

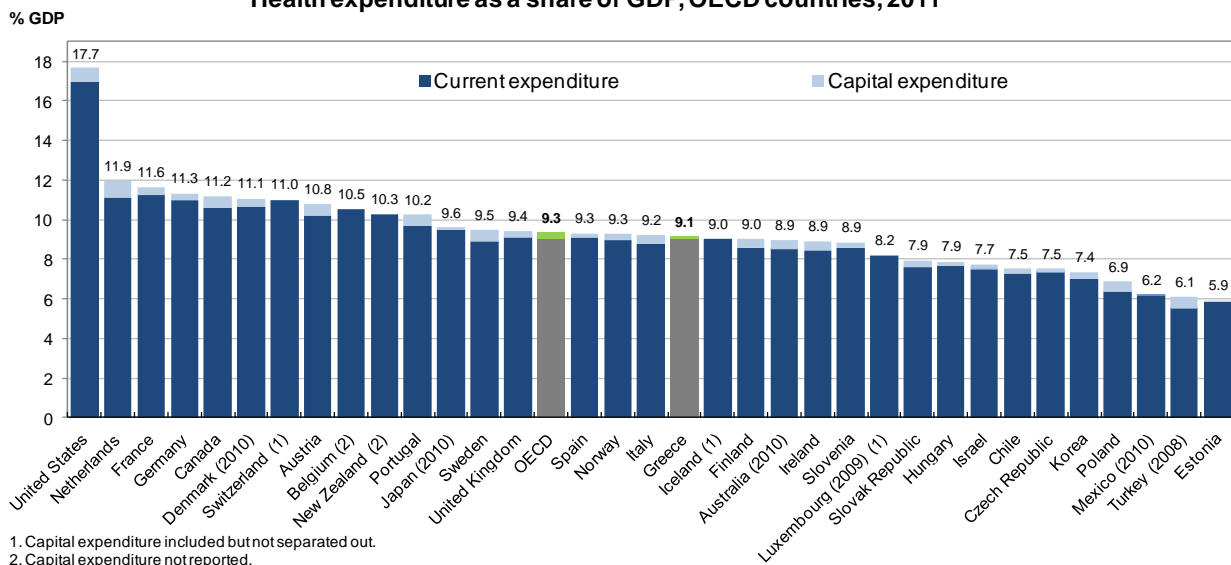
OECD Health Data 2013

How Does Greece Compare

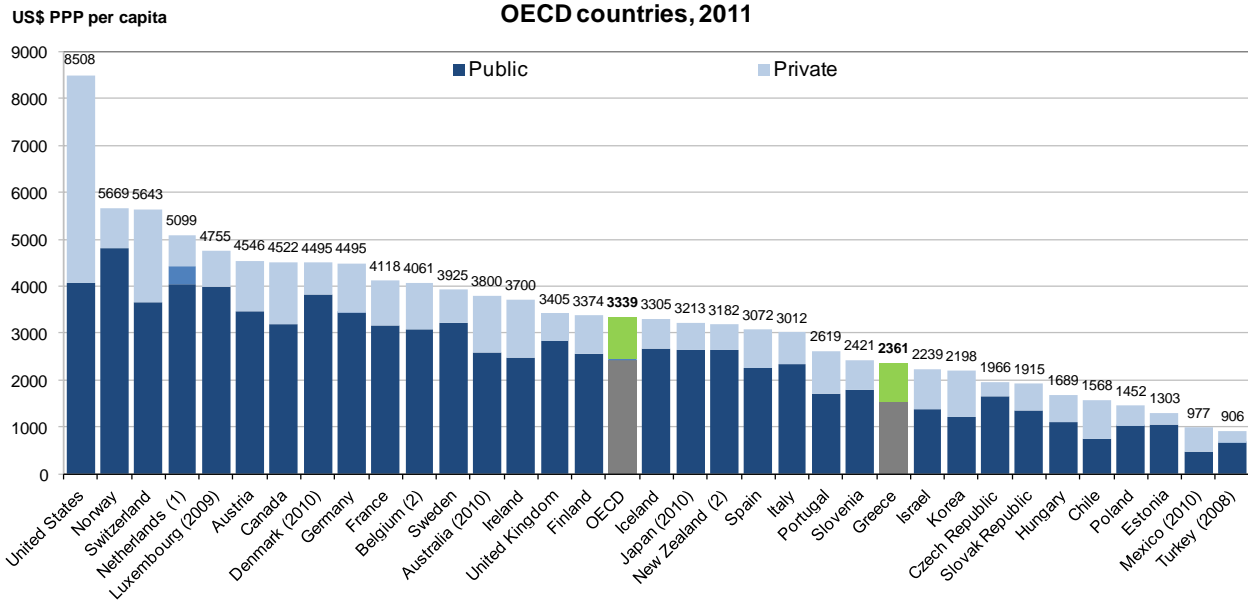
Health spending accounted for 9.1% of GDP in **Greece** in 2011, slightly less than the average of 9.3% in OECD countries, and down from 9.5% in 2010. The financial and economic crisis initially led to an increase in the health spending to GDP ratio, as the Greek economy slumped but health spending was maintained. However, subsequent cuts in public spending have seen the health share of GDP fall significantly. Health spending as a share of GDP is highest in the United States (which spent 17.7% of its GDP on health in 2011), followed by the Netherlands (11.9%), France (11.6%) and Germany (11.3%).

