

National Survey on Uncompensated Care in EMS

Like hospital emergency departments, EMS agencies are safety net providers, responding to all patients who access 911, regardless of the patient's socio-economic status. Often, EMS agencies provide medical care to these patients, but are not compensated for those services, either by insurers, or the patients themselves (uninsured/self-pay).

Uncompensated care exacerbates the on-going financial crisis in EMS, which is a key driver of the EMS staffing crisis. An industry news tracker has chronicled over 2,000 local and national EMS news reports since 2021, and 82% of the news reports highlight the EMS economic and staffing crisis.

The [Academy of International Mobile Healthcare Integration](#) (AIMHI) and the [National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians](#) (NAEMT) recently distributed a survey related to the impact of uncompensated care in EMS. 28 agencies representing diverse types of EMS systems in both urban and rural communities responded to the survey. [PWWJAG](#) analyzed the data provided by the respondents and has summarized the findings.

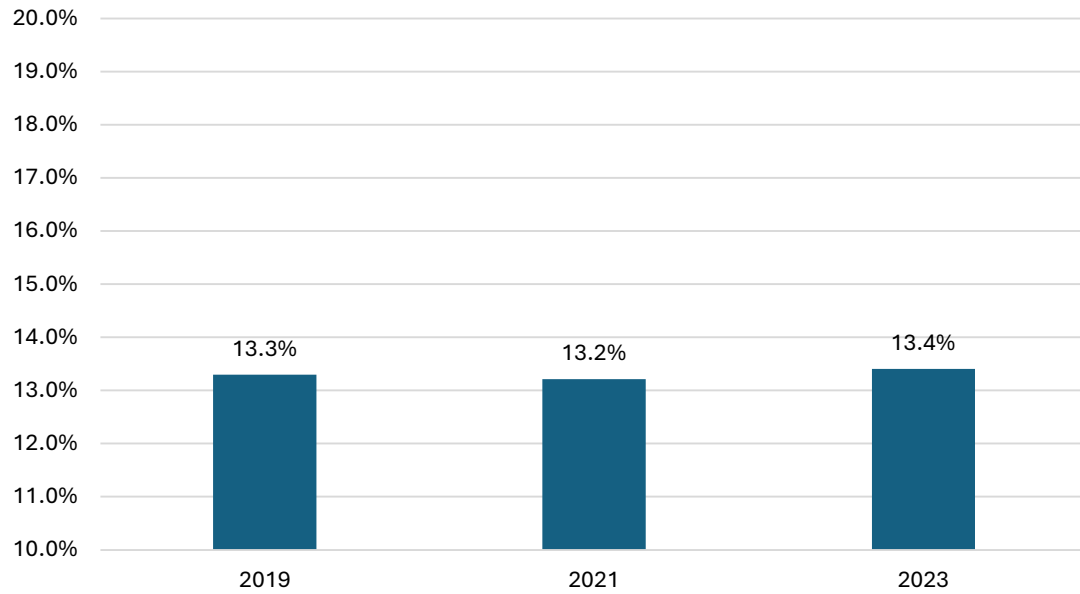
The results from the survey detail the level of uncompensated care provided by the respondents, and we applied these findings to the U.S. EMS systems to quantify the likely cost of unreimbursed care to America's EMS agencies.

Findings:

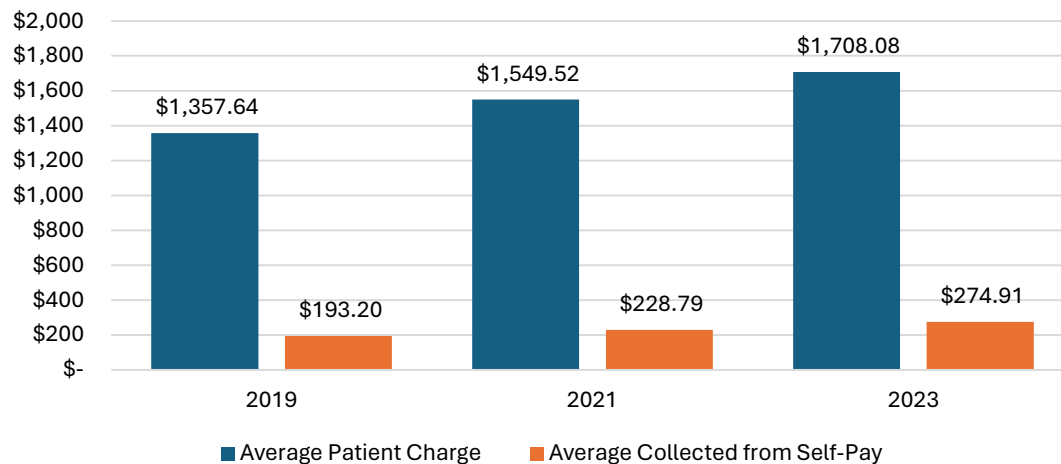
- Data from survey respondents for 2019, 2021 and 2023 reveals that **self-pay patients represent 13.3%** of the overall patients treated by the EMS agencies that responded to the survey.
 - For these patients, **the average collection across the agencies was \$232.30**, on an average patient charge of \$1,538.41, representing a **15.1% collection rate**.
- Data recently provided by the Public Consulting Group (PCG) derived from Medicaid cost reports found that in 2021, **the average provider cost for responding to a call and transporting a patient to a hospital was \$2,351.34**.
 - Therefore, for 13.3% of EMS responses, on average, the **uncompensated care cost is \$2,119.04 per patient** (\$2,351.34 - \$232.30).
- According to a [report](#) from the [National Association of State EMS Officials](#) (NASEMSO), there were 15.9 million EMS patient transports in 2018.
 - Applying the uncompensated patient percentage of 13.3%, this means that 2,114,700 of these transports are provided at a loss of \$2,119.04 per transport, **for a total cost of uncompensated care of \$4.5 billion**.



