



# NEWS RELEASE

## Canada one of highest spenders among universal health care countries, but performance ranks modest-to-low

October 27, 2016  
For immediate release

**VANCOUVER**—Canada spends more on health care than almost every other comparable country with universal care, with only middling to poor performance to show for it, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Canadians spend a lot for their universal health-care system, but compared to other countries who also have universal care, our system generally has fewer resources, a mixed record on the quality of care patients receive, and remarkably long wait times,” said Bacchus Barua, senior economist for health-care studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Comparing Performance of Universal Health Care Countries, 2016*.

The study compares 28 universal health-care systems in developed countries, spotlighting several key areas including cost, use of resources, access to care and treatment, clinical performance and quality, and the health status of patients.

In 2012, the most recent year of readily comparable cost data, Canada’s health-care spending as a share of GDP (10.6 per cent) ranked third highest—after adjusting for age—behind only the Netherlands and Switzerland.

But despite the high cost, Canada ranked poorly on a number of important indicators. For example, Canada ranked 24 out of 28 countries for number of physicians (2.59 per 1,000 people), and last for the number of acute care beds (1.77 per 1,000 people).

When it comes to critical technological resources, Canada ranked 18 out of 26 for the number of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines with 9.2 MRIs per million people. Japan ranked first with 36.7 MRIs per million people.

As for wait times, Canada ranked last for the percentage of patients (29 per cent) who waited two months or more for a specialist appointment. Canada ranked second-last for the percentage of patients (18 per cent) who waited four months or longer for elective surgery. Switzerland, the Netherlands and Germany all reported significantly shorter wait times.

“Despite Canada’s high health-care spending, wait times remain a defining characteristic of Canadian health care,” Barua said.

“To improve Canada’s health-care system, policymakers should learn from other successful universal health-care countries, for the benefit of Canadians and their families,” Barua said.

(30)

**MEDIA CONTACT:**


Bacchus Barua, Senior Economist, Health Policy Studies  
Fraser Institute

*For interviews with Bacchus Barua or for more information, please contact:*

Bryn Weese, Media Relations Specialist, Fraser Institute

Tel: (604) 688-0221 Ext. 238

E-mail: [bryn.weese@fraserinstitute.org](mailto:bryn.weese@fraserinstitute.org)



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