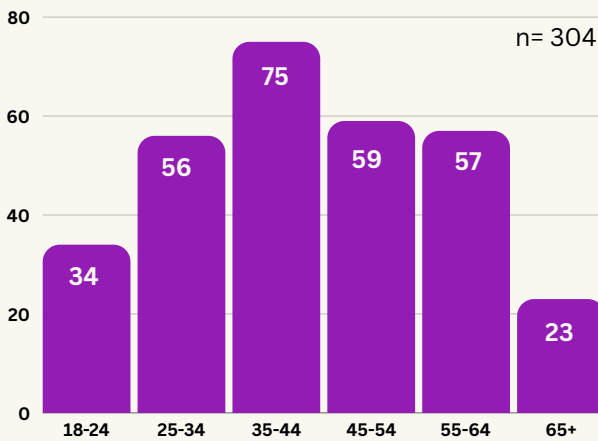


COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2024

Health Equity Solutions engaged 304 residents from 44 towns across Connecticut in discussions about health equity. Partnering with community groups and libraries, we sought to understand residents' top health equity priorities. This year, we included questions about community experiences with medical debt and its associated challenges. Feedback was collected through community conversations co-hosted with partners and through an online survey. Community responses to these issues were instrumental in shaping Health Equity Solutions' 2025 Policy Agenda. The following summary presents the key insights we gathered.

SELF-IDENTIFIED DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

AGE OF PARTICIPANTS



GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS

Female/Woman/Girl	69%
Male/Man/Boy	26.1%
Transgender Female/Woman/Girl	0.7%
Transgender Male/Men/Boy	0.7%
Nonbinary, genderqueer, or not exclusively female or male	3.3%
I don't know	0.3%

n= 304

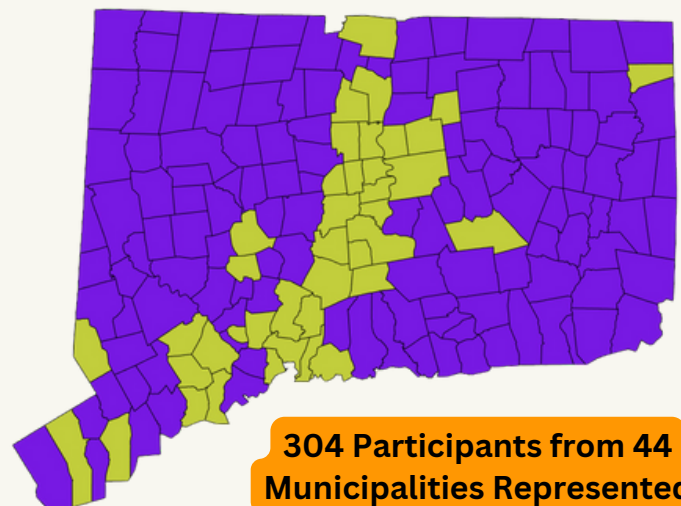
RACE & ETHNICITY OF PARTICIPANTS

American Indian/Alaskan Native	4.46%
Asian (Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese, Other)	4.78%
Black and/or African American	27.71%
Hispanic/Latino (Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Mexican, Other)	42.36%
Middle Eastern/North African	1.91%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1.59%
White/Caucasian	14.97%
Prefer Not to Say	1.27%
Other	0.96%

