

Coping Mechanisms Employed by Young Cancer Survivors and Their Caregivers.

Malesa Pereira¹, Denise Danos¹, Ed Trapido², Pinki Prasad³, Bilikisu Elewonibi², Stephen Phillippi¹, Lauren Maniscalco⁴, Donna Williams¹
LSU Health New Orleans - ¹Community Health Sciences and Policy, ²Epidemiology & Population Health, ³Pediatrics, ⁴Louisiana Tumor Registry

BACKGROUND

Adolescents and Young Adult (AYA) Cancer Survivors:

- Individuals diagnosed with cancer between the ages of 15-39 years (NCI, 2024)
- 85,480 AYAs diagnosed with cancer in the United States in 2025 (NCI, 2026)
- 9,380 estimated cancer deaths among AYAs the U.S. in 2025 (NCI, 2026)
- Relative 5-year survival rates are at 86.0% (NCI, 2026)

Financial Toxicity (FT):

- Refers to the economic burden of cancer treatment, encompassing both direct and indirect costs that significantly affect a cancer patient's quality of life.
- Annual productivity loss for AYA cancer survivors is \$4,564, compared to \$2,314 for non-cancer adults (Guy et al., 2014)
- 28.7% of all cancer survivors report experiencing at least one financial issue, with many facing FT (Kale et al., 2016)

Coping After Cancer Diagnosis:

- A cancer diagnosis can lead to increased psychosocial distress and decrease in quality of life. (Thom et al., 2021)
- Survivors employ coping strategies to facilitate a normal life like their peers without cancer. (Belpame et al., 2021)
 - Staying grounded in the present instead thinking about the future.
 - Avoid conversations about their cancer experience.
 - Focus and cherish positive memories.
 - Reframe cancer experience in a more hopeful experience.
 - Maintaining the sense of togetherness.

OBJECTIVE

To identify the coping strategies used by AYA cancer survivors and caregivers to address financial toxicity during long-term survivorship.

METHODS

Study Design:

- This cross-sectional survey used Louisiana Tumor Registry to identify eligible survivors.

Study Population:

- Participants were at least 18 years old and had been diagnosed with cancer between the ages of 15 to 39 during 2010 to 2020.

Measures:

- Participants completed:
 - Demographics (current age, sex, race and ethnicity, marital status/relationship status, health insurance type, employment status, educational level, and annual household income)
 - Cancer-related questions (age at diagnosis, cancer type, and types of cancer treatments)
 - Cancer Behavior Inventory - Short Form (CBI - SF)
 - Cost-Related Coping Behaviors Questions from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS)

Analysis:

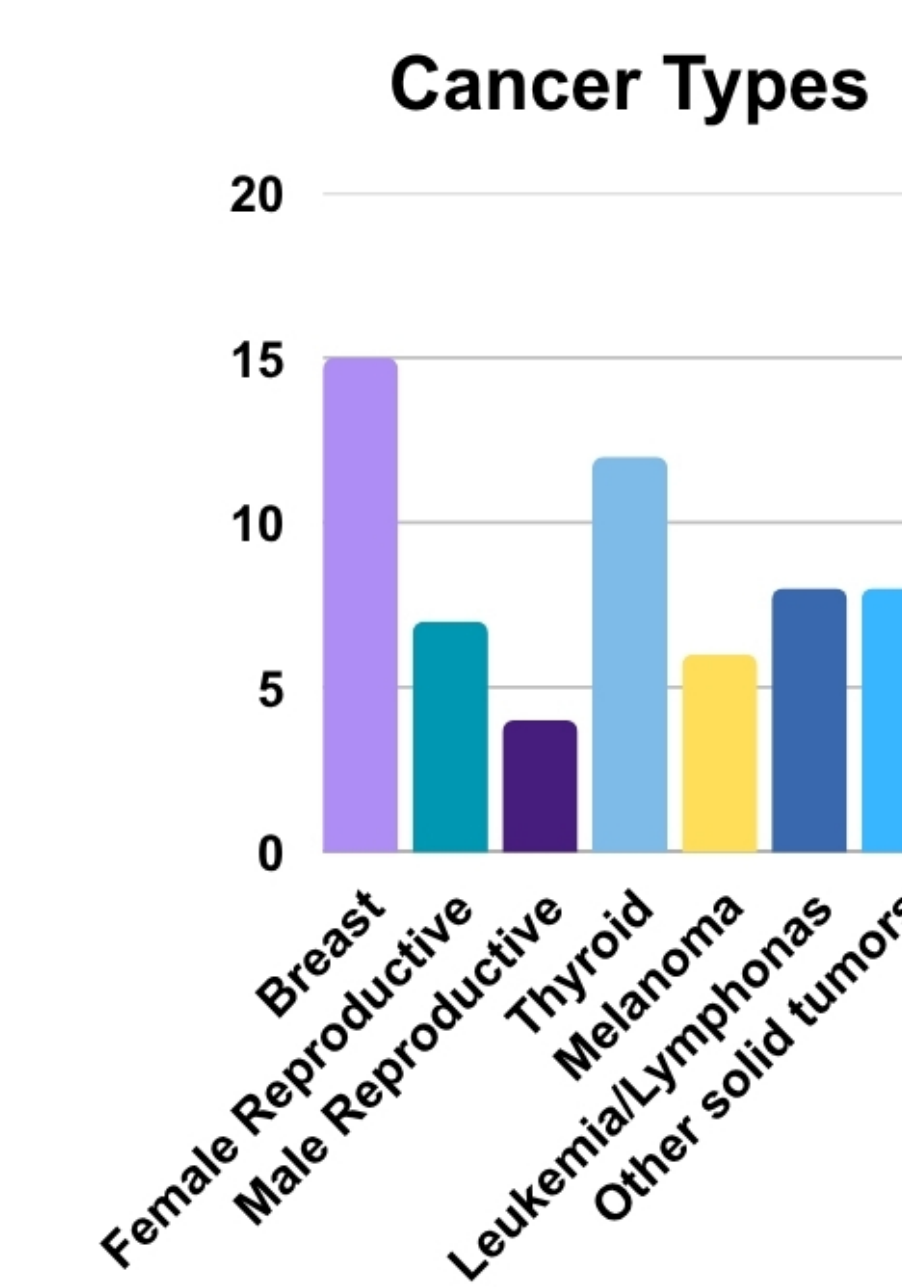
- All statistical analyses was performed using SAS version 9.4 (SAS Institute, Cary, NC) and R.
- For continuous variables, the descriptive statistics included mean, median, standard deviation (SD), and range.
- For categorical variables, descriptive statistics included frequencies and percentages.



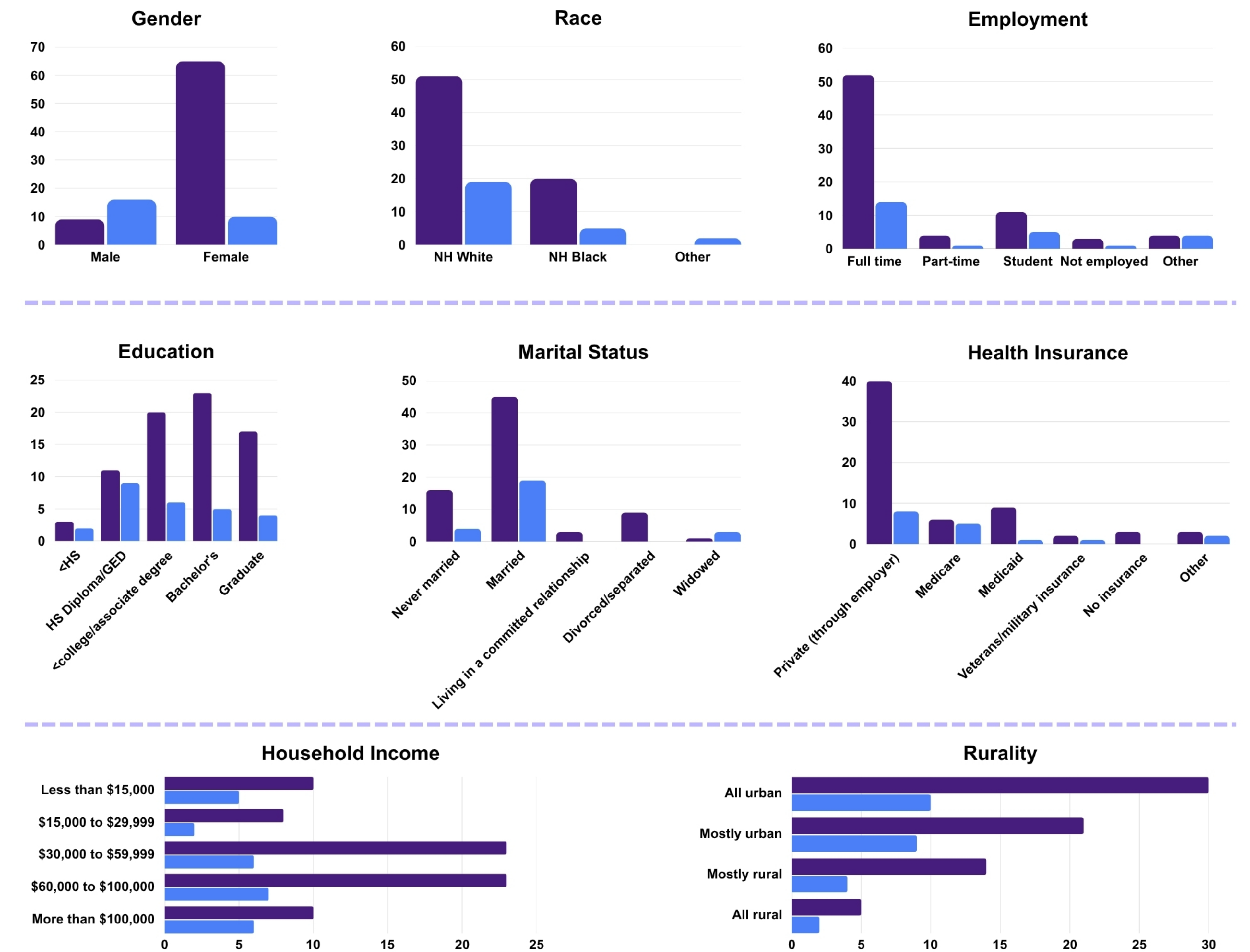
AYA Cancer Survivors (n=74)



