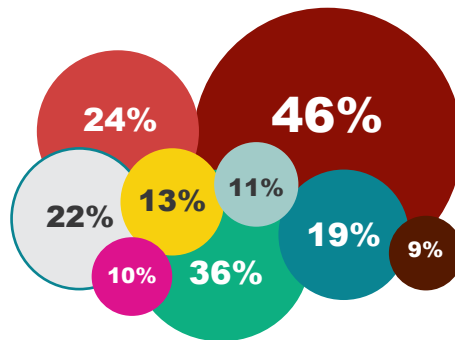


Access to Health Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

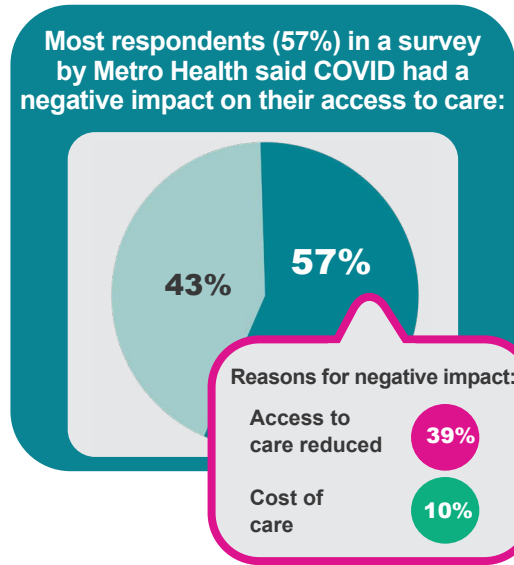
Barriers, Challenges, and Affected Populations


As part of its SA Forward plan, Metro Health commissioned the Health Collaborative to assess how access to health care changed during the worst of the pandemic. The report draws on public data sets, interviews, focus groups and a survey of more than 1,800 people. The report also includes prior surveys by community partners, who are credited here alongside their data.

Respondents in a survey by Metro Health told us the problems below got WORSE after the pandemic started:

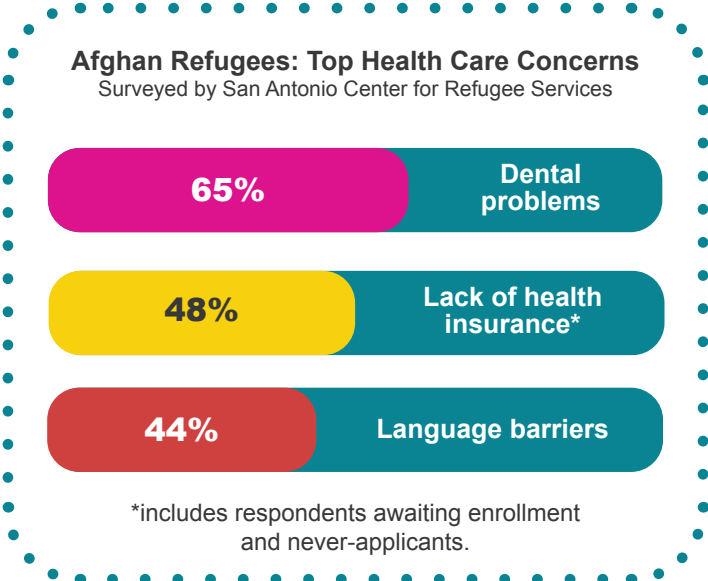
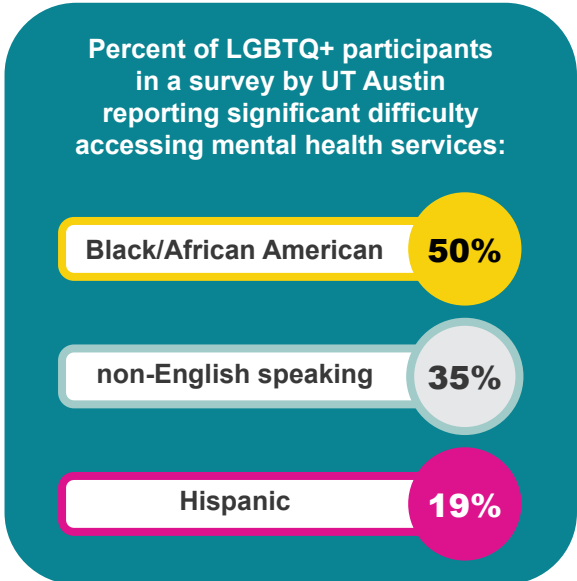


- Fear of catching COVID
- Getting appointments
- Cost of prescriptions
- Cost of health care
- Not knowing how to find care
- Discrimination or rude treatment by staff
- Digital access for telehealth
- Transportation
- Language barriers



70% 

of people with a disability in a survey by disABILITYsa said the pandemic affected their health care and medical supplies.

