

How Did the Affordable Care Act Affect Workers?

A closer look at detailed occupations and health insurance coverage

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Background

Many researchers have pondered the potential effect on the labor market in light of the ACA changes (CBO, Urban, etc).

The majority of people have health insurance primarily through their employer or a family member's employer (55 percent) (Smith and Medalia, 2015). In 2014, the implementation of major provisions of the Affordable Care Act increased the number of people with health insurance coverage and reduced the percentage of workers without health insurance coverage. Among these workers, the uninsured rate dropped for people who worked less than full time, year round between 2013 and 2014 (by 6.3 percentage points). For these workers, most obtained their health insurance coverage through Medicaid or direct purchase (directly purchasing their health insurance from an insurance provider or through an health insurance exchange), rather than through their own employer (Smith and Medalia, 2015).

As health insurance offerings vary across the labor force, we use occupation to investigate the disparity of resulting health insurance coverage among workers. Occupation helps to account for dissimilarities among groups in their differential access to health insurance coverage.

Data and Definitions

Detailed occupations: occupation categories covering 140 million employed workers, from the American Community Survey, 1-year files, 2013 and 2014.

Unit of analysis: Occupations

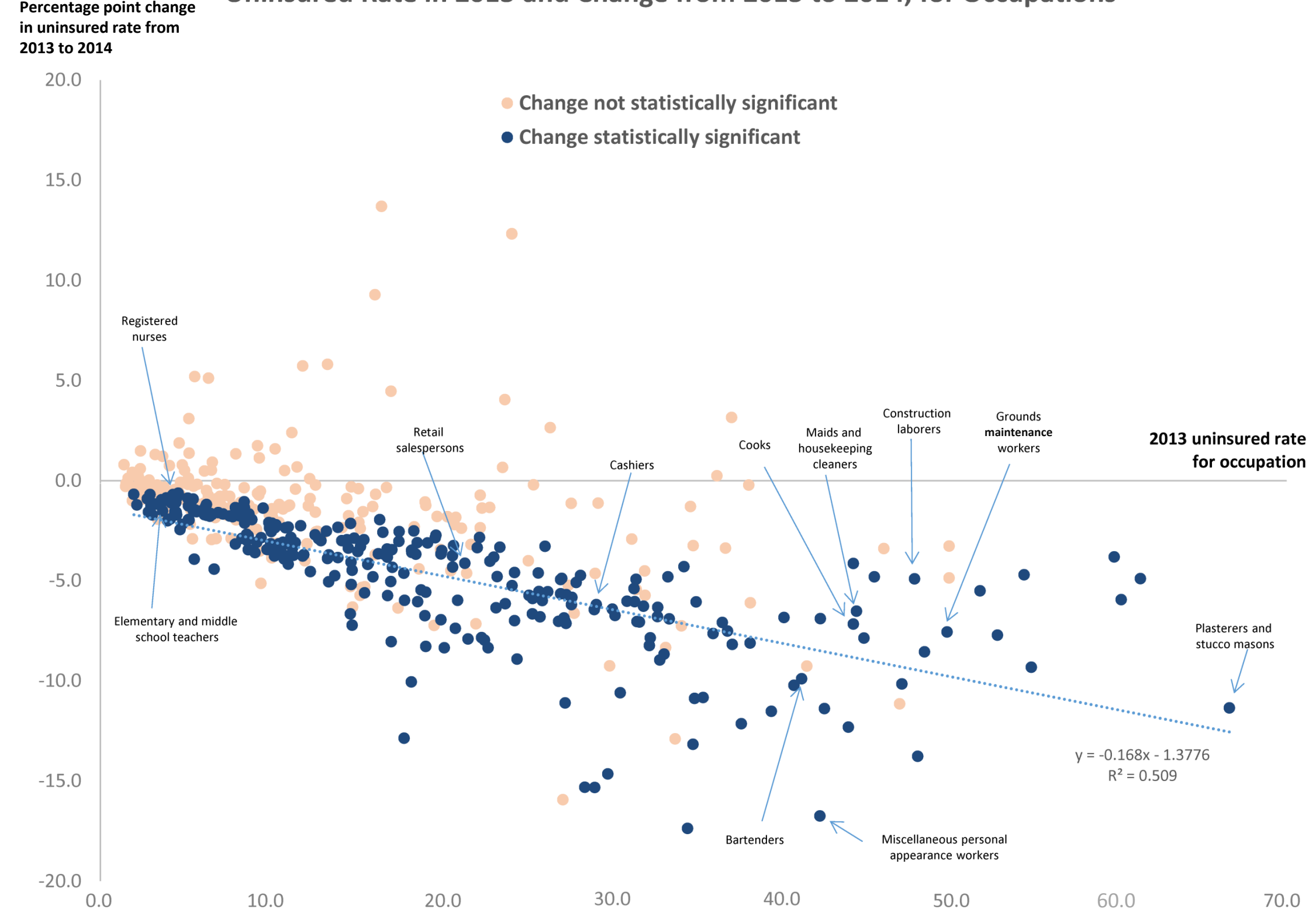
Restricted to employed workers in nonmilitary occupations, ages 16-64. Detailed occupations with a CV (coefficient of variation) of 50 percent or more of the uninsured rate for either 2013 or 2014 are excluded from the analysis.