Greece ranks below the OECD average in terms of health spending per capita, with spending of 2361 USD in 2011 (adjusted for purchasing power parity), compared with an OECD average of 3339 USD in 2011.

Health expenditure as a share of GDP, OECD countries, 2011



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

Health spending in **Greece** increased at a rapid rate of 5.7% per year in real terms on average between 2000 and 2009, but it fell by 11% in both 2010 and 2011. These cuts were driven by a sharp reduction in public spending on health as part of government-wide efforts to reduce the large budgetary deficit. Most of the reductions in public spending have been achieved through cuts in wages and actual reductions in the number of health workers, as well as price reductions for pharmaceuticals. As in many other countries hard-hit by the recession, investment plans have also been put on hold.

The public sector is the main source of health funding in all OECD countries, except Chile, Mexico and the United States. In **Greece**, 65% of health spending was funded by public sources in 2011, which is much lower than the OECD average of 72%.

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

There remain more physicians per capita in **Greece** than in any other OECD country. The number of doctors per capita increased rapidly in **Greece** up to 2008 and stood at 6.1 physicians per 1000 population in 2010, nearly twice as much the OECD average of 3.2. On the other hand, there were only 3.3 nurses per 1000 population in **Greece** in 2009 (latest year available), a much lower figure than the average of 8.7 in OECD countries. For many years, there has been evidence of an over-supply of doctors and under-supply of nurses in **Greece**, resulting in an inefficient allocation of resources.

The number of hospital beds in **Greece** was 4.9 per 1000 population in 2009, very close to the OECD average (4.8). Contrary to most OECD countries, the number of hospital beds per capita in **Greece** has not fallen between 2000 and 2009.

In **Greece**, the numbers of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) units and CT scanners are much greater than in most other OECD countries. There were 22.6 MRIs per million population in **Greece** in 2010, nearly twice as much the OECD average of 13.3. The number of Computed Tomography (CT) scanners was also higher than the OECD average (34.3 per million population in **Greece** compared with 23.2 for the OECD average). In **Greece**, most MRI scanners are installed in 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.

Health status and risk factors

Life expectancy at birth in **Greece** stood at 80.8 years in 2011, almost a year higher than the OECD average (80.1). However, life expectancy in **Greece** remains lower than in a number of OECD countries (such as Switzerland, Japan and Italy), where life expectancy exceeded 82 years.

The proportion of smokers among adults has shown a marked decline over the past two decades in most OECD countries, but not in **Greece**. **Greece** had the highest rate of daily smokers among adults of all OECD countries, with a rate of 31.9% in 2009, compared with an OECD average of 20.9%. Sweden, the United States and Iceland provide examples of countries that have achieved remarkable success in reducing tobacco consumption, with smoking rates among adults now below 15%.

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 17.3% in 2009. This is lower than in the United States (28.5% in 2011), but higher than the average across all OECD countries with self-reported data (15.0%). 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 2013* is available at www.oecd.org/health/healthdata.

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