



Background

Maine Cancer Foundation (MCF) was interested in understanding more about financial toxicity in Maine as it relates to a cancer diagnosis, treatment, and recovery.

The intent of the study was to better understand the nature of financial toxicity in Maine, the impact of cancer on the finances and decisions of patients and caregivers, and the options to help address this issue in the state.

At What Cost? The Financial Impact of a Cancer Diagnosis Among Maine Cancer Patients

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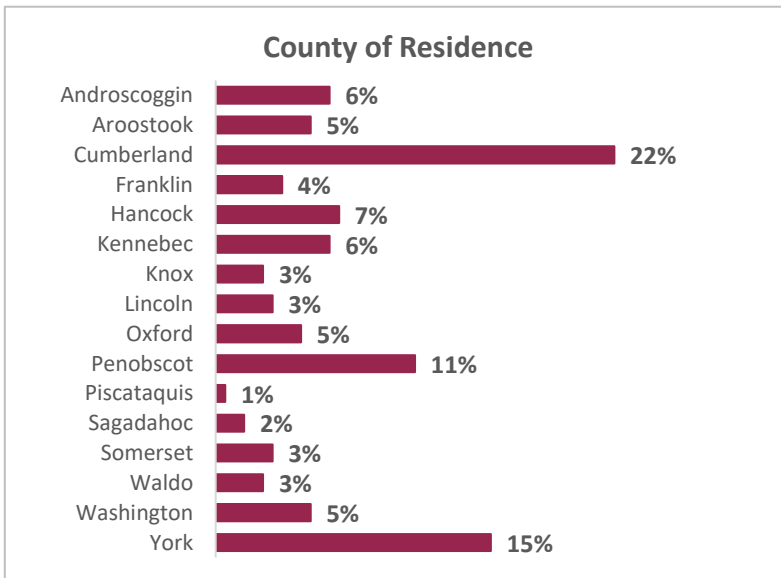
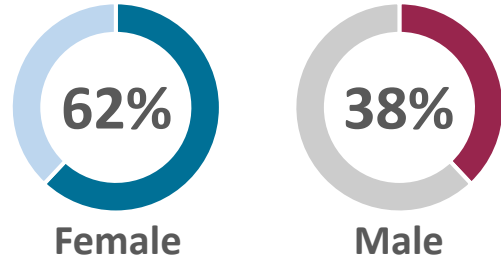
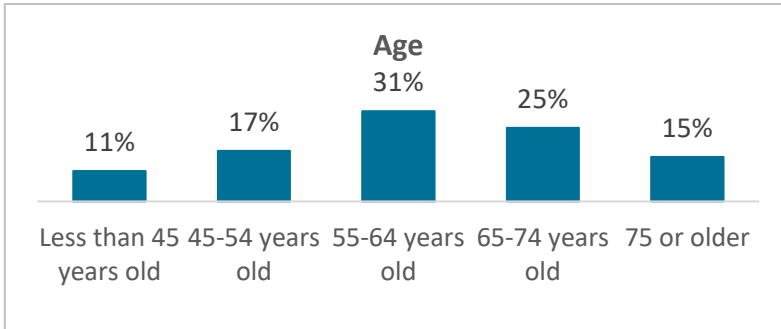


Financial Toxicity

Financial Toxicity describes problems cancer patients have related to the cost of treatment.

Research has shown that cancer patients and survivors are more likely to have financial toxicity than people without cancer. Cancer treatment can affect a cancer patient's ability to work and pay bills.

