



SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

What are the Top Preferences of Consumers to Improve Social Determinants of Health?

By the Remington Editorial Team

Clinical factors are responsible for just 20 percent of individuals' health outcomes; the remainder can be attributed to health-related social needs (HRSNs).

A survey of more than 5,000 US consumers highlights how HRSNs are evolving, their potential impact on healthcare use, preferences, and outcomes, and actions healthcare entities may consider to support consumers' needs effectively.

Findings

- Consumers with HRSNs were more likely to report poor physical and mental health and barriers to accessing care.
- Consumers with multiple HRSNs were more likely than other groups to report seeking support from family or friends, yet roughly 20% do not seek support.

- Consumers have expressed a strong desire for health systems, health insurance companies, and employers to gain a deeper understanding of their needs. This suggests that these entities have a significant role in meeting those needs and should consider stepping up their efforts.

Increasing recognition of the impact of these needs on consumers' health and livelihoods is driving momentum across the healthcare ecosystem to integrate health and social care, creating opportunities for healthcare entities to design consumer-centric models of care tailored to individual needs and preferences.

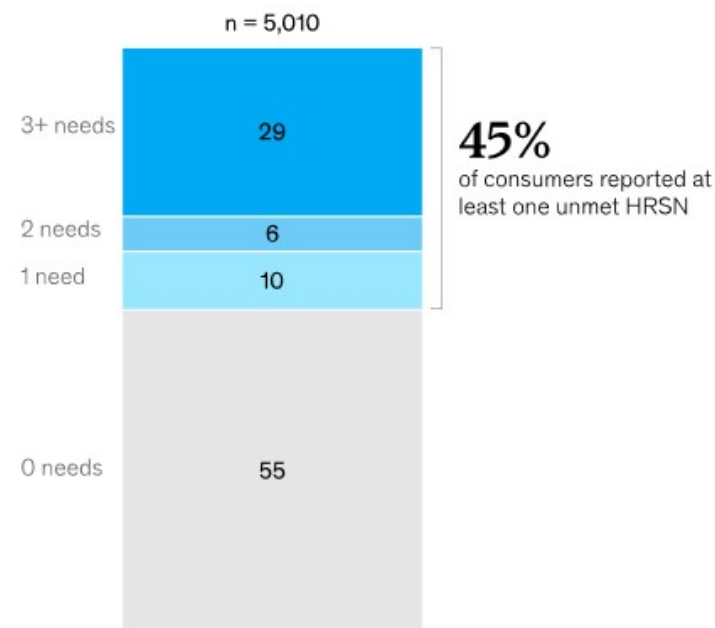
Unmet HRSNs Create More Emergency Room Visits

Unmet HRSNs can lead to significant barriers to accessing necessary care. Shockingly, nearly 50% of consumers with multiple unmet HRSNs have reported not receiving all the care they need,

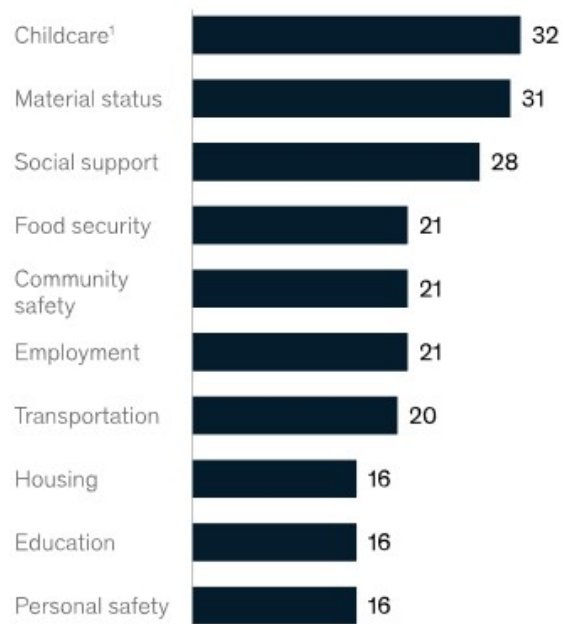
compared to just 12% of those with none. This disparity is further underscored by the fact that consumers with two or more unmet HRSNs are three times more likely to visit the emergency room 'frequently' than those with none, a clear indication of the urgent need to address these issues.

Nearly half of US consumers have unmet health-related social needs, and the majority of this segment have more than one.

