

The Impact of TennCare

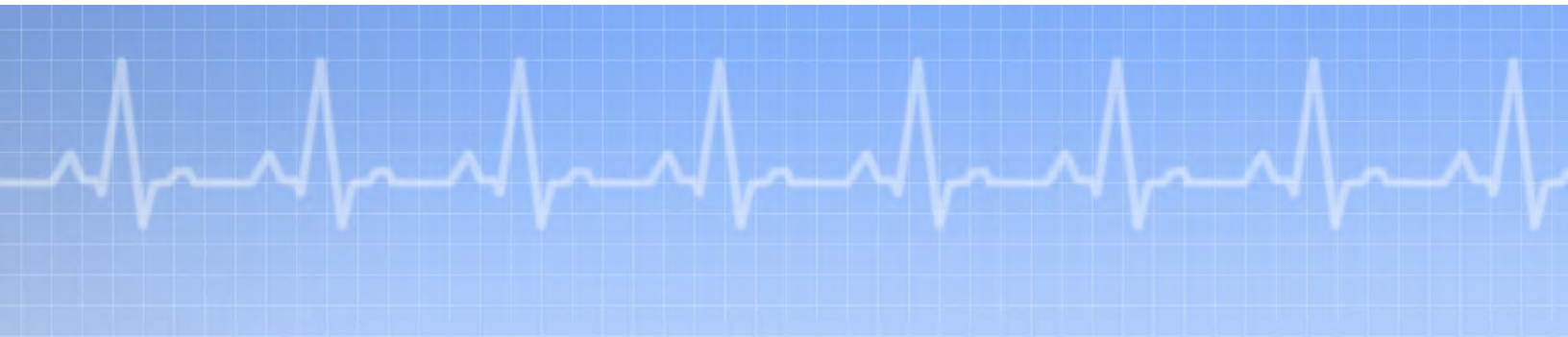
A Survey of Recipients, 2017

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The Impact of TennCare: A Survey of Recipients, 2017

Method

The Boyd Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Tennessee, under contract with the Department of Finance and Administration of the State of Tennessee, conducted a survey of Tennessee residents to ascertain their insurance status and use of medical facilities and their level of satisfaction with the TennCare program. A target sample size of 5,000 households allows us to obtain accurate estimates for subpopulations. The Boyd Center prepared the survey instrument in cooperation with personnel from the Division of TennCare.

The University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (SWORPS) conducted the survey by randomly selecting potential respondents from a land line and cell phone set of numbers and contacting those families between May and July 2017.¹ Up to five calls were made to each residence, at staggered times, to minimize non-response bias. The design chosen was a “Household Sample,” and the interview was conducted with the head of the household. When Hispanic households without an English speaker were reached, a person fluent in Spanish would call the household at a later time to conduct the survey.

Approximately 44.9 percent of both those who answered their land line phone or cell phone were willing to participate in the survey but only 33.3 percent qualified to participate.² The large sample size allowed for the weighting of responses by income and age to provide unbiased estimates for the entire population. For all statewide estimates, a correction factor was used to adjust for the degree to which the sample over- or under-represented Tennesseans grouped by household income and head of household age.³ (Table 1)

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, we make comparisons to findings from earlier surveys.

¹ Beginning this year, SWORPS supplemented random dialing with calls to a web panel of respondents. These respondents previously provided some basic information such as age and income and were contacted to balance the distribution of responses across age and income combinations.

²In the land line phone sample, there were 4,067 completed surveys, 6,456 refusals, and 1,196 who did not qualify. In the cell phone sample, there were 410 completed surveys, 921 refusals, and 340 who did not qualify. An individual will not qualify to participate if he/she is not a head of household or a Tennessee resident.

³ Starting with the 2016 report, the 5-year American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the U.S. Census is used to adjust the sample by household income and head of household age. The ACS is a nationwide survey designed to provide reliable and timely estimates of the demographic, social, economic and housing characteristics of the US population.

