

Reader's Guide

Main features

Each indicator is preceded by a short text that opens with an explanation in general terms of what is measured and why. This is followed by a more detailed description of the underlying concept (Definition) consistent with the 1993 *System of National Accounts (SNA)*. The final paragraph (Comparability) highlights those areas where some caution may be needed when comparing performance across countries or over time. Some issues relating to comparability, or the care that should be taken when making comparisons, cut across a number of subject areas. Rather than refer to these each time they arise these generic cases are described below.

1993 SNA – Standard definitions

Data included in this publication are compiled according to the 1993 SNA “System of National Accounts, 1993”; jointly prepared by the Commission of the European Communities, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the United Nations and the World Bank.

2008 SNA – Changes from the 1993 SNA

The 2008 SNA has been finalised but it will be a number of years before most OECD countries are in a position to provide statistics on the basis of the new system. Key changes from the 1993 SNA are presented in the annex.

Questionnaires and source data

Unless otherwise specified all data have been provided by countries via standardised OECD questionnaires.

Statistical conventions

- All growth rates refer to constant prices (or real) data.
- Ratios, percentages and shares are derived from current prices data.
- Contribution of Y to the growth of X (Y being a component of X) is defined as the growth rate of Y (chained or fixed constant prices) weighted by the share of Y in X at current prices (period t-1).

Signs and abbreviations

- .. Missing values, not applicable or not available.
- e OECD estimates.

Countries and zones

Data are available for most indicators for all OECD countries. Where data are not available or have not been provided to the OECD, estimates are often produced.

OECD total

OECD total refers to all OECD countries except Chile, Israel and Slovenia, unless otherwise specified.

Euro area

Data for the zone “euro area” are taken from Eurostat databases.

Data in euros

Data for all member countries of the European Monetary Union (EMU) are expressed in euros.

Data relating to years prior to entry into the EMU have been converted from the former national currency using the appropriate irrevocable conversion rate. This presentation facilitates comparisons within a country over time and ensures that the historical evolution (i.e. growth rates) is preserved. However, pre-EMU euros are a notional unit and are not normally suitable to form area aggregates or to carry out cross-country comparisons.

OECD accession countries

In 2010, Chile (on 7 May), Slovenia (on 21 July), Israel (on 7 September) and Estonia (on 9 December), have become members of the OECD. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to include data for Estonia in this issue of the publication. The Russian Federation is still in the process of accession. The OECD is also engaging key global players in its work, such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa. Although data for these countries do not form part of this publication, some national accounts data for them are available on the OECD website. See below for more information on how to find the data online.

General comments on concepts and comparability

The list of comments described below relates to cross-cutting issues and is provided here to avoid repetition in the sections that follow.

Purchasing power parities for GDP

PPPs are the rates of currency conversion that equalise the purchasing power of different countries by eliminating differences in price levels between countries. When converted by means of PPPs, expenditures on GDP across countries are in effect expressed at the same set of prices, enabling comparisons between countries that reflect only differences in the volume of goods and services purchased. Simplistic comparisons of economic activity using exchange rates should generally be avoided as such comparisons will embody these price differences, and, moreover, exchange rate series tend to be more volatile than PPPs, presenting difficulties when comparing across countries and time.

However, a caveat related to international comparisons is still necessary in the context of PPPs. When countries are clustered around a very narrow range of outcomes, it may be misleading to establish a strict order of ranking. As is often the case with statistical information, there is a level of uncertainty associated with the data sources and procedures on which PPPs computations rely. Relatively minor differences between two country's PPP adjusted indicators, such as PPP adjusted GDP or NNI, may not be statistically or economically significant.

1995-98: PPPs for all European countries are annual benchmark results provided by Eurostat. PPPs for all other countries are OECD estimates.

1999, 2002, 2005 and 2008: PPPs for all OECD countries except Chile are triennial benchmark results calculated jointly by the OECD and Eurostat.

