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“Who are the uninsured”

The U.S. Census Bureau has reported that almost 25% of Arizona's population are uninsured.

Nationally, this same government agency indicated there were 43.3 million or 16.1% of the U.S. population uninsured in 1997.

And this is supposed to grow to 54 million or 19.1% of the population by 2007.

Who are these people?

There have been several studies conducted recently by some notable organizations. Namely, The Galen Institute, a non-profit health and tax policy research organization, the National Federation of Independent Businesses or the NFIB, the Employee Benefit Research Institute or EBRI, and the Lewin Group, which specializes in health care finance issues.

Here is a listing of some of their findings that will shed some light on just who are the uninsured.

- ? ? Over the last decade health insurance costs have increased faster than overall consumer prices. The average annual premium for employment-based family health insurance increased by 111% between 1988 and 1996.
- ? ? Data shows that at the state level, the thousands of new rules and regulations passed with the intent of forcing health insurers to offer coverage at a reasonable cost have, in effect, increased the cost of health insurance.
- ? ? The General Accounting Office has directly linked the erosion of health insurance coverage to cost pressures. They estimate that for every one percent increase in the cost of health insurance throws 200,000 more Americans off the insurance rolls.
- ? ? The uninsured are disproportionately young, minority, lower income, and either work for small companies or are their dependents.
- ? ? About 40% of businesses with fewer than 50 workers do not offer health insurance, indicating that costs make it prohibitive.
- ? ? The GAO determined that between 1990 and 1994 16 states were most aggressive in passing laws regulating health insurance. By 1996 these 16 states were seeing their uninsured populations grow an average of EIGHT times faster than the other 34 states.
- ? ? A study in 1997 found that 28% of the uninsured workers were offered health insurance by their employer but declined the coverage.
- ? ? A high proportion of young adults are without health insurance because they are no longer covered by a family policy, may not have established themselves as permanent members of the work force, or think that they have a low probability of encountering a costly medical event.
- ? ? The time frame for being uninsured is either very short or very long with 37% lasting four months or less, 33% lasting 12 months or longer. Those most likely to be uninsured for longer than four months are: Hispanic, individuals 25 and older, the self-employed, and individuals with long spells of unemployment.
- ? ? The number of uninsured increase at a rate of roughly 10 million people every decade.
- ? ? Females are less likely than males to be uninsured because many mothers and pregnant women qualify for coverage under Medicaid.
- ? ? About 40.7% of the uninsured are in middle income groups with incomes between \$20,000 to \$50,000.
- ? ? Nearly 20% of the uninsured have family incomes in excess of \$50,000 per year yet do not purchase health insurance.
- ? ? About 76.2% of the uninsured are either employed or are the dependent child or spouse of a worker some time during the year.

? ? In any given month only 54.2% of the uninsured are working full time or are the dependent of a full-time worker. In any given month, about 45% have no connection to employment.

In dealing with this “moving target” some are suggesting that we allow the employer-based tax code to encompass the self-employed, part-time workers and contract workers.

Regardless of this tax issue, Americans have long recognized that in every other industry regulation drives up prices, restricts innovation, drives up competition, and forces businesses to cater to regulators and not consumers. This is exactly what’s happening in healthcare.