

Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System

Mirror, Mirror 2024 is the Commonwealth Fund's eighth report comparing the performance of health systems in selected countries. Since the first edition in 2004, our goal has remained the same: to highlight lessons from the experiences of these nations, with special attention to how they might inform health system improvement in the United States.

David Blumenthal et al., Mirror, Mirror 2024: A Portrait of the Failing U.S. Health System — Comparing Performance in 10 Nations (Commonwealth Fund, Sept. 2024)

Health Care Affordability for Older Adults: How the U.S. Compares to Other Countries

Despite having Medicare coverage, older Americans have greater difficulty affording health care than their counterparts in most of the other countries surveyed.

Munira Z. Gunja et al., Health Care Affordability for Older Adults: How the U.S. Compares to Other Countries (Commonwealth Fund, Dec. 2024)

The Cost of Not Getting Care: Income Disparities in the Affordability of Health Services Across High-Income Countries

U.S. adults are more likely to struggle with health care costs and forgo medical care than their counterparts in other high-income countries.

Munira Z. Gunja et al., The Cost of Not Getting Care: Income Disparities in the Affordability of Health Services Across High-Income Countries — Findings from the Commonwealth Fund 2023 International Health Policy Survey (Commonwealth Fund, Nov. 2023)

Health Care for Women: How the U.S. Compares Internationally

U.S. women's life expectancy and access to affordable health care trail far behind other countries in our analysis, with significant racial and ethnic disparities among Black and Hispanic women in some measures.

Munira Z. Gunja, Relebohile Masitha, and Laurie C. Zephyrin, Health Care for Women: How the U.S. Compares Internationally (Commonwealth Fund, Aug. 2024)

Mental Health Needs in the U.S. Compared to Nine Other Countries

Social drivers of health, such as food and housing insecurity, contribute to a higher rate of mental health needs among U.S. adults compared to other high-income nations.

Munira Z. Gunja, Evan D. Gumas, and Reginald D. Williams II, "Mental Health Needs in the U.S. Compared to Nine Other Countries: Findings from the Commonwealth Fund 2023 International Health Policy Survey," chartpack, Commonwealth Fund, May 2024

Finger on the Pulse: The State of Primary Care in the U.S. and Nine Other Countries

In the U.S. and many other nations, access to comprehensive primary care is hindered by underinvestment, workforce shortages, and physician burnout.

Evan D. Gumas et al., Finger on the Pulse: The State of Primary Care in the U.S. and Nine Other Countries (Commonwealth Fund, Mar. 2024)

Stressed Out and Burned Out: The Global Primary Care Crisis

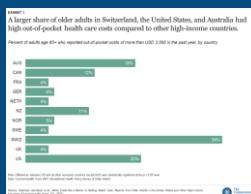
A new Commonwealth Fund survey finds that a majority of primary care doctors in the U.S. and other high-income countries say they are burned out and stressed, and many feel the pandemic has negatively impacted the quality of care they provide.

Munira Z. Gunja et al., Stressed Out and Burned Out: The Global Primary Care Crisis — Findings from the 2022 International Health Policy Survey of Primary Care Physicians (Commonwealth Fund, Nov. 2022)

Overworked and Undervalued: Unmasking Primary Care Physicians' Dissatisfaction in 10 High-Income Countries

Primary care physicians around the world say they are overworked, demoralized, and undervalued.

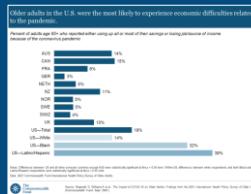
Evan D. Gumas et al., Overworked and Undervalued: Unmasking Primary Care Physicians' Dissatisfaction in 10 High-Income Countries — Findings from the 2022 International Health Policy Survey (Commonwealth Fund, Aug. 2023)



When Costs Are a Barrier to Getting Health Care

Older Americans pay more for health care and are more likely to not get care for cost-related reasons than people in other high-income countries. Affordability remains a concern and should continue to be a focus of research and policy.

G. Jacobson, A. Cicchielo, A. Shah, M. M. Doty, and R. D. Williams II, "When Costs Are a Barrier to Getting Health Care: Reports from Older Adults in the United States and Other High-Income Countries: Findings from the 2021 International Health Policy Survey of Older Adults," (Commonwealth Fund, Oct. 2021).



The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults

Older adults in the United States have faced greater economic challenges and disruptions in their care throughout the coronavirus pandemic than their peers in other high-income countries.

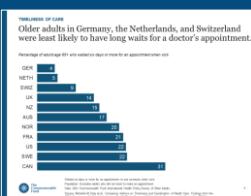
R. D. Williams II, A. Shah, M. M. Doty, K. Fields, and M. FitzGerald, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Adults: Findings from the 2021 International Health Policy Survey of Older Adults," (Commonwealth Fund, Sept. 2021).