Full-time, year-round workers include people who work at least 35 hours a week, for 50 or more weeks per year.

In this poster, "full-time workers" refers to full-time, year-round workers, and "part-time workers" refers to people who work less than full time, year round. Note that, starting in 2014, with regard to health insurance coverage, the Affordable Care Act defines full-time employment as 30 hours or more per week.

Among detailed occupations, did all occupations experience a decrease in their rate of uninsured?

Uninsured Rate in 2013 and Change from 2013 to 2014, for Occupations

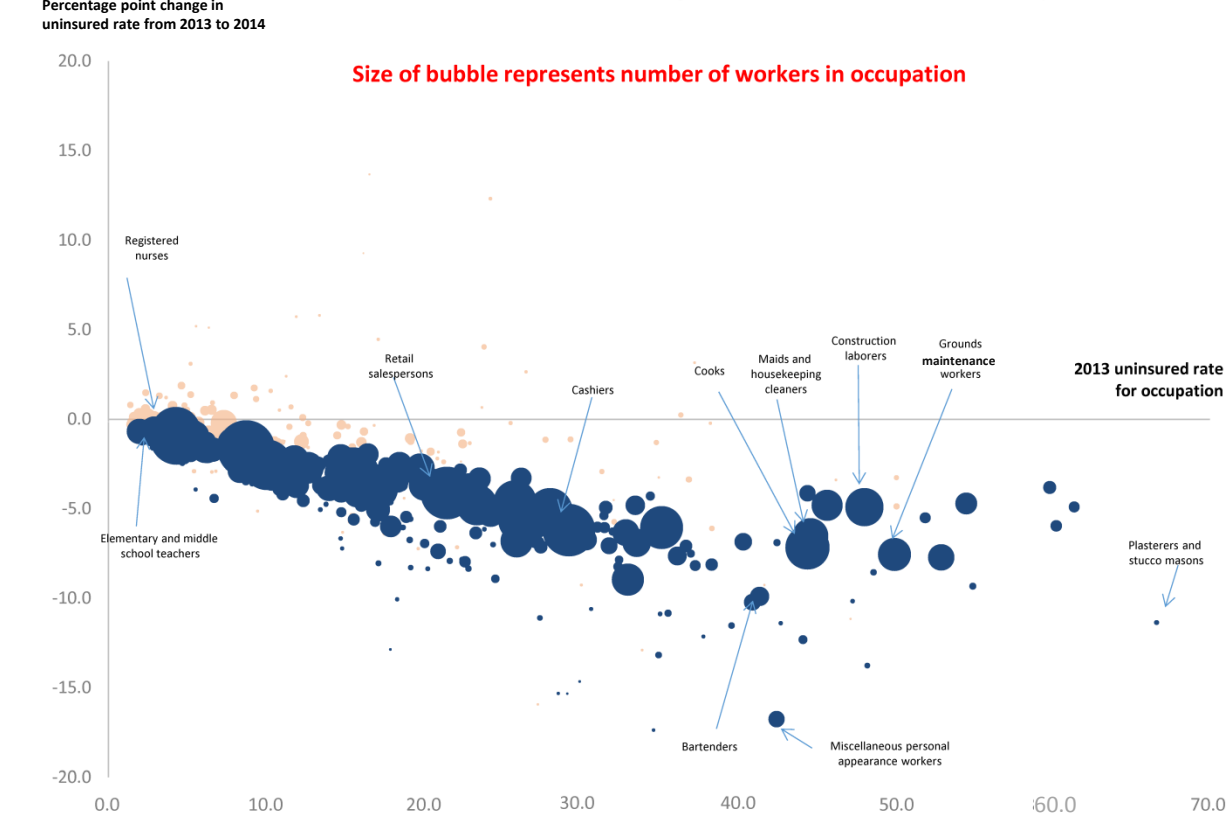


Detailed occupations also show a drop in the rate of uninsured for many occupations.

No occupation had a statistically significant increase in the uninsured rate.

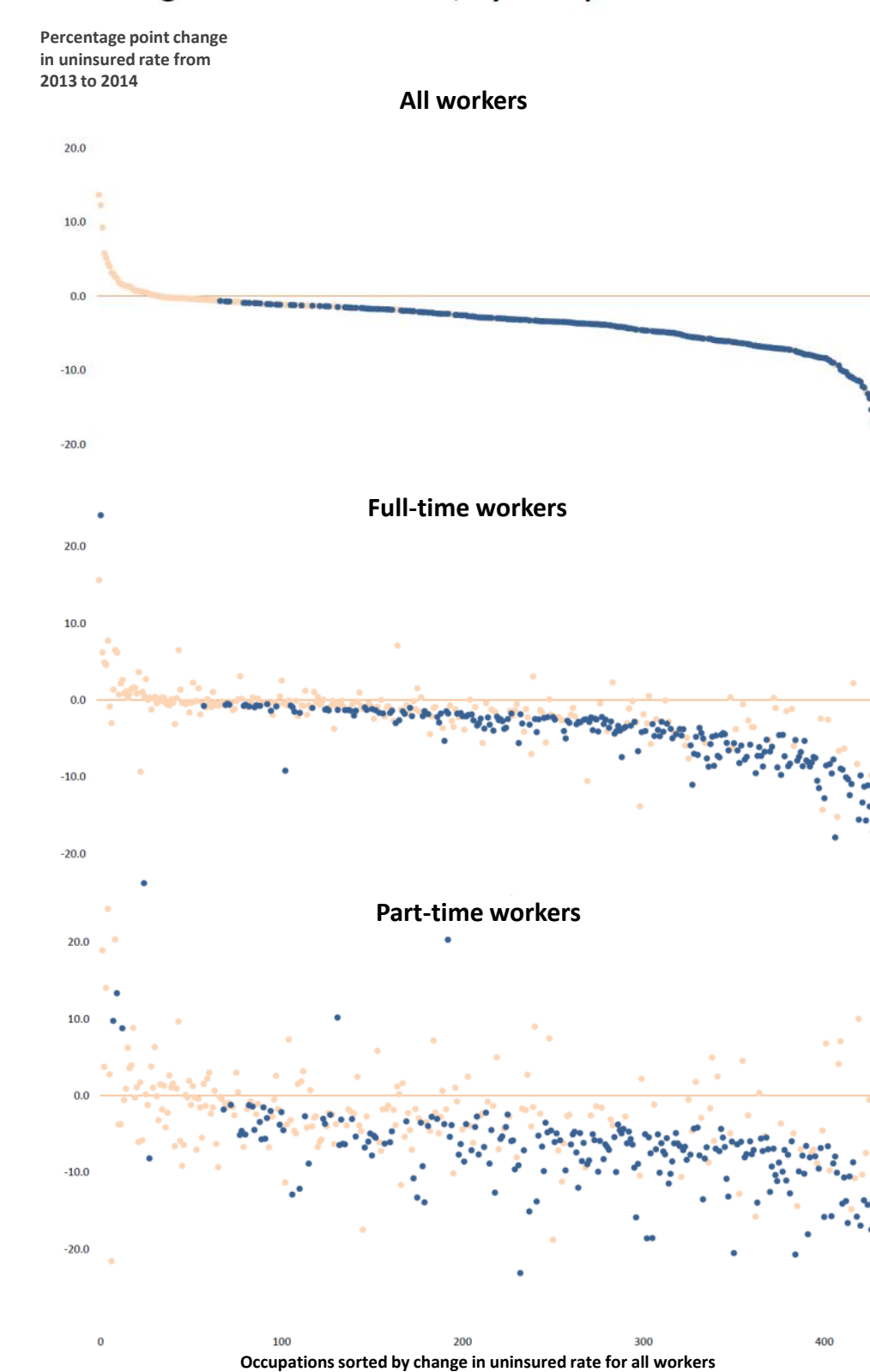
Occupations with larger uninsured rates in 2013 experienced larger improvements by 2014.

