

Autism's costs to U.S. economy estimated to top \$265 billion for 2015

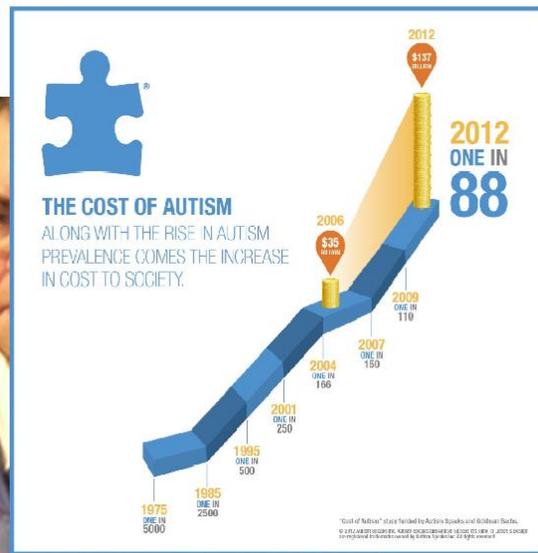
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2016 Autism Costs top 265 billion

Projected costs would rise to more than \$1 trillion by 2025 if prevalence continues to rise at rates seen over last decade

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A [new study](#) pegs autism's economic costs for 2015 at an estimated \$268 billion in the United States. The study, [funded in part by Autism Speaks](#), projects costs rising to \$461 billion in 2025 if autism's prevalence remains flat at today's rates. By contrast, if autism's prevalence continues the steep rise seen over the last decade, the projected costs will top \$1 trillion by 2025.



For perspective, the estimated 2015 costs of autism are on a par with estimates for diabetes and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and exceed those for stroke and hypertension.

“But if the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder continues to grow as it has in recent years, ASD costs will likely far exceed those of diabetes and ADHD by 2025,” says study co-author Paul Leigh, a health economist at the University of California-Davis Center for Healthcare Policy and Research.

The report appears in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

“We know we can reduce the economic burden and, more importantly, improve lives by enhancing early detection and access to early intervention and by facilitating employment opportunities for the growing adult population with autism,” comments epidemiologist Michael Rosanoff, Autism Speaks director for public health research. “Services are expensive and missed opportunities for income earning among individuals with autism and their caregivers compound the issue.”

In 2011, Autism Speaks awarded Dr. Leigh’s a research grant to develop clear and reliable methods to update autism’s economic costs to society on an annual basis. Such information is crucial when advocating for support services that reduce overall costs to society while improving daily function and quality of life.

In his work, Dr. Leigh included analysis of both direct and indirect costs.

Direct costs include special education, adult care programs, physician and therapist visits, hospitalizations, medications and paid caregivers.

Indirect costs include lost productivity – particularly in terms of wages and benefits – for both those who have autism and their family caregivers.

Information for the analysis came from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and published research estimates of per-person costs.

“Public, research and government policy attention to autism ought to be at least as great as it is for other major health conditions such as diabetes,” concludes Dr. Leigh.

Dr. Leigh’s co-author on the paper was economist Juan Du, of the Old Dominion University’s Strome College of Business, in Norfolk, Virginia.

Also see:

[Lifetime Costs of Autism Average \\$1.4 Million to \\$2.4 Million](#)

[High-Quality Early Intervention for Autism More Than Pays for Itself](#)



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