



# News Release

204 N. First St., Suite C • PO Box 7 • Silverton, OR 97381 • [www.ocpp.org](http://www.ocpp.org) • 503-873-1201 • fax 503-873-1947

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**For More Information, Contact:**  
**Charles Sheketoff, 503-873-1201**  
**Michael Leachman, 503-873-1201**

## **Record Number of Oregonians – Mostly Working-Age Adults – Lacked Health Insurance, While Oregon Leads Nation in Growth in Uninsured**

### ***Analysis Shows Child Poverty in Multnomah County Rose and Typical Oregon Household's Income Dropped***

(Silverton) – A record 602,000 Oregonians, most of them working-age adults, went without health insurance for a full year in 2003-04, according to new statistics released today by the U.S. Census Bureau and analyzed by the Oregon Center for Public Policy, a Silverton think-tank. In 2003-04, 16.9 percent of Oregonians went without health coverage for a full year, up from 12.8 percent in 2000-01. This 4.1 percentage point gain was the largest increase in the nation.

The OCPP analysis shows that while the typical Oregon household's income was down \$1,362 from 2002-03, it has fallen \$4,365 in inflation adjusted dollars since 1999-00, before the economic downturn. Oregon was one of eight states that saw median household income decline from 2002-03 to 2003-04.

The Silverton-based research institute also found that while child poverty statewide did not change significantly from 2002-03 to 2003-04, nearly a quarter of all children in Multnomah County lived in poverty in 2003-04, a significant increase since 2002-2003.

Oregon's largest-in-the-nation growth in the rate of people lacking health insurance for an entire year reflects the failure of the state to adequately fund its Medicaid program and the impact of skyrocketing health care costs on businesses. "Budget cuts to the Oregon Health Plan and cost-shifting by Oregon businesses have left a record number of working-age Oregonians living dangerously without health insurance for long periods of time," said Chuck Sheketoff, executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

OCPP's analysis of the new Census Bureau data found that 499,000 Oregonians between the ages of 18 and 65 went without insurance for a full year in 2003-04. That's 22 percent of all Oregonians of working-age and a record number of uninsured. "Given that even more working-age Oregonians

## **Poverty, Income, and Health Insurance**

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went without insurance for less than a year, today's Census report shows that when you cut back on government programs, working people suffer," said Sheketoff.

"In 2003-04, Oregon had 150,000 more working-age Oregonians going without insurance for a full year than in 1992-93, the period just before the Oregon Health Plan was implemented," said Sheketoff. He noted that Oregon has continued to cut the Oregon Health Plan in 2005. The average monthly caseload in 2005 in the OHP Standard program, the "expanded" Medicaid program for those not receiving public assistance, was just 58 percent its size in 2003-04, and down to one-third of the caseload in 2002.

OCPP's analysis of the new data also found that Oregon's median household income of \$41,971 in 2003-04 was down from \$46,333 in 1999-01, before the economic downturn, after adjusting for inflation. Hence, the typical household has lost \$4,365 in real dollars.

"The typical Oregon household is sliding backward while the economy moves forward," said Sheketoff. "As Oregon's economy recovered in 2003 and 2004, the growth was not reaching the pocketbooks of the typical household."

Oregon's overall poverty rate stood at 12.1 percent in 2003-04. The state poverty rate has been flat over the last decade. However, the total number of poor Oregonians increased by 64,500 since 1993-94. Oregon's poverty rate for children stood at 17.9 percent in 2003-04.

While poverty and child poverty in Oregon as a whole held flat in 2003-04, child poverty in Multnomah County shot up significantly. In 2003-04, almost one quarter of Multnomah County children were poor (24 percent), a sharp jump from 18 percent in 2002-03. Overall poverty in Multnomah County in 2003-04 was 16.7 percent, not up significantly from 2002-03, but significantly higher than the county's 12.8 percent poverty rate in 1999-00.

"With one out of four children living in poverty, Multnomah County schools and publicly-funded social services face significant challenges," said Sheketoff.

### **NOTE TO EDITORS AND REPORTERS:**

Charts in PDF are available with the news release at [www.ocpp.org](http://www.ocpp.org).