

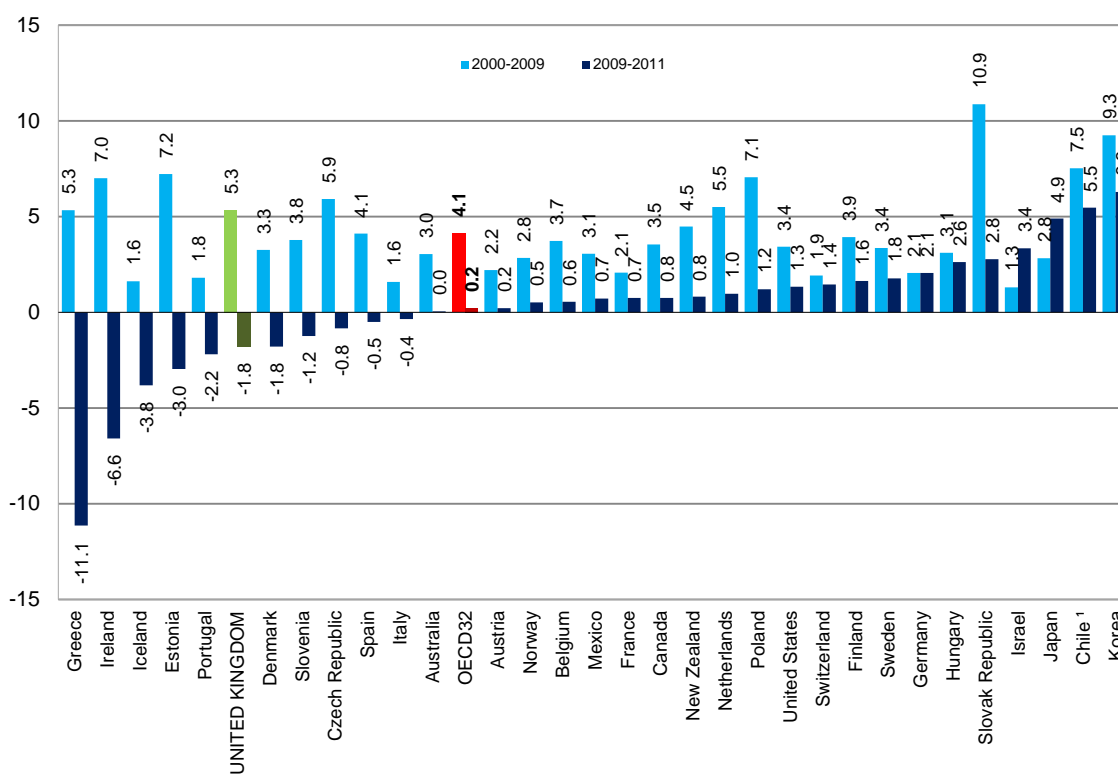


Health spending fell in real terms in the United Kingdom in 2010 and 2011, says OECD

Health spending has fallen in the United Kingdom in 2010 and 2011 for the first time since the 1970s, according to a new OECD report. *Health at a Glance 2013* says that spending in real terms per capita fell by 1.1% in 2011, following a 2.5% decline in 2010. It had increased by an average of 5.3% per year over the previous decade. Spending per capita fell in 10 other OECD countries between 2009 and 2011, following the recession and the need for fiscal consolidation.

This makes it all the more important that the UK and other countries make their healthcare systems more productive, efficient and affordable, according to the report.

Annual average growth rate in per capita health expenditure, real terms, 2000 to 2011



Source: OECD Health Statistics 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>; WHO Global Health Expenditure Database.

A public sector pay freeze in the UK has been a major factor towards the NHS's planned cost savings.

The UK has also tried to contain pharmaceutical spending by promoting the sale of generic drugs. The share of generics in the total volume of pharmaceuticals reimbursed has gone up in the UK from two-thirds of the market in 2000 to three-quarters in 2011. This is the highest share among all OECD countries (along with Germany), exceeding by a wide margin the generic market share in France, Italy, Switzerland and other continental European countries.