TABLE 1: Head of Household Age and Household Income

Age-Householders	Proportion in 2017 Survey (Percent)	Proportion in ACS* (Percent)	Deviation (Percent)
Under 25	5.2	4.4	-0.8
25-44	31.8	33.1	1.3
45-64	44.6	39.4	-5.2
65+	18.4	23.1	4.7

Household Income Level	Proportion in 2017 Survey (Percent)⁴	Proportion in ACS* (Percent)	Deviation (Percent)
Less than \$10,000	8.5	8.6	0.1
\$10,000 to \$14,999	7.2	6.3	-0.9
\$15,000 to \$19,999	6.1	6.3	0.2
\$20,000 to \$29,999	10.8	12.3	1.5
\$30,000 to \$39,999	8.2	11.2	3.0
\$40,000 to \$49,999	7.8	9.5	1.7
\$50,000 to \$59,999	7.8	8.2	0.4
\$60,000 to \$99,999	18.0	20.9	2.9
\$100,000 to \$149,999	10.1	10.2	0.1
\$150,000 and over	7.1	6.5	-0.6

*Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates.

Estimates for Insurance Status

Estimates for the number of Tennesseans who are uninsured are presented below (Table 2 and Figure 1). These statewide estimates are extrapolated from the weighted sample. The estimated population of uninsured represents 6.0 percent of the 6,651,194 Tennessee residents.⁵ The percent of uninsured adults increased from 6.6 percent in 2016 to 7.4 percent in 2017. The level of uninsured adults increased by approximately 41,200 since 2016. The uninsured rate for children in 2017 is 1.5 percent, which is lower than last year's rate of 1.8 percent (Table 2a). The estimate of the number of uninsured children in 2017 is 22,009, similar to 2015 levels.

⁴ Amounts do not total 100 percent because 8.4 percent either did not know or declined to answer.

⁵ Population estimates are found using United States Census Bureau Population Estimates. In prior years (1993 to 2008), population figures were gathered from the "Interim State Population Projections," also prepared by the United States Census Bureau.

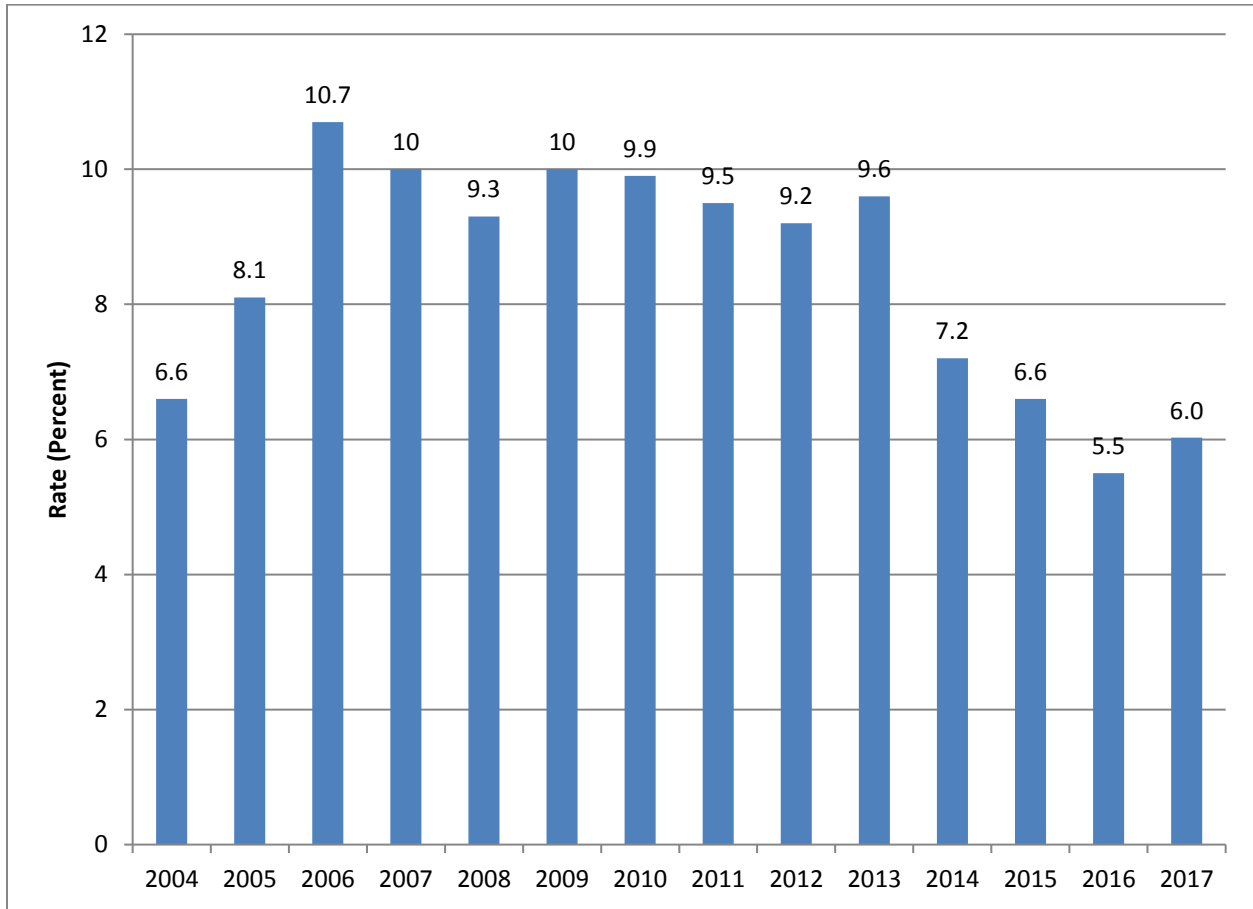
TABLE 2: Statewide Estimates of Uninsured Populations (1997–2017)

