

Health Impacts of the Affordable Care Act Insurance Expansions: An Analysis of the 2014 Medicaid Expansions and the 2010 Young Adult Provision

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Key Findings and Policy Implications

This paper examines the health impacts of two insurance expansions that occurred through the Affordable Care Act: the Medicaid expansion for lower-income adults and the dependent coverage expansion for young adults. For the Medicaid expansion analyses, the study uses data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System covering 2012-2014. For the young adult dependent coverage expansion, it uses data from the 2007-2015 National Health Interview Study. Among the key findings from the paper:

- By comparing newly-eligible individuals in states that expanded ACA Medicaid to comparable individuals in states that did not expand Medicaid, we find that the Medicaid expansion led to a significant increase in insurance enrollment, self-assessed health, and access to care for low-income childless adults. The expansion but did not, however, change the probability of having a personal doctor.
- We examined the impact of the dependent coverage expansion by comparing health insurance, health care use, and health between individuals at the ages targeted by the policy (19-25) to those slightly older (27-29). We find that the dependent coverage expansion significantly reduced the uninsurance rate of 19-25 year-olds, mainly through gains in parental insurance coverage, but did not lead to significant changes in disability, mental health, access or utilization.

The policy implications of the findings are in understanding how certain provisions of the Affordable Care Act impacted populations with particularly high rates of being uninsured before the reform. The study is also valuable in understanding how expanded health insurance coverage affects health care utilization and health outcomes, and relates closely to our earlier work on how these provisions affect labor market outcomes.

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