

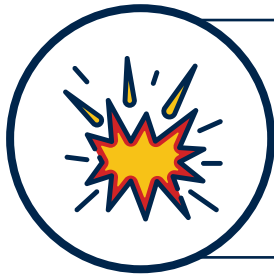
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# The X Factor: How Skyrocketing Medicaid Enrollment Is Driving Down the Labor Force

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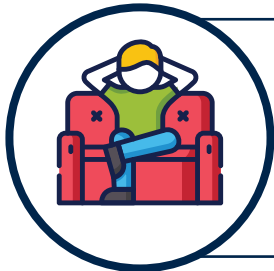
# KEY FINDINGS



AMERICA'S LABOR FORCE HAS BEEN SHRINKING WHILE **MEDICAID ENROLLMENT IS EXPLODING.**



ABLE-BODIED ADULTS ARE THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE MEDICAID SURGE, **SIPHONING RESOURCES FROM THE TRULY NEEDY.**



EXPANDED WELFARE BENEFITS ARE **KEEPING PEOPLE OUT OF THE WORKFORCE.**



SMALL BUSINESSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE **SUFFERING AND FACING CLOSURE.**

## THE BOTTOM LINE:

**ABLE-BODIED ADULTS MUST BE MOVED FROM WELFARE TO WORK IF WE WANT TO SOLVE THE WORKFORCE SHORTAGE.**

## Background

There is one common theme in nearly every store window across the nation. One thing that supersedes the uniqueness of regions, the boundaries of states, the variety of businesses: “Help wanted.”

The economy is attempting to recover, but the lack of workers threatens a full recovery.<sup>1</sup> There are more than 10 million open jobs nationwide, a near-record high, and not enough workers to fill them.<sup>2-4</sup> Although employers are desperate to fill these openings, nearly four million Americans are still missing from the workforce.<sup>5-8</sup>



THERE ARE **MORE THAN 10 MILLION OPEN JOBS** NATIONWIDE, A NEAR-RECORD HIGH.

Worse yet, recent data reveals that more than four million Americans recently quit their jobs—the highest quit rate in American history.<sup>9</sup> There are more open jobs than people looking for work, and the reason is simple: Government benefits have made staying at home pay better than work.<sup>10-14</sup>

This is perhaps nowhere more evident than within the Medicaid program. While the economy has struggled to bounce back, enrollment in Medicaid has soared to new heights.<sup>15</sup>

