



DATA BRIEF NO. 83 | OCTOBER 2020



Mississippi Delta Region: 70% of Adults Experienced Healthcare Affordability Burdens in the Past Year

According to a survey of Mississippi adults, conducted from May 7, 2020 to June 9, 2020, 7 in 10 residents of the Delta region (70%) have experienced healthcare affordability burdens in the prior 12 months. The Delta and Northeast regions reported the highest healthcare affordability problems in the state. Delta region adults reported one or more of the following burdens:

1) BEING UNINSURED DUE TO HIGH PREMIUM COSTS¹

2) DELAYING OR FORGOING HEALTHCARE DUE TO COST

More than half of Mississippi's Delta region adults (56%) who needed healthcare during the prior 12 months encountered one or more cost-related barriers to getting that care:

- 29%—Delayed going to the doctor or having a procedure done
- 29%—Did not fill a prescription
- 27%—Skipped a recommended medical test or treatment
- 27%—Skipped needed dental care
- 25%—Had problems getting mental healthcare and/or addiction treatment
- 24%—Avoided going to the doctor or having a procedure done altogether
- 21%—Cut pills in half or skipped doses of medicine

Moreover, cost was by far the most frequently cited reason for not getting needed medical care, exceeding a host of other barriers like transportation, difficulty getting an appointment and lack of childcare.

3) STRUGGLING TO PAY MEDICAL BILLS

In the prior 12 months, almost half of Delta region adults (49%) experienced one or more of these struggles paying their medical bills:

- 20%—Were unable to pay for basic necessities like food, heat or housing
- 17%—Contacted by a collection agency
- 14%—Borrowed money, got a loan or another mortgage on their home
- 12%—Placed on a long-term payment plan
- 11%—Used up all or most of their savings
- 8%—Racked up large amounts of credit card debt

HIGH LEVELS OF WORRY ABOUT AFFORDING HEALTHCARE IN THE FUTURE

Residents of the Delta region of Mississippi reported high levels of worry about affording healthcare in the future. More than three-quarters of respondents (79%) reported being “worried” or “very worried” about one or more of the following topics: costs when elderly (60%); affording nursing home and home care services (56%); health insurance becoming too expensive (55%); cost of a serious illness or accident (54%); prescription drug costs (51%); cost of needed dental care (49%); and losing health insurance (40%).

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

Residents of the Delta region of Mississippi were extremely dissatisfied with the health system. Just 34% agreed or strongly agreed that “we have a great healthcare system in the U.S.,” while 60% agreed or strongly agreed that “the system needs to change.”

Respondents do see a role for themselves in solving problems. They reported actions they have already taken, like researching the cost of a drug beforehand (62%), as well as actions they should be taking—68% believed that taking better care of their personal health is one of the top things they can do personally to address affordability.

But, in far greater numbers, they saw a role for their elected representatives. Examples of strategies that received support across party lines included (Total/Republican/Democrat/Neither):

- Ensure the cost of widely needed vaccines are affordable for all—(83%/81%/84%/82%)
- Expand health insurance options so that everyone can afford quality coverage—(82%/86%/78%/80%)
- Set standard payment to hospitals for specific procedures—(81%/83%/78%/81%)

The high burden of healthcare affordability, along with high levels of support for change, suggest that elected leaders and other stakeholders need to make addressing the cost of healthcare a top priority. Annual surveys can help assess whether or not progress is being made.

NOTE

1. We received too few responses at the regional level to provide a reliable estimate for this statistic, but these respondents are included in the overall “burdened” population.

For survey methodology and state-wide data, see www.healthcarevaluehub.org/Mississippi-Healthcare-Survey



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