

Medicaid Works For Communities Of Color

April is [Medicaid Awareness Month](#) and Medicaid is an essential pillar in providing coverage for communities of color. Generations of structural racism have resulted in people of color experiencing lower rates of coverage, worst health outcomes, and staggering health inequities. As a result, Medicaid coverage remains a critical source of coverage, especially for Black, Hispanic, and Latino Americans who experience poverty at a higher rate than white Americans and remain less likely to have access to quality care. These groups also face higher rates of chronic conditions that make access to affordable health coverage even more essential.

Research confirms that Medicaid expansion saves lives and [drastically reduces](#) racial health disparities. States that expanded their Medicaid programs saw a [51 percent](#) reduction in the gap between uninsured white and Black adults after expansion, and a [45 percent](#) reduction between white and Hispanic adults. Despite Medicaid expansion's proven role in reducing racial disparities in health care access and improving outcomes, Republicans have spent years undermining the expansion of Medicaid, blocking millions from coverage. Currently, an estimated [four million uninsured adults](#) are locked out of coverage in the 12 [holdout states](#) refusing Medicaid expansion, with people of color comprising [60 percent](#) of those who would gain coverage.

By The Numbers

- **1 In 5 Medicaid Enrollees Is Black.** As of 2021, Black Americans make up [13.4](#) percent of the U.S. population but [20 percent](#) of Medicaid enrollees.
- **30 Percent Of Medicaid Enrollees Are Hispanic.** Hispanic people make up [18.5 percent](#) of the U.S. population, but nearly [30 percent](#) of Medicaid enrollees.
- **2.4 Million People Of Color Could Gain Coverage If Holdout States Accepted Expansion.** If Republicans did the right thing and expanded Medicaid in the remaining holdout states, more than [four million](#) uninsured adults could gain coverage; people of color make up nearly [60 percent](#) of this group, or roughly 2.4 million people.

Research Confirms Medicaid Improves Coverage, Health, And Economic Equity

Reduced Racial Disparities In Coverage. Increasing Medicaid access is the single most important action available to expand coverage and reduce racial inequities in the American health care system. The majority of Americans who would [gain coverage](#) if the remaining 12 holdout states expanded Medicaid are people of color. The ACA led to historic reductions in racial disparities in access to health care, but racial gaps in insurance coverage [narrowed the most](#) in states that adopted Medicaid expansion. States that expanded their Medicaid programs saw a [51 percent](#) reduction in the gap between uninsured white and Black adults after expansion, and a [45 percent](#) reduction between white and Hispanic adults.

Medicaid Is Essential For Children Now And In The Future. Children of color disproportionately rely on Medicaid coverage, making robust Medicaid access a critical racial justice issue for American children. As of 2018, Black children made up 14 percent of the total child population in the United States, but [20 percent](#) of the children on Medicaid. Hispanic children made up roughly 25 percent of the total child population, but [36 percent](#) of the children on Medicaid. This coverage not only provides health coverage in the immediate term, but also provides [significant long term benefits](#), such as being less likely to be hospitalized and more likely to graduate high school and college.

Medicaid Coverage Is Critical To Improving Maternal Health. The United States is only one of two nations that has reported an [increase in maternal mortality](#) since 2000. Women of color consistently experience higher rates of maternal mortality than white women, with the Center on Budget Policy and Priorities finding this to be the result of a combination of factors, including life-long toxic stress resulting from racism and the impacts of [structural racism in the health care system](#). If post-partum Medicaid coverage was expanded to a full year, more than [720,000](#) individuals would receive quality coverage. In the 12 states that have refused Medicaid expansion, [eight](#) had more than 40 percent of births covered by Medicaid. Medicaid covers [65 percent](#) of all births to Black mothers and [65 percent](#) of women of reproductive age living in the coverage gap are women of color.

Reduced Racial Disparities In Access To Care. Medicaid expansion significantly reduced racial disparities in the share of people who went without care because of [cost](#). When Arkansas and Kentucky accepted Medicaid expansion, adults in those states became [more likely](#) to have a personal doctor, obtain care for ongoing conditions, and have a yearly medical check up. Residents in other states where Medicaid has been expanded are more likely to receive higher quality care, including for chronic health conditions, such as [diabetes](#) and [hypertension](#) that disproportionately impact communities of color. Medicaid beneficiaries are also [more likely](#) to receive treatment for substance use disorders and their children are more likely to have a yearly medical check up.

Improvements In Disease-Specific Diagnosis And Treatment. Medicaid expansion [reduced](#) racial disparities in cancer care and resulted in earlier diagnosis and treatment for Black patients. Medicaid expansion also improved access to care for patients of color with kidney disease. According to the Center for American Progress, Black women were [more likely](#) to receive care because of the ACA.

Medicaid Reduces Poverty And Inequity. Poverty can produce negative long-term consequences for [children](#) and adults alike. Medicaid has long been considered one of the most effective [anti-poverty](#) programs in the nation, and its expansion has significantly [improved](#) health outcomes for people of color. In a nation where out-of-pocket health care spending forced more than [10 million](#) Americans into poverty in 2016 alone, Medicaid serves as a lifeline

not only for health care, but for economic stability. A January 2021 [study](#) from Health Affairs found that the ACA helped reduce income inequality across the board, but much more dramatically in Medicaid expansion states.

Medicaid Improves Financial Security For Families. The racial wealth gap in America is staggering. According to data from the US Census Bureau, in 2017, the annual median household income for white Americans was nearly [\\$20,000](#) higher than for Hispanic households and nearly [\\$30,000](#) higher compared to Black households. As a result, policies to boost financial well-being undoubtedly help people of color. The bottom 10th percentile of earners in Medicaid expansion states saw a [22.4 percent](#) boost in their income, compared to 11.4 percent in non-expansion states. Over the past decade, research has shown the gap in medical debt between Medicaid expansion and holdout states has grown approximately [30 percent](#). In 2020, Americans living in holdout states carried an average of [\\$375](#) more in medical debt than their counterparts in expansion states