## The “X Factor”: While the Labor Force Is Shrinking, Medicaid Is Surging

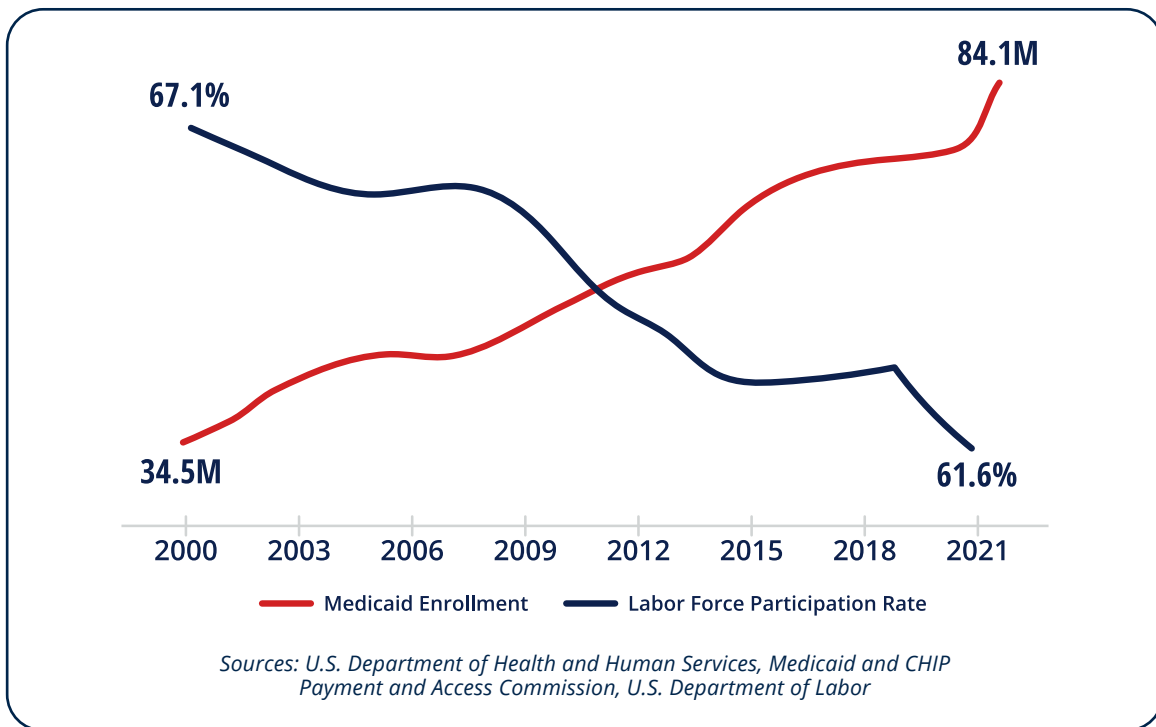
Getting people off the sidelines and back to work continues to be a problem. In 2000, the labor force participation rate was just over 67 percent.<sup>16</sup> But two decades later, it had fallen by more than eight percent.<sup>17</sup> Today, labor force participation sits near a 45-year low, and is comparable to the 1970s—a time when most women were still not in the workforce.<sup>18</sup>



**Today, labor force participation sits near a 45-year low, and is comparable to the 1970s—a time when most women were still not in the workforce.**

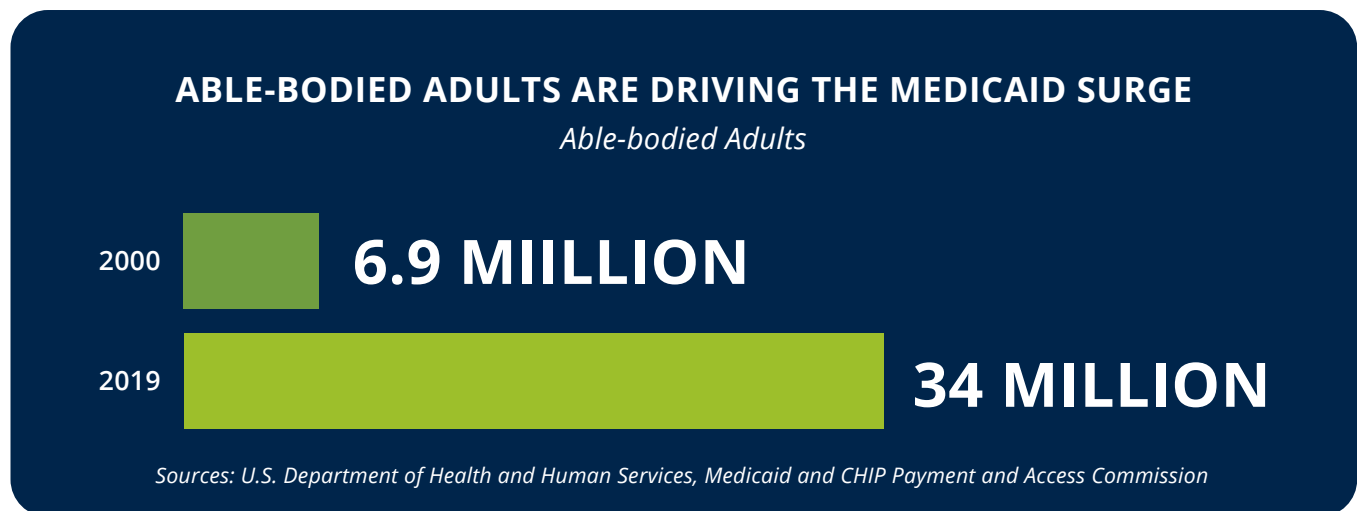


Over the same period, Medicaid enrollment experienced massive growth, with nearly 50 million more people added to the rolls.<sup>19-22</sup> **This is the “X factor” facing America today—surging Medicaid enrollment and a shrinking workforce.**



But it is not the truly needy driving this Medicaid enrollment surge—it is able-bodied adults.

