

## Hospital stay

- **Having a baby.** The average length of stay (ALOS) in the hospital for a normal delivery is 1.8 days in the United States. This compares to 2 days in Canada, 5.3 days in Germany and 5.3 days in France.
- **Heart Attack.** The ALOS for American heart attack patients is 6 days compared to 8.6 days in Canada. 8.1 days in France, 10.3 days in Italy and 15.8 days in Germany.
- **Appendicitis.** The ALOS for appendicitis patients in the United States is 3.8 days compared to 3.1 days in Sweden, 5.1 in France, 7 in Germany and 5.6 in Spain.

## Health expenditure

### Health expenditure per capita, 1998

	(\$)
United States	\$4,178
Germany	\$2,424
Canada	\$2,312
France	\$2,077
Japan	\$1,822
Italy	\$1,783
United Kingdom	\$1,461

Source: OECD Health Data 2000

## U.S. Leads in Cutting Average Hospital Stays

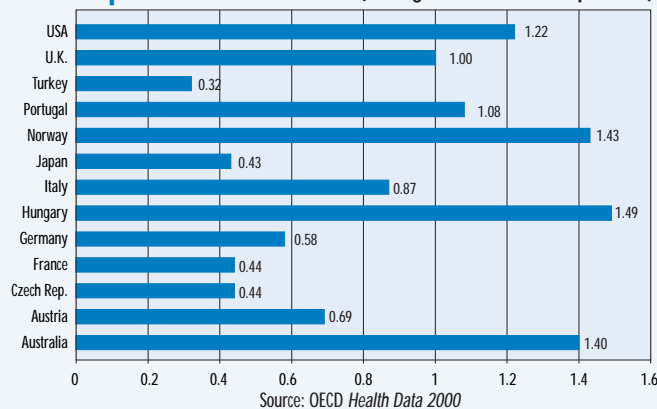
If you had your appendix removed in the United States, you would stay in the hospital less than four days, but if you underwent the same procedure in Germany you would be hospitalized for almost seven days. The length of hospital stays has been a contentious issue in the United States and Canada, as well as in other OECD countries, because of the difficulties involved in weighing patients' welfare against the rising costs of health care. The OECD has collected health data from its 29 member countries and found that the lengths of hospital stays for specific medical conditions vary widely (see side-bar).

Among the other findings of the recently released *OECD Health Data 2000* the United States remains the OECD's largest spender on health care—both on a per capita basis and as a percentage of GDP. While the OECD average annual per capita spending on health care stood at \$1,891 in 1998, the comparative figure for the U.S. was \$4,178. Switzerland was the second highest per capita spender, followed by Norway, Germany and Canada.

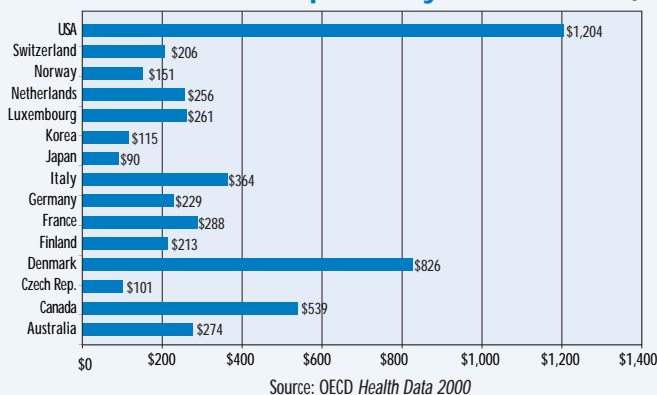
Hospital cost per bed per day serves as one useful indicator of health costs. In 1997, the cost of a bed in the United States was \$1,204 per day compared to Denmark—the second highest spender on beds per day—where a hospital bed cost \$826 a day. In that same year, however, U.S. hospitals had among the highest number of nurses per bed. Patients in the U.S. could expect to have 1.4 nurses per bed, while those in most other countries could expect less than 1.

*OECD Health Data 2000: A Comparative Analysis of 29 OECD Countries*, \$295, ISBN 92 64 06876 7

### Hospital Nurse Ratio (Average number of nurses per bed)



### The Cost of a Hospital Stay, 1997 (\$/bed/day)



### Foreign or foreign-born population, 1998

	Thousands	% of Total Pop.
Australia	3908	21.1
Austria	737	9.1
Belgium	892	8.7
Canada	4971	17.4
Denmark	256	4.8
Finland	85	1.6
France	3597	6.3
Greece	7320	8.9
Germany	111	3
Ireland	1250	2.1
Italy	1512	1.2
Japan	662	4.4
Netherlands	165	3.7
Norway	178	1.8
Portugal	720	1.5
Spain	500	5.6
Switzerland	1348	19
United Kindom	2207	3.8
United States	26300	9.8

Note: For France, the data is from 1990; for Canada and Australia from 1996

Source: OECD

## Employment Outlook 2000: The Renaissance of Self-Employment

According to the OECD's recently released *Employment Outlook 2000*, self-employment has become a significant source of job growth in many OECD countries—growing more rapidly than civilian employment as a whole. This trend is in sharp contrast with that prevailing in the 1970's and 1980's, when self-employment was on the decline.