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
State Total	319,079	335,612	387,584	372,776	353,736	348,753	371,724
Percent	6.1	6.2	7.2	6.5	6.2	6.1	6.4
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
State Total	387,975	482,353	649,479	608,234	566,633	616,967	618,445
Percent	6.6	8.1	10.7	10	9.3	10	9.9
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
State Total	604,222	577,813	611,368	472,008	426,301	364,732	400,691
Percent	9.5	9.2	9.6	7.2	6.6	5.5	6.0

TABLE 2a: Uninsured Tennesseans by Age (2004–2017)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Under 18 Total	67,772	72,387	82,484	70,096	72,258	54,759	57,912
Under 18 Percent	4.9	5	5.7	4.8	4.9	3.7	3.9
18+ Total	320,203	409,965	566,955	538,138	494,375	562,208	560,532
18+ Percent	7.2	9.1	12.1	11.7	10.6	11.9	12
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Under 18 Total	35,743	40,700	55,319	36,104	21,959	27,226	22,009
Under 18 Percent	2.4	2.7	3.7	2.4	1.5	1.8	1.5
18+ Total	568,479	537,113	556,049	435,904	404,342	337,506	378,682
18+ Percent	12	11.2	11.4	8.7	8.2	6.6	7.4

FIGURE 1: Rate of Uninsured Populations (2004-2017)



Reasons for Failure to Obtain Medical Insurance

Affordability is the primary reason the surveyed uninsured failed to obtain insurance, with more than three-quarters of all respondents citing “cannot afford” as a major reason and 9 percent citing affordability as a minor reason. Those saying unaffordability was not a reason for failing to obtain insurance fell from 16 percent in 2016 to 13 percent in 2017 (Table 3) and the percentage citing affordability has been declining since 2008. Respondents in the less than \$20,000 income bracket are most likely to cite affordability as a major reason for their uninsured status, but this percentage dropped from 86 percent in 2016 to 80 percent in 2017 but the percentage has been falling across all income brackets (Table 4).

TABLE 3: Reasons for Not Having Insurance (1999–2017) (Percent)⁶

Reason	Cannot Afford			Did Not Get to It			Do Not Need		
Year	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason	Major Reason	Minor Reason	Not a Reason
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
2010	91	5	4	5	13	82	6	15	80
2011	88	5	7	11	12	77	8	12	79
2012	88	5	7	9	13	78	7	13	80
2013	83	6	11	9	17	74	5	16	79
2014	86	6	8	11	15	75	12	14	74
2015	83	7	10	9	13	77	9	10	80
2016	80	5	16	16	10	73	17	13	70
2017	78	9	13	11	15	74	13	13	74

TABLE 4: “Cannot Afford” Major Reasons for No Insurance: By Income (2012–2017) (Percent)

Household Income	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Less than \$20,000	90	87	90	89	86	80
\$20,000 - \$39,999	89	82	82	78	69	75
\$40,000 and above	81	74	82	66	79	42

⁶ A number of people in this table did not report income. Results in Table 4 omit those respondents.