Since 2000, the Medicaid rolls have spiked by a whopping 27 million able-bodied adults.<sup>23-25</sup> Much of this growth is the result of states expanding Medicaid under ObamaCare. Between 2013 and 2018, for example, able-bodied adult enrollment nearly doubled, while enrollment in the rest of the Medicaid program grew by just two percent.<sup>26</sup> In states that expanded Medicaid, more than twice as many able-bodied adults signed up for the program as expected, leading to major enrollment spikes and budget overruns.<sup>27</sup>



Rather than able-bodied adults powering the growth of the workforce, they are driving up Medicaid enrollment, consuming resources that could instead go to the truly needy.

Government benefits have made it more lucrative to stay at home rather than return to work. And although there has never been a better time to return to work, workforce growth remains sluggish while Medicaid enrollment is exploding.<sup>28</sup>

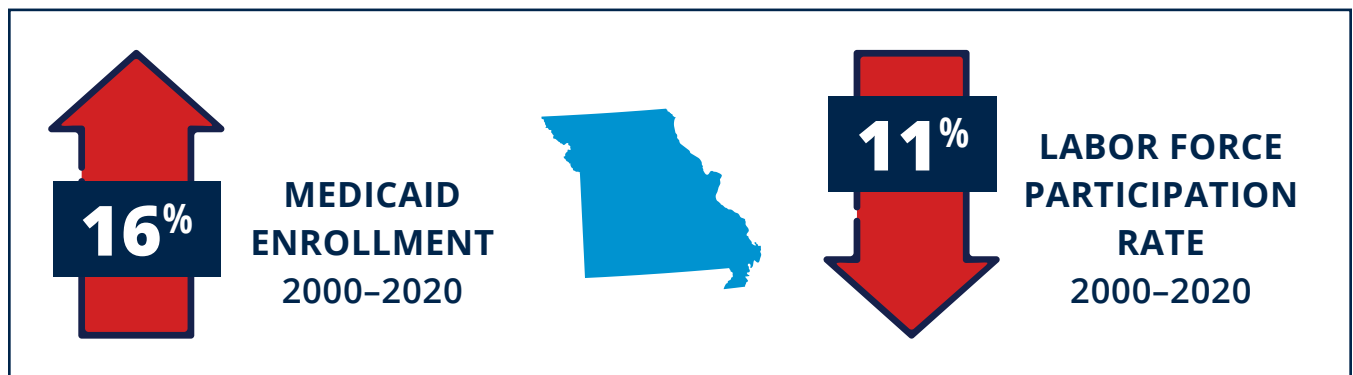
## States Are Struggling as a Result

Over the last 20 years, every state has seen a drop in its labor force and a surge in Medicaid enrollment.<sup>29</sup> And Medicaid handcuffs have only exacerbated an existing problem as states try to move towards economic recovery. For a full recovery to take effect, states desperately need to bolster their workforce, not their welfare programs.

