



# HealthVoices

## Healthcare Access Survey Results

Issue 2, 2013

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) is now the law of the land. Some provisions of the law are already in place, some are still being developed, and others are scheduled to roll out in the coming years. The debate surrounding the law has been intense, as elected officials, providers, payers, and consumers all seek to understand the implementation and impact of this historic legislation. The purpose of this issue of HealthVoices is to provide a snapshot of how Georgians feel about their current healthcare, and how they view health reform as this next phase begins.

How do Georgians access healthcare? Do they face issues around access? How much do Georgians know about and support the healthcare reform law? How do they expect the law to affect their own access to healthcare?

In the summer of 2013, Healthcare Georgia Foundation provided support to The Schapiro Group to conduct a healthcare access public opinion survey of Georgia residents.

### Access and Cost

Where do Georgians go for their healthcare? Most often, they will turn to either their primary care physician or pharmacist, though one in five residents does not have a primary care physician. (Figure 1) More

than half of Georgians sometimes or always see a specialist, and close to one-quarter sometimes or always visit emergency rooms, public health clinics, or walk-in, retail medical clinics.

Looking more closely, the survey results show that access to healthcare is an important issue to Georgia residents, primarily as a function of the *cost* of healthcare. Nearly all (91%) Georgians are satisfied with the healthcare they receive, including a majority (57%) who are very satisfied. We followed up on these high levels of satisfaction by asking residents about their satisfaction with a few specific aspects of healthcare: the availability of healthcare nearby, the amount of time healthcare professionals spend with them,

the amount of time it takes to get an appointment with a healthcare professional, and the cost of healthcare. More than three-quarters of Georgians are at least somewhat satisfied with all aspects of their healthcare tested in the survey except for one: the cost. Only 26% say that they are very satisfied with the cost of the healthcare they receive, 20 points lower than the next closest aspect tested.

Further, in the past year, one-third (33%) of Georgians wanted to seek care for a health-related issue, but chose not to for some reason. Only one of the tested reasons played a major role in more than 20% of these residents' decisions not to seek healthcare—the cost, which was cited by 61% as playing a major role. (Figure 2)

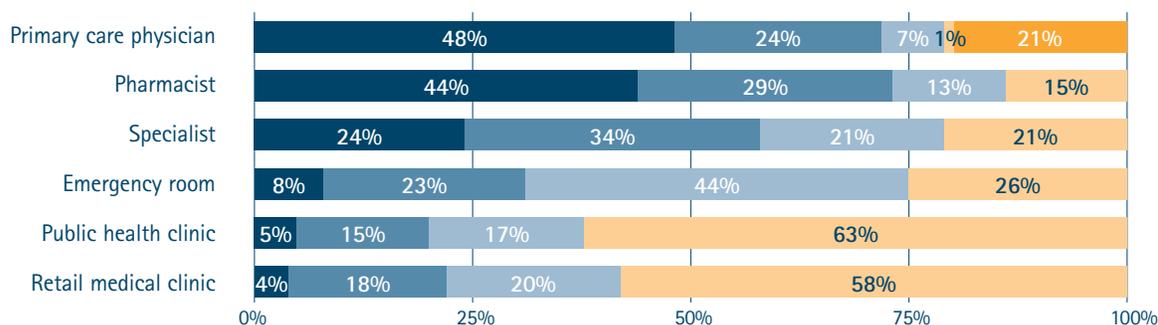


Figure 1. I'm going to list several places where people sometimes go when they need healthcare, and I'd like you to tell me how often you use each one when you personally are in need of healthcare.

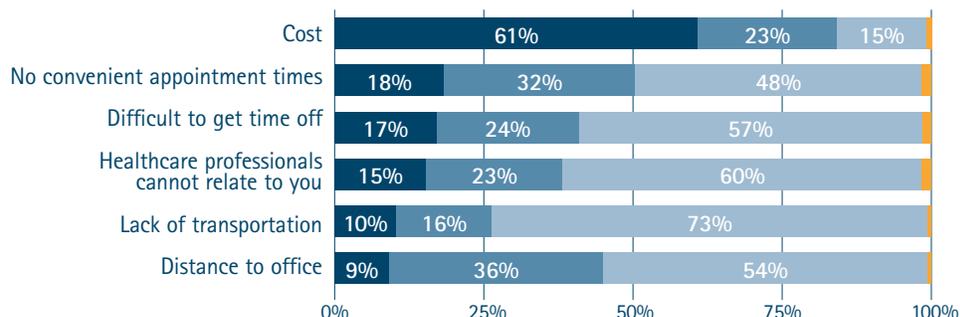
Always  
Sometimes  
Rarely  
Never  
Don't have one



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**Figure 2.** I'm going to list some factors that could prevent someone from receiving the healthcare that they want or need. I'd like you to tell me whether or not each one played a role in your decision not to seek healthcare in the past year.

- Major role
- Minor role
- No role
- Don't know/Refused



### Health Insurance

A majority (81%) of Georgians are covered by some type of health insurance (including Medicaid and Medicare), and nearly all of those covered consider their coverage to be either good (55%) or adequate (39%). For those who do not have health insurance, the main reason they do not have coverage is, once again, the cost. Some of the groups least likely to have health insurance are young people, African Americans, individuals with less education, those with less household income, and unmarried Georgians.

