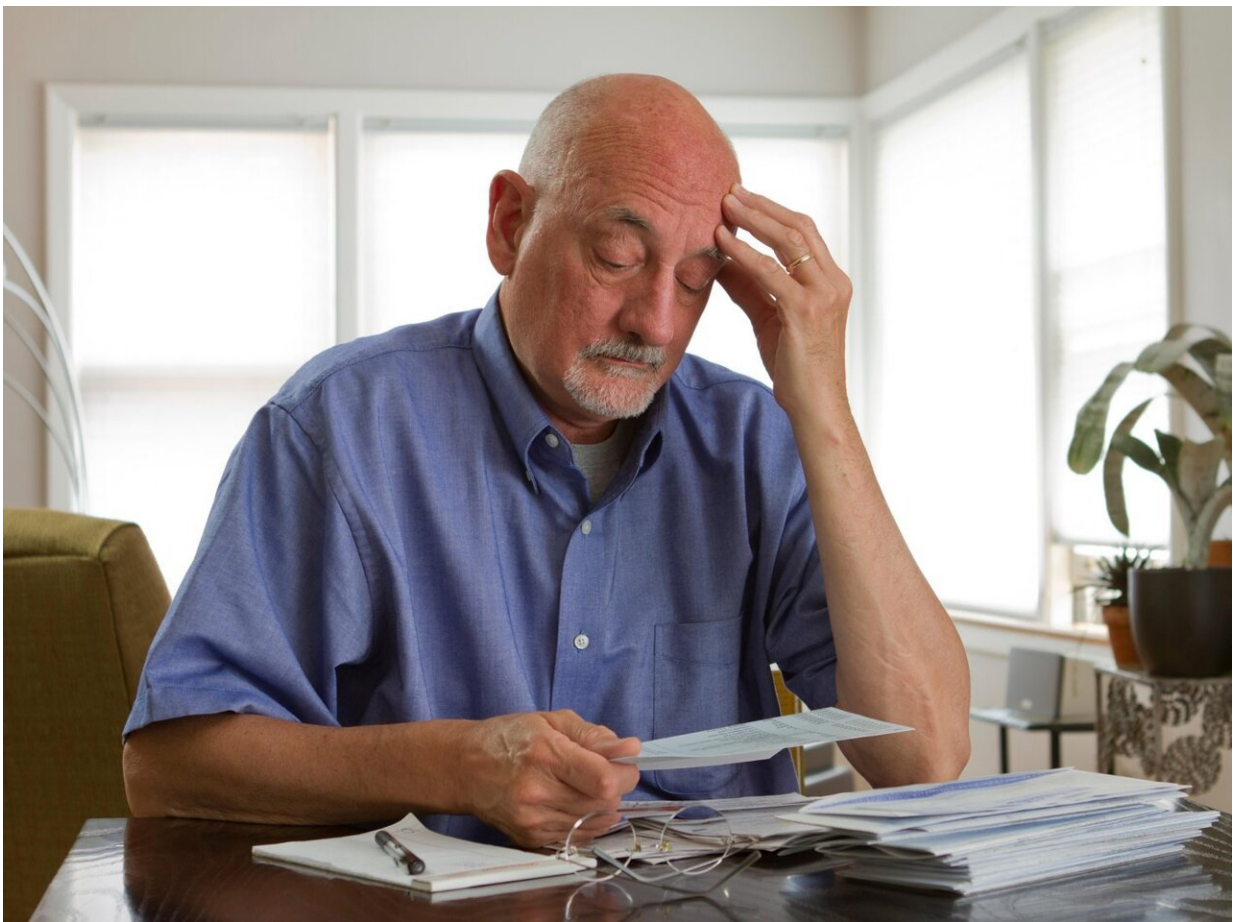


Compared to citizens of other wealthy nations, Americans more likely to skip medical care due to cost

November 16 2023, by Ernie Mundell



If you need medical care, you're more likely to skip it due to cost issues if you're American than if you're Australian, Canadian, British or French, a new report finds.

Rising costs aren't just causing poorer Americans to forgo needed care: The Commonwealth Fund report found higher-income people often doing the same.

"Adults in the United States with lower and average incomes are more likely to struggle to afford their health care than people with similar incomes in most other [wealthy countries](#)," according to a news release from the Commonwealth Fund.

The new data is based on 2023 responses to the organization's International Health Policy Survey.

It polled people living in nine affluent nations (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States) on whether they faced financial barriers when making everyday health care decisions.

The survey found that regardless of their [household income](#), Americans were more likely to experience issues accessing care than residents of the other eight nations.

In many cases, a higher-income person in the United States was still more likely to report challenges accessing care compared to a low- or average-income person living in the other countries.

"Nearly half of U.S. adults with lower or average incomes (46%), and nearly one of three with higher incomes (29%), reported at least one cost-related challenge accessing health care," the news release said. "These included having a medical issue but not visiting a doctor; skipping a

[medical test](#), treatment or follow-up recommended by a doctor; not filling a prescription; or skipping medication doses."

These trends applied to mental [health care](#) as well. Twenty-one percent of low-income Americans polled said they'd skipped needed mental health services because they couldn't afford it, while 14% of higher-income Americans said the same.

Nearly half (44%) of American adults said they'd had trouble paying a medical bill over the past year. Sometimes this meant falling behind in payments, but often people said they'd gotten swamped with paperwork or entangled in disputes around medical bills.

"Surprise" medical bills, or insurance coverage that didn't meet expectations was also common, the report found.

However, the report also found that none of the countries polled was fully meeting the "social needs" of citizens.

"In six of the nine countries, roughly one-third of adults with lower or average incomes reported an unmet social need," the Commonwealth Fund noted. "These include not having enough food, struggling to pay for housing, lacking a clean and safe place to live, or not having a stable job or income."

Still, while the gap between rich and poor was found everywhere, it was most stark in the United States, the report showed.

More information: Find out more about accessing health care in the United States at the [University of Southern California](#).

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