n= 304*

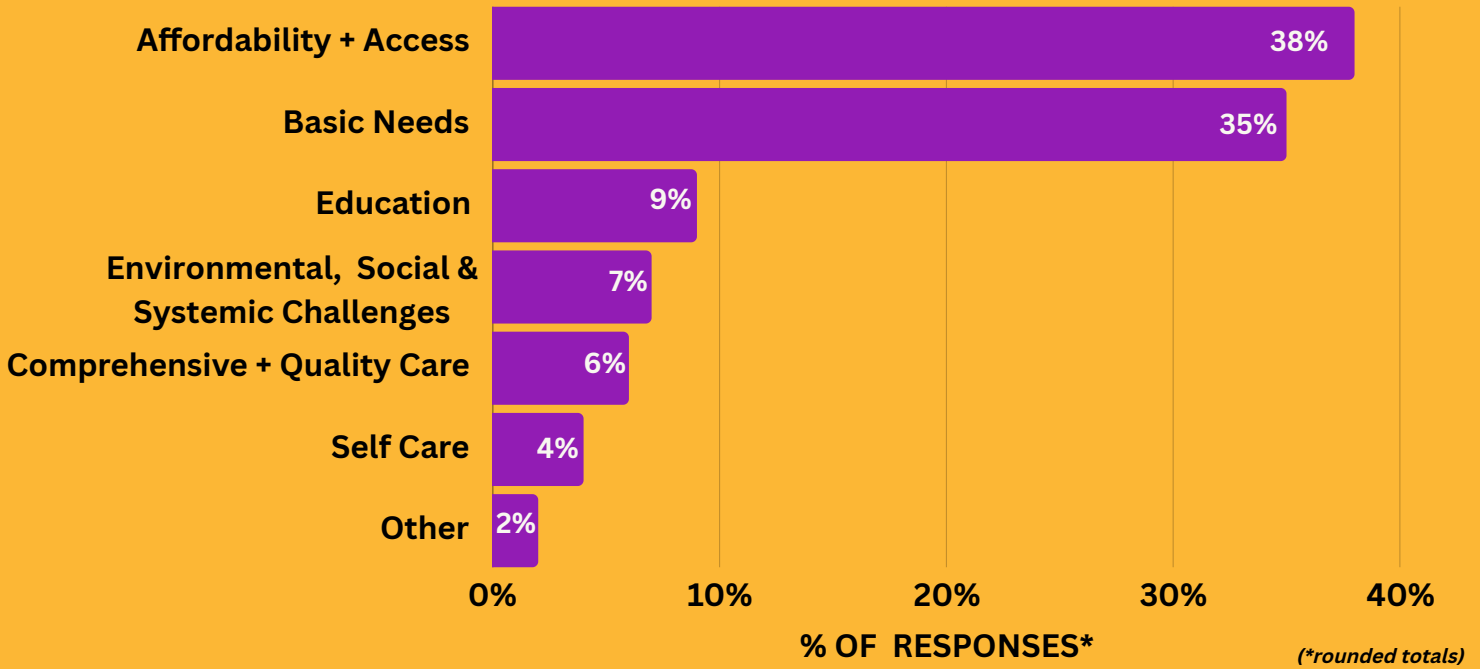
*Total may add up to more than 100% because some participants identified with more than one race/ethnicity

REGIONAL SPREAD OF PARTICIPANTS

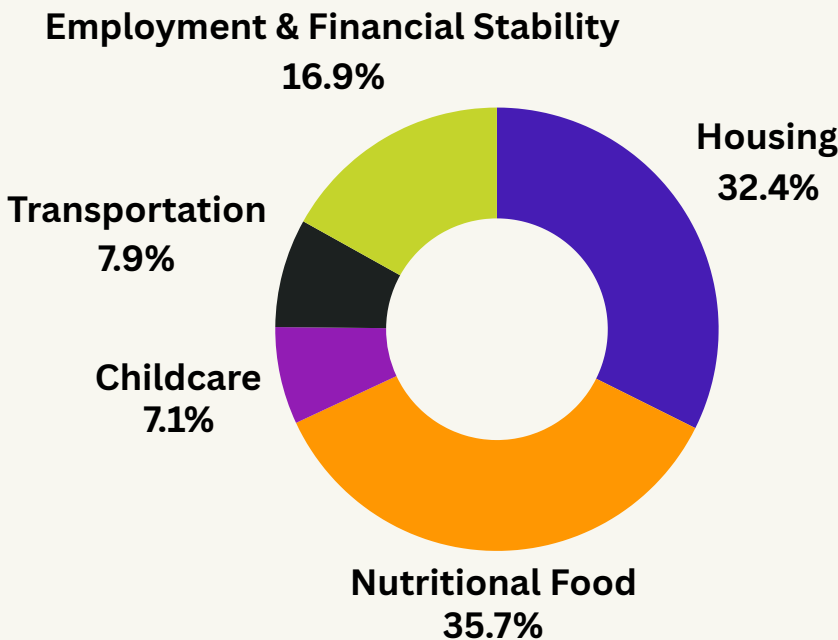


COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2024

2024 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS THEMES



A Closer Look at *BASIC NEEDS*



Survey responses show that basic needs make up 35% of community responses for top health equity priorities in Connecticut. The graph to the left further disaggregates the 35% and shows nutritional food, housing, employment / financial stability, transportation, and childcare as primary concerns in accessing essential resources.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2024

