

4. HEALTH CARE ACTIVITIES

4.3. Hospital beds

The number of hospital beds provides a measure of the resources available for delivering services to inpatients in hospitals. This section presents data on the total number of hospital beds, including those allocated for curative (acute), psychiatric, long-term and other types of care. It also includes an indicator of bed occupancy rates focussing on curative care beds.

Among OECD countries, the number of hospital beds per capita is highest in Japan and Korea, with over eight beds per 1 000 population in 2009 (Figure 4.3.1). Both Japan and Korea have “social admissions”, that is, a significant part of hospital beds are devoted to long-term care. The number of hospital beds is also well above the OECD average in the Russian Federation, Germany and Austria. On the other hand, large emerging countries in Asia (India, Indonesia and China) have relatively few hospital beds compared with the OECD average. This is also the case for OECD and emerging countries in Central and South America (Mexico, Brazil and Chile).

The number of hospital beds per capita has decreased at least slightly over the past decade in most OECD countries, falling from 5.4 per 1 000 population in 2000 to 4.9 in 2009. This reduction has been driven partly by progress in medical technology which has enabled a move to day surgery and a reduced need for hospitalisation. The reduction in hospital beds has been accompanied in many countries by a reduction in hospital discharges and the average length of stay (see Indicators 4.4 “Hospital discharges” and 4.5 “Average length of stay in hospitals”). Only in Korea, Greece and Turkey has the number of hospital beds per capita grown between 2000 and 2009.

Two-thirds of hospital beds are allocated for curative care on average across OECD countries. The rest of the beds are allocated for psychiatric (14%), long-term (12%) and other types of care (8%). In some countries, the share of beds allocated for psychiatric care and long-term care is much greater than the average. In Finland, a greater number of hospital beds is in fact allocated for long-term care than for curative care, because local governments (municipalities) use some beds in health care centres (which are defined as hospitals) for at least some of the institution-based long-term care (OECD, 2005a). In Ireland, just over half of hospital beds are allocated for acute care, while 30% are devoted to long-term care (Figure 4.3.2).

In several countries, the reduction in the number of hospital beds has been accompanied by an increase in their occupancy rates. The occupancy rate of curative (acute) care beds stood at 76% on average across OECD countries in 2009, slightly above the 2000 level (Figure 4.3.3). Israel, Canada, Norway, Ireland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom had the highest occupancy rates in 2009. All of these countries have fewer curative care beds than most other OECD countries. On the other hand, the Netherlands, Turkey and Mexico have the lowest occupancy rates,

although the occupancy rate has increased over the past decade in Turkey and Mexico. In the Netherlands, the low occupancy rates can be explained at least partly by the fact that hospital beds include all administratively approved beds and not only those available for immediate use.

Definition and comparability

Hospital beds are defined as all beds that are regularly maintained and staffed and are immediately available for use. They include beds in general hospitals, mental health and substance abuse hospitals, and other specialty hospitals. Beds in nursing and residential care facilities are excluded.

Curative care beds are beds accommodating patients where the principal intent is to do one or more of the following: manage labour (obstetric), cure non-mental illness or provide definitive treatment of injury, perform surgery, relieve symptoms of non-mental illness or injury (excluding palliative care), reduce severity of non-mental illness or injury, protect against exacerbation and/or complication of non-mental illness and/or injury which could threaten life or normal functions, perform diagnostic or therapeutic procedures.

Psychiatric care beds are beds accommodating patients with mental health problems. They include beds in psychiatric departments of general hospitals, and all beds in mental health and substance abuse hospitals.

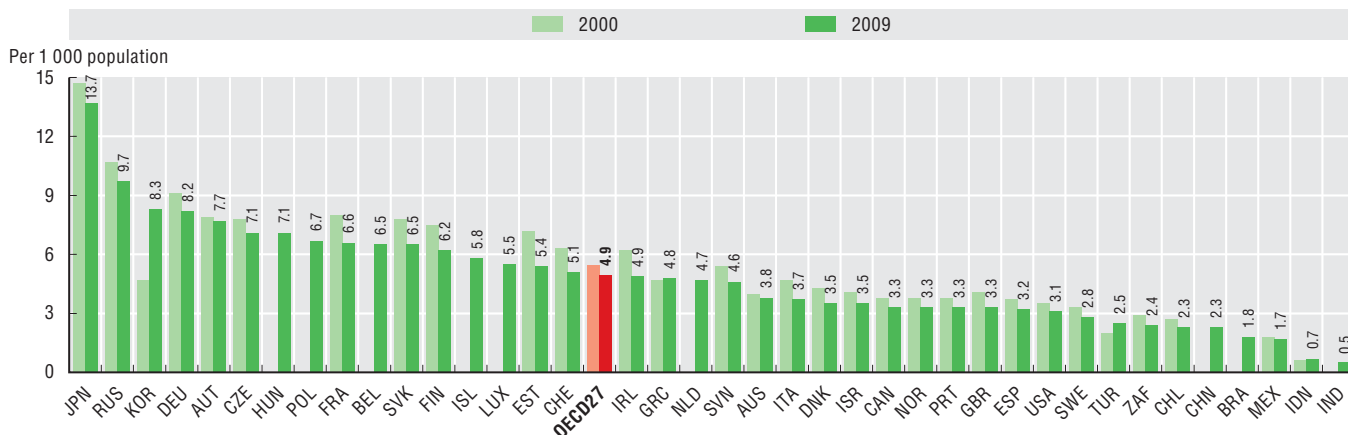
Long-term care beds are hospital beds accommodating patients requiring long-term care due to chronic impairments and a reduced degree of independence in activities of daily living. They include beds in long-term care departments of general hospitals, beds for long-term care in specialty hospitals, and beds for palliative care.