Evaluations of Medical Care and Insurance Coverage

Tennessee residents' perception about the quality of care received remains consistent with their perceptions during the last decade. Overall, 78 percent of all heads of households and 73 percent of TennCare heads of households rated the quality of care as "good" or "excellent," (Table 5). Over the past 10 years, the percentage of families on TennCare reporting "good" or "excellent" care has ranged from a low of 65 percent in 2010 to a high of 76 percent in 2009. Satisfaction levels in 2016 and 2017 were near the 2009 level. Importantly, the rating by all heads of households has been consistent, reflecting strong stability in their perceptions about their quality of care.

Heads of households rate the quality of care received by children consistently high. In 2017, 88 percent of all heads of households and 87 percent of TennCare households rated their children's quality of care as "excellent" or "good" (Table 6). Three percent of TennCare families with children rate the quality of care as "poor," up from 1 percent in 2016, but very consistent with findings during the past decade.

TABLE 5: Quality of Medical Care Received by Heads of Households (2007–2017) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Excellent	28	28	32	32	31	30	32	31	32	33	33
Good	47	46	46	46	46	46	46	47	46	45	45
Fair	18	18	16	16	15	17	16	16	17	17	17
Poor	7	8	6	6	7	7	6	6	5	5	5
Heads of Households w/ TennCare	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Excellent	23	24	29	24	30	24	24	25	28	31	27
Good	44	43	47	41	41	45	44	45	42	43	46
Fair	27	25	18	29	19	22	24	22	24	23	22
Poor	6	8	6	6	10	9	8	8	6	3	5

TABLE 6: Quality of Medical Care Received by Children of Heads of Households (2007–2017) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Excellent	35	34	39	46	44	42	43	41	45	46	43
Good	48	51	49	43	45	45	43	48	44	42	45
Fair	12	11	9	9	9	10	10	9	8	10	10
Poor	4	4	3	3	2	3	4	2	3	2	2
Heads of Households w/ TennCare⁷	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Excellent	30	32	41	43	48	38	35	38	41	43	39
Good	49	49	48	45	39	42	45	49	46	44	48
Fair	19	14	8	6	11	14	14	10	9	12	10
Poor	2	6	3	6	2	6	6	3	4	1	3

Satisfaction with Quality of Care Received from TennCare

TennCare recipients continue to show high levels of satisfaction with the TennCare program as a whole. (Table 7) The percentage of respondents who indicated they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied,” increased from 92 percent in 2016 to 95 percent in 2017.⁸ The satisfaction level has stayed within a narrow range since 2009, fluctuating only between 92 percent and 95 percent.

TABLE 7: Percent Indicating Satisfaction with TennCare (2003–2017) (Percent)

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
83	90	93	87	90	89	92	94	95	93	95	93	95	92	95

⁷ This subgroup includes all households in which at least one child is enrolled in TennCare, even if the head of the household is not enrolled.

⁸ A three-point scale was used, and respondents could indicate “very satisfied,” “somewhat satisfied,” or “not satisfied.”

Behavior Relevant to Medical Care

Each respondent was asked a series of questions regarding his or her behavior when initially seeking medical care (Table 8). There was no substantial change in the behavior among all heads of households from last year. Ninety-five percent of all heads of households sought care first at a doctor's office or clinic while 91 percent of TennCare heads of household reported the same behavior, down from 96 percent in 2016. The TennCare decrease is entirely due to a smaller percent first seeking care at a clinic. Approximately 7 percent of TennCare households initially sought care at a hospital, similar to pre-2016 levels (Table 8). Consistent with prior years, 97 percent of all households and 96 percent of TennCare households sought initial care for children at a doctor's office or a clinic (Table 9).

TABLE 8: Head of Household: Medical Facilities Used When Medical Care Initially Sought (2007-2017) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Doctor's Office	83	83	83	82	83	82	81	81	81	80	80
Clinic	11	11	12	12	12	13	13	14	15	16	15
Hospital	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
Other	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2
Heads of Households w/ TennCare	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Doctor's Office	79	80	83	77	80	75	80	72	76	78	79
Clinic	15	13	12	15	11	14	14	18	18	18	12
Hospital	4	6	4	7	8	10	6	8	6	3	7
Other	2	<1	1	<1	2	1	<1	2	0	1	2

