

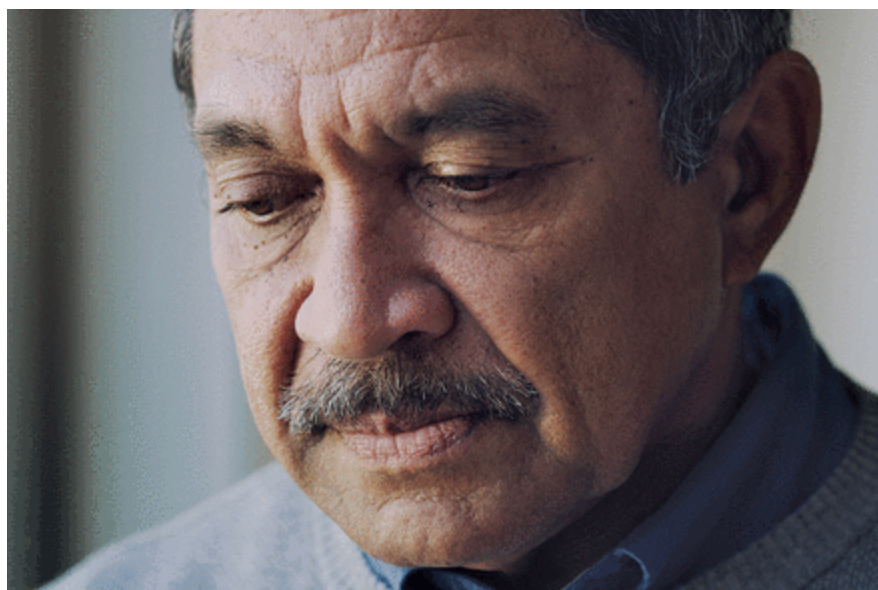


News | Nation

Survey: High US health care costs harm minorities during pandemic

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The Nation's Health May 2022, 52 (3) 6;



U.S Hispanics have experienced elevated levels of stress and anxiety about high health care costs during the COVID-19 pandemic, a West Health-Gallup poll found.

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Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to be harmed by rising health care costs than their white counterparts, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated concerns, a recent survey finds.

Conducted by Gallup and West Health during the fall COVID-19 delta surge, the survey found that Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to skip health care because of financial issues than whites.

Blacks were twice as likely than whites to have known someone who died due to a treatable condition that was not addressed due to health costs.

Over 90% of the 6,600 participants in the survey said the general cost of health care was too high, with 70% saying health care costs created a financial burden for them. About half said they experienced daily stress because of health care costs, and that costs rose during the pandemic.

“For decades, health care costs have grown at a rate double that of Americans’ incomes,” the report said.

“Americans say they have grown more worried about the cost of health care services due to the pandemic.”

As a result of rising health care costs, many Americans skip or delay their care, with 21% experiencing worsening health outcomes. The authors said the percentage is similar for people covered by Medicaid and those who are uninsured.

About 5% of adults reported they knew someone who experienced delays or inability to receive treatment for an illness and ended up dying from the illness.

Nearly 70% of Blacks and Hispanics were anxious about testing positive for COVID-19 during the second year of the pandemic, compared with 57% of whites. Expenses may be a factor: The median cost of a five-day hospital stay for COVID-19 was estimated to be about \$13,500 in 2020, according to an October study in *Advances in Therapy*. COVID-19 patients who required mechanical ventilation had a median cost of \$47,500.

Early this year, West Health and Gallup estimated that at least 46 million people delayed care during the pandemic because of cost.

“(2021) set the stage for policy leaders to choose between legislating for real change or maintaining the status quo,” the report said. “If 2022 brings about the latter, we will likely see continued erosion of Americans’ ability to afford much-needed medicine and care beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, putting millions of Americans’ health further at risk.

For more information, on the “West Health-Gallup 2021 Health Care in America Report,” visit www.gallup.com.

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[← Previous](#)

[Next →](#)

[^ Back to top](#)

In this issue



The Nation's Health

Vol. 52, Issue 3
May 2022

[Table of Contents](#)

[Table of Contents \(PDF\)](#)

[Index by author](#)

[Complete Issue \(PDF\)](#)



- Print
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- Email Article
- Citation Tools

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- Post
- Like 0



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