2021 Data Comparison of Health Care Systems Across 11 Countries

The United States trails far behind other high-income countries on measures of health care affordability, administrative efficiency, equity, and outcomes. Lessons from the top-performers can inform the U.S. and other countries seeking to improve their health care systems.

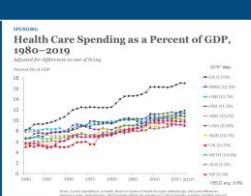
E. C. Schneider, A. Shah, M. M. Doty, R. Tikkannen, K. Fields, and R. D. Williams II, "Mirror, Mirror 2021: Reflecting Poorly: Health Care in the U.S. Compared to Other High-Income Countries," (Commonwealth Fund, Aug. 2021).



Timeliness and Coordination of Health Care

Many older adults, both in the U.S. and other countries, experience problems getting timely health care, including long waits for appointments and delays in communication.

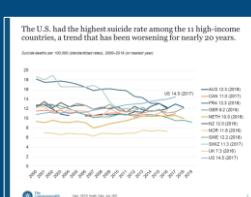
M. M. Doty, A. Shah, K. Fields, M. Fitzgerald, and R. D. Williams II, "Comparing Nations on Timeliness and Coordination of Health Care: Findings from the 2021 International Health Policy Survey of Older Adults," (Commonwealth Fund, Oct. 2021).



2020 Data Analysis

An analysis of data collected by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to compare health care systems and performance on a range of topics, across eleven industrialized countries.

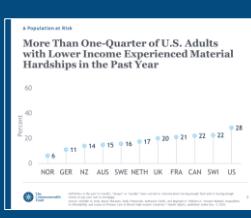
compare health care systems and performance on a range of topics, across eleven industrialized countries, and K. Fields, "Multinational Comparisons of Health Systems Data, 2020," (Commonwealth Fund, Feb. 2021).



Mental Health Care Needs

Compared with their peers in other high-income countries, American adults with mental health needs experience more difficulty accessing care because of cost-related barriers. The U.S. has some of the worst mental health outcomes among wealthy countries.

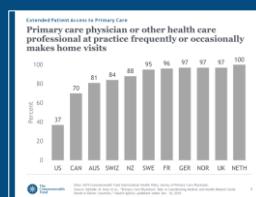
R. D. Williams II and A. Shah, "Mental Health Care Needs in the U.S. and 10 Other High-Income Countries: Findings from the 2020 Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey," (Commonwealth Fund, Oct. 2021).



2020 Survey - The Bottom Line

Income-related health disparities exist in all high-income countries but are far worse in the United States. And they may be undermining U.S. efforts to respond to the pandemic, including prospects for effective vaccination of the U.S. population.

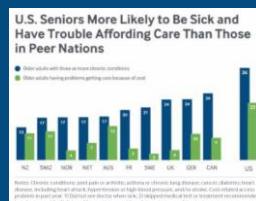
M. M. Doty, R. Tikkainen, M. FitzGerald, K. Fields, and R. D. Williams II, "Income-Related Inequalities in Affordability and Access to Primary Care in Eleven High-Income Countries: 2020 Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey," *Health Affairs*, published online Dec 9, 2020.



2019 Physician Survey - The Bottom Line

Although primary care physicians in the U.S. lead other nations in several aspects of health information technology, they struggle to coordinate care and communicate with other health care provider and with social and community-based services.

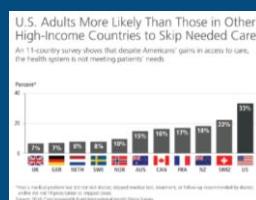
*M. M. Doty, R. Tikkainen, A. Shah, and E. C. Schneider, "International Survey: Primary Care Physicians in U.S. Struggle More to Coordinate Care and Communicate with Other Providers But Offer Patients More Health IT Tools: 2019 Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey of Primary Care Physicians," *Health Affairs*, published online Dec. 10, 2019.*



2017 Survey - The Bottom Line

Despite Medicare coverage, older adults in the United States are sicker than those in other countries and face more financial barriers to health care.

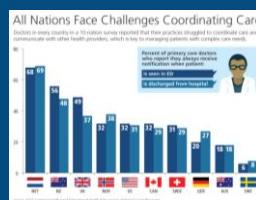
*R. Osborn, M. M. Doty, D. Moulds, D. O. Sarnak, and A. Shah, "Older Americans Were Sicker and Faced More Financial Barriers to Health Care Than Counterparts in Other Countries," *Health Affairs*, published online Nov. 15, 2017.*



2016 Survey - The Bottom Line

Despite progress since passage of the Affordable Care Act, adults in the United States remain more likely to go without needed health care because of costs compared to adults in other high-income countries.