Number of unmet health-related social needs (HRSNs), % of individuals



Consumers facing unmet HRSNs at least every 1–2 months, by type of need, %



¹Among individuals who indicated they have children.
Source: McKinsey Health-Related Social Needs Consumer Survey, 2022

McKinsey & Company

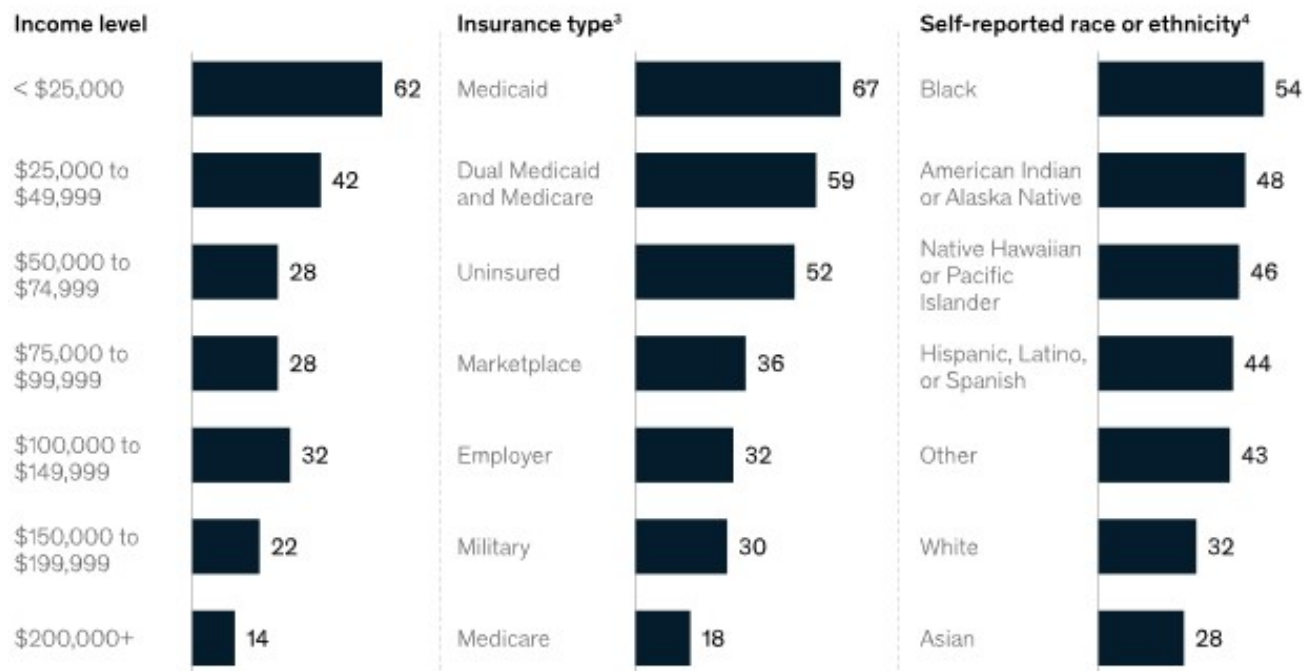
Unmet HRSNs Affect All Payers

Unmet HRSNs cut across socioeconomic status. While consumers with lower incomes reported a greater prevalence of unmet HRSNs, nearly one-third of consumers with incomes of \$100,000 to \$149,999 also reported unmet HRSNs. Similarly, unmet HRSNs are prevalent

across insurance types. While Medicaid, dual insurance, and uninsured individuals reported unmet HRSNs most heavily, two or more HRSNs affect nearly one-third of individuals reporting employer-sponsored insurance. This suggests screening for HRSNs should occur across patient segments, not just for Medicaid members.

Health-related social needs affect consumers across socioeconomic levels, insurance types, and races and ethnicities.

Consumers reporting 2+ unmet health-related social needs (HRSNs) sometimes or often,¹
% of individuals²



¹"Sometimes or often" indicates an unmet need reported at least once every 1-2 months.

²Individuals with 2+ HRSNs: n = 1,750.

³Military: n = 77. All others: n > 150.

⁴Pacific Islander and American Indian or Alaskan Native: n < 100. All others: > 150.

Source: McKinsey Health-Related Social Needs Consumer Survey, 2022

Where Will Consumers Get Support?

