

The State of Missouri's Health

Missouri spends approximately \$5,500 per person on health care per year, which is the 21st highest amount among all U.S. states.¹ Even at this spending level, many of the state's health indicators fall in the bottom third compared to other states. This fact sheet examines two reports that rank Missouri's health and indicate areas where the health care system works well and where it needs improvement.

Demographics

Currently, Missouri has a population of approximately 5.87 million people: 1.42 million children under 18; 790,000 seniors 65 years and over; and 3.66 million adults between the ages of 18 and 64. The median age is 37.5 years, almost a year older than the national median age. Median household income in Missouri is \$46,408, about \$6,000 less than the national median household income. In Missouri, 13.3 percent of people live below the federal poverty level compared to 13.2 percent nationally.² The current economic downturn has led to an increase in the unemployment rate (9.5 percent in Missouri as of August 2009) which is often associated with an increase in both the number of people living below the federal poverty level and the number of uninsured.

Health Rankings Report

The United Health Foundation provides annual health rankings of all 50 states. The 2009 edition³ ranks Missouri 38th overall, unchanged from 2008 but down three rankings since 2007. The rankings are computed from 20 measures divided into two different categories: health determinants (i.e., personal behaviors, community and environment, public and health policies, and clinical care) and health outcomes (i.e., mortality and quality-of-life). The health determinant measures influence the health outcomes of the residents of a state. Improving the determinant indicators will improve health outcomes over time.

Strengths

One of Missouri's health determinant measures ranks in the top 15 in the nation, while another is in the top 20:

- ninth graders graduating high school within four years (81%, rank – 12th), and
- pregnant women receiving adequate prenatal care (74.4%, rank – 16th).
(The education-related indicator is included in the rankings because it is a measure of a given health consumer's ability to learn about, create, and maintain a healthy lifestyle.)

The state ranks moderately better among health determinant indicators than it does in health outcome indicators. This would seem to indicate that the overall health of Missourians could improve over time. However, the challenges that face Missouri may impact both the short- and long-term health outcomes of Missouri residents.

Challenges

The rankings for Missouri's health outcome indicators range from 34th to 42nd. These rankings include:

- 37th for years lost due to premature death (8,284 years lost per 100,000 population),
- 39th for cancer deaths (207.4 deaths per 100,000 population),
- 42nd for cardiovascular deaths (318.3 deaths per 100,000 population), and
- 42nd for poor physical health days (3.8 days in previous 30 days).

Challenges also exist among the health determinant indicators. Missouri ranks 39th and 47th for the percentage of its population that is obese (29%) and that smokes (24.9%), respectively. Missouri also has

poor rankings for preventable hospitalizations (40th) and violent crime (38th). These challenges reflect a state that must acknowledge and begin to address weaknesses in the health care system, as well as encourage and support the personal health of its residents.

Health System Performance Report

In 2009, the Commonwealth Fund updated a state scorecard that examined health system performance across five dimensions: 1) Access, 2) Prevention and Treatment, 3) Avoidable Hospital Use and Costs, 4) Equity, and 5) Healthy Lives.⁴ This scorecard offers a framework for states to “gauge efforts to ensure affordable access to high-quality, efficient, and equitable care.” Overall, Missouri ranked 36th among states across all five dimensions.

Rankings Within the Dimensions

Missouri’s most favorable ranking was in the avoidable hospital use and cost dimension (28th). This dimension looked at hospital admissions, readmissions, and emergency visits for certain vulnerable populations. It should be noted that the state scored among the bottom five states for hospital admissions for asthmatic children.

The prevention and treatment dimension included indicators that measure the performance of three related components: receipt of recommended care, preventive care, and patient-centered care. The state scored in the top quartile on two indicators related to children’s care. Overall, Missouri ranked 30th in this dimension.

Missouri also ranked 30th in the access dimension, which examined insurance coverage. The state ranked 33rd in the equity dimension, which examined three types of equity: income, insurance coverage, and race/ethnicity. Missouri’s lowest ranking was in the healthy lives dimension (41st).

This ranking included indicators that measured the degree to which a state’s residents live long and healthy lives. These indicators are closely related to many of the indicators found in the United Health Foundation’s health rankings report.

Missouri’s Uninsured

One of the indicators that played a major role in both state ranking reports was the percentage of uninsured state residents. From 2006 to 2008, Missouri’s uninsured population increased from 668,000 to 739,000.⁵ This is a 10 percent increase over two years, with the percentage of uninsured Missourians increasing from 11.7 to 12.6 percent. The growth in the uninsured can be tied to the decrease in Medicaid coverage in 2005 and the decrease in the number of Missourians with employer-sponsored health coverage. There have been significant gains in coverage for children due to increased enrollment in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Plan (CHIP), with uninsured among this group dropping from 9.1 percent in 2006 to 6.8 percent in 2008.

Endnotes

- 1 Congressional Budget Office, *Geographic Variation in Health Care Spending*, 2008, <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/89xx/doc8972/02-15-GeogHealth.pdf>.
- 2 US Census Bureau, American FactFinder, “Missouri Fact Sheet,” 2006-2008 American Community Survey, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=Search&geo_id=&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=&_cityTown=&_state=04000US29&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010.
- 3 United Health Foundation, *America’s Health Rankings: A Call to Action for People and Their Communities*, 2009, <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/2009%5Creport%5CAHR2009%20Final%20Report.pdf>.
- 4 The Commonwealth Fund Commission on a High Performance Health System, *Aiming Higher: Results from a State Scorecard on Health System Performance*, The Commonwealth Fund, 2009, http://www.commonwealthfund.org/-/media/Files/Publications/Fund%20Report/2009/Oct/1326_McCarthy_state_scorecard_2009_full_report_FINAL.pdf.
- 5 U.S. Census Bureau, “Table HI05. Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type of Coverage by State and Age for All People: 2008,” *Current Population Survey 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplement*, http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032009/health/h05_000.htm.