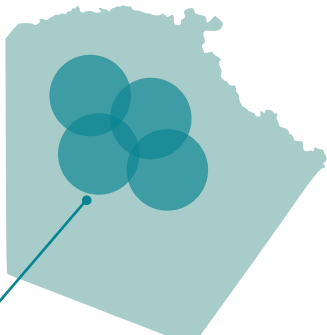


Access to Health Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Systems, Access, and Utilization

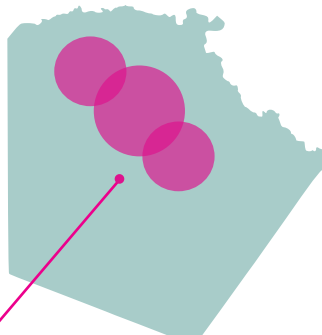
Southern San Antonio is lacking in **mental health** and **women's health** care service providers. Most are concentrated in north-central Bexar County.

Mental Health Providers



includes psychologists and psychiatrists

Women's Health Providers



includes obstetrics and gynecology

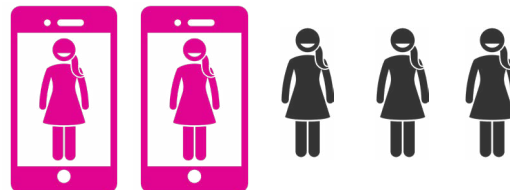
"We had conversations with constituents who [...] had a car at the start of the pandemic, and they don't anymore because they had to make choices, right, on what to pay. And they've had to sell their car and rely on public transportation. So getting access to doctor's appointments is another challenge."

- Office of a San Antonio City Council Member

"... I think of my seniors who have landlines and don't have Internet. And who may have Internet but don't know how to use the computer; who may have a computer but may not have access to the Internet."

- Office of a San Antonio City Council Member

Nearly 2 in 5 participants used **telehealth** during the pandemic, according to a survey by Metro Health:



In another survey conducted by the Center for Healthcare Services,

90% of respondents said telemedicine met their needs

81% of respondents would welcome future telehealth visits



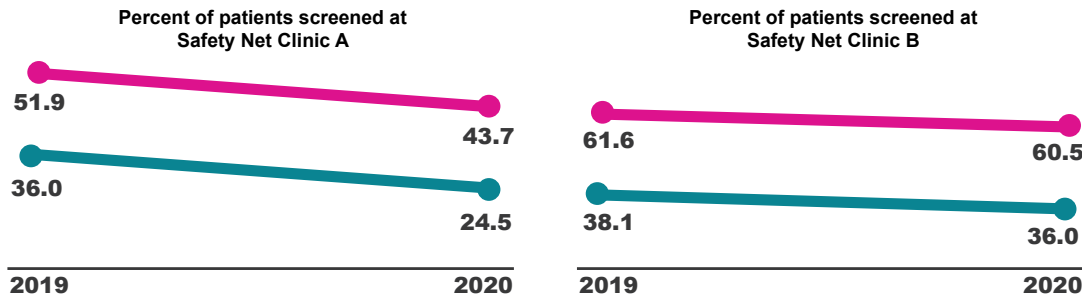
Access to Health Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prevention and Primary Care

“Some of my clients are like, ‘I’m not gonna go because I’m gonna be slapped with a big bill that I can’t afford.’ I have a client that has all these medical issues, and she was still, like, trying not to go.... I convinced her to go, you know, it came to find out that she has all these things and needs surgery.”