### MISSOURI MEDICAID MAYHEM

Missouri policymakers have struggled with skyrocketing Medicaid enrollment and spending for decades. Missouri's Medicaid spending nearly tripled over the last two decades, with the program eating up nearly 40 percent of the entire budget—all before Medicaid expansion went into effect.<sup>30</sup> By 2020, nearly one in five Missourians were on Medicaid.<sup>31</sup> With Missouri implementing ObamaCare expansion effective October 1, 2021, enrollment will only soar higher, as expansion could add nearly 600,000 more enrollees to the program.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, the state's labor force has already taken a drastic hit. Over the past two decades, Missouri's labor force has shrunk by 11 percent.<sup>33</sup> Now, more than ever, Missouri needs its residents to get off the sidelines and back to work. But unfortunately, able-bodied adults are opting to stay at home rather than re-enter the workforce.<sup>34</sup>



## GEORGIA'S SITUATION IS NOT PEACHY

Georgia's Medicaid program has seen skyrocketing growth over the last two decades. In 2000, the state's Medicaid program had just 913,000 individuals enrolled.<sup>35</sup> But by 2020, enrollment had swelled to nearly 2.2 million enrollees—an increase of 140 percent.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, Georgia's labor force participation suffered a sharp decline, experiencing an 11 percent drop over the same period.<sup>37</sup> In a time when work pays better than ever, fewer Georgians are entering the workforce and are instead choosing to stay home.<sup>38</sup>

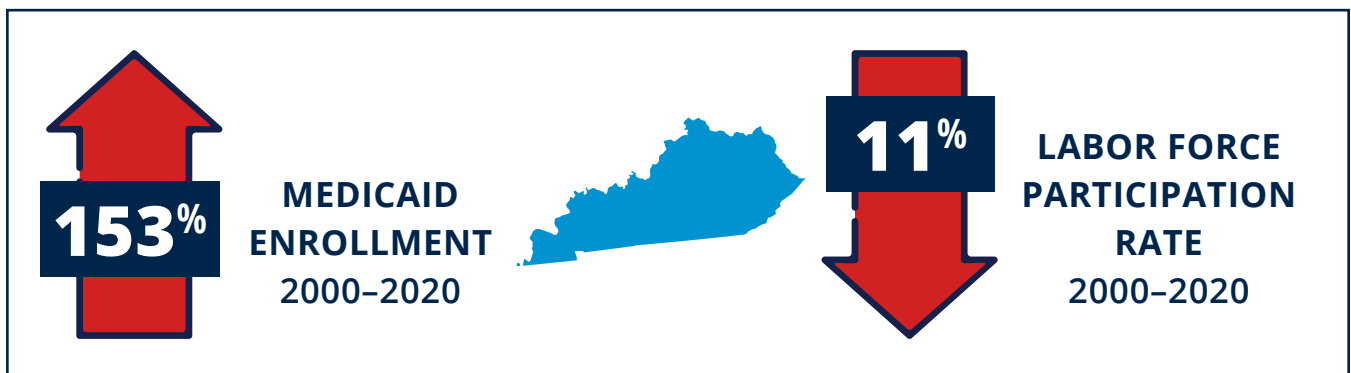


## KENTUCKY'S COLOSSAL MEDICAID GROWTH

Kentucky's Medicaid program has exploded in recent years. Since 2000, Kentucky has added more than a million new enrollees to Medicaid—an increase of 153 percent.<sup>39-41</sup> Much of this growth has been driven by then-Governor Steve Beshear's unilateral decision to expand Medicaid to a new class of able-bodied adults under ObamaCare. More than 600,000 able-bodied adults have enrolled in the Medicaid expansion—more than triple the number state officials expected.<sup>42-43</sup>

As more able-bodied adults enroll into Medicaid, the state's labor force is trending downward. Since 2000, labor force participation has decreased by 11 percent in Kentucky, with nearly half of adults now sitting on the sidelines.<sup>44</sup>

If Kentucky is to have an economic comeback, able-bodied adults must be moved from welfare to work.



