

# NEWS RELEASE



## Of 30 countries with universal health care, Canada among highest spenders, but ranks near the bottom for number of doctors, hospital beds, MRIs and has the longest wait times

November 10, 2022

For immediate release

**VANCOUVER**—Despite spending more on health care than most other developed countries with universal coverage, Canada has some of the lowest numbers of doctors, hospital beds, and medical technologies—and the longest wait times, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“There is a clear imbalance between the high cost of Canada’s health-care system and the value Canadians receive in terms of availability of resources and timely access to care,” said Bacchus Barua, director of Health Policy Studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Comparing Performance of Universal Health Care Countries, 2022*.

The study compares 30 universal health-care systems in developed countries, spotlighting several key areas including cost, availability and use of resources, access to care, clinical performance and quality.

In 2020, the latest year of comparable data, Canada’s health-care spending as a share of the economy (13.3 per cent) ranks highest (after adjusting for population age) and eighth highest for health care spending per capita.

But despite Canada’s high level of spending, availability and access to medical resources is generally worse than in comparable countries (its performance in terms of utilization and quality is mixed).

For example, (out of 30 countries) Canada ranks 28<sup>th</sup> for the number of doctors (2.8 per 1,000 people), 23<sup>rd</sup> (out of 28 countries) for the number of somatic care beds (beds dedicated to physical care; 2.2 per 1,000 people), and 22<sup>nd</sup> (out of 29 countries) for the number of psychiatric beds available (0.38 per 1,000 people).

Canada ranks 26<sup>th</sup> (out of 29) for the number of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) machines with 10.3 MRIs per million people, and 27<sup>th</sup> (out of 30) for CT scanners with 15.0 scanners per million people.

Crucially, among the 10 comparable universal health-care countries that measure wait times, Canada ranks last with the lowest percentage (38 per cent) of patients who waited four weeks or less to see a specialist, and the lowest percentage of patients (62 per cent) who waited four months or less for elective surgery.

“While today’s study measures Canada’s relative spending and performance during 2020, the country’s relative lack of critical resources and struggle with long wait times for treatment precede the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Mackenzie Moir, policy analyst and co-author of the report.

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

(30)

### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Mackenzie Moir, Policy Analyst, Health Policy Studies  
Fraser Institute

Bacchus Barua, Director, Health Policy Studies

Fraser Institute

*To arrange an interview, please contact:  
Drue MacPherson, 604-688-0221 ext. 721, [drue.macpherson@fraserinstitute.org](mailto:drue.macpherson@fraserinstitute.org)*

Follow the Fraser Institute on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

The Fraser Institute is an independent Canadian public policy research and educational organization with offices in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal and ties to a global network of think-tanks in 87 countries. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for Canadians, their families and future generations by studying, measuring and broadly communicating the effects of government policies, entrepreneurship and choice on their well-being. To protect the Institute's independence, it does not accept grants from governments or contracts for research. Visit [www.fraserinstitute.org](http://www.fraserinstitute.org)