When seeking HRSN-related support, consumers said they primarily go to family or friends (23%), followed by community organizations and government agencies

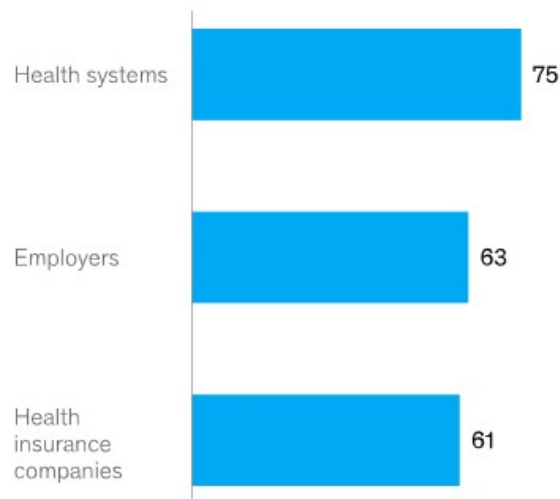
(17%). Family, friends, and even community organizations may be a first resort, given the comfort, convenience, and speed of support. However, roughly 20% of consumers neither seek support nor look to alternative sources.

Consumers with multiple unmet health-related social needs most often seek support from family or friends, yet many do not seek it.

Where consumers with multiple unmet health-related social needs (HRSNs) seek support, % of individuals with 2+ HRSNs¹



Consumers reporting a desire for healthcare systems, insurance companies, and employers to understand their HRSNs,² % of individuals with 2+ HRSNs



¹Respondents were able to select all that apply.

²Respondents who indicated it is "important" or "highly important" that their health system, insurance company, or employer knows about their needs.

Source: McKinsey Health-Related Social Needs Consumer Survey, 2022

Top Consumer Preferences

Consumers identified convenience, personalization, and transparency when asked about their top preferences for support related to physical, social, and mental well-being. They highlighted a desire for better experiences in scheduling appointments, navigating billing and other processes, and understanding benefits offerings.

Consumer preferences, particularly in the context of health-related social needs (HRSNs), emerged as a significant theme. Consumers consistently expressed a desire for health systems, insurers, and employers to address their unmet HRSNs, indicating a clear opportunity for these entities to enhance their support offerings.

Consumers with unmet health-related social needs report a preference for convenient, personalized, and transparent support.

Top preferences for physical, social, and mental well-being support,¹ % individuals with 2+ unmet health-related social needs (HRSNs)

Health systems	Health insurance companies	Employers
#1 Convenient: Improve convenience of when I can get an appointment 25%	#1 Convenient and transparent: Simplify billing and other processes 23%	#1 Convenient and transparent: Increase ease of understanding available benefits 21%
#2 Convenient: Increase convenience of process (eg, paperwork, making appointments) 20%	#2 Personalized: Ask me about my unmet HRSNs 21%	#2 Personalized: Provide information about support for my unmet HRSNs 17%
#3 Personalized: Provide information about support for my unmet HRSNs 19%	#3 Personalized: Connect me with community organizations that can support my HRSNs 21%	#3 Flexible: Provide more paid sick leave and/or flexibility to attend appointments for medical care 16%
Other top responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make costs easier to find out about • Provide support for my unmet HRSNs • Ask me about my unmet HRSNs • Make costs for visits or treatments more affordable 	Other top responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve technology • Provide greater personalization • Increase coverage • Make things easier to understand • Improve affordability 	Other top responses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase convenience of enrolling in healthcare benefits • Provide support for my unmet HRSNs • Create a workplace culture that reduces stigma around receiving care • Ask me about my unmet HRSNs

¹Consumers were asked "What can your [health system, health insurance company, employer] do to better support your physical, social, and mental well-being?" Consumers were given 20–25 options to choose from for each entity. Source: McKinsey Health-Related Social Needs Consumer Survey, 2022

Beyond the top three preferences, other high-ranking preferences included flexibility, cost and affordability, and direct HRSN support (for example, medically tailored meals and other direct food provisions).

By aligning their strategies with consumer preferences, health insurance companies, health systems, employers, and others cannot only meet the needs of their consumers but also potentially improve health outcomes. This could involve designing consumer-centric solutions, fostering partnerships to address a wide range of needs, and tailoring support to caregivers and families.

Entities across the healthcare ecosystem can act to better meet consumers' health-related social needs:

- Recognize that HRSNs affect consumers across socioeconomic levels and insurance types, and design programs to meet the needs of a variety of consumers.

- Design consumer-centric solutions (for example, with consumer input and involvement) to ensure they are tailored to be usable and effective (for example, matching personalized consumer preferences, ensuring transparency, prioritizing convenience, and reflecting cultural sensitivity).
- Explore a network of partnerships across the healthcare ecosystem to address a range of needs, given that consumers typically face multiple unmet needs.
- Consider the needs of caregivers and the family broadly – in addition to the individual – because roughly one-fourth of consumers reported seeking help from friends and family.
- Focus on improving convenience and personalization in HRSN programming, because this may significantly reduce hurdles to receiving care and other benefits.