Uninsured Rate in 2013 and Change from 2013 to 2014, for Occupations



Was the decline in the uninsured rate similar within occupations for full-time and part-time workers?

Change in Uninsured Rate, by Occupation: 2013 to 2014



Many people receive health insurance through their employer as a benefit of working full time.

The pattern of change in the rate of health insurance coverage within occupations appears larger when looking at part-time workers than full-time workers.

Many causes may account for the increase in health insurance coverage for part-time workers, such as enrolling in their employer's plan, enrolling on a parent's or spouse's employer's plan, or obtaining insurance through Medicaid. Also, the ACA definition of part-time work may change the eligibility of some workers to obtain health insurance coverage through their employer.

Relationship Between Full-time and Part-time Workers by Occupation: 2013 to 2014 Change



The 1-1 line represents the same percentage point change in health insurance coverage for both full-time and part-time workers.

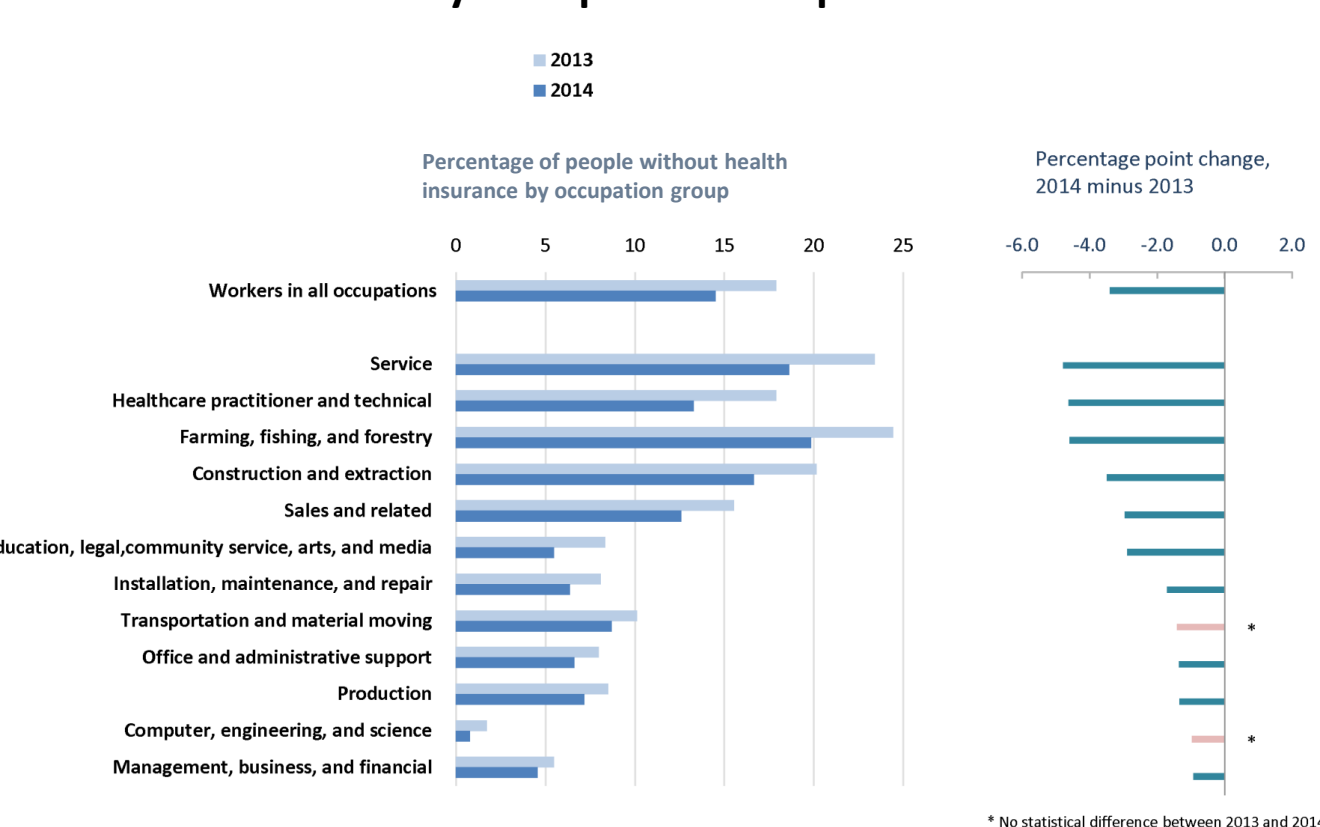
In many occupations, the uninsured rate declined for both full-time and part-time workers.

Often the change in the uninsured rate differed for full-time and part-time workers within an occupation, with a larger decrease in the uninsured rate for part-time workers.

Did health insurance coverage change across all occupations?