The occupancy rate for curative (acute) care beds is calculated as the number of hospital bed-days related to curative care divided by the number of available curative care beds (multiplied by 365).

In the Netherlands, hospital beds include all beds that are administratively approved rather than only those immediately available for use, resulting in an over-estimation (the difference between all administratively approved beds and beds available for immediate use was about 10% in 2007). This also results in an under-estimation of bed occupancy rates.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

4.3.1 Hospital beds per 1 000 population, 2000 and 2009 (or nearest year)

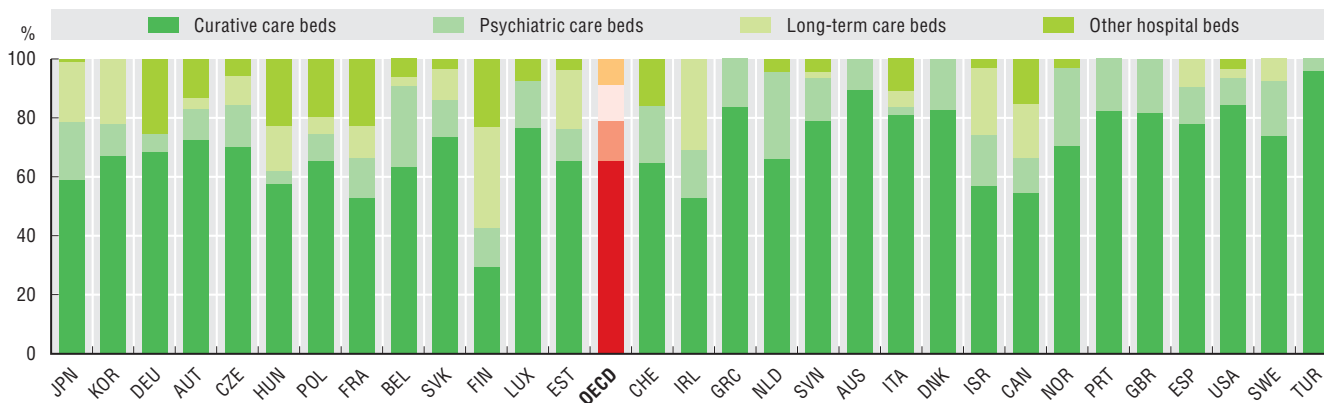


Source: OECD Health Data 2011; national sources for non-OECD countries.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932524545>

4.3.2 Hospital beds by function of health care, 2009 (or nearest year)

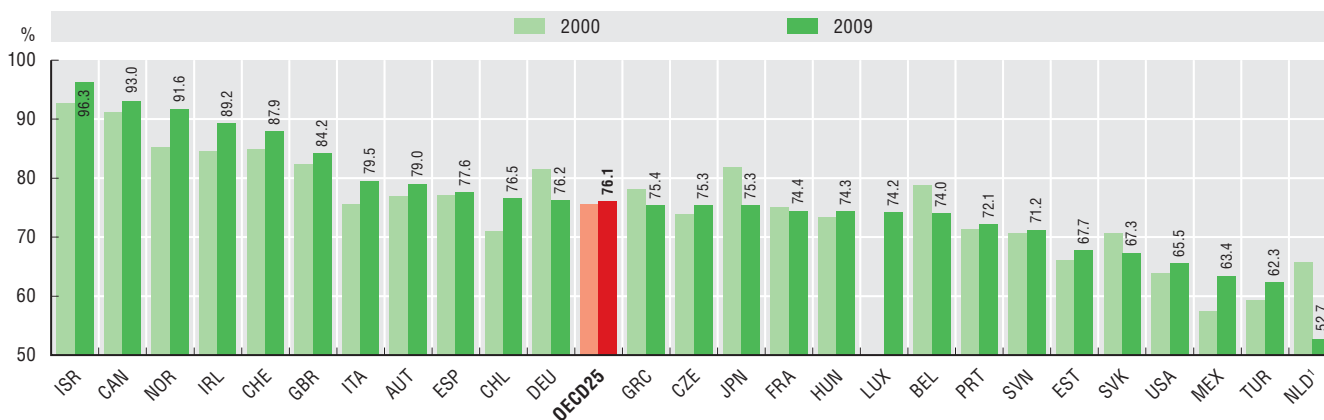
Countries ranked from highest to lowest number of total hospital beds per capita



Source: OECD Health Data 2011.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932524564>

4.3.3 Occupancy rate of curative (acute) care beds, 2000 and 2009 (or nearest year)



1. In the Netherlands, hospital beds include all beds that are administratively approved rather than those immediately available for use.

Source: OECD Health Data 2011.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932524583>



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