

# International Longevity Centre - UK

## Health and Austerity In Europe

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The International Longevity Centre - UK is a think tank focussed on some of the biggest challenges relating to demographic change and an ageing society.

### Objectives

I spent 6 weeks working at the ILC-UK, primarily working on a project which looked at the impact of austerity on public health across Europe. The project was funded by Pfizer, a research-based pharmaceutical company. The aims of the project were to look at how austerity was delivered across different European countries (looking particularly at health spending) and to map health outcomes during the austerity years. The final report will draw on the research to outline the implications and recommendations for public policy.

### Method

In the first couple of weeks I used Excel and Eurostat/OECD websites to collect data on health indicators across Europe and austerity measures over a 20 year time period. With some of this data I was able to make an index, which ranked the health of European countries based on life expectancy, healthy life expectancy and subjective health.

I used STATA to fill in any missing values in the data. I used a dummy variable to run regressions, with different measures of austerity (e.g. high health austerity, cuts to budget deficit, high unemployment) and setting high austerity countries as a value of 1 and low austerity countries as 0. The regressions tested to see if austerity had an impact on different health indicators, including suicides and cancer related deaths. I also researched and compiled an extensive table of country-by-country specific austerity policies. This will form part of the appendix in the final report.

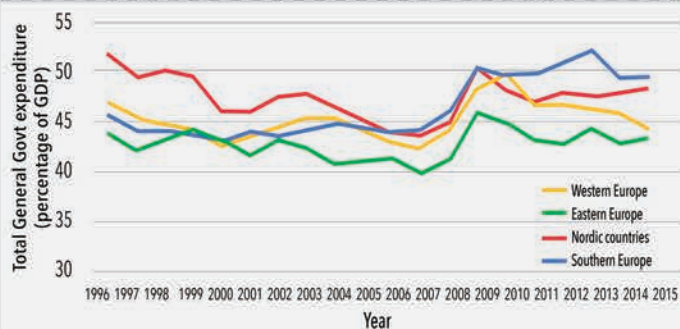


Figure 1: Total general government expenditure across Europe as proportion of GDP

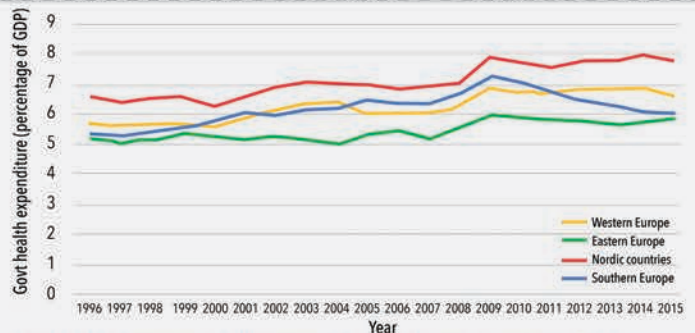


Figure 2: Total government health expenditure across Europe as proportion of GDP

### Software used

- Data collected from a range of sources, primarily Eurostat and the OECD
- Excel used to manage and organise data into panel set and make graphs to present trends
- STATA used to run regressions
- Powerpoint and Word used to present findings

### Key Findings

There were varied results regarding austerity and health outcomes in Europe. Mortality rates continued to improve during the austerity years, but the rate of improvement in mortality slowed. Health budgets were cut in many countries - typically cuts to prevention in real terms. There were significant improvements during austerity years in infant mortality, heart disease and cancer. There were very small increases in mortality from HIV and flu, albeit from a very low base. Across Europe, self-perceived health fell amongst the youngest age group. In the UK,

self-perceived health fell amongst all age groups, especially the oldest age group. A 1% rise in unemployment was associated with a rise of just over 2% in suicides.

### Impact

- Report has already been discussed in a conference in San Francisco and will be officially launched and presented in Brussels, as well as in London at the ILC's Future of Ageing Conference.
- I published a data-driven blog on the virtues of intergenerational living ('Social Crises: Housing, Isolation and an Ageing Population'), which included graphs based on calculations I made with ONS data. The blog was published on the ILC's website and social media
- I also started the background work for the ILC's annual FactPack, 'When I'm 64'. I wrote an analysis of the data I collected (primarily from ONS) and produced graphs and pie charts on healthy ageing, consumption, tenure and navigating the digital world.
- Developed quantitative and qualitative skills, as well as interpersonal skills, attending the ILC's annual summer party.