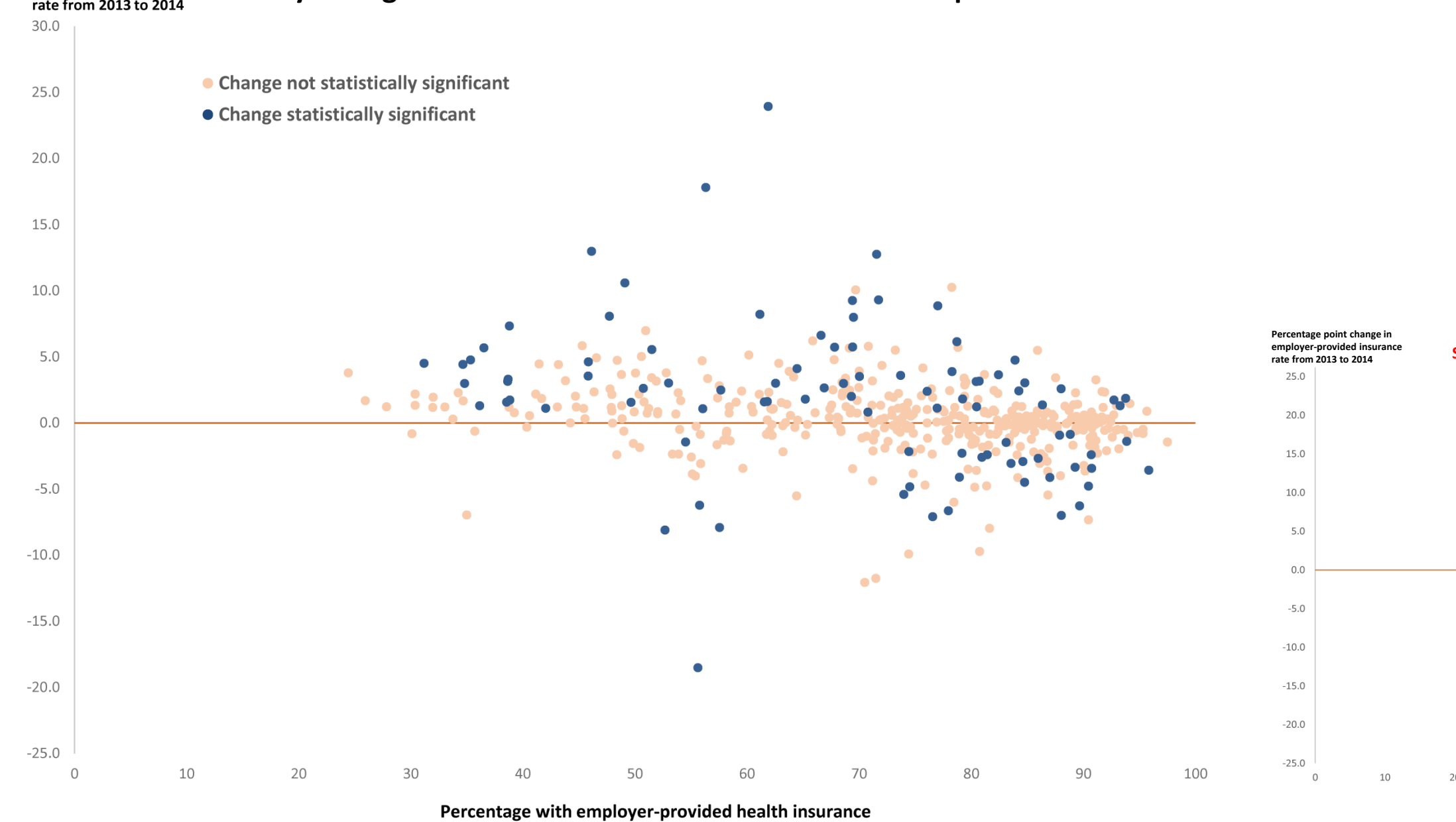
Across the broad occupation groups, most (10 out of 12) showed a significant decline in the percentage of uninsured between 2013 and 2014. The occupation groups with the higher uninsured rates in 2013 experienced larger improvements.

Uninsured Rate by Occupation Group: 2013 and 2014



Did the rate of employer provided health insurance change across occupations?

Employer-Provided Health Insurance Coverage Rate in 2013 by Change in Rate between 2013 and 2014 for Occupations



