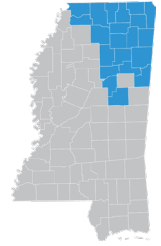




DATA BRIEF NO. 82 | OCTOBER 2020

Northeast Mississippi: 69% 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 Northeast region have experienced high levels of healthcare affordability burdens in the prior 12 months. By a small margin, residents in the Northeast and Delta regions reported the highest healthcare affordability problems in the state. Almost 7 in 10 of Northeast region adults (69%) 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 Northeast Mississippi adults (57%) who needed healthcare during the prior 12 months encountered one or more cost-related barriers to getting that care:

- 36%—Delayed going to the doctor or having a procedure done
- 34%—Skipped needed dental care
- 30%—Avoided going to the doctor or having a procedure done altogether
- 29%—Skipped a recommended medical test or treatment
- 26%—Did not fill a prescription
- 20%—Had problems getting mental healthcare and/or addiction treatment
- 19%—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, 2 in 5 Northeast region adults (40%) experienced one or more of these struggles paying their medical bills:

- 18%—Contacted by a collection agency
- 13%—Borrowed money, got a loan or another mortgage on their home
- 11%—Were unable to pay for basic necessities like food, heat or housing
- 10%—Racked up large amounts of credit card debt
- 8%—Used up all or most of their savings
- 6%—Placed on a long-term payment plan

HIGH LEVELS OF WORRY ABOUT AFFORDING HEALTHCARE IN THE FUTURE

Residents of Northeast Mississippi reported high levels of worry about affording healthcare in the future. More than three-quarters of respondents (77%) reported being “worried” or “very worried” about one or more of the following topics: affording nursing home and home care services (67%); costs when elderly (60%); cost of a serious illness or accident (57%); cost of needed dental care (56%); health insurance becoming too expensive (54%); prescription drug costs (52%); and losing health insurance (36%).

DISSATISFACTION WITH THE HEALTH SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR CHANGE

Residents of Northeast 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 61% 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—65% 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):

- Make it easy to switch insurers if a health plan drops your doctor—(88%/90%/88%/87%)
- Expand health insurance options so that everyone can afford quality coverage—(86%/89%/86%/84%)
- Require drug companies to provide advanced notice of price increases and information to justify those increases—(86%/84%/91%/84%)

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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