Average Self-Pay Patient Mix: All Respondents



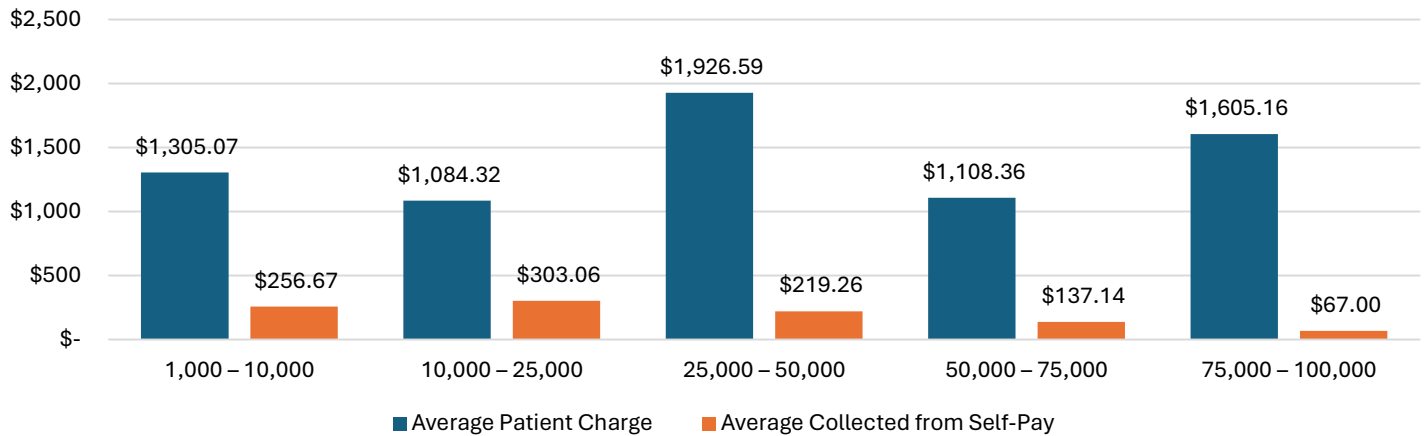
Average Fee and Self-Pay Collections: All Respondents



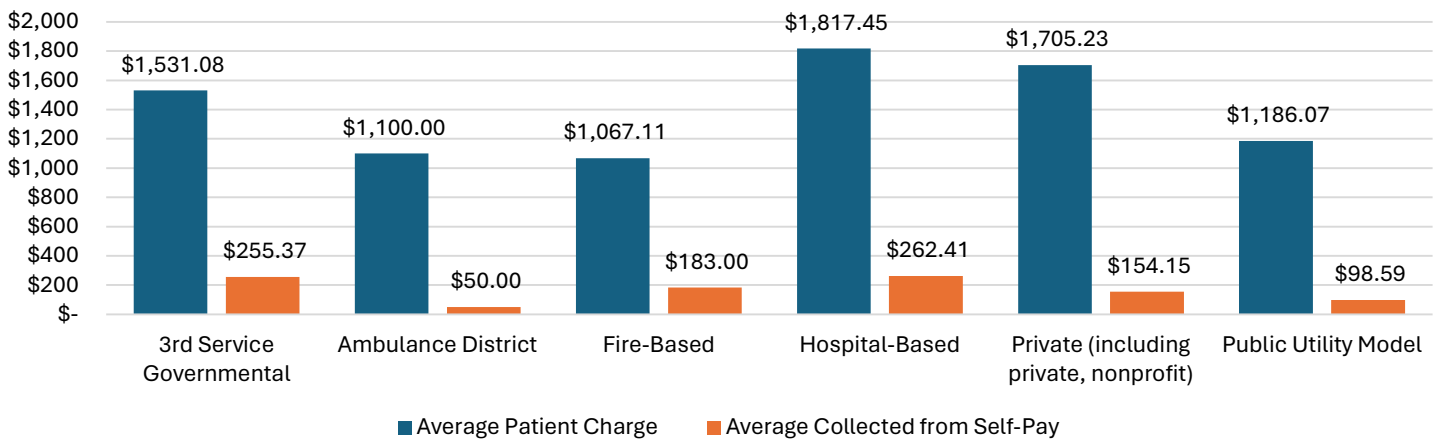
Note: Respondents reported a range of average collected amounts over the three years from self-pay patients from a low of \$17.01 (4.7% collection rate) to a high of \$1,046 (23.1% collection rate).

