An estimated 55 million Americans will be uninsured by the year 2008 without some governmental intervention, according to a study released by the Health Insurance Association of America. That means that 22% of the nation’s nonelderly population will be without health insurance and lacking good access to health care, according to a report by the American Hospital Association.

In releasing its report, the nation’s top health insurance trade association warned that the number is contingent on the economy remaining robust and health care cost increases remaining low. If the economy slows or health care costs begin to increase more rapidly, the number of uninsured people could grow to more than 60 million by the year 2008.

In 1998, 44.3 million (16%) of the nation’s population not eligible for Medicare were without health insurance. “This study confirms the plight of the nation’s uninsured must be our nation’s top priority,” said Health Insurance Association of America President Chip Kahn in a released statement. “No longer can our nation ignore the magnitude of this problem.”

Women were more likely than men to lose health care coverage between 1997 and 1998, a trend that the insurance group’s report indicated was likely to continue. Although those below the poverty level were most likely to be without health insurance coverage, the report noted that people who earn more than twice the poverty level and were still uninsured increased from 40% of the uninsured population in 1997 to 46% in 1998.

Arizona had the highest percentage of uninsured population at 27.2%. Texas (with 27% of its population uninsured) and California (with 24.4%) were close behind. Nebraska and Minnesota had the lowest rate, with 10.3% of their population uninsured.

Ruth SoRelle, MPH
Circulation Newswriter
Study Predicts 55 Million People Uninsured by the Year 2008
Ruth SoRelle

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