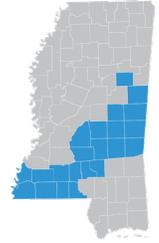




DATA BRIEF NO. 84 | OCTOBER 2020

Central Mississippi: 65% 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 Central region have experienced high levels of healthcare affordability burdens. These problems were slightly lower than those experienced by resident of the Northeast and Delta regions. More than 3 in 5 of Central Mississippi adults (65%) reported one or more of the following issues in the prior 12 months.

1) BEING UNINSURED DUE TO HIGH PREMIUM COSTS¹

2) DELAYING OR FORGOING HEALTHCARE DUE TO COST

Nearly 3 out of 5 Central Mississippi adults (56%) who needed healthcare during the prior 12 months encountered one or more cost-related barriers to getting that care:

- 31%—Delayed going to the doctor or having a procedure done
- 29%—Skipped needed dental care
- 28%—Skipped a recommended medical test or treatment
- 28%—Avoided going to the doctor or having a procedure done altogether
- 28%—Did not fill a prescription
- 23%—Cut pills in half or skipped doses of medicine
- 21%—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, well over one-third of Central Mississippi adults (41%) experienced one or more of these struggles paying their medical bills:

- 22%—Contacted by a collection agency
- 13%—Were unable to pay for basic necessities like food, heat or housing
- 11%—Placed on a long-term payment plan
- 10%—Used up all or most of their savings
- 9%—Racked up large amounts of credit card debt
- 8%—Borrowed money, got a loan or another mortgage on their home

HIGH LEVELS OF WORRY ABOUT AFFORDING HEALTHCARE IN THE FUTURE

Residents of Central Mississippi reported high levels of worry about affording healthcare in the future. Four in five respondents (80%) reported being “worried” or “very worried” about one or more of the following topics: affording nursing home and home care services (66%); costs when elderly (62%); cost of a serious illness or accident (62%); health insurance becoming too expensive (59%); prescription drug costs (54%); cost of needed dental care (49%); and losing health insurance (42%).

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

Residents of Central Mississippi were extremely dissatisfied with the health system. Just 32% 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 (64%), as well as actions they should be taking—71% 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):

- Require insurers to provide upfront cost estimates to consumers—(89%/91%/85%/89%)
- Ensure the cost of widely needed vaccines are affordable for all—(87%/85%/83%/94%)
- Show what a fair price would be for specific procedures—(87%/89%/84%/87%)
- Set standard prices for drugs to make them affordable—(87%/84%/89%/87%)

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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