**TABLE 9: Children: Medical Facilities Used When Medical Care Initially Sought
(2007-2017) (Percent)**

All Heads of Households	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Doctor's Office	88	88	86	87	88	88	86	87	86	85	84
Clinic	9	10	10	11	9	10	12	12	12	13	13
Hospital	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2
Other	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Heads of Households w/ TennCare⁹	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Doctor's Office	83	83	85	82	84	86	84	84	83	86	85
Clinic	14	14	15	15	7	11	12	14	14	12	11
Hospital	3	3	0	3	9	3	3	1	3	2	4
Other	0	<1	0	0	0	0	<1	1	0	<1	0

TennCare recipients continue to report seeing physicians on a more frequent basis than the average Tennessee household (Table 10). Approximately 14 percent of all households report seeing a doctor at least weekly or monthly compared to 33 percent of TennCare heads of households.

Similar trends are observed among children, with 8 percent of all households taking their children to visit a doctor at least weekly or monthly compared to 17 percent of all TennCare households (Table 11).

⁹ This subgroup includes the children of heads of households enrolled in TennCare.

TABLE 10: Frequency of Visits to Doctor for Head of Household (2007–2017) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Weekly	2	3	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Monthly	13	12	12	11	11	11	11	11	11	12	12
Every Few Months	46	46	49	45	44	46	46	47	46	44	46
Yearly	23	22	22	24	25	25	24	25	25	26	26
Rarely	16	17	15	18	17	17	17	15	16	16	14
Heads of Households w/ TennCare	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Weekly	8	7	6	6	6	4	5	6	3	5	5
Monthly	33	33	30	29	26	31	34	31	26	31	28
Every Few Months	45	47	51	47	46	43	43	45	49	42	42
Yearly	6	8	7	7	10	8	8	11	9	10	14
Rarely	8	4	6	12	11	14	10	8	13	12	11

TABLE 11: Frequency of Visits to Doctor for Children (2007–2017) (Percent)

All Heads of Households	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Weekly	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Monthly	11	9	9	9	10	8	9	9	7	8	7
Every Few Months	50	50	51	51	50	50	52	47	47	44	48
Yearly	27	29	31	29	31	35	30	35	36	38	36
Rarely	10	10	8	9	8	6	8	8	8	9	8
Heads of Households w/ TennCare¹⁰	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Weekly	4	1	1	3	1	0	1	2	1	3	3
Monthly	14	16	18	13	15	15	19	17	13	12	14
Every Few Months	54	55	50	51	55	58	53	53	51	53	48
Yearly	16	21	27	24	25	22	25	25	28	29	31
Rarely	11	7	4	10	4	5	2	2	5	3	4

¹⁰ This subgroup includes the children of heads of households enrolled in TennCare.

Appointments

The reported time required to obtain an appointment is comparable to previous years' findings. Approximately 71 percent of TennCare recipients obtained a doctor's appointment within a week, and 42 percent obtained an appointment within one day (Table 12). The average wait time once TennCare patients arrived at their appointments was 42 minutes, the shortest during the past decade. The average travel time to a physician's office was 22 minutes. The travel time is similar to times reported in prior years (Table 13).

TABLE 12: Time between Attempt to Make Appointment and First Availability of Appointment: TennCare Heads of Household (2008–2017) (Percent)

When you last made an appointment to see a primary care physician for an illness, in the last 12 months, how soon was the first appointment available?	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Same day	21	18	20	21	20	18	18	24	19	21
Next day	17	23	19	19	21	25	21	18	22	21
1 week	27	25	29	30	25	23	29	26	28	29
2 weeks	10	9	11	10	14	10	8	8	9	9
3 weeks	4	4	4	4	2	4	6	3	4	5
Over 3 weeks	22	20	17	16	18	20	19	21	18	15

TABLE 13: Wait for Appointments: TennCare Heads of Household (2007–2017) (Minutes)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Number of minutes wait past scheduled appointment time?	57	50	52	65	58	58	51	53	63	52	42
Number of minutes to travel to physician's office?	21	25	24	31	23	22	22	22	27	24	22