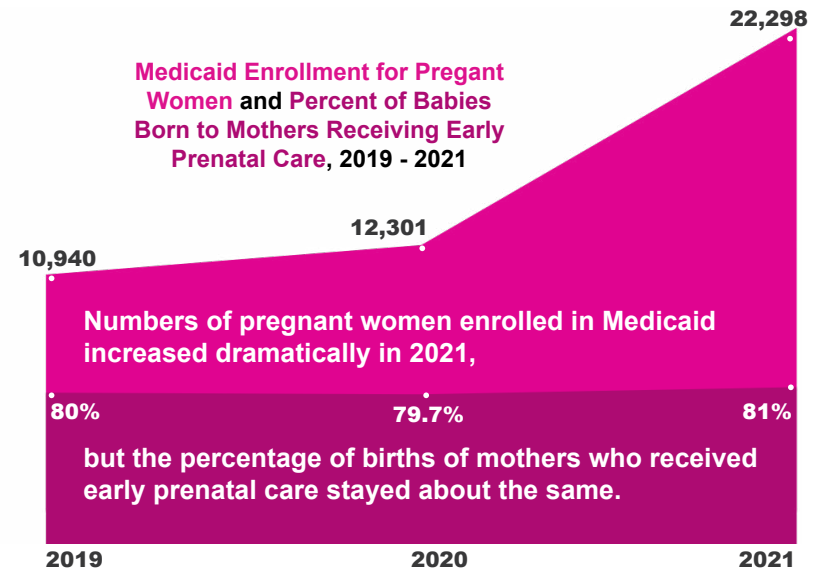
- Community Health Worker

Screenings for colorectal and cervical cancers decreased from 2019 to 2020.



“What became more difficult to access were preventative health care services, check-ups. And I’ll tell you why. The price on them went up astronomically, so... that price is not really affordable anymore for our clients.”

- Local Community Health Leader

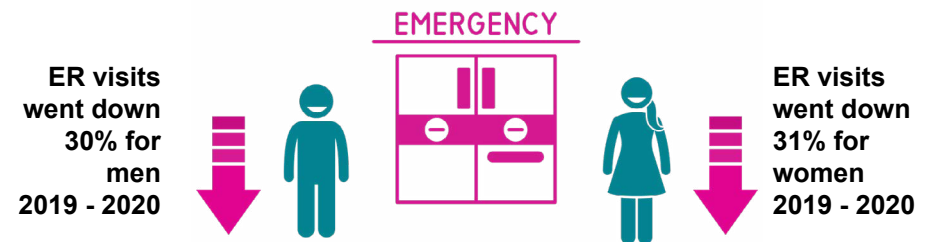


Numbers of pregnant women enrolled in Medicaid increased dramatically in 2021,

but the percentage of births of mothers who received early prenatal care stayed about the same.

“We started seeing anywhere from 80 to 100 patients daily from all the influx. It was just basically like herding cattle, it wasn’t even good health care anymore.”

- Urgent Care Nurse



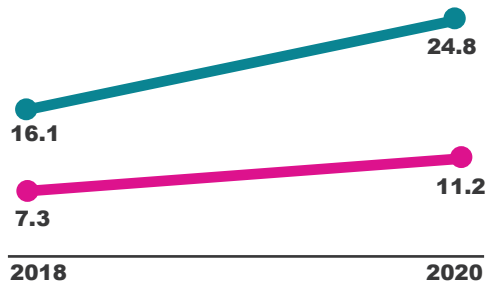
Access to Health Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mental Health and Substance Use

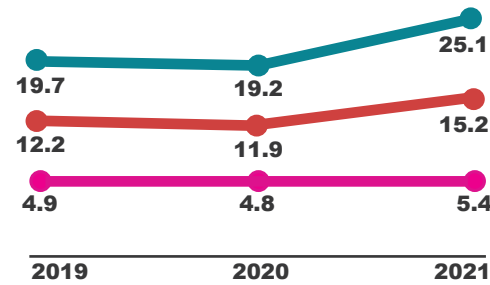
“Mental health issues spiked. We had older adults who were struggling with just being alone constantly. And not even having their family able to come and visit because they were older family members [...] It was very, very — it was a tragic time for District 4.”

- Office of San Antonio City Council District 4

Drug-related Deaths per 100K



Suicide Deaths per 100K



● Men ● Women ● Total

“There’s many of us that are dedicated to our community, tremendously. It’s a way of life. So when we were isolated, it started affecting the CHWs, because we weren’t able to communicate or [...] see our clients, our families. [...] It started causing us to get depressed.”

- Community Health Worker (CHW) Instructor and Advocate

Support Needed to Obtain Health Care

“It was hard for the insurance to figure out that even though they [patients] had been at the hospital for 15 days or 30 days, they still weren’t well enough to go home, and they needed additional care, and they needed to authorize that additional care. And that’s if the patient had insurance.”

- Hospital Chief Executive

A survey by Metro Health asked “What services or support would help you get the health care you need now?”

nearly half (42%) of the respondents said they needed help with current and future medical costs

42%

and over a third (36%) of participants said they needed support with health insurance.

36%

Focus Group Recommendations

- Increase awareness and marketing of health care resources.
- Expand and improve medical transportation services.
- Reduce infrastructure barriers to telehealth and offer guided telehealth help to older patients.
- Prioritize Spanish, Arabic and Pashto interpretation and translation.
- Foster long-term partnerships between health care, local government and community organizations to enhance access to care.