Concerns have often been expressed about the quality of self-employment jobs, and specifically about the working conditions and earnings. Self-employed people tend to report poorer working conditions, including longer hours, less training, less use of computers and a lower sense of job security. However, according to surveys, the self-employed feel that they are in greater control of their working conditions. This feeling of control may reflect the higher levels of job satisfaction and independence experienced by the self-employed compared with those reported by wage- or salary-earning employees in similar jobs.

### Growth Rates of Self-Employment and Total Civilian Employment (percent)

	1973-1979		1979-1990		1990-1998	
	Self-Employment	Civilian Employment	Self-Employment	Civilian Employment	Self-Employment	Civilian Employment
Canada*	na	na	4.1	2	4.7	0.9
France	-0.5	0.8	-0.5	0.6	-1.2	0.4
Germany	-1.8	0	0.3	0.8	5.6	3.2
Italy	-1.7	1	2.6	1.1	0	-0.3
Japan	1	1.2	-0.2	1.8	-1.4	0.7
UK	-1.3	0.3	6.6	0.5	-0.9	0.1
US	3.6	2.7	2.3	1.8	0.4	1.3

\* 1990-1997 instead of 1990-1998

Source: OECD *Employment Outlook 2000*.

OECD *Employment Outlook, June 2000*, \$48, ISBN 92 64 17653 5

## Immigration Influx

Over the last four decades, the European Union has witnessed a net inflow of immigrants. The average annual flow of immigrants more than doubled during the 1990s compared with the previous decade—reaching an average of approximately 800,000 people per year. This rate is similar to that experienced by the United States. When population size is taken into account, however, the European Union receives about 5 immigrants per thousand inhabitants—almost double the rate received by the U.S. While much attention has been paid, both in the U.S. and elsewhere, to the potential adverse effects on immigration on the labor market, it may in fact confer a number of economic benefits to the host country. Recently, a lot of emphasis has been placed on immigration's potential to ease the economic and fiscal pressures of declining and/or ageing populations.

Extracted from a speech by Ignazio Visco, OECD Chief Economist. To obtain a pdf file of the entire speech, email [sandra.wilson@oecd.org](mailto:sandra.wilson@oecd.org) and request "Immigration, Development and the Labour Market".

## Economic Survey: France 2000

After performing poorly between the years 1990-96, France's economy is currently enjoying its most favorable conditions in ten years. The strong recovery of world trade led to increased job creation, a revival of household confidence, rising disposable incomes and lowered inflation.

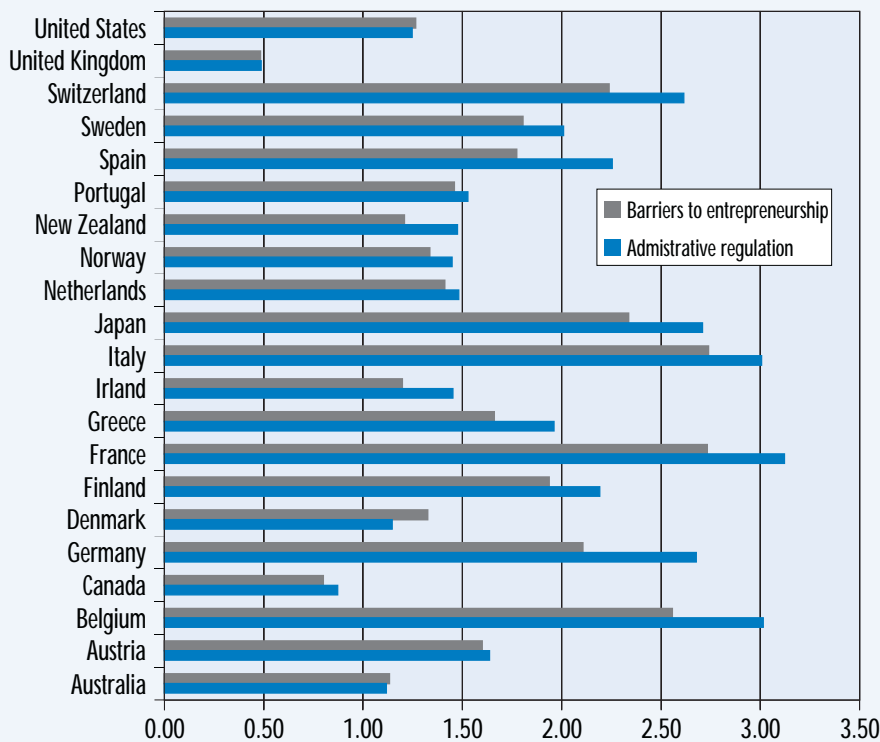
The French authorities have sought to "boost" job growth through the reduction of work hours (while maintaining salaries). Two laws mandating shorter hours were adopted by Parliament and a new system put into effect on February 1st 2000. As a result of the two measures, work hours have been reduced on average by 10 per cent, bringing the French workweek to between 33 and 35 hours. By the end of March 2000, nearly 28,000 firms had signed agreements to reduce work hours for over 3 million employees. While a shorter workweek has made possible the creation of "new" jobs, it poses a number of potential problems. There is a real risk, for instance, that businesses with fewer than 20 employees will have little scope for hiring or reorganizing their work—a phenomenon which could lead to lower output and/or higher costs.