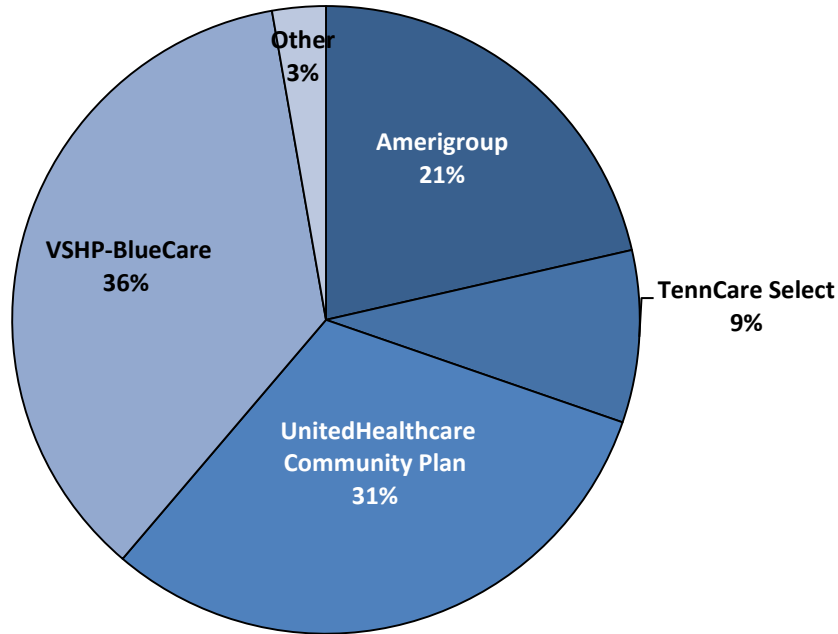
TennCare Plans

The largest number of TennCare survey household members (36 percent) report being signed up with Volunteer State Health Plan (VSHP). UnitedHealthcare accounts for 31 percent, followed by Amerigroup with 21 percent and TennCare Select with 9 percent. Although there are no other active TennCare plans, 3 percent indicate they are represented by some plan other than these four listed. VSHP saw the greatest shift (8 percent decrease), the majority of which represented changes to Amerigroup (2 percent increase) and TennCare Select (6 percent increase).

TABLE 14: Reported TennCare Plan (2012–2017) (Percent)

What company manages your TennCare plan?	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Amerigroup	20	17	19	20	19	21
TennCare Select	6	5	4	4	3	9
UnitedHealthcare Community Plan (formerly AmeriChoice)	37	41	42	33	30	31
VSHP – BlueCare	33	30	30	36	44	36
Other	4	7	5	7	4	3

FIGURE 2: Reported TennCare Plan (2017)



About four out of five TennCare heads of households’ report knowing the name of the managed care organization (MCO) they are assigned to and 71 percent of them report receiving an enrollment card – an increase from 67 percent in 2016 (Table 15). The proportion of households receiving information about filing appeals and a list of patients’ rights and responsibilities was 76 percent and 82 percent, respectively. These results are consistent with recent trends.

The ways that TennCare households report receiving information about the program are very similar to those reported in 2016. Postal mail remains the preferred method for receiving information about TennCare, with 72 percent reporting it was the best way (Table 16). Approximately 10 percent prefer to receive communication electronically by email or through online resources.

TABLE 15: Households Receiving TennCare Information from Plans (2008–2017) (Percent)

Please indicate whether or not you or anyone in your household has received each of the following regarding TennCare	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
An enrollment card	78	77	74	61	62	69	63	69	67	71
Information on filing grievances	41	41	43	29						
Information on filing appeals ¹¹					73	76	70	82	76	76
A list of rights and responsibilities	73	75	74	68	80	82	78	85	81	82
Name of MCO to whom assigned	79	79	79	76	79	76	76	84	81	81

TABLE 16: Best Way to Get Information about TennCare (2008–2017) (Percent)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Mail	73	71	72	78	80	74	75	78	78	72
Doctor	5	6	5	5	6	9	5	4	5	6
Phone	11	10	11	5	4	6	6	8	4	5
Handbook	6	7	5	6	5	4	4	3	2	4
Drug Store	1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Friends	<1	1	1	2	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
TV	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Paper	<1	1	<1	0	<1	<1	<1	0	<1	<1
Email									5	6
Website									4	4
Other	4	3	3	4	4	4	6	8	<1	<1

Six percent of respondents indicated that either they or someone else in their family had changed plans within the preceding 12 months. Of that total, 72 percent requested the change. The most commonly cited reason for changing plans was “limited choice of doctors and hospitals.”