However, the consumption of certain types of prescribed drugs has increased significantly since 2000 in the UK, notably the consumption of antidepressants and antibiotics. As in several other countries, the rise in consumption of antidepressants preceded the financial and economic crisis in 2008, but consumption has continued to grow rapidly since then: it nearly doubled in the UK

between 2000 and 2011, and is now well above the OECD average. Greater intensity and duration of treatments are some of the factors explaining the rise in antidepressant consumption in the United Kingdom and other countries.

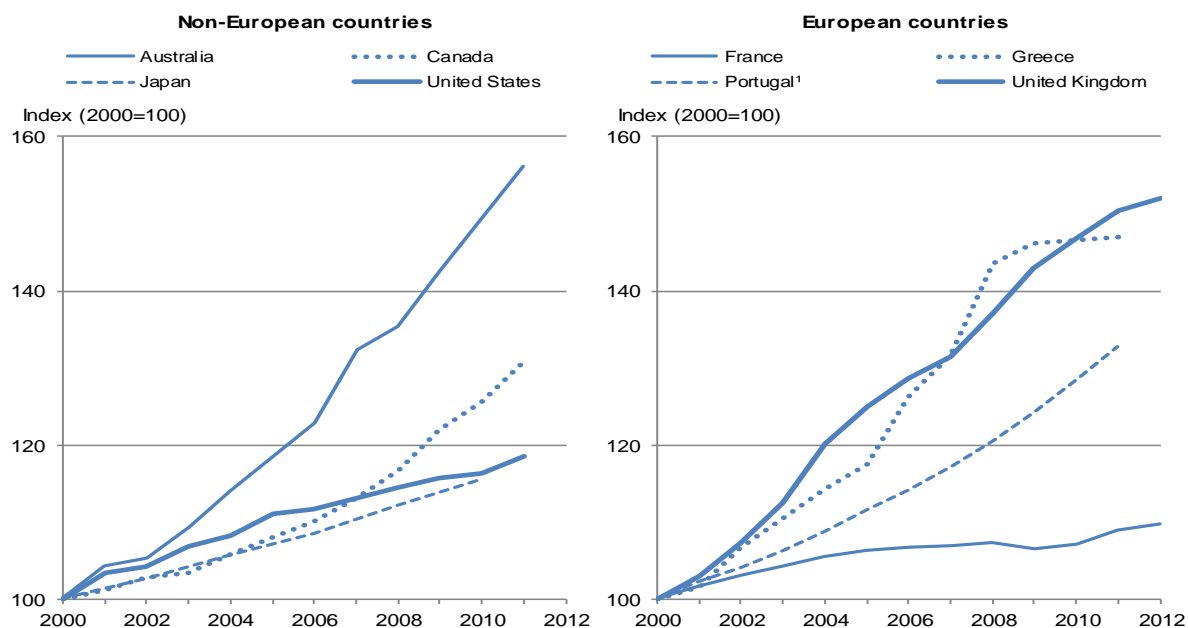
Waiting times for some elective surgery creeping up again

Increasing demands for health services put additional stresses on the health system. While waiting times in the United Kingdom (England) for increasingly common operations, such as cataract surgery and hip and knee replacements, came down significantly between 2006 and 2008, the latest figures show that they have since crept up again. While waiting times in England are higher than in the Netherlands, they are lower than in nearly all other countries for which OECD has data.

Health at a Glance 2013 also shows that the United Kingdom has experienced a substantial expansion of its medical workforce since 2000, driven by a strong rise in the number of medical graduates. This should improve access to health care, but will put pressure on future health care budgets if more graduates enter the medical workforce, or else a growing number of new graduates might have difficulties finding jobs.

The number of doctors in the UK has increased by over 50% since 2000, much more rapidly than in nearly all other OECD countries

Evolution in the number of doctors in selected OECD countries, 2000 to 2012



1. Data refer to all doctors who are licensed to practice.
Source: *OECD Health Statistics 2013*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health-data-en>.

More information on **Health at a Glance 2013** is available at www.oecd.org/health/healthataglance.

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Journalists can download the report from the OECD's protected site or contact the OECD Media Division (tel. + 33 1 45 24 97 00).