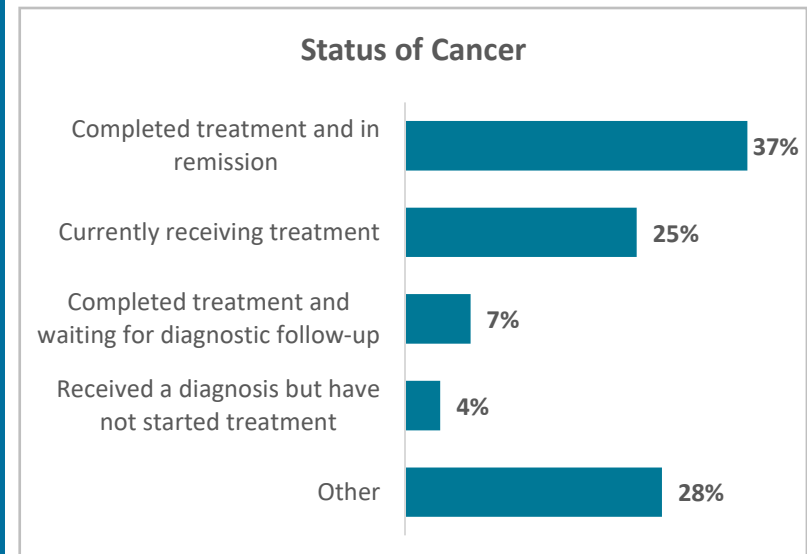
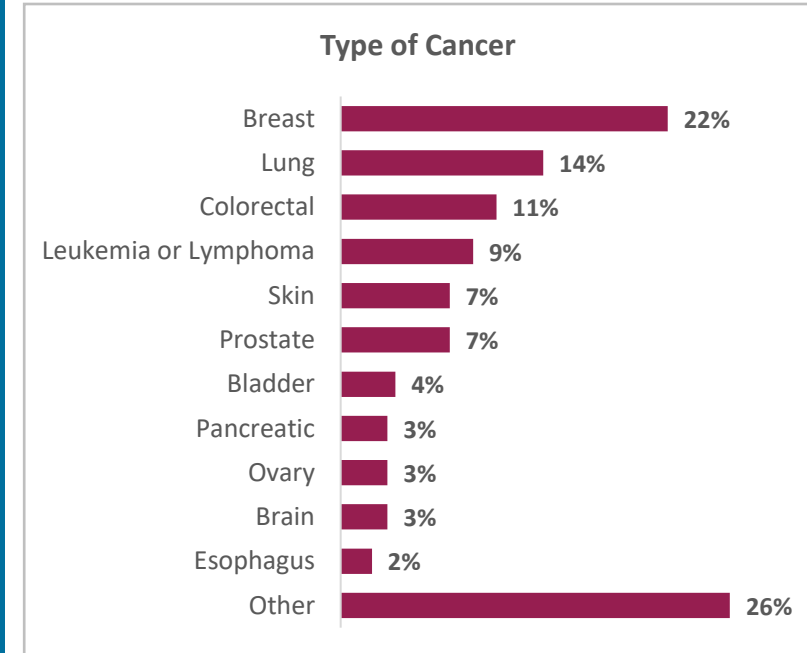
Demographics



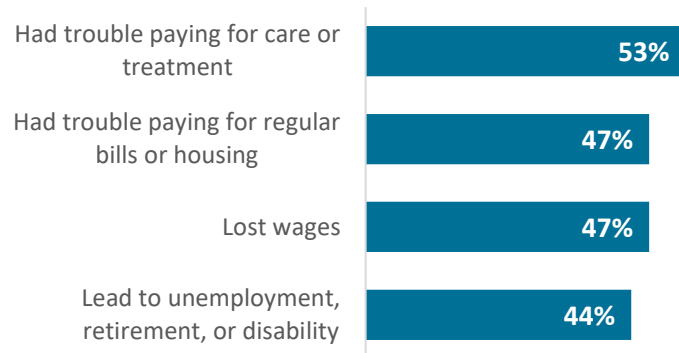
Methodology

- This study involved Mainers aged 18 or older who had a cancer diagnosis within the past five years. Caregivers were also allowed to participate on behalf of recent cancer patients.
- The questionnaire was designed by MDR and MCF and took an average of 15 minutes to complete.
- Data collection took place between November 8th, 2020, to January 4th, 2021.
- Surveys were conducted online using a social media recruitment strategy combined with an online panel.
- 191 Maine cancer survivors or their caregivers participated in the survey.
- A limitation of the study was using a nonprobability convenience sample and therefore respondents may not be representative of the overall population.