Caregivers (n=26)



RESULTS



Cancer Behavior Inventory - Short Form	Cancer Survivor Mean (St Dev)	Caregiver Mean (St Dev)
Maintaining independence.	7.41 (1.89)	6.69 (2.19)
Sharing my worries or concerns with others.	6.96(1.68)	7.15 (2.09)
Managing nausea and vomiting (whether or not I have had these problems in the past).	7.43 (1.79)	7.27 (2.24)
Coping with physical changes.	6.80 (2.21)	7.12 (2.16)
Maintaining a positive attitude.	6.78 (2.11)	6.58 (2.64)
Maintaining a sense of humor.	5.73 (2.11)	5.85 (2.41)
Expressing feelings about cancer.	7.42 (1.85)	7.08 (2.13)
Maintaining activities (work, home, hobbies, social).	7.92 (1.88)	7.46 (1.79)
Trying to be calm throughout treatments and not letting scary thoughts upset me.	5.47 (2.75)	6.12 (2.52)
Actively participating in treatment decisions.	5.27(2.86)	6.23 (2.39)
Asking physicians questions.	6.23 (2.59)	6.04 (2.54)
Seeking social support.	5.09 (2.48)	6.15 (2.59)
Average Total	78.51 (15.55)	79.73 (16.50)

Cost-Related Coping Behaviors	Cancer Survivor Mean (St Dev)	Caregiver Mean (St Dev)
Take extended paid time off from work, unpaid time off, or make a change in your hours, duties or employment status?	52 (70.27%)	10 (38.46%)
Delay large purchases (e.g., car)	40 (54.05%)	12 (46.15%)
Reduce spending on basics (e.g., food and clothing)	44 (59.46%)	13 (50%)
Use savings set aside for other purposes (e.g., retirement, educational funds, family support)	47 (63.51%)	13 (50%)
Make a change to living situation (e.g., sold, refinanced, or moved to a smaller residence)	19 (25.68%)	5 (19.23%)
Reduce spending on vacation or leisure activities	49 (66.22%)	16 (61.54%)
Delay, forego, or have to make other changes to visit to a specialist	34 (45.95%)	8 (30.77%)
Delay, forego, or have to make other changes to Treatment (other than prescription medicine)	27 (36.49%)	5 (19.23%)
Did you ever delay, forego, or have to make other changes to follow up care	25 (33.78%)	6 (23.08%)
Did you ever delay, forego, or have to make other changes to mental health services	18 (24.32%)	2 (7.69%)
Did you ever delay, forego, or have to make other changes to prescription medicine	24 (32.43%)	4 (15.38%)
Average MEPS Count	5.12	3.62

CONCLUSIONS

In long-term survivorship, both SURVIVORS and CAREGIVERS require:



Social Support



Psychosocial Support



Bi-Directional Decision Making



Optimism

- These findings highlight several opportunities for tailored interventions.
- Louisiana survivorship should incorporate both AYA and caregiver-related resources designed to address coping needs and financial support across survivorship.