Although job creation has played a large part in France's recent growth, business creation itself has played only a minor role. Its minimal impact may be attributable to the overall environment surrounding small firms. This environment is one characterized by a large number of regulations—mainly in the form of complex administrative procedures during the start-up phase. In an attempt to improve the burdensome business climate, the French government implemented the 1999 Finance Act outlining 37 simplification measures for SME's. Nevertheless, the number of new businesses created in 1999 was still less than that of the mid-1990's.

OECD Economic Surveys: France 2000, \$30, ISBN 92 64 17514 8

### Regulatory Indicators

(The scale of indicators is 0-6, from the least to the most restrictive)



Source: OECD Economic Surveys: France 2000

### Road Trip

In this Summer holiday season, many of the United States' passenger cars and station wagons have joined truck and buses on the country's highways. Americans not only own more cars than other people in the world; they drive more—about 5,700 miles per person per year.

Miles driven per capita,  
1998  
(passenger cars and  
station wagons)

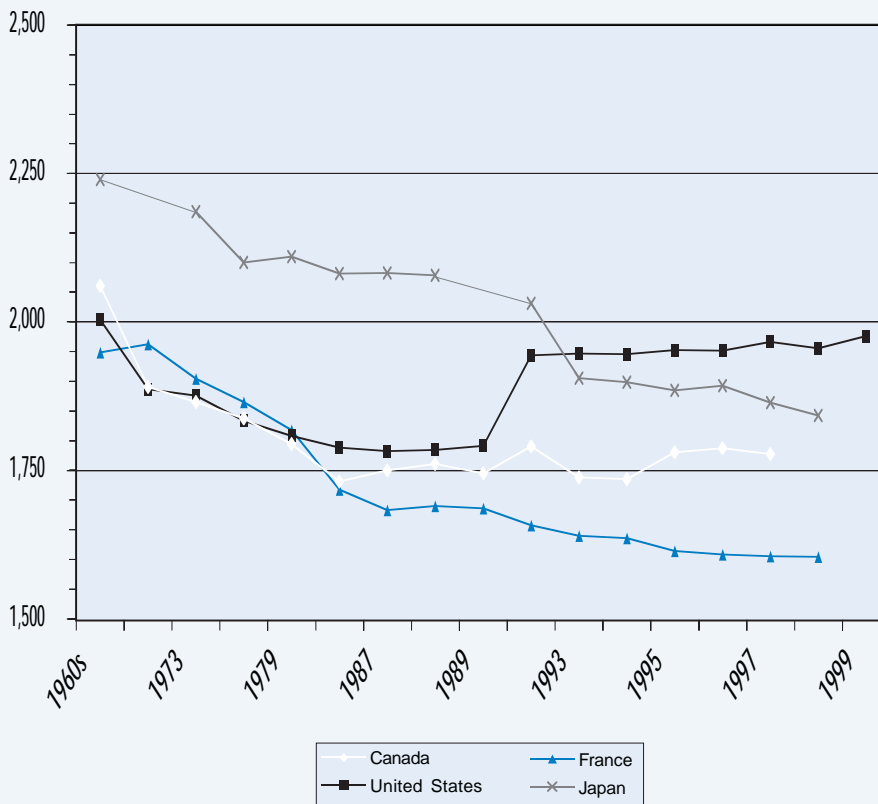
Australia *	4282
Austria	3997
Belgium	4089
Canada*	3685
Denmark	4114
Finland	4587
Germany	3989
Great Britain	4050
Japan	2365
Netherlands	3691
Norway	3689
Mexico*	292
Sweden	3995
Switzerland	3991
USA	5730

\* 1997

Source: OECD Transport Statistics.

## Hours worked

(average hours worked per person in employment per year)



Note: There is a break in the series for the U.S. in 1990.

Source: OECD Employment Outlook 2000



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