

08.15.2014 | METHODS

How does health spending in the U.S. compare to other countries?

Health spending data were obtained from the health expenditure and financing file in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Health Statistics database. Data were accessed on June 25, 2014.

Comparable countries for comparison were identified based on economic similarity because national health spending strongly correlates with GDP. Comparable countries met the following criteria:

- Above median total GDP among all OECD countries
- Above median GDP per capita among all OECD countries for at least 1 of the past 10 years

The comparable country averages were calculated using the simple (unweighted) average of comparable OECD countries (not including the U.S.), for which data are available.

For slides displaying data for total health expenditures per capita in PPP adjusted U.S. dollars:

- 2011 data were used for Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, and Spain because 2012 data were unavailable
- Health expenditures for Canada, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Slovenia, and Switzerland are estimated
- New Zealand health expenditure data reflect a difference in methodology

For the slide displaying total health expenditures as percent of GDP:

- Data are unavailable for the Netherlands in 1970, 1971, and 2012; Australia in 1970 and 2012; Germany in 1991; and France from 1971 through 1974, 1976 through 1979; 1981 through 1984, and 1989
- There is a break in series data in 2003 for Belgium and France and in 2005 for the Netherlands
- 2012 data for Canada and Switzerland are estimated values

For the slides displaying average annual growth rate in total health expenditures per capita in PPP adjusted U.S. dollars:

- The average annual percent change was calculated as the nth root of the total percent growth rate over a period of 4 years.
- Data are unavailable for Australia and the Netherlands in 2012; France from 1981 through 1984 and 1986 through 1989; and Germany in 1991
- There is a break in series data for Belgium in 2003; Canada in 1975; France in 2003; and the Netherlands in 2005
- Canada and Switzerland data are reported as estimated values for 2012

For the slide displaying total health expenditures as percent of GDP by public vs. private spending:

- 2012 data were unavailable for Australia and the Netherlands, so the nearest data were used for 2011 and 2002, respectively
- Canada data are estimated values

For the slide displaying total health expenditures as % of GDP for 1970-2012:

- There are breaks in series data in Belgium in 2003; Canada in 1975; France in 1995 and 2003; Sweden in 1993; Switzerland in 1995 and 2008; and the United Kingdom in 1997
- Canada data are estimated in 2012
- Data for Belgium from 1995-2002 reflect a difference in methodology
- Data unavailable for: the Netherlands 1970, 1971, and 2003-2012; Australia in 1970 and 2012; Canada in 2011; Belgium from 1970-1994; Germany 1991; Switzerland 1970-1985; and France from 1971-1974, 1976-1979; 1981-1984, and 1986-1989