*R. Osborn, D. Squires, M. M. Doty, D. O. Sarnak, and E. C. Schneider, "In New Survey of 11 Countries, U.S. Adults Still Struggle with Access to and Affordability of Health Care," *Health Affairs* Web First, published online Nov. 16, 2016.*



2015 Physician Survey - The Bottom Line

To ensure affordable, high-quality health care for sick and complex patients, the U.S. must strengthen its primary care infrastructure. This includes making it easier for patients to get care on nights and weekends, facilitating communication among providers, and enabling access to social services.

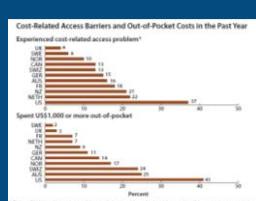
*R. Osborn, D. Moulds, E. C. Schneider et al., "Primary Care Physicians in Ten Countries Report Challenges Caring for Patients with Complex Health Needs," *Health Affairs*, Dec. 2015 34(12):2104–12.*



2014 Survey - The Bottom Line

Compared with their counterparts in 10 other industrialized countries, older adults in the U.S. are sicker and more likely to have problems paying their medical bills and getting needed health care.

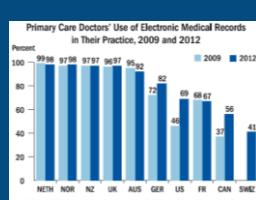
*R. Osborn, D. Moulds, D. Squires, M. M. Doty, and C. Anderson, "International Survey of Older Adults Finds Shortcomings in Access, Coordination, and Patient-Centered Care," *Health Affairs* Web First, published online Nov. 19, 2014.*



2013 Survey - The Bottom Line

Across the industrialized world, residents of the U.S. are the most likely to endorse major reforms to their health care system, perhaps signaling difficulty in affording care and dealing with insurance paperwork and complexity.

*C. Schoen, R. Osborn, D. Squires, and M. M. Doty, "Access, Affordability, and Insurance Complexity Are Often Worse in the United States Compared to 10 Other Countries," *Health Affairs* Web First, published online Nov. 14, 2013.*



2012 Physician Survey - The Bottom Line

The United States has made considerable strides in physician use of electronic medical records but performs poorly, compared with other high-income countries, on access to care. The experiences of U.S. physicians support the need for reform, including enhanced access to affordable care.

*C. Schoen, R. Osborn, D. Squires, M. M. Doty, P. Rasmussen, R. Pierson, and S. Applebaum, "A Survey of Primary Care Doctors in Ten Countries Shows Progress in Use of Health Information Technology, Less in Other Areas," *Health Affairs* Web First, published online Nov. 15, 2012.*



2011 Survey - The Bottom Line

Across 11 countries, adults with complex care needs who had a medical home reported fewer coordination failures with their care, including medical errors and test duplication, as well as better relationships with their doctors and greater satisfaction with care.

*C. Schoen, R. Osborn, D. Squires, M. M. Doty, R. Pierson, and S. Applebaum, "New 2011 Survey of Patients with Complex Care Needs in 11 Countries Finds That Care Is Often Poorly Coordinated," *Health Affairs* Web First, Nov. 9, 2011.*

Percent	AUS	CAN	FR	GER	METH	NZ	NOR	SWE	SWIZ	UK	US
Went without care because of cost*	22	15	13	25	6	14	11	10	10	5	33
\$1,000 or more in out-of-pocket costs	21	12	4	8	9	7	16	2	25	1	35
Serious problem or unable to pay bill	8	6	9	3	4	6	5	6	6	2	20
Problems with health insurance**	14	15	23	23	20	6	9	4	13	5	31

2010 Survey - The Bottom Line

Compared with the residents of 10 other industrialized countries, U.S. adults are the most likely to report health care problems related to access, cost, and insurance complexity. Comprehensive health reform could lead to improvements in many of these areas.

*C. Schoen, R. Osborn, D. Squires, M. M. Doty, R. Pierson, and S. Applebaum, "How Health Insurance Design Affects Access to Care and Costs, by Income, in Eleven Countries," *Health Affairs* Web First, Nov. 18, 2010.*



2009 Physician Survey - The Bottom Line

Despite spending more on health care than other countries, an international survey finds the United States lags behind on important measures of access, quality, and use of health information technology. There are opportunities to learn as other countries move ahead to enhance the primary care foundations of their health care systems.

*C. Schoen, R. Osborn, M. M. Doty, D. Squires, J. Peugh, and S. Applebaum, "A Survey of Primary Care Physicians in 11 Countries, 2009: Perspectives on Care, Costs, and Experiences," *Health Affairs* Web Exclusive, Nov. 5, 2009, w1171-w1183.*



The
Commonwealth
Fund

Key Findings from International
Health Policy Surveys