

Background Fact Sheet

Health Care Expenditures for Immigrants in the United States

- 1- The U.S. immigrant population was 28.4 million in 2000, or 10.4% of the population, but immigrants account for 7.9% of U.S. health care expenditures (\$39.5 billion in 1998), significantly less than their proportion of the population.
- 2- Immigrants utilize 55% less health care than U.S.-born residents (\$1,139 vs. \$2,546 per capita).
- 3- Immigrant children visit emergency rooms significantly less than non-immigrant children, but their individual ER costs are nearly three times higher (\$45 vs. \$18 per capita), suggesting that immigrant children forego needed care until experiencing an emergency.
- 4- Immigrant children utilize 74% less health care than U.S.-born children (\$270 vs. \$1,059 per capita).
- 5- Immigrant children utilize 71% less doctors' care, 90% less inpatient hospital care, and 72% less prescription medications than U.S.-born residents.
- 6- 30% of immigrants utilize no health care in the course of a year compared to 20% of U.S.-born residents.
- 7- Immigrants utilize less health care per capita regardless of insurance status including those with private insurance (\$1,711 vs. \$1,906 for U.S.-born) and those with public insurance (\$2,749 vs. \$3,447).
- 8- Immigrants are more likely to be uninsured than U.S.-born residents (24.6% vs. 10.0%) but utilize less health care than other uninsured residents (\$459 vs. \$629 per capita).
- 9- Per capita, immigrants utilize 64% less emergency department care, 49% less doctors' care, 31% less inpatient hospital care, and 69% less on prescription drugs than U.S.-born residents.
- 10- Latino immigrants utilize half as much health care as U.S.-born Latinos (49% less) and less than one third of U.S.-born whites (70% less).
- 11- It is estimated that immigrants will pay, on average, \$80,000 more in taxes than they will use in government services over their lifetimes (*The New Americans: Economic, Demographic, and Fiscal Effects of Immigration*, National Academy Press, 1997).
- 12- For the purposes of the study, immigrant was defined as being born in a foreign country. The data contains no information about citizenship or legal status.

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All figures are *annual per capita* unless otherwise noted

	U.S.-born	Immigrants
Total health care spending	\$2,546	\$1,139
Emergency department costs	\$91	\$33
Office visit costs	\$410	\$209
Inpatient hospital care costs	\$932	\$634
Prescription drug costs	\$507	\$159
Costs for whites (non-Hispanic)	\$3,117	\$1,747
Costs for Hispanics	\$1,870	\$962
Costs blacks (non-Hispanic)	\$2,524	\$1,030
Data by insurance status		
Private insurance	74.9%	58.1%
Public insurance	15.0%	17.3%
Uninsured	10.0%	24.6%
Per capita expenditures for uninsured	\$629	\$459
Data on children (per capita):		
Total health care spending	\$1,059	\$270
Average number of emergency department visits	15 visits/100 children	6 visits/100 children
Emergency department costs	\$18	\$45
Average number of office visits	278 visits/1000 children	108 visits/1000 children
Office visit costs	\$215	\$63
Inpatient hospital care costs	\$167	\$16
Prescription drug costs	\$86	\$24

Data from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's 1998 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) and the 1996-1997 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS).

Source: Sarita A. Mohanty, Steffie Woolhandler, David U. Himmelstein, Susmita Pati, Olveen Carrasquillo, and David H. Bor. "Health Care Expenditures of Immigrants in the United States: A Nationally Representative Analysis." *American Journal of Public Health* 2005; 95.