Overall	Overall Average		
	Average	Low	High
Average Patient Charge	\$1,538.41	\$438.33	\$4,501.27
% Self-Pay Payer Mix	13.3%	3.3%	32.7%
Average Collected from Self-Pay	\$232.30	\$17.01	\$1,046.00
% Collected from Self-Pay	15.0%	4.7%	23.1%

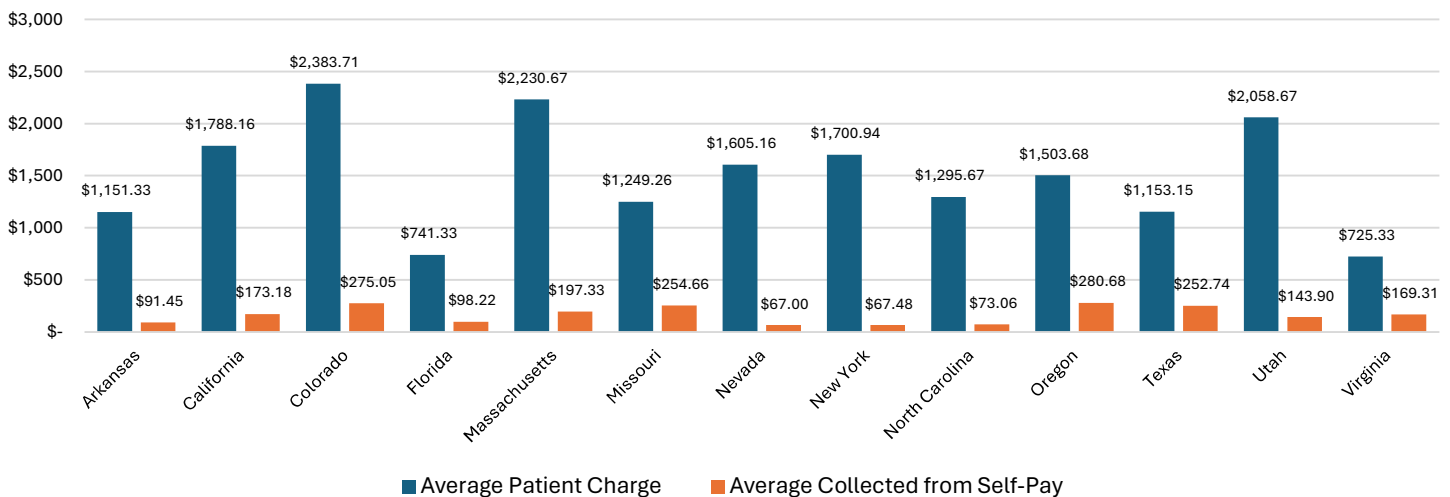
3-Year Average: by Agency Response Volume



3-Year Average: by Agency Type



3-Year Average by State





Provider Cost Per Trip Analysis

ALL PROVIDER STATISTICS			
	2019	2020	2021
Provider Count	371	363	385
Average Cost Per Trip Inclusive of Outliers	\$2,604.66	\$2,866.37	\$2,750.40
Average Cost Per Trip - Outliers Removed	\$2,132.89	\$2,361.06	\$2,351.34
FIRE & EMS Providers			
	2019	2020	2021
Provider Count	302	300	312
Average Cost Per Trip Inclusive of Outliers	\$2,945.55	\$3,223.20	\$3,106.41
Average Cost Per Trip - Outliers Removed	\$2,405.44	\$2,673.78	\$2,680.77
EMS Only Service Providers			
	2019	2020	2021
Provider Count	69	63	72
Average Cost Per Trip Inclusive of Outliers	\$1,127.47	\$1,190.35	\$1,242.06
Average Cost Per Trip - Outliers Removed	\$975.60	\$1,008.59	\$1,026.32