Not only is there a disproportionate lack of coverage among some demographic groups, but being insured versus not being insured has dramatic effects on Georgians' experiences and satisfaction with their access to healthcare. Residents with no healthcare coverage are less likely to see primary care physicians or pharmacists when they need healthcare, more likely to go to public health clinics, less satisfied with all aspects of their healthcare, and more likely to choose not to seek care for their health-related issues.

### Prevention

Preventive care is also on the minds of Georgians. Most (61%) use at least half of their visits with medical professionals for some type of preventive care, such as a checkup, a wellness visit, or a physical exam. As might be expected, though, the uninsured, young people, and individuals with less education tend to use more of their visits with healthcare professionals to treat acute, immediate problems rather than preventing future ones.

### The Affordable Care Act

Georgians lag behind the rest of the country when it comes to knowledge of the ACA. (Figure 3) When asked how familiar they are with the law, 16% of Georgians indicate that they are very familiar with it, which is identical to the percent of Americans overall; one-quarter (27%) of Georgians, however, indicates that they are not familiar at all, compared to only 7% of the country overall.

Close to 20% of Georgians are unsure if they support the law or not. This is much higher than the 4% of Americans overall who are unsure. Additionally, one-quarter (24%) of Georgia residents does not know the current status of the ACA, with another 13% believing it has been repealed by Congress, and 9% believing it has been overturned by the Supreme Court.

### About Uninsured Georgians

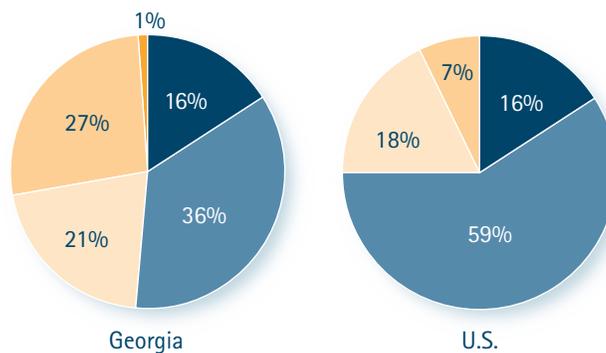
- Most likely to be young people, African Americans, individuals with less education, those with less household income, and unmarried
- Cost is the main reason they lack health insurance
- More likely to get healthcare from public health clinics, less likely to get healthcare from primary care physicians or pharmacists
- More likely to choose not to seek care for their health-related issues
- Healthcare visits more likely for acute, immediate problems rather than preventive care
- Less satisfied with all aspects of their healthcare
- More likely to support the ACA and most of its individual parts, but less likely to know about the law's current status



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**Figure 3.** How familiar are you with the 2010 Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Obama, that restructured the U.S. health care system?

- Very familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Somewhat unfamiliar
- Not familiar at all
- Don't know/Refused



Despite being split on their overall support of the healthcare law (39% approve, 42% disapprove), Georgians are very supportive of most of the individual elements of the law. At least two-thirds of residents support preventing health insurance companies from denying coverage due to pre-existing conditions, requiring health insurance companies to cover some preventive services at no cost to the patient, lowering the amount that seniors have to pay out-of-pocket for their prescription drugs, and expanding Medicaid to cover more low income uninsured adults. On the other hand, nearly half (47%) strongly disapprove of requiring many Americans to purchase health insurance or else pay a tax penalty. The uninsured, younger residents, African Americans, individuals with less education, those with less household income, and unmarried residents are more likely to support the ACA and most of its individual parts, but they are also less likely to know about its current status.

About half (45%) of Georgia residents do not believe that the ACA will make much of a difference on the access that they and their families have to healthcare. The rest are split as to whether it will or not: 26% think their families will have less access, 22% think their families will have more access.

### Implications

The survey results bring to light several findings that may affect the ACA's rollout in Georgia. In particular, the state's uninsured residents and young people are the most likely to support the ACA and its provisions, but they are also the least likely to be familiar with its current status. Plainly, two of the primary audiences that the law intends to help are not even sure if the ACA is the law of the land. Absent outreach to these groups, this lack of awareness could be a hurdle for the effective implementation of the law in Georgia.

### Up Next

Healthcare Georgia Foundation is interested in gauging Georgia residents' experiences with and opinions on all healthcare issues, and this research is the first of two surveys aimed at doing just that. This survey focuses mainly on issues related to access to healthcare, while the next one will focus on issues related to the cost and quality of healthcare. Cost has already been shown to be a key issue for Georgians, and the upcoming survey will dive more deeply into its effects on Georgians' healthcare.

### About the Survey

The Schapiro Group conducted a scientific telephone survey of 410 Georgia adults, including 100 respondents from cell phone-only households, in July 2013. The margin of sampling error for the entire sample is  $\pm 4.8\%$ .

### References

All national data are taken from a Gallup Healthcare System survey fielded in June 2013. The full results of this national survey, along with trends over time, can be found at: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/4708/healthcare-system.aspx>.



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Through strategic grantmaking, Healthcare Georgia Foundation supports organizations that drive positive change; promotes programs that improve health and health care among underserved individuals and communities; and connects people, partners and resources across Georgia.

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Healthcare Georgia Foundation is a statewide, private independent foundation whose mission is to advance the health of all Georgians and to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities.

