Interactive Map: Variations in Healthcare Costs

Facts at a Glance

- Nearly half of U.S. health care spending is funded through federal, state, and local government programs.
- The federal government spends more for health care than it does for defense, Social Security, or any other single spending area.
- Total U.S. health expenditures are projected to soar to one-quarter of the economy by 2037.

Mouseover to explore the interactive map above

The U.S. spends nearly twice as much on healthcare per person than most other major developed countries, but our health outcomes are generally no better. The amount we spend, in both absolute and relative terms, is massive: in 2012, U.S. national health expenditures totaled $2.8 trillion, which is 18 percent of GDP. The federal government paid for nearly a third of that total.

As the largest driver of our federal debt, healthcare costs should be more closely examined. For example, the U.S. doesn’t just spend more than other countries — there are also wide variations in costs within regions of the U.S. itself. We’ve gathered some of this information for you, so you can see this for yourself.
beneficiary varies significantly across the country. Costs are adjusted for age, sex, and race of the beneficiary population and are grouped by hospital referral region. A Congressional Budget Office study reported that regions with higher Medicare costs do not necessarily have better health outcomes. Many health analysts believe that this evidence suggests it is possible to achieve savings in the healthcare system without harming access or quality.

We hope this interactive chart makes it easier for engaged citizens like you to explore these important issues, and think about how we can solve a major economic and fiscal challenge like healthcare spending.

Data source: The Dartmouth Atlas Project

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