

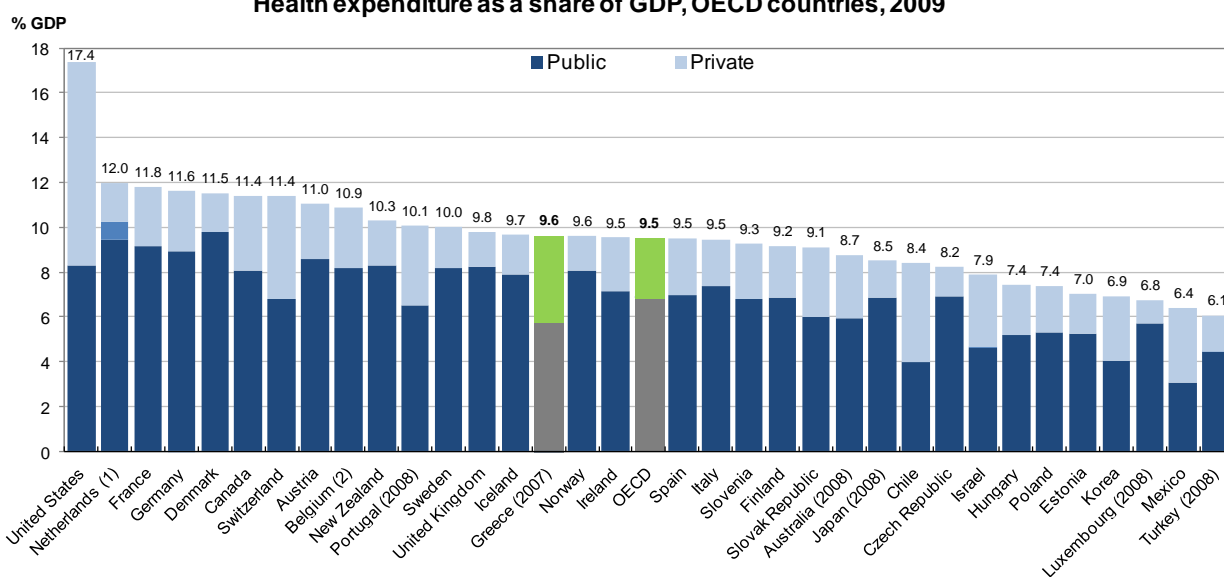
OECD Health Data 2011

How Does Greece Compare

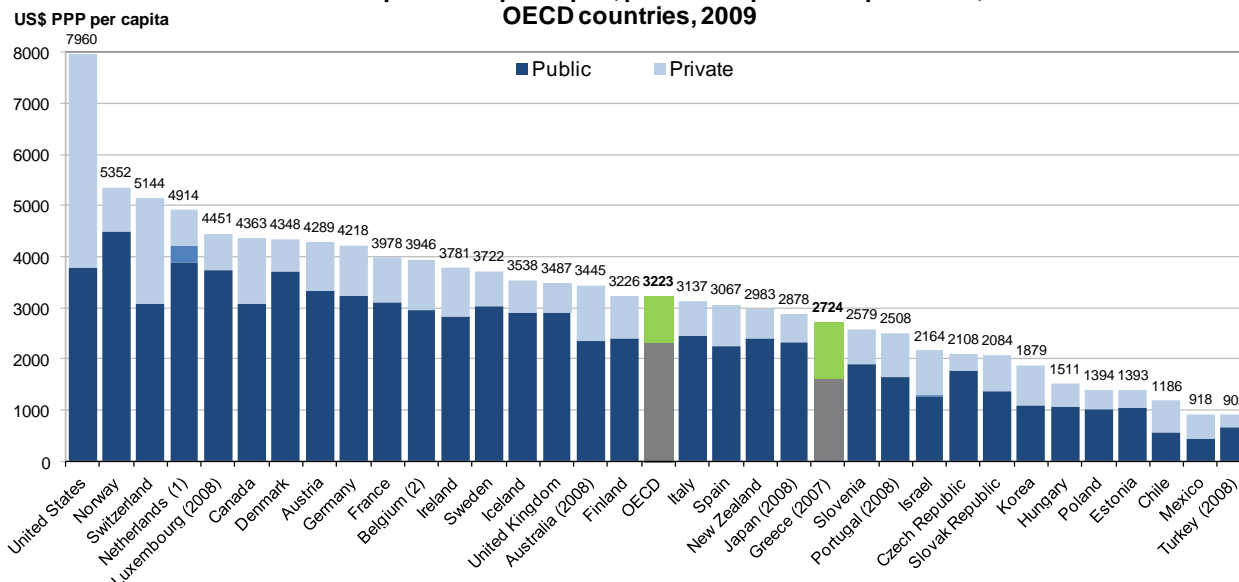
Total health spending accounted for 9.6 % of GDP in **Greece** in 2007 (latest year available), slightly more than the 2009 average of 9.5% in OECD countries. Health spending as a share of GDP is highest in the United States (which spent 17.4% of its GDP on health in 2009), followed by the Netherlands (12.0%), France (11.8%) and Germany (11.5%).

