

Access to Healthcare - Background

January 4, 2022



Top Line

1. The **quality** of US healthcare is extremely high
2. However, **access** and **affordability** are low – lower than any other large, advanced country
3. As a result, Americans are experiencing worse health outcomes than people in other large, advanced countries
4. Americans are not satisfied with the US healthcare system, and fixing it is a high priority
5. Sound policies can protect quality while improving access and affordability

America’s healthcare system is broken – costing us far too much and leaving too many without adequate care. We need our political leaders to work together to find common-sense solutions to improve access and affordability.

Backup

1. The **quality** of US healthcare is extremely high

- a. The US performs well in terms of the quality of our healthcare technology, training, and advanced resources. For example:
 - i. Of the top 25 **medical schools** in the world, 12 are in the US (1)
 - ii. Of the top 25 **biomedical science institutions** in the world, 19 are in the US. (2)
 - iii. Of the top 25 **cancer research institutions** in the world, 19 are in the US. (3)
- b. According to measurements by Newsweek and Statista, the three best **hospitals** in the world are in the US – Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, and Massachusetts General Hospital (4).
 - i. Seven of the 25 best hospitals in the world are in the US.
 - ii. No other country has more than three hospitals in the top 25

- c. The US can be proud of our world-class medical science capabilities. However, our health care **system** does not measure up.

2. In contrast to this high quality, access and affordability are low – lower than any other large, advanced country

- a. The US has by far the **most expensive** health care system among large, advanced countries.
- In 2019, the US spent \$10,948 per person on health care (5)
 - This is more than twice the average for the 16 other large, advanced countries, \$5,044.
 - The US spends 16.8% of its GDP on health care. No other large, advanced country spends more than 13%. (6)
 - Costs by country are detailed in the chart below.
 - See Appendix 1 for a description of the major health insurance programs in the U. S.
- b. At the same time, health insurance **coverage is the lowest** among large, advanced countries. (See Appendix 1 for a description of the major healthcare coverage programs in the US)
- As of 2020, 90.3% of Americans were covered by health insurance. Over 9% are uninsured.
 - As shown in Appendix 1, this means 30 million Americans do not have health insurance.
 - This is by far the highest level of uninsured among large, advanced countries. As the table below shows, no other large, advanced country insures less than 98% of their populations.
 - **Among large, advanced countries the US has by far the highest cost and the highest percent uninsured.**

Health Insurance Cost and Coverage

Country	Health Insurance Coverage	US\$ per Capita on Health Care	Rank	
			Health Insurance Coverage	US\$ per Capita on Health Care
Australia	100.0%	\$4,919	1	7
Austria	99.9%	\$5,899	15	13
Belgium	98.6%	\$5,458	16	10
Canada	100.0%	\$5,370	1	9
Czechia	100.0%	\$3,804	1	4
France	99.9%	\$5,564	13	11
Germany	100.0%	\$6,731	1	15
Israel	100.0%	\$2,903	1	1
Italy	100.0%	\$3,819	1	5
Japan	100.0%	\$4,691	1	6
Korea (Republic of)	100.0%	\$3,494	1	2
Netherlands	99.9%	\$6,299	14	14
Spain	100.0%	\$3,600	1	3
Sweden	100.0%	\$5,754	1	12
Switzerland	100.0%	\$7,138	1	16
United Kingdom	100.0%	\$5,268	1	8
United States	90.3%	\$10,948	17	17

Sources:

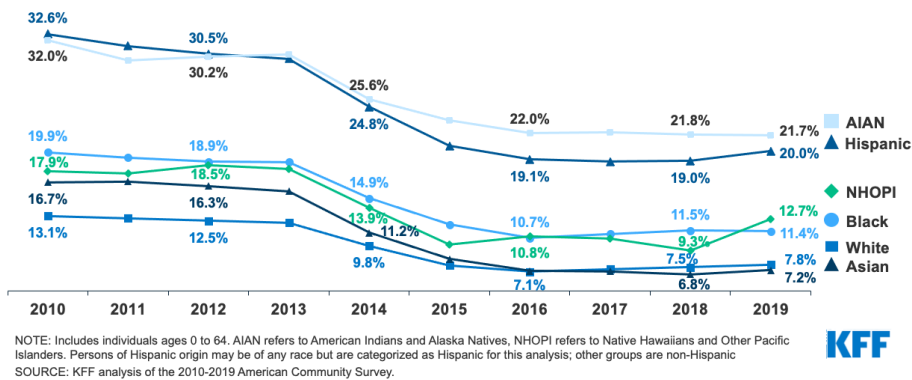
Health Insurance Coverage - OECD - Total Public and Private health insurance, % of population covered, 2019 or 2020 - https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_PROT

Health Care Spending in US Dollars - OECD - <https://data.oecd.org/healthres/health-spending.htm>

- c. There are also large **racial disparities** in coverage in the US (7)
- As of 2019, according to data reported by the Kaufmann Family Foundation (see graph below), 7.8% of white Americans aged 0 -64 did not have health insurance, compared to 11.4% of blacks and 20.0% of Hispanics.

Figure 1

Uninsured Rates for the Nonelderly Population by Race and Ethnicity, 2010-2019



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation,

<https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity/>

3. As a result of our broken healthcare system, Americans are experiencing worse health outcomes than people in other countries

- a. The US is worse on life expectancy, premature deaths, and disease burden than other advanced countries. (8)
- b. US Life expectancy in 2019 (before the effects of the COVID pandemic) was 78.9 years (9).
 - This is the lowest of any of the 17 large, advanced countries. Only one other country has a life expectancy below 80 years.
 - The average for the 16 other large, advanced countries was 82.6, 3.7 years longer than the US.
- c. Maternal mortality is much higher in the US than in other large, developed countries
 - The rate in the US in 2019 was 20 per 100,000 live births, vs. less than 10 for other developed countries. (8)
 - While the average rate for developed countries has declined since 1987, the maternal mortality rate has increased in the US – more than doubling over the past 30 years. (8)

- As with many other health outcomes, there is a large racial disparity in maternal mortality rates. The maternal mortality rate for non-Hispanic white women in 2019 was 17.9. For non-Hispanic black women, the rate was 44.0, more than twice as high. (12)

4. Americans are not satisfied with the US health care system, and fixing it is a high priority

- a. In a 2021 poll, Gallup found that **most Americans are not satisfied with “the availability of affordable healthcare”**. (10)
 - 63% said they are dissatisfied (41% “Very Dissatisfied”, 22% “Somewhat Dissatisfied”).
 - Only 34% said they are satisfied (10% “Very Satisfied”, 24% “Somewhat Satisfied”).
 - Americans are dissatisfied with the availability of affordable healthcare, by a margin of 2 to 1.
- b. In contrast, 53% said they are satisfied with the **“quality of healthcare in the nation”**, vs. 47% dissatisfied. (10)
- c. **Most Americans think healthcare in the US has major problems.** When asked “what best describes the state of healthcare in the US today”, 16% chose “Crisis” and 45% chose “Major problems”, a total of 61%. Only 3% of Americans selected “no problems”. (10)
- d. A Pew survey in 2019 found that **69% of Americans believed that “Healthcare costs” should be a top priority for the President and Congress.** This was second only to the economy. (11)
 - This concern is bi-partisan – it included 59% of Republicans and 77% of Democrats.

5. Sound policies can protect quality while improving access and affordability

Ideas and policy recommendations from both the right and the left can help to address the shortfalls in our Healthcare system. Some specific categories of ideas to consider include:

- Increasing access to care for all Americans, so that health issues are addressed early, before they become more difficult and costly to treat.
- Increasing price transparency, and the ability for government-run health systems to negotiate prices more effectively.
- Learning from health systems that are working more effectively in other countries.
- Building on the successes of earlier programs, such as the Affordable Care Act, which has increased coverage levels and helped to reduce cost increases.
- Improving preventive care to reduce more expensive problems down the road
- Leveraging lower cost support staff for some procedures, to reduce cost and improve access
- Making better use of technology to improve communication and increase efficiency.