In the past 12 months, 10 percent of TennCare families used a non-emergency care provider that did not participate in their plan, with nearly six out of 10 of this population only using non-participating providers one to two times (Figure 3). Of the 10 percent of TennCare households using non-participating providers, the most common type of care sought was from a general medical care/family doctor (47

¹¹Before 2012, survey respondents were asked whether they had received “information on filing grievances.” The term “appeals” is much more widely used in the TennCare program than the term “grievances.” Therefore, the question was changed in 2012 to ask whether respondents had received “information on filing appeals.”

percent) followed by dental care (37 percent) (Table 17 and Figure 4). Approximately 36 percent of survey responders who sought care from a non-TennCare provider stated that they did so because the service was not covered under TennCare, while only 5 percent stated that they were dissatisfied with the quality of service from the TennCare provider (Table 18). Over half of the respondents (53 percent) reported that TennCare helped them find a provider that participated in the TennCare plan.

FIGURE 3: Number of Times Sought Non-Emergency Care at a Non-Participating Provider in Past 12 Months (Percent)

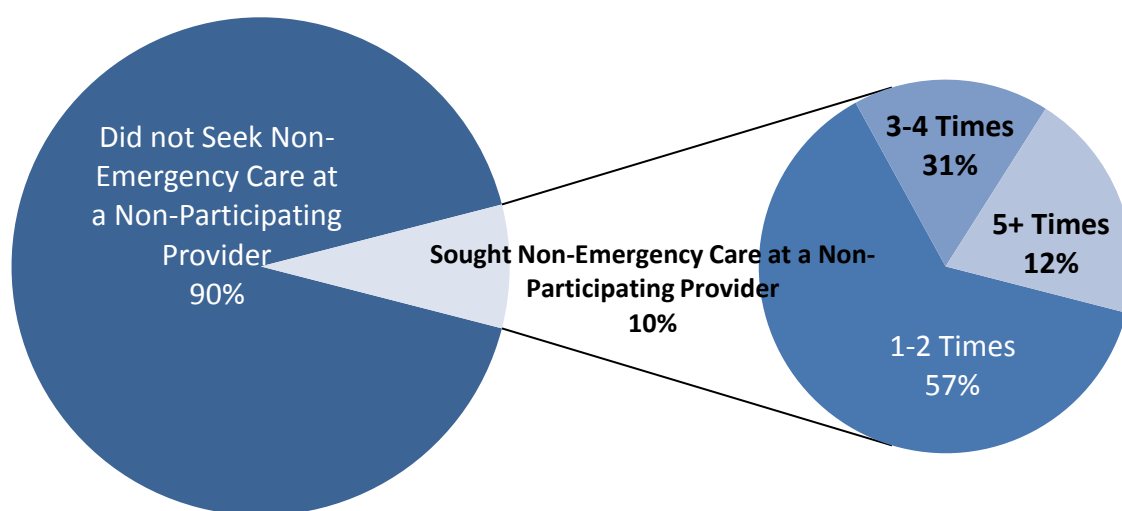


TABLE 17: Type of Non-Emergency Care Sought from a Non-TennCare Provider (2017) (Percent)

	2017
Eye Care	27
Dental Care	37
General Medical Care Specialist	47
Non-Surgical Specialist	26
Surgical Specialist	18
Not Sure	3

Respondents could choose more than one type of non-emergency care.

FIGURE 4: Type of Non-Emergency Care Sought from a Non-TennCare Provider (2017)

