

Health

Overall

In regards to health, more than half of homeowners (57%) feel no change has occurred in their (the respondent's) frequency of needing to go to the doctor. Fourteen percent feel that, after moving into their Habitat home, they go to the doctor more often; 29 percent feel that they go less often.

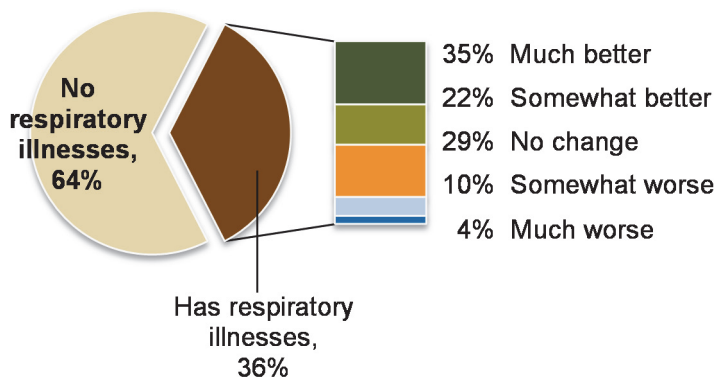
With respect to other family members, 49 percent of respondents said the frequency that other family members need to go to the doctor has not changed, 11 percent feel their family members go more often to the doctor, since moving into the Habitat home, 40 percent feel other family members go less often to the doctor.

In addition to overall health, we inquired particularly about asthma or respiratory allergies. Of our sample, 36 percent of homeowners said they have, or someone in their home has, a respiratory or lung illness such as asthma or allergies. Of those, 57 percent said their condition has gotten better since moving into their Habitat home, and 29 percent said it has stayed the same (Figure 4).

Since approximately half of the homeowners feel no change has occurred in their needs to go to the doctor and that no change has occurred in the needs for other family members to go to the doctor, no strong relationship appears between health and Habitat homeownership. However, it's worth noting that nearly 60 percent of Habitat homeowners or family members with respiratory illnesses noted improvement in those conditions, which corresponds with anecdotal accounts of houses having less mold and a healthier environment.

My health issues improved -- because before we were living in an apartment and the rooms were dusty and smelly because the ceilings were wet [leaked] and moisture made it feel damp and one of my sons had asthma that made it worse. Since being in the [Habitat] home, he is much better now.

4. Respiratory health (N=397; of those that had respiratory illnesses, N=136)



Regional

Across each of the three regions, the percentage of people who reported no change in needing to go to the doctor was relatively consistent. In regard to other household members, Twin Cities and the South had similar percentages of family members going to the doctor less often (41% and 46%, respectively) as opposed to 32 percent in the North where more people said there was no change.

More people in the South (48%) reported having respiratory illnesses than in the North (38%) or in the Twin Cities (31%). Of the people with respiratory illnesses in the Twin Cities, 21 percent said their condition worsened as opposed to 10 percent in greater Minnesota. However, across the three regions, just over half of the people with respiratory illnesses said their condition improved.

Medical-wise, my children are not on steroids. It has impacted us medically, greatly. Before when we were renting, my children would break out from the mold, and they were all on oral and topical creams. Once we moved out, within a few months, their skin cleared up and the need for medications was gone.

Length of homeownership

Analysis revealed no differences between longer- and shorter-term homeowners regarding frequency of seeing doctors.

Fewer shorter-term homeowners said they have respiratory or lung illnesses (28%) than longer-term homeowners (43%). While there are fewer respondents that have these conditions, and thus a small sample size, 74 percent of shorter-term homeowners or family members with respiratory or lung illnesses said their condition improved since moving into their Habitat home, compared to 47 percent of longer-term homeowners.

In 2009, Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota implemented the Healthy Homes program, working with Habitat for Humanity affiliates to plan, build, and track the performance of affordable, energy efficient, accessible, and healthy homes in new construction, rehab, and repair. The timing of the implementation of this program and its focus on building healthy homes aligns with the increase in improvement in respiratory conditions for shorter-term homeowners. Additional exploration could be done to investigate this relationship.

My youngest daughter was always sick when we lived in an apartment because the apartment was filthy and unsanitary to live in. Now her asthma is much better, she doesn't have to use her medication anymore.