

# Public health care fared better than the private sector in the coronavirus pandemic, study finds

April 18 2023

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Credit: University of Helsinki

Publicly funded health care systems in developed countries fared better in terms of excess mortality and case fatality associated with COVID-19 than private sector health care. A study compared the performance of

health care systems in 43 developed countries during the coronavirus pandemic.

According to a study carried out at the University of Helsinki, excess mortality and case fatality associated with COVID-19 were directly linked to the financial and organizational structures of health care systems. In countries whose health care funding was more based on public financing, COVID-19 mortality was lower than in systems based on private consumption.

"The countries whose health care systems performed well already before the coronavirus pandemic also fared better in terms of reducing COVID-19 mortality," says Doctoral Researcher Iris Moolla from the University of Helsinki. The article, titled "Health system characteristics and COVID-19 performance in high-income countries," was published in *BMC Health Services Research*.

## **Canada, Australia and New Zealand fared well in addition to Western and Northern Europe**

The study compared the performance of health care systems in 43 developed countries during the coronavirus pandemic and how the characteristics of health care in these countries were linked to COVID-19 mortality before the emergence of the omicron variant. In addition to the countries of Western and Northern Europe, the countries that stood out positively were Canada, Australia and New Zealand, while the countries of Eastern Europe and South America fared the worst. Finland ranked fairly well, in the top ten.

According to the study, investment in the funding, facilities and staff of public health care systems reduces COVID-19 [mortality](#) more than investment in systems that rely on private funding.

"The anticipation of pandemics can be improved by increasing the resources of public health care and improving its functioning," says Professor Heikki Hiilamo from the University of Helsinki.

The study focused on OECD countries and non-member economies. The survey of the characteristics of health care systems was based on the researchers' previous studies, where health care systems in developed countries were classified by funding, service provision and performance.

**More information:** Iris Moolla et al, Health system characteristics and COVID-19 performance in high-income countries, *BMC Health Services Research* (2023). [DOI: 10.1186/s12913-023-09206-z](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-023-09206-z)

Provided by University of Helsinki

Citation: Public health care fared better than the private sector in the coronavirus pandemic, study finds (2023, April 18) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-04-health-fared-private-sector-coronavirus.html>

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