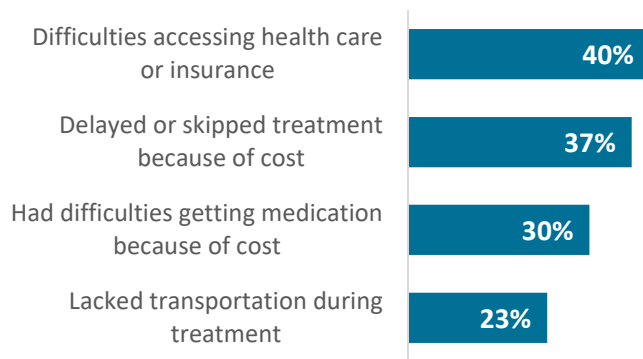
Cancer Experience



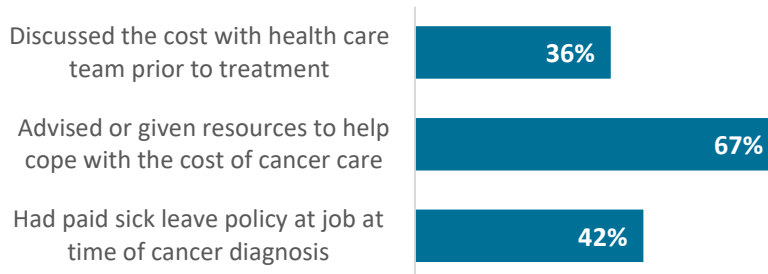
Financial Issues



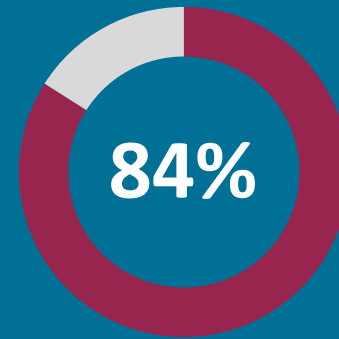
Issues Accessing Care



Other Factors



Results



Experienced mental health issues as a result of cancer diagnosis

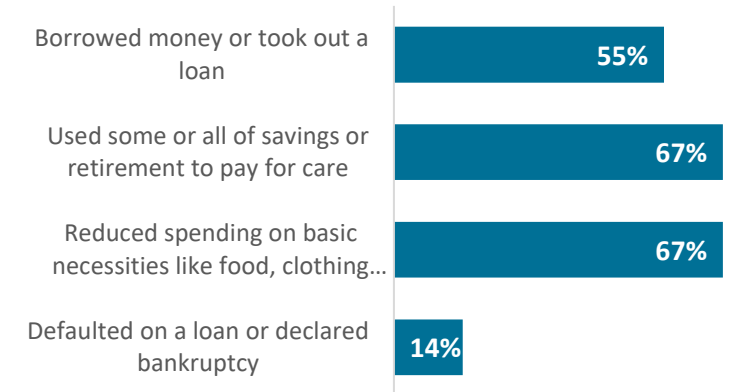
"I'm living in poverty because of cancer. It took my savings and a big portion of my income."

"Entire lifestyle change. Expected to go back to work two weeks after surgery; never able to return."

"Emotional. Dealing with scared loved ones and needing to be strong (outwardly)."

"My family missed out on things/experiences, no vacations, no eating out, no going out, no new clothes, decreased groceries, cheaper food items."

Financial Impacts of Cancer



Those who **lost their job, had to retire or were unable to work** because of their cancer diagnosis and those **without health insurance** were significantly more likely to experience financial toxicity, including:

- ✓ Difficultly paying for care
- ✓ Delaying or skipping treatment due to cost
- ✓ Difficulty paying regular bills
- ✓ Having to borrow money or spend their savings
- ✓ Defaulting on a loan or declaring bankruptcy as a result of their cancer.

1 Improve cancer **patients' ability and willingness to discuss costs** of treatment and care

2 Improve cancer **care providers ability to engage with patients** about costs of treatment and care

3 Consider **value when discussing treatment options** and administering treatment with patients

4 **Personal and social needs** are often neglected due to financial toxicity and are a critical area of focus

Recommendations

Nearly all Mainers diagnosed with cancer experienced some level of financial toxicity, such as forgoing or delaying care, mental health issues, loss of employment and income, debt and bankruptcy, and long-term reductions in quality of life.

Financial toxicity can be one of the biggest impediments to acceptance and recovery from cancer, especially for those who lose their jobs or can't work or those who lack adequate health insurance.

5 **Addressing mental health** is as important as providing financial assistance

6 **Reduce the cost of care** or shift burden of payment away from patients

7 Provide patients with **affordable prescription medication** options

8 **Employers** have a role beyond a paycheck

9 Develop a **Maine task force** focused on the issue of financial toxicity in the state