



DATA BRIEF NO. 85 | OCTOBER 2020

Southeast Mississippi: 67% 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, residents of the Southeast region have experienced high levels of healthcare affordability burdens. These problems were slightly lower than those experienced by residents of the Northeast and Delta regions. However, almost 7 out of 10 Southeast region adults (67%) experienced one or more of the following burdens:

1) BEING UNINSURED DUE TO HIGH PREMIUM COSTS¹

2) DELAYING OR FORGOING HEALTHCARE DUE TO COST

Six out of ten of Southeast Mississippi adults (60%) who needed healthcare during the prior 12 months encountered one or more cost-related barriers to getting that care:

- 37%—Skipped needed dental care
- 31%—Delayed going to the doctor or having a procedure done
- 30%—Skipped a recommended medical test or treatment
- 30%—Avoided going to the doctor or having a procedure done altogether
- 26%—Did not fill a prescription
- 20%—Cut pills in half or skipped doses of medicine
- 19%—Had problems getting mental healthcare and/or addiction treatment

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, more than one-third of Southeast Mississippi adults (38%) experienced one or more of these struggles paying their medical bills:

- 19%—Contacted by a collection agency
- 12%—Used up all or most of their savings
- 10%—Were unable to pay for basic necessities like food, heat or housing
- 7%—Racked up large amounts of credit card debt
- 7%—Borrowed money, got a loan or another mortgage on their home
- 6%—Placed on a long-term payment plan

HIGH LEVELS OF WORRY ABOUT AFFORDING HEALTHCARE IN THE FUTURE

Residents of Southeast Mississippi reported high levels of worry about affording healthcare in the future. Three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported being “worried” or “very worried” about one or more of the following topics: affording nursing home and home care services (61%); costs when elderly (57%); cost of a serious illness or accident (57%); health insurance becoming too expensive (54%); cost of needed dental care (49%); prescription drug costs (46%); and losing health insurance (34%).

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

Residents of Southeast Mississippi were extremely dissatisfied with the health system. Just 31% agreed or strongly agreed that “we have a great healthcare system in the U.S.,” while 63% 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 (60%), as well as actions they should be taking—70% 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):

- Show what a fair price would be for specific procedures—(86%/87%/83%/87%)
- Make it easy to switch insurers if a health plan drops your doctor —(85%/88%/78%/85%)
- Ensure the cost of widely needed vaccines are affordable for all—(85%/88%/83%/82%)

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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