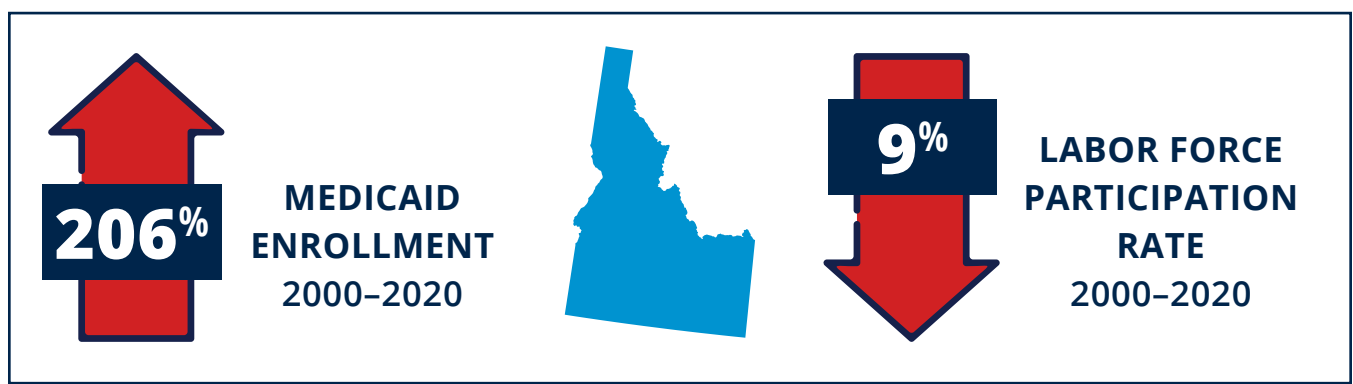
## UNSUSTAINABLE ENROLLMENT IS SINKING IDAHO

Over the last 20 years, Idaho's Medicaid enrollment has grown by a whopping 206 percent—with more than one in five Idahoans now on the program.<sup>45-47</sup> In fact, between February 2020 and May 2021 alone, Idaho saw nearly 75,000 new enrollees added to the program.<sup>48</sup>

But as the state's Medicaid program is growing rapidly, the workforce is being depleted. Indeed, over the same period, labor force participation has decreased by nearly 10 percent.<sup>49</sup> Instead of able-bodied adults returning to work, they are filling up the Medicaid rolls.

If Idaho is to reverse course and overcome these Medicaid woes, able-bodied adults must return to work.

These states should serve as a stark warning for their neighbors, and for other states across the country. Without a change, this dire situation will only get worse.



## When There Is a Shortage of Able-Bodied Workers, the Economy Suffers

While President Biden boasted that “this recovery is faster, stronger, fairer, and wider than almost anyone could have predicted,” this could not be further from the truth.<sup>50</sup> In fact, not only has the recovery remained sluggish as millions of workers sit on the sidelines, but Biden’s \$1.9 trillion “stimulus” package did not create even a single promised job in 2021.<sup>51</sup>

While many sectors of the economy are struggling, small businesses are being hit the hardest. In fact, most small businesses report major difficulties hiring workers, despite offering higher wages, signing bonuses, and other benefits.<sup>52-53</sup>

Unfortunately, the next step for many small businesses is closure—with 57 percent of small businesses facing permanent closure if these trends do not reverse course.<sup>54</sup>

Unless there is a permanent change, and able-bodied adults are moved from welfare to work, the American economy may never reach its full potential.

## **Bottom Line: Lawmakers should move able-bodied adults from welfare to work to help solve the workforce shortage.**

Over the past two decades, uncontrollable Medicaid growth—to which able-bodied adults are the major contributor—and the congressional expansion of welfare benefits have created hurdles that are stalling economic recovery. In a time when work pays better than ever, Americans are reaching for welfare applications instead of job applications.

The time for action is now. To kickstart the American comeback, states must adopt policies that move able-bodied adults from welfare to work. Such a move would protect the truly needy and help solve the labor force issues plaguing states.