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Access & Affordability

Health care, Insurance, Ability to afford to go to doctor, Affordable health care, Free health care, Better health care, Affordable medication

Basic Needs

Financial stability, Employment, Healthy foods, Housing, Childcare, Transportation, Financial resources

Education

Health information, Nutrition health education, Educational opportunities, More resources for business owners

Environmental, Social & Systemic Challenges

Clean water, Substance use, Community resources, Systemic racism, Criminal Justice system

Comprehensive & Quality Care

Good health care, Better medical, Maintenance of mental health, More LGBTQ+ health resources, elderly care

Self-care

Good nutrition, Exercise, Nutrition, Discipline, Diet, Good night sleep, Less processed foods, Good health

Other Responses: Smile and love everyone, sugar, free of seizures, help, concerned about the likelihood of political violence

HEAR FROM THE COMMUNITY

"[Deberíamos de] eliminar las restricciones fiscales para poder financiar los programas sociales de Connecticut..."

"[We should] eliminate the fiscal guardrails so we can fund Connecticut social programs..."

- Bridgeport Participant

"Tengo que hacer recortes en la alimentación, y necesidades para poder hacer ahorros y poder lograr pagar mis deudas."

"I have to cut back on food and necessities to save money and be able to pay my debts"

- Hartford Participant

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2024

Medical debt is a significant issue for 280,000 Connecticut residents, causing financial and emotional distress. There is a notable lack of awareness about available financial assistance options, also known as charity care, in hospitals, underscoring the need for improved policies such as debt forgiveness programs and sliding scale payment systems. CT residents have highlighted the profound impact of medical debt on their lives. This section of the report summarizes feedback from 184 Connecticut residents regarding their experiences with medical debt, the contributing factors, its effects, and potential solutions to address this pressing concern.

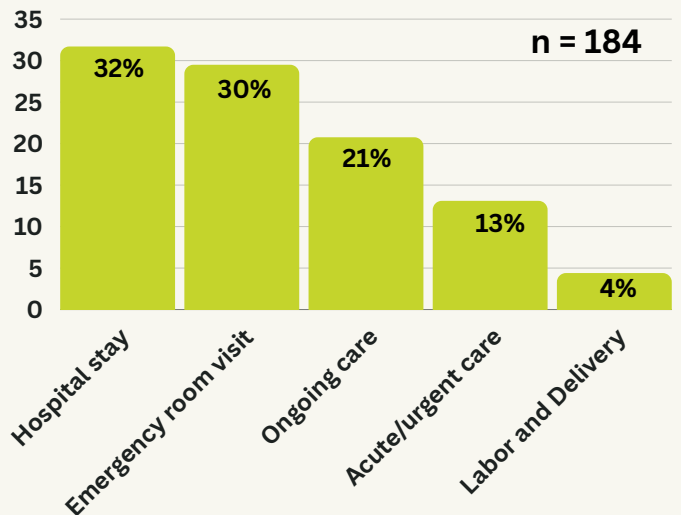
HAVE YOU OR YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS EXPERIENCED MEDICAL DEBT?

n = 184



2 out of 3 respondents said they or a family member had experienced some form of medical debt.

WHAT EXPERIENCES LED COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO MEDICAL DEBT?



HOW DOES MEDICAL DEBT IMPACT CT RESIDENTS?