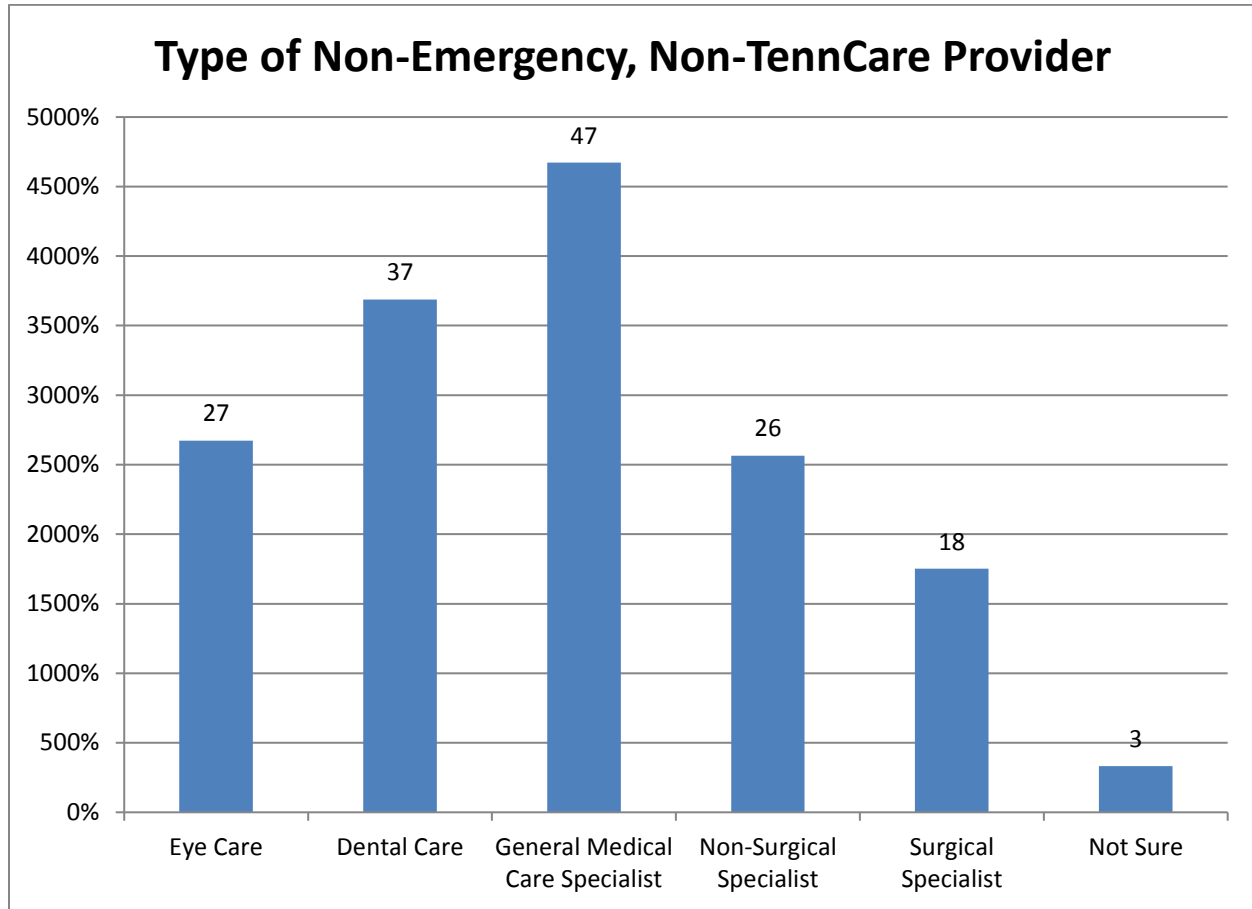


TABLE 18: Reasons Sought Non-Emergency Care from a Non-TennCare Provider (2017) (Percent)

	2017
Dissatisfaction with quality of service from TennCare provider	5
Service was not covered by TennCare	36
No TennCare provider in the area	11
Could not get timely appointment with TennCare provider	4
When I made the appointment or received care, I mistakenly thought the provider participated in my TennCare health care plan	20
Not Sure	24

Conclusion

The positive trends in recent years regarding the rate of uninsured and the overall satisfaction in TennCare recipients continued with this survey, Tennessee's overall uninsured rate in 2017 is 6.0 percent. The rate is an increase from the 2016 rate of 5.5 percent, but it is still one of the lowest rates in two decades. In 2017, the proportion of uninsured children decreased from 1.8 percent in 2016 to 1.5 percent, while the proportion of uninsured adults increased from 6.6 percent in 2016 to 7.4 percent. The increase in uninsured adults represents more than 40,000 Tennesseans.

Affordability continues to be the major reason cited for not having insurance. The percentage of people citing affordability has steadily fallen over time and across all income brackets. TennCare enrollees (91 percent) are somewhat less likely than all households (95 percent) to seek initial care at a doctor's office or clinic. There continues to be a trend in both TennCare heads of households and their children to have more doctor visits than the general population.

Overall, TennCare continues to receive positive feedback from its recipients, with 95 percent reporting satisfaction with the program. This positive feedback is a strong indication that TennCare is providing satisfactory medical care and meeting the expectations of those it serves.