

**Press Release
Delta Rural Poll
Health Data
February 15, 2004**

Access to health care among residents of the Mississippi Delta is an issue of great importance to community development efforts focused on improving quality of life. As a way of informing such efforts, the 2003 Delta Rural Poll was conducted by the Center for Community and Economic Development at Delta State University. The survey, administered via telephone, consisted of questions on socio-demographics, quality of life, community satisfaction and three specialty topics – education, health care and communication technology.

Poll data suggest that Deltans generally feel that they are in good health. Asked to rate their overall personal health:

- 69% of the Deltans surveyed reported that their health was good or excellent.
- 23% felt that their health was fair.
- 8% said that their health status was poor.

Additionally, many Deltans are accessing some level of health care. More than 75% of the Deltans interviewed reported having visited a doctor in the last year.

Still, health problems do exist. Many people are faced with the challenge of having to pay for health care expenses out of pocket or relying on government programs to pay for health care. Most troubling is that there are Deltans who reported needing to go to the doctor but could not because of the cost.

- 20% of those interviewed said that there was a time within the past year when they needed to visit a doctor but could not because of the cost.
- 16% indicated that someone in their family had faced the same predicament.
- 23% of those interviewed said that they generally pay for routine health care themselves (out of pocket).
- 29% generally cover costs through participation in government programs (e.g. Medicaid and Medicare).
- Approximately 46% of respondents had private insurance or insurance through their job, and 1.5% reported payment using some combination of payment forms.

Many Deltans also report having difficulty paying for dental care.

- 41% reported having to pay for dental care out of pocket.
- 36% report having dental insurance.
- 23% report paying for dental care through government assistance.

Most of the Deltans interviewed travel within fifteen miles (one-way) of their home for routine care.

- 45% of Deltans surveyed reported traveling less than 5 miles to access routine health care.
- 30% of those surveyed traveled between 5 and 15 miles.

Many Deltans travel considerable distances to get adequate health care.

- Approximately 14% indicated that they traveled 16 to 30 miles.
- 1 in 10 reported that they had to travel over 30 miles to receive adequate health care.

Residents were asked to indicate whether they had received specialized healthcare in the last year and if so, how far they had to travel to receive such care.

- 15% reported that they did not receive specialized care.
- Nearly half of the 85% that received specialized care reported traveling 31 miles or more.

A total of 809 randomly selected individuals provided responses. Counties represented in the survey were: Bolivar, Coahoma, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tunica, and Washington. The margin of error is $\pm 3.4\%$.

Researchers at Delta State University prepared the questions for the Delta Rural Poll. Information was collected through telephone interviews with Delta residents, conducted by the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University.

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