## APPENDIX 1: MEDICAID ENROLLMENT FROM 2000–2020

State	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2000 to 2020
Alabama	644,332	813,253	922,595	1,044,969	1,141,138	77%
Alaska	82,981	98,710	121,597	138,100	226,515	173%
Arizona	518,511	1,067,275	1,205,658	1,893,054	2,094,748	304%
Arkansas	416,214	624,593	687,131	919,768	919,628	121%
California	6,247,244	8,018,670	9,664,788	13,145,593	13,159,326	111%
Colorado	289,752	421,403	679,529	1,298,364	1,410,227	387%
Connecticut	352,345	436,171	671,216	840,619	1,042,833	196%
Delaware	101,309	144,352	209,230	210,636	239,025	136%
District of Columbia	128,123	144,573	210,287	245,800	259,261	102%
Florida	1,859,559	2,272,992	3,172,076	3,974,935	4,445,313	139%
Georgia	913,062	1,405,875	1,801,333	1,869,933	2,193,172	140%
Hawaii	147,864	192,294	265,449	318,073	357,869	142%
Idaho	128,749	180,336	243,694	303,272	394,092	206%
Illinois	1,425,685	2,068,661	2,810,613	2,931,849	2,937,593	106%
Indiana	632,996	821,795	1,093,399	1,244,321	1,641,919	159%
Iowa	237,014	337,443	499,691	585,978	677,628	186%
Kansas	200,996	274,381	342,451	370,464	389,858	94%
Kentucky	596,001	694,215	866,035	1,274,166	1,506,916	153%
Louisiana	693,980	1,034,274	1,220,858	1,444,601	1,816,232	162%
Maine	175,007	269,953	298,704	271,406	330,923	89%
Maryland	569,462	711,066	978,929	1,061,749	1,383,758	143%
Massachusetts	930,481	1,035,010	1,601,378	1,805,041	1,765,345	90%
Michigan	1,090,554	1,518,612	2,090,316	2,285,078	2,724,152	150%
Minnesota	478,794	586,060	805,880	1,186,498	1,176,859	146%
Mississippi	506,285	649,839	667,951	723,301	741,177	46%

State	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2000 to 2020
Missouri	866,076	953,898	1,070,627	961,996	1,008,795	16%
Montana	72,132	85,180	134,267	140,253	262,664	264%
Nebraska	194,478	203,788	252,304	233,048	291,951	50%
Nevada	108,576	175,442	300,223	579,784	709,613	554%
New Hampshire	82,033	109,715	152,999	187,999	209,658	156%
New Jersey	754,422	864,291	1,303,411	1,690,998	1,760,094	133%
New Mexico	323,020	411,926	572,845	840,108	907,868	181%
New York	2,788,018	4,194,898	5,018,385	6,317,220	6,777,532	143%
North Carolina	987,387	1,265,581	1,822,523	2,004,104	2,363,887	139%
North Dakota	45,869	53,765	75,193	87,269	108,654	137%
Ohio	1,167,156	1,749,245	2,198,799	3,131,119	2,987,643	156%
Oklahoma	450,601	578,826	808,802	672,225	792,404	76%
Oregon	391,845	396,263	656,022	1,055,080	1,120,109	186%
Pennsylvania	1,339,302	1,718,873	2,171,331	2,670,350	3,161,673	136%
Rhode Island	159,923	187,159	211,377	279,851	320,587	100%
South Carolina	694,122	844,600	883,892	1,172,308	1,357,644	96%
South Dakota	79,581	101,698	125,433	108,416	115,367	45%
Tennessee	1,394,933	1,293,117	1,378,378	1,654,238	1,676,327	20%
Texas	1,981,621	3,054,204	4,177,257	4,314,877	4,901,254	147%
Utah	133,079	209,604	324,929	332,312	388,599	192%
Vermont	120,619	125,584	178,759	208,420	183,394	52%
Virginia	526,668	734,291	1,003,785	989,083	1,574,108	199%
Washington	765,342	938,514	1,219,740	1,813,800	1,910,704	150%
West Virginia	257,568	307,168	371,889	554,210	575,310	123%
Wisconsin	508,309	828,489	1,196,809	1,191,714	1,353,048	166%
Wyoming	37,090	60,878	72,617	65,015	58,017	56%