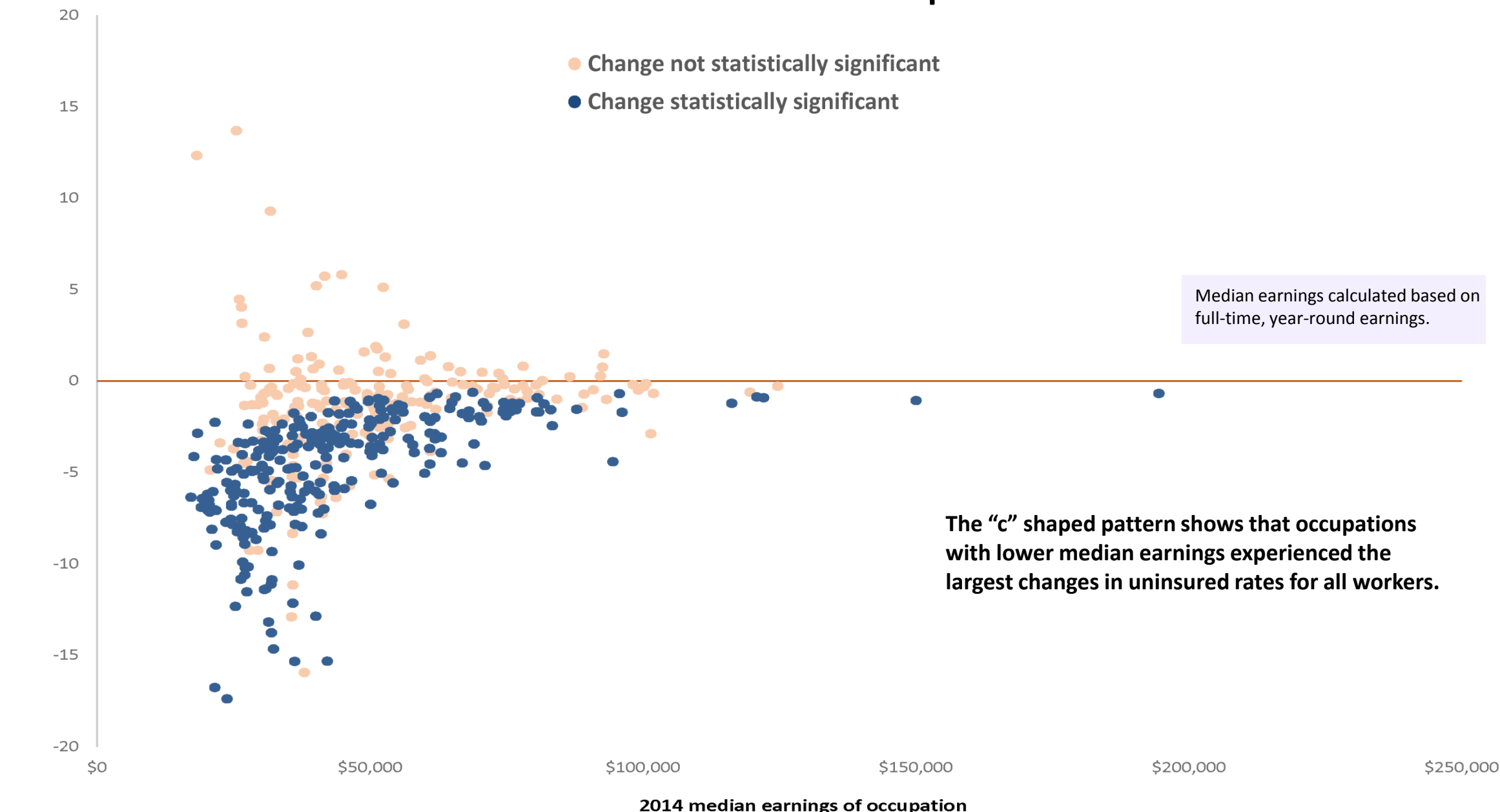
Some occupations showed a decline in the rate of employer provided health insurance, while many other occupations showed a significant increase. Occupations that had lower rates of employer-provided health insurance in 2013 experienced increased compared with occupations that had higher rates.

Please note, we cannot distinguish with these data whether the increase or decrease in employer-provided health insurance is from changes in the number of workers getting/losing health insurance through their own employer or from a family member's employer policy

Considering occupation size, many larger occupations showed small but significant change.

Did occupations with lower median earnings experience a change?

Median earnings in 2014 by Change in Uninsured Rate Between 2013 and 2014 for Occupations



Median earnings calculated based on full-time, year-round earnings.

The "C" shaped pattern shows that occupations with lower median earnings experienced the largest changes in uninsured rates for all workers.

Summary

The changes in the rates of health insurance coverage between 2013 and 2014 affected workers in many occupations.

Within occupations, the changes were most notable for people who worked part time, year round.

Some occupations showed a decline in the rate of employer-provided health insurance while many other occupations showed a significant increase in this kind of insurance.

Across occupations, those with lower median earnings experienced more change than occupations with higher median earnings.