

Health Care Expenditures for Immigrants Are Lower Than for Citizens

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■ **Immigrants use less health care on average than citizens do.** In fact, the average immigrant uses *less than half* the dollar amount of health care services as the average native-born U.S. citizen.¹

■ **Immigrants are far less likely than citizens to be offered employer sponsored health coverage.** Nevertheless, immigrants are less likely to participate in Medicaid and other public health coverage programs than are U.S.-born citizens.²

■ **Despite their high rate of workforce participation, immigrants are more likely to be uninsured than are citizens.** However, immigrants are not driving the nation's uninsured problem.

- Citizens make up 78% of the nonelderly uninsured, and the majority of growth in the number of uninsured from 2000 to 2006 occurred among citizens.³
- The root causes of the nation's failing health care system are lack of insurance and

skyrocketing medical costs, not unauthorized immigration.⁴

■ **Contrary to oft-repeated claims, immigrants are significantly less likely to use the emergency room than are citizens.**

- 20% of adult citizens report an emergency room visit in 2007, compared to 13% of immigrants.⁵
- Communities with high rates of emergency room usage tend to have relatively small percentages of noncitizen residents.⁶ Metropolitan areas with high immigrant populations such as Miami and Phoenix have much lower rates of emergency room use than areas with low numbers of immigrants.
- Undocumented immigrants have especially low medical expenses compared to citizens. Only 1.3% of all public medical expenditures in the year 2000 went towards care for undocumented immigrants.⁷

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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¹ One study found that immigrants use about \$1,129 per capita in health care, compared to citizens, who use about \$2,546 per capita. Sarita A. Mohanty, "Unequal Access: Immigrants and U.S. Health Care" (Immigration Policy Center, July 2006).

² "The Role of Employer-Sponsored Health Coverage for Immigrants: A Primer" (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Unemployed, June 2006).

³ "Five Basic Facts on Immigrants and Their Health Care" (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, March 2008).

⁴ "Are Immigrants Responsible for Most of the Growth of the Uninsured?" (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, 2005).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Peter Cunningham, "What Accounts for Differences in the Use of Hospital Emergency Departments across U.S. Communities?" *Health Affairs*, July 18, 2006.

⁷ D. Goldman, J. Smith, and N. Sood, "Immigrants and the Cost of Medical Care," *Health Affairs*, 2006, 25(6):1700-11.



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