Effect on paying bills and other needs

46% of respondents said they have been unable to pay for basic necessities, such as food, rent or mortgage



Delayed medical visits

53% of respondents said they have delayed seeking necessary medical treatments due to concerns over medical debt



Overall impact on health

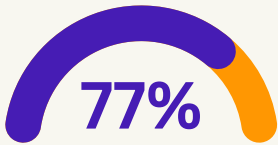
54% of respondents said that medical debt has affected their overall health and wellbeing

"My mother has nearly always been in some sort of medical debt. Still working full-time at 68, she lives paycheck-to-paycheck, so she cannot afford to pay out of pocket for larger expenses until reaching her deductible." - Middletown Participant

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS 2024

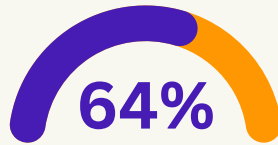
According to a report from the Connecticut Office of Health Strategy, “[f]rom 2016-2022, hospitals estimated that \$100 million of bad debt, [unpaid patient bills that are written off by the hospital], was attributed to individuals who would have qualified for charity care.”

ARE CT RESIDENTS AWARE OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OPTIONS FOR MEDICAL DEBT RELIEF?



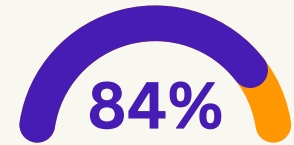
Lack of Awareness

77% of respondents were not informed of financial assistance programs / charity care programs when seeking medical care



Growing Interest

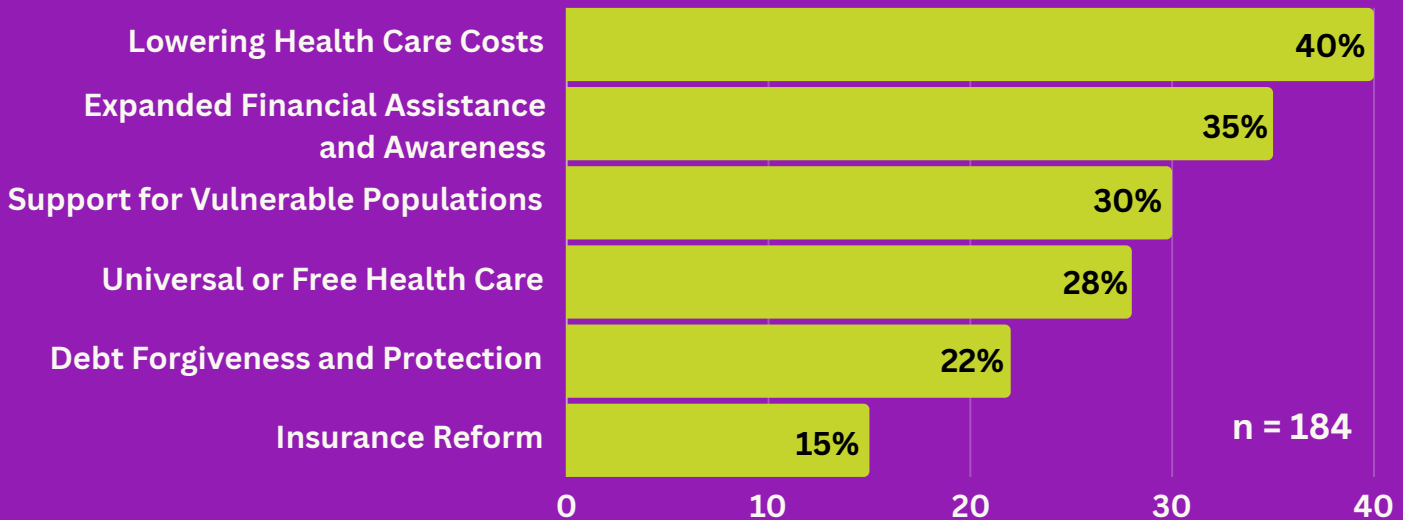
64% of respondents want to learn more about hospital financial assistance policies / charity care programs



Strong Support for Reform

84% of respondents would like to see more laws to address, eliminate, and prevent medical debt

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TO ELIMINATE MEDICAL DEBT IN CT



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

Hands on Hartford, Hispanic Health Council, Make The Road CT, Ministerial Health Fellowship, New Haven Library, New Haven Pride Center, Silas Bronson Library, The Village