With all these potential ideas, it will take careful analysis and learning from experience to find the best solutions to a complex and urgent problem.

More Information

1. **Health outcomes metrics:** Health System Tracker, <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/>
“The Peterson Center on Healthcare and KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation) are partnering to monitor how well the U.S. healthcare system is performing in terms of quality and cost. The Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker provides clear, up-to-date information on trends, drivers and issues that impact the performance of the system. It also illustrates how the U.S. is performing relative to other countries and how different parts of the system are performing relative to one another.”
2. **Country comparisons:** Commonwealth Fund, "U.S. Health Care from a Global Perspective", January 2020, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2020/jan/us-health-care-global-perspective-2019>. Comparison of the US and other countries on a range of health metrics.

3. **Potential Solutions:** Brookings, "Achieving an equitable national health system for America", December 9, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/achieving-an-equitable-national-health-system-for-america/>. Assessment of current US healthcare system, and recommendations for improvement

Sources

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2. Nature Index, <https://www.natureindex.com/supplements/nature-index-2019-biomedical-sciences/tables/overall>
3. Nature Index, <https://www.natureindex.com/supplements/nature-index-2020-cancer/tables/overall>
4. Newsweek/Statista, <https://www.newsweek.com/best-hospitals-2020>
5. OECD - Health Care Spending in US Dollars - <https://data.oecd.org/healthres/health-spending.htm>
6. Health Care Spending - Expenditures on health as a % of GDP 2019 - https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_STAT
7. Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity/>
8. "How does the quality of the U.S. health system compare to other countries?", Health System Tracker, Peterson Center on Healthcare and Kaiser Family Foundation, <https://www.healthsystemtracker.org/chart-collection/quality-u-s-healthcare-system-compare-countries/>
9. Life expectancy - OECD - 2019 (before COVID-19) - https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=HEALTH_STAT
10. Gallup, Healthcare related surveys, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4708/healthcare-system.aspx>
11. Pew Research, Healthcare, January 24, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/01/24/publics-2019-priorities-economy-health-care-education-and-security-all-near-top-of-list/>
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2019", <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality-2021/maternal-mortality-2021.htm>

Appendix 1

Health Care Coverage, 2019

Program	People Covered (Millions)	Percent of US Population
Private Health Insurance - Group	179	55.4%
Private Health Insurance - non -Group	42	13.1%
Medicare	58	18.1%
Medicaid/CHIP	64	19.8%
Military - TRICARE	9	2.7%
Military - VA Care	7	2.2%
Uninsured	30	9.2%

Source: Congressional Research Service, "US Healthcare Coverage and Spending", <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/IF10830.pdf>

Private Health Insurance - Private health insurance is the predominant source of health insurance coverage in the United States. The private health insurance market includes both the group market (largely made up of employer-sponsored insurance) and the non-group market (commonly referred to as the individual market, which includes plans directly purchased from an insurer both on and off health insurance exchanges).

Medicare - Medicare is a federal health insurance program that pays for covered health care services for most people aged 65 and older and for certain permanently disabled individuals under the age of 65.

Medicaid/The State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Medicaid is a joint federal-state program that finances the delivery of primary and acute medical services, as well as long-term services and supports, to a diverse low-income population, including children, pregnant women, adults, individuals with disabilities, and people aged 65 and older.

CHIP is a means-tested program that provides health coverage to targeted low-income children and pregnant women in families that have annual income above Medicaid eligibility levels but have no health insurance.

Military - Health care services for military servicemembers, veterans, and their dependents are provided by the Department of Defense, through programs such as TRICARE, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.