

Data Highlights: Consumer Survey of Health Care Access

Summary

Twice each year, the AAMC fields a Consumer Survey of Health Care Access to assess access to health care services in the United States. Emphasizing a consumer perspective, the Consumer Survey complements our ongoing research on the physician workforce. Significantly, the Consumer Survey takes an inclusive approach to defining access, beginning with whether or not care is received at all, and also seeking to better understand the roles of health insurance coverage, having a usual source of care, the timeliness and location of care, and the quality of patient-provider communications.

Questionnaire Content

Consumer Survey respondents are asked a series of demographic questions followed by a filter question to discover whether respondents or their health care providers believed that they needed care within the last 12 months. Participants who did need care (our analytic sample) are then asked to provide more information about their experiences when seeking medical care.

The core set of items remains the same across survey waves. Questions related to participants' access to care include: the ability to obtain health care (always, never, or only some of the time), health insurance coverage, wait time for care, and having a usual source of care. Health care provider information is assessed through questions about where respondents go for their care and whom they saw (generalist or specialist; physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant). Quality of health care and health status are measured through questions about satisfaction with care, experiences during respondents' most recent medical care visit, difficulties with communication, chronic condition diagnoses, and limitations due to physical or mental health conditions. In addition, some survey waves include supplementary topical modules (e.g. telemedicine utilization, access to mental and behavioral health care, access to dental care).

The survey instrument for each study wave is reviewed and approved by an independent Institutional Review Board.

Respondents

Respondents to the Consumer Survey are drawn from an online panel maintained by the survey company Toluna/Greenfield (<http://us.toluna.com/About>). Toluna's panel consists of over six million people worldwide, including 1.5 million within the United States. Panelists are rewarded for participating in surveys through a point-based compensation system where 75,000 to 90,000 points yields a \$25 gift card or check, and surveys are worth

variable points based on complexity and length of participation. Panelists are not allowed to participate in two consecutive waves of the survey.

Each wave of the Consumer Survey consists of a core sample of 2,000 respondents, stratified by age and health insurance status (quotas are set for age-insurance combinations). In addition to the core sample, every other survey wave includes an oversample of an additional 1,500 respondents from select subgroups (minority, rural, and/or Medicaid recipients). For waves 12 and 13 we were able to interview some additional respondents who needed mental and behavioral health care but did not need medical care. The actual number of respondents fluctuates somewhat in other waves due to additional sampling needed to fill minimum quotas for subgroups (Table 1). To better represent the adult population as measured by the U.S. Census Bureau, data are weighted by sex, age, race and ethnicity, employment status, household income, educational attainment and geographic region.

Table 1. Sample sizes respondents who needed care for the Consumer Survey (unweighted)

Survey Wave	Survey month and year	Target Sample size*	Final Sample size
1	December 2010	2000	2087
2	June 2011	3500	3528
3	December 2011	2000	2053
4	June 2012	3500	3558
5	December 2012	2000	2068
6	June 2013	3500	3711
7	January 2014	2000	2054
8	June 2014	3500	3694
9	December 2014	2000	2161
10	June 2015	3500	3664
11	December 2015	2000	2029
12*	June 2016	3680	3753
13*	December 2016	2025	2179
14	June 2017	3500	3446
15	December 2017-January 2018	2000	2393
16	June 2018	3500	3506
17	January 2019	2000	2139
18	June 2019	3500	3500
19	December 2019	2000	2000
20	June 2020	3500	3500

** Respondents who indicated that they, or a health care professional, believed they needed medical care in the past 12 months. For Survey Waves 12 & 13 also includes some persons who needed mental or behavioral care even if they did not need medical care*