\*Data rates come from the month December

## APPENDIX 2: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES FROM 2000–2020

State	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2000 to 2020
Alabama	63.2	61.4	59.6	56.0	58.2	-8%
Alaska	72.8	71.4	69.3	66.4	65.0	-11%
Arizona	65.3	63.9	62.8	60.3	60.3	-8%
Arkansas	61.9	63.1	60.4	58.3	58.3	-6%
California	67.2	65.3	63.8	62.1	60.2	-10%
Colorado	71.7	72.5	69.8	66.7	68.5	-4%
Connecticut	67.5	67.5	68.0	65.6	64.0	-5%
Delaware	70.1	67.8	62.3	62.4	60.6	-14%
District of Columbia	68.4	67.6	68.4	69.8	70.0	2%
Florida	63.6	62.4	61.2	59.2	56.6	-11%
Georgia	68.9	68.1	64.2	60.7	61.2	-11%
Hawaii	67.2	65.9	62.8	61.9	60.5	-10%
Idaho	69.6	68.9	64.9	63.8	63.2	-9%
Illinois	69.0	66.7	66.3	65.3	61.9	-10%
Indiana	67.7	67.6	63.5	64.6	63.3	-6%
Iowa	71.8	71.8	70.8	70.0	65.3	-9%
Kansas	69.8	70.2	69.6	67.8	67.9	-3%
Kentucky	63.4	62.1	61.6	57.7	56.5	-11%
Louisiana	61.7	64.3	60.3	59.7	58.5	-5%
Maine	67.4	66.7	64.9	62.8	59.5	-12%
Maryland	70.3	69.1	68.3	66.8	65.2	-7%
Massachusetts	67.9	66.7	66.1	65.0	66.5	-2%
Michigan	68.5	65.3	60.5	60.7	60.7	-11%
Minnesota	75.5	73.1	71.2	70.2	68.4	-9%
Mississippi	62.1	60.4	60.1	55.7	55.8	-10%

State	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2000 to 2020
Missouri	70.4	67.5	65.6	64.6	63.0	-11%
Montana	67.9	66.7	63.9	63.6	61.5	-9%
Nebraska	73.3	73.0	71.4	70.3	68.7	-6%
Nevada	70.7	67.7	65.2	62.2	60.6	-14%
New Hampshire	72.3	71.0	69.8	68.4	67.4	-7%
New Jersey	66.3	66.4	66.0	64.0	61.9	-7%
New Mexico	63.4	62.6	58.7	58.2	57.9	-9%
New York	62.6	63.2	62.1	60.7	59.8	-4%
North Carolina	67.8	66.0	62.9	61.2	60.0	-12%
North Dakota	70.9	72.6	72.5	70.7	69.0	-3%
Ohio	67.0	66.7	64.9	62.7	62.2	-7%
Oklahoma	64.2	64.0	61.7	61.4	60.8	-5%
Oregon	68.2	65.1	65.6	62.0	62.0	-9%
Pennsylvania	64.8	64.3	63.1	63.2	61.4	-5%
Rhode Island	66.4	67.9	67.4	64.5	62.3	-6%
South Carolina	64.8	64.7	60.7	59.2	56.6	-13%
South Dakota	73.0	72.4	71.8	69.8	69.1	-5%
Tennessee	65.2	63.2	62.9	59.8	60.6	-7%
Texas	68.1	67.0	65.9	63.8	63.0	-7%
Utah	72.3	72.2	68.1	68.1	67.2	-7%
Vermont	70.6	70.9	70.7	67.0	60.9	-14%
Virginia	68.3	68.5	67.4	64.9	63.2	-7%
Washington	68.8	67.6	65.4	63.5	62.5	-9%
West Virginia	56.1	55.5	54.5	53.4	55.3	-1%
Wisconsin	73.2	70.7	69.2	68.1	65.5	-11%
Wyoming	71.5	71.6	69.5	66.7	64.6	-10%

\*Data rates come from the month December

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