Greece ranks below the OECD average in terms of health spending per capita, with spending of 2724 USD in 2007 (adjusted for purchasing power parity), compared with an OECD average of 3223 USD in 2009.

Health expenditure as a share of GDP, OECD countries, 2009



Health expenditure per capita, public and private expenditure, OECD countries, 2009



1. In the Netherlands, it is not possible to distinguish clearly the public and private share for the part of health expenditures related to investments.
 2. Total expenditure excluding investments. Source: OECD Health Data 2011, June 2011.

Data are expressed in US dollars adjusted for purchasing power parities (PPPs), which provide a means of comparing spending between countries on a common base. PPPs are the rates of currency conversion that equalise the cost of a given 'basket' of goods and services in different countries.

Between 2000 and 2007, health spending per capita in **Greece** increased, in real terms, by 6.9 % per year on average, a growth rate much higher than the average in OECD countries (4.0%) between 2000 and 2009.

The strong rise in pharmaceutical spending has been one of the factors behind the above-average increase in total health spending in **Greece** over the past decade. Between 2000 and 2007, spending on pharmaceuticals per capita more than doubled in real terms in **Greece**. Pharmaceutical spending accounted for 25% of total health spending in **Greece** in 2009, up from 19% in 2000. By the late 2000, **Greece** has become the third highest spending country on pharmaceuticals among all OECD countries, just after the United States and Canada. A recent study about the strong rise in pharmaceutical spending in **Greece** over the past decade found that the increase was not due to higher prices (which remain relatively low by international standards), but rather to higher prescription and consumption, and a move towards more innovative and more expensive pharmaceutical drugs.¹

The public sector is the main source of health funding in all OECD countries, except Chile, Mexico and the United States. In **Greece**, 60.3% of health spending was funded by public sources in 2007, which is much lower than the OECD average of 71.7% in 2009.

Resources in the health sector (human, physical, technological)

There are more physicians per capita in **Greece** than in any other OECD country. During the past decades, the number of doctors per capita increased rapidly in **Greece** to reach 6.1 practising physicians per 1 000 population in 2009, nearly twice as much the OECD average of 3.1. On the other hand, there were only 3.3 nurses per 1 000 population in **Greece** in 2009, a much lower figure than the average of 8.4 in OECD countries. There is evidence of an over-supply of doctors and under-supply of nurses in **Greece**, resulting in an inefficient allocation of resources.

The number of acute care hospital beds in **Greece** was 4.1 per 1 000 population in 2009, above the OECD average (3.5). As in most OECD countries, the number of hospital beds per capita in **Greece** has fallen over time. This reduction has coincided with a reduction of average length of stays in hospitals and an increase in the number of surgical procedures performed on a same-day (or ambulatory) basis.

In **Greece**, the number of computed tomography (CT) scanners and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) units is much greater than in most other OECD countries. There were 33.8 CT scanners per million population in 2009, a number that is much higher than the OECD average of 22.1. And there were 21.6 MRIs per million population, nearly twice as much the OECD average of 12.0. In **Greece**, most CT and MRI scanners are installed in the growing number of private diagnostic centres, with only a minority found in public hospitals. There is no regulation around the purchase of MRI units in **Greece**, while the purchase of CT scanners requires a licence that is granted following a review based on a criterion of population density. There are also no guidelines concerning the use of CT and MRI scanners once these equipment have been purchased (OECD Health Working Papers No. 50).

Health status and risk factors

Most OECD countries have enjoyed large gains in life expectancy over the past decades, thanks to improvements in living conditions, public health interventions and progress in medical care. Life expectancy at birth in **Greece** stood at 80.3 years in 2009, almost a year higher than the OECD average (79.5). However, life expectancy in **Greece** remains lower than in a number of OECD countries (such as Japan, Switzerland, Spain, Italy and Australia), where life expectancy now exceeds 81.5 years.

¹ Lambrelli, D. and O. O'Donnell (2011), "The impotence of price controls: failed attempts to constrain pharmaceutical expenditures in Greece", *Health Policy*, Vol. 101, pp. 162-171.

The infant mortality rate in **Greece**, as in other OECD countries, has fallen greatly over the past decades. It stands at 3.1 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2009, one of the lowest rates in OECD countries.

The proportion of daily smokers among adults has shown a marked decline over the past two decades in most OECD countries, but not in **Greece**. **Greece** has the highest rate of daily smokers among adults of all OECD countries, with a rate of 39.7% in 2008, compared with an OECD average of 22.3% in 2009. Sweden, the United States, Canada and Australia provide examples of countries that have achieved remarkable success in reducing tobacco consumption, with current smoking rates among adults below 17%.

At the same time, obesity rates have increased in recent decades in all OECD countries, although there remain notable differences. In **Greece**, the obesity rate among adults - based on self-reported height and weight - was 18.1% in 2008. This is lower than for the United States (27.7% in 2009). The average for the 28 OECD countries with self-reported data was 15.1% in 2009. Obesity's growing prevalence foreshadows increases in the occurrence of health problems (such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases), and higher health care costs in the future.

More information on *OECD Health Data 2011* is available at www.oecd.org/health/healthdata.

For more information on OECD's work on **Greece**, please visit www.oecd.org/greece.