

Emergency Department Visits

DESCRIPTION

Rates of Emergency Department (ED) use for treatment of conditions that are potentially preventable have been widely used as an indicator of limited access to primary care, with variations in these rates across groups reflecting disparities in access.^{1,2,3} Differences in potentially preventable ED use by ZIP code or other socio-economic factors can inform us about barriers to primary care that may exist for certain populations of the county and provide insight into the relative depth and success of interventions.

HOW WE ARE DOING

Among ED visits during 2010-2014 made by Ramsey County residents, 77.2 percent were potentially preventable. The rate of potentially preventable ED visits is 687 per 1,000 residents.

DISPARITIES

Children under 5 had the highest rates of potentially preventable ED visits followed by visits among 20 to 24-year-olds. Over half of potentially preventable visits were made by residents who live in high poverty ZIP codes.

RISK FACTORS

Residents receiving publicly funded insurance i.e., Medical Assistance, may be more likely to visit an emergency department. Medicaid patients use the emergency room at twice the rate of those with private insurance, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.⁴

WHAT RAMSEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT IS DOING

Thousands of Ramsey County residents used emergency departments under circumstances and with conditions that may be more appropriately managed in other care settings during 2010-2014. To successfully reduce potentially preventable ED use, we need to understand the multifaceted reasons patients visit the ED. Hearing directly from patients will help identify those reasons. To better understand causal pathways and to build a model of patient-centered care for Ramsey County residents, we must include the patient perspective. Saint Paul – Ramsey County Public Health and local hospitals are continuing to explore ED utilization by designing a study that will help us learn directly from patients themselves why they chose to visit the ED.

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Information to note

- **Potentially Preventable Definition:** The nature of the condition was potentially preventable if timely and effective ambulatory care had been received during the episode of illness.
- **77.2% of ED visits made by Ramsey County residents were potentially preventable.**

¹ Falik M, Needleman J, Wells B, Korb J. Ambulatory care sensitive hospitalizations and emergency visits: experiences of Medicaid patients using federally qualified health centers. National Center for Biotechnology Information. 2001; 39(6):551-561. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11404640>. Accessed August 2018.

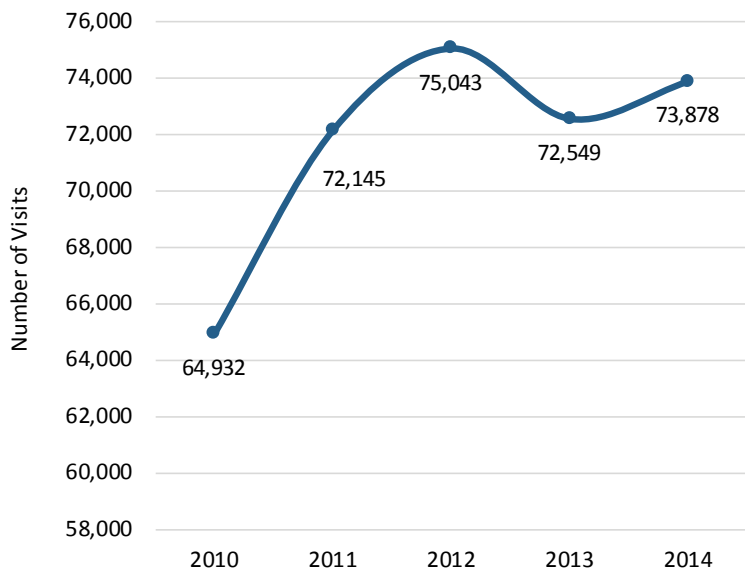
² Epstein A. The role of public clinics in preventable hospitalizations among vulnerable populations. National Center for Biotechnology Information. 2001; 36(2):405-420. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1089231/>. Accessed August 2018.

³ Hossain M, Laditka J. Using hospitalization for ambulatory care sensitive conditions to measure access to primary health care: an application of spatial structural equation modeling. Int J Health Geogr. 2009; 8:51. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1476-072X-8-51>.

⁴ Mann C. Reducing nonurgent use of emergency departments and improving appropriate care in appropriate settings. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2014. <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib-01-16-14.pdf>. Accessed August 2018.

