

Progress in Peril

In 2019, Colorado is holding onto gains made in access to health care in the years since the Affordable Care Act took effect: 93.5 percent of Coloradans have health coverage, a rate that has held steady since 2015. But there are concerning indications that health care is becoming increasingly unaffordable and hard to access for many Coloradans.

The Colorado Health Access Survey (CHAS) is administered by the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) every other year to 10,000 randomly selected households. The survey offers insight into these and other key trends in health, access, and affordability across Colorado.



COVERAGE: No change on the surface, but still waters run deep

The uninsured rate — 6.5 percent — remained unchanged from 2015 and 2017. But that stability masks changes in the way Coloradans are getting their coverage, including increases in employer-sponsored coverage, drops in Medicaid and individual coverage, and increased churn on and off insurance plans.



FOOD, HOUSING, AND HEALTH: The economic boom is unbalanced

Despite a booming state economy, nearly one in 10 Coloradans (9.6 percent) said they couldn't afford food at some point in the past year. One in 15 (6.7 percent) worry about where they will live in the next two months.



UNFAIR TREATMENT: A wake-up call for health care

More than one in seven Colorado adults (15.1 percent) say they have sometimes or often been treated unfairly when seeking medical care. Of those, three-quarters (74.6 percent) said that their experiences with unfair treatment were somewhat or extremely stressful.



USE OF CARE: More people visited the doctor and dentist

Most Coloradans — eighty-one percent — report visiting a general doctor in the past year. Nearly three-quarters of Coloradans (73.6 percent) visited the dentist or dental hygienist in the past year — an encouraging increase compared to the past decade.



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: More awareness, increasing needs

One in seven Coloradans (13.5 percent) say they have needed mental health treatment but didn't get it. More than one in 10 Colorado adults (11.7 percent) who responded report that they had been addicted to opioids or had a loved one or close friend who had been addicted. One quarter of adults (25.2 percent) know someone who has been addicted to alcohol or other drugs.



AFFORDABILITY: Warning signs of a backslide

Nearly one in five Coloradans (18.1 percent) had trouble paying their medical bills in the past year — the most since before key provisions of the Affordable Care Act took effect.

More findings will be available in December 2019. Learn more about the CHAS, including past years' surveys and methodology, at colo.health/CHAS

Contact chas@coloradohealthinstitute.org with questions

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