral									1			<1		
VHP Community Care											1		<1	
Windsor Health Plan of TN, Inc.												<1	<1	
Other	0	0	2	1	1				4	1	6	22	27	7

In 2009, receipt of information (enrollment card, grievance form, a list of rights and responsibilities, and information on filing grievances) mostly increased, but a few categories decreased or remained the same. Seventy-seven percent recall receiving an enrollment card, down from last year's 78 percent (Table 14); 24 percent of respondents indicated that they changed providers, down from last year's 27 percent. Respondents reported receiving a list of rights and responsibilities and the name of their assigned provider in proportions higher than in 2008. The largest year-to-year change was that 32 percent of respondents indicated that they had received a ballot to change providers, up from last year's 28 percent. The preferred method for receiving information about TennCare remains through the mail, with 71 percent reporting this is the best way they obtain TennCare information (Table 15).

Table 14: Households Receiving TennCare Information for Providers (1995–2009) (Percent)

Please indicate whether or not you or anyone in your household has received each of the following regarding TennCare	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
An enrollment card	68	71	70	77	76	74	65	70	65	74	70	73	78	78	77
A grievance form	20	33	28	41	39	33	32	34	35	33	24	42	44	40	40
Information on filing grievances	23	35	31	43	44	36	46	39	40	40	26	41	46	41	41
A list of rights and responsibilities	58	66	63	73	70	66	63	70	70	75	71	78	77	73	75
Name of provider to whom assigned							72	79	76	81	79	82	81	79	79
Ballot to change provider							64	43	29	31	21	25	40	28	32
Changed providers							31	32	18	19	32	17	25	27	24

Table 15: Best Way to Get Information about TennCare (2002–2009) (Percent)

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Mail	67	75	73	75	75	72	73	71
Doctor	7	5	5	6	8	8	5	6
Phone	11	10	9	9	5	8	11	10
Handbook	8	6	4	4	3	6	6	7
Drug Store	1	0	1	1	2	1	1	1
Friends	2	0	1	0	1	1	<1	1
TV	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	<1
Paper	0	0	0	0	0	0	<1	1
Other	4	3	3	4	5	4	3	3

Conclusion

The survey reveals that from the perspective of the recipients, the TennCare program continues to work as expected. TennCare recipients see physicians more often, visit emergency rooms less for routine care, and are able to see a physician without excessive travel or waiting time. Tennessee's 10 percent rate of uninsured in 2009 is an increase from 9.3 percent in 2008, but it is lower than the highest of 10.7 percent set in 2006. Still, the rate is substantially higher than recent years past; just four years prior the rate was 8.1 percent. The total uninsured population is approximately 617,000, including about 55,000 children, a substantial decrease from last year's number of 72,000 uninsured children.

In 2009, recipients expressed overall satisfaction with TennCare, with a 3 percent increase over the proportion expressing satisfaction in 2008. The satisfaction rate remains dramatically higher (31 percentage points) than the rate in the program's first year. Additionally, TennCare recipients' experience with medical care remains positive, with the gap between their experiences and those of all Tennesseans narrowing somewhat compared to 2008. TennCare continues to receive positive feedback from its recipients, indicating the program is providing health care in a satisfactory manner and up to the expectations of those it serves.