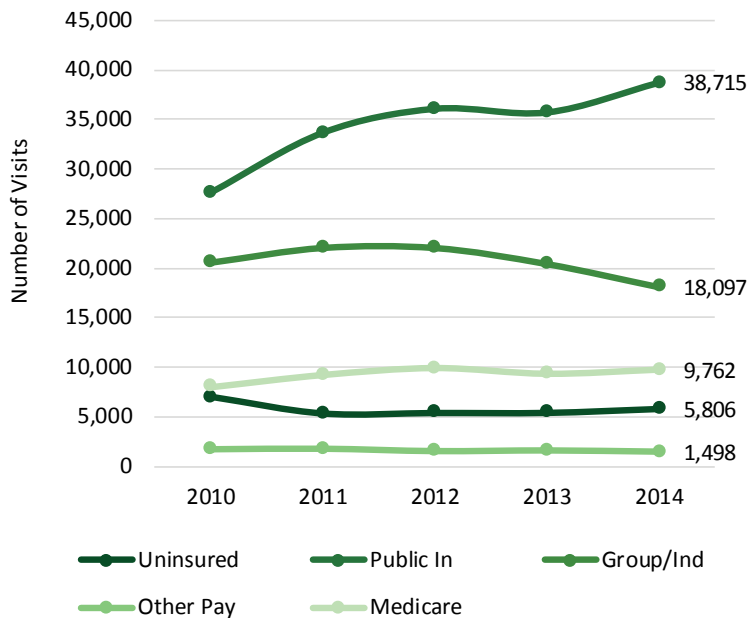
Emergency Department Visits figures

Potentially Preventable ED Visits, Ramsey County Residents



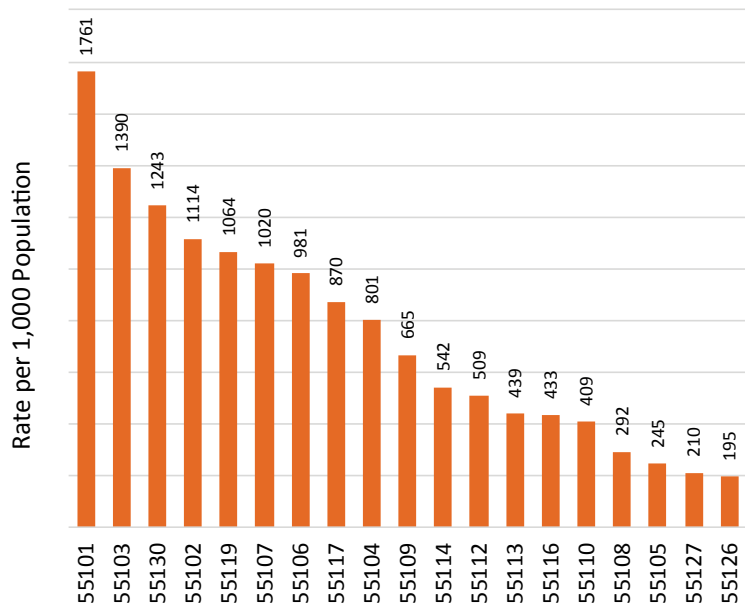
Source: Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health.

Potentially Preventable ED Visits by Payer Group and Year



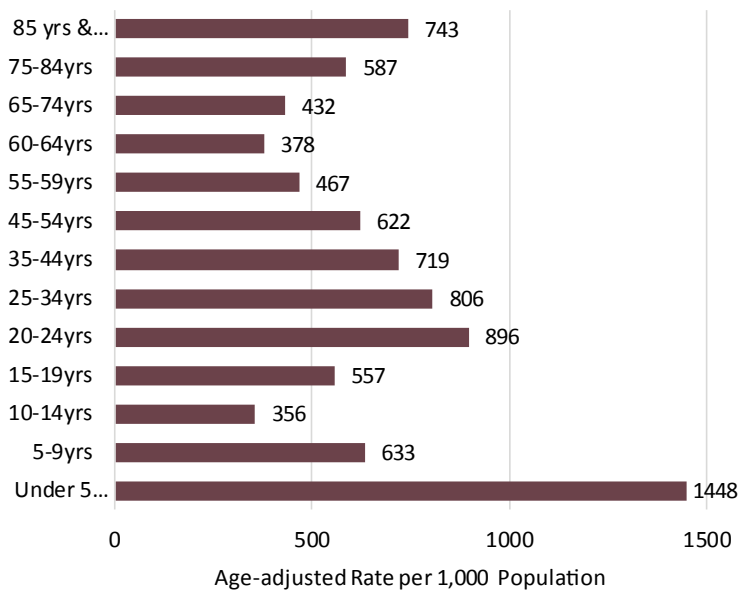
Source: Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health.

Potentially Preventable ED Visits by Zipcode, Ramsey County, 2010-2014



Source: Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health.

Potentially Preventable ED Visits by Age Group, Ramsey County, 2010-2014



Source: Saint Paul - Ramsey County Public Health.