

New poll: 114 million Americans think the US health care system is failing them

October 6 2022

West Health-Gallup Healthcare in America Report Card

Name: U.S. Healthcare System **Year:** 2022

Surveyed: The American Public **Survey Period:** June 21-30, 2022

Survey Question: What grade would you give the U.S. healthcare system?

	A Excellent	B Good	C Satisfactory	D Poor	F Fail	D+F Combined	Average Grade
U.S. healthcare system overall	4%	17%	34%	30%	14%	44%	C-
 Cost of care	1%	6%	19%	41%	33%	75%	D-
 Equitable care	8%	14%	23%	29%	27%	56%	D+
 Access to care	9%	22%	31%	26%	12%	38%	C
 Quality of care	12%	35%	36%	12%	5%	17%	C+

Comments:

"When members of my family have needed surgeries or medications [they] have to really consider how much medical debt they're willing to go into. Our healthcare system forces us to try and make calculations between financial security and health just because of how expensive things are, and that's even with health insurance, so I can't imagine if you didn't have health insurance how fraught that would be."

— Stef Schloo, female, age 28, Pennsylvania

Note: Percentages indicate the number of Americans who assigned that letter grade. Full details on the calculation of overall letter grades can be found in the Methodology section on [page 34](#).

Nearly half the country (44%), or about 114 million Americans, give poor (30%) or failing (14%) grades to the U.S. health care system, percentages that climb higher and grow even more negative when it comes to affordability and health equity, according to a new report from West Health and Gallup, the polling organization.

The 2022 *West Health-Gallup Healthcare in America Report* asked a nationally representative sample of more than 5,500 Americans to provide a letter grade (A-excellent, B-good, C-satisfactory, D-poor and F-fail) for the health care system overall and to give individual grades for affordability, equity, accessibility and quality of care.

High marks were in short supply across the board, with the health care system getting an average grade of C-minus. Women and Hispanic and Asian Americans were more negative, with about half of each group assigning it a grade of D or F compared to about 40% of males, and 43% of White and Black Americans.

Nothing, however, earned more failing grades than affordability, which for three-quarters of Americans—an estimated 190 million adults—deserved no higher than a D (41%) or F (33%), for an average grade of D-minus. A top grade of A was virtually nonexistent (1%), only 6% went as high as a B, and 19% gave it a middling grade of C. The negative feelings about health care affordability were strikingly similar across gender, age, race, [household income](#) and political persuasion.

"After years of higher prices, growing inequities, skipping treatments, getting sicker, or borrowing money to pay [medical bills](#), it's no wonder so many Americans view the health system so poorly," said Timothy A. Lash, President, West Health. "This new report should send a strong message to policymakers that despite the health care provisions in the

Inflation Reduction Act, most of which will not take effect for some time, there is still immediate work to be done to lower health care prices."

Report card on health care equity, access and quality of care

Two-thirds of Black Americans (66%) and a similar percentage of Asian Americans (64%) gave a D or F for equity, the ability of every person to get quality care when they need it regardless of personal characteristics. That's more than the 55% of Hispanic Americans and 53% of White Americans who deemed [health equity](#) to be poor or failing. Black, Hispanic and Asian Americans and women were also more critical when it came to access to care. More than 40% of each of these groups gave access Ds and Fs, compared to about a third of White Americans and men.

Quality of care was the only aspect of the health care system that received more positive than negative marks, though it was still only able to earn an overall grade of C-plus. Less than half (47%) gave it an A or B grade, but a significant gender divide emerged, with women much less likely to give high grades for quality than men (38% vs. 57%). Black and Hispanic Americans were more negative on quality and less likely to give top marks than the general population (36% each vs. 47% overall).

Making the grade—why do so many Americans view health care so poorly?

Millions of Americans struggle every day in the face of a high-cost health care system, a struggle that not only results in a bad [report card](#) but in negative real-life consequences. Nearly one in five Americans say they or a family member had a health problem worsen after being unable to pay for needed care and an estimated 70 million people (27%) report that if they needed quality care today, they would not be able to afford

it.

"What I've done instead is ration health care...medicine. Using less to make it last. Using less than was prescribed in order to make it last longer...Things weren't as good as they could have been if I'd been using it...the way I should have been," said 71-year-old Anne Courtney Davis from Ohio, one of the survey respondents.

Additional key findings

- 66% of Americans say their household pays too much relative to the [quality of care](#) that it receives, up six points compared to April of last year.
- Half the country, about 129 million people, lack confidence they will be able to afford health care as they age.
- Two in three Americans under 65 are worried Medicare will not exist when they turn 65, and 3 in 4 adults 62 or younger say the same about Social Security.
- 17% cut back on health care services to pay for other household goods with women more likely to do so than men (about 50% more likely); and Black (23%) and Hispanic (24%) Americans 53% and 60% more likely than White adults (15%).
- Six in 10 Americans report that cost is an extremely important or important factor when considering a recommended medical procedure or medication.
- People 50 to 64 are nearly twice as likely to say cost is extremely important as those over 65 (29% vs. 16%)—rates that run even higher for Black (39%) and Hispanic adults (41%).

"While America's grading of the U.S. [health care system](#) is troubling, it provides a roadmap for health care systems and policymakers to invest and fix areas with the greatest impact to shift sentiment," said Dan Witters, Research Director for the Gallup National Health and Well-

Being Index. "What we must remember is that there are actual people behind these grades and that too many Americans are persistently struggling to access and afford quality health care."

More information: (PDF download) [2022 West Health-Gallup Healthcare in America Report](#)

Provided by West Health Institute

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