

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 several 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 6 million people: 1.43 million children under 18; 838,000 seniors 65 years and over; and 3.73 million adults between the ages of 18 and 64. The median age is 37.9 years, slightly older than the national median age (37.2 years).² Median household income in Missouri is estimated at \$44,301, about \$5,745 less than the national median household income.³ In Missouri, 14.6 percent of people live below the federal poverty level compared to 14.3 percent nationally.⁴ While the current unemployment rate in Missouri dropped to 8.6 percent in August 2011,⁵ the number of people living below the federal poverty level and the percentage of uninsured Missourians (14.1%) have not changed significantly since 2009.

Health Rankings Report

The United Health Foundation provides annual health rankings of all 50 states. The 2010 edition⁶ ranks Missouri 39th overall- Missouri's lowest ranking since 1997. 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). Health determinants influence the health outcomes of Missouri residents. Improving determinant indicators will improve health outcomes over time.

Strengths

Two of Missouri's health determinant measures rank in the top 10 in the nation, both improving from 2009:

- pregnant women receiving adequate prenatal care (86.4%, rank – 8th), and
 - ninth graders graduating high school within four years (81%, rank – 10th).
- (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.)

Several health outcome indicators improved in state ranking from 2009, including: infant mortality (7.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, rank- 32nd) and years lost due to premature death (8,107 years lost per 100,000 population, rank- 36th). The state ranks slightly better among health outcome indicators than it does in health determinant indicators. This would seem to indicate that, without intervention, the overall health of Missourians could decline as health determinant indicators may impact both the short- and long-term health outcomes of Missouri residents.

Challenges

The rankings for Missouri's health outcome indicators range from 24th to 44th. These rankings include:

- 37th for poor physical health days (3.8 days in previous 30 days),
- 38th for cancer deaths (206.3 deaths per 100,000 population),
- 41st for cardiovascular deaths (309.0 deaths per 100,000 population), and
- 44th for poor mental health days (3.9 days in previous 30 days).

Challenges also exist among health determinant indicators. Missouri ranks 42nd and 45th for the percentage of its population that is obese (31%) and that smokes (23%), respectively. Additionally, Missouri has poor rankings for preventable hospitalizations (39th), violent crime (37th), and immunization coverage of children (45th). Furthermore, Missouri spends less money on public health per person each year than any other state.⁷ 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 Reports

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.⁸ 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.

Overall, Missouri ranked 30th in the prevention and treatment dimension, which included indicators measuring the receipt of recommended care, preventive care, and patient-centered care. Missouri also ranked 30th in the access dimension, which examined insurance coverage. The state ranked 33rd in the equity dimension, which analyzed three types of equity: income, insurance coverage, and race/ethnicity. Missouri’s lowest ranking was in the healthy lives dimension (41st), which measured the degree to which people live long and healthy lives.

In 2011, the Commonwealth Fund reported its rankings of states’ child health systems applying the five dimensions studied on previous scorecards.⁹ Missouri’s child health system ranked 21st for overall performance. Ranking in the top quartile for multiple indicators, Missouri ranked highest in equity in children’s care (13th), percentage of children with a medical home (8th), and percentage of children ages 2 – 17 receiving needed mental health care (6th). Despite these indicators, Missouri ranked 30th for children’s potential to lead healthy lives.

Missouri’s Uninsured

The percentage of uninsured state residents played a major role in the state ranking reports. From 2008 to 2010, Missouri’s uninsured population increased from 739,000 to 839,000.¹⁰ This is a 13 percent increase over two years, with the percentage of uninsured Missourians increasing from 12.3 to 14 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). Despite gains, the percentage of uninsured children in Missouri rose from 6.8 percent in 2008 to 8.9 percent in 2010.¹¹

Endnotes

¹ Congressional Budget Office, *Geographic Variation in Health Care Spending*, 2008.

² U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, “Missouri Age-Groups and Sex,” 2010.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, “Selected Economic Characteristics, American Community Survey 1-year estimates,” 2010.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, “State and County Quick Facts: Missouri,” 2009.

⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Local Area Unemployment Statistics,” 2011.

⁶ United Health Foundation, *America’s Health Rankings: Missouri*, 2010.

⁷ Trust for America’s Health, “Key Health Data about Missouri: Public Health Funding Indicators,” 2010.

⁸ 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.

⁹ The Commonwealth Fund, *State Scorecard on Child Health System Performance, 2011*, 2011.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, “Table HI05. Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type of Coverage by State and Age for All people: 2010,” *Current Population Survey 2009 Annual Social and Economic Supplement*, 2011.

¹¹ *Ibid.*