2000-01, 2003-04, 2006, 2007: PPPs for all European countries are annual benchmark results provided by Eurostat. PPPs for all non-European countries are OECD estimates.

2009: PPPs for all European countries are preliminary annual benchmark results provided by Eurostat. PPPs for non-European countries are OECD estimates. Estimates and preliminary results should be interpreted with caution as they are subject to revision.

PPPs for Chile are estimates based on the results of the 2005 International Comparison Programme (ICP) round.

More information is available on the PPP Internet site: www.oecd.org/std/ppp.

Exchange rates

The exchange rates used in this publication have been calculated by the International Monetary Fund, and are published in *International Financial Statistics*. They are market rates averaged over the year.

Per capita indicators

Many of the indicators that follow are shown on a per capita basis. It is important to note therefore that the underlying population estimates are based on the SNA notion of residency: namely they include persons who are resident in a country for one year or more, regardless of their citizenship, and also include foreign diplomatic personnel, defence personnel, together with their families, and students studying and patients seeking treatment abroad, even if they stay abroad for more than one year. The “one-year rule” means that usual residents who live abroad for less than one year are included in the population and foreign visitors (for example, holidaymakers) who are in the country for less than one year are not included.

An important point to note in this context is that individuals may feature as employees of one country (contributing to the GDP of that country via production), but residents of another (with their wages and salaries reflected in the GNI of their resident country).

Calendar/fiscal years

Unless specified below, or in the text accompanying the section, all data are on the basis of calendar years.

Data for Australia and New Zealand refer to fiscal years – 1 July of the year indicated to 30 June for Australia and 1 April of the year indicated to 31 March for New Zealand.

Volume (constant price) estimates

Most OECD countries now produce their accounts using annual chain volume series. Mexico and Chile however currently produce fixed-base volume estimates with the base year updated at present less periodically and links created to earlier base year estimates.

The SNA recommends the production of estimates on the basis of annual chain volume series. These produce better estimates of growth as the weights used for the contribution of different goods and services are more relevant to the period in question. There is one downside to (annual) chaining however: aggregates may not equal the sum of their components in volume terms.

Gross and net values

The term “gross” is a common means of referring to values before deducting consumption of fixed capital. But not all references to “net” are necessarily in the context of net of depreciation. The reference to “net lending/borrowing” is the relevant example in this publication where “net” is not in the context of “depreciation”.

Households and NPISHs

A number of countries are not able to provide a breakdown of Households and Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households (NPISHs) in their sector accounts. As a consequence, to ensure the highest level of comparability, unless otherwise specified, the accounts for the households sector include NPISHs in this publication.

Important equalities in the SNA**Gross domestic product (GDP) at market prices**

- = Final consumption expenditure
- + Gross capital formation
- + Exports of goods and services
- Imports of goods and services
- = Gross value added at basic prices
- + Taxes less subsidies on products

Net National Income (NNI) at market prices

- = GDP at market prices
- + Taxes less subsidies on production and imports (net, receivable from abroad)
- + Compensation of employees (net, receivable from abroad)
- + Property income (net, receivable from abroad)
- Consumption of fixed capital

Net National Disposable Income (NNDI)

- = NNI at market prices
- + Current taxes on income, wealth, etc. (net, receivable from abroad)
- + Social contributions and benefits and other current transfers (net, receivable from abroad)

Saving, net

- = NNDI at market prices
- Final consumption expenditure
- + Adjustment for the change in net equity of households on pension entitlements (net, receivable from abroad)

Net lending/net borrowing

- = Saving, net
- + Capital transfers (net, receivable from abroad)
- Gross capital formation
- Acquisitions less disposals of non-produced non-financial assets
- + Consumption of fixed capital

Further reading

Useful references for “further reading” are available at the bottom of most sections.

For all sections, general information on methodology and detailed definitions can be found in:

- UN, OECD, IMF and Eurostat (eds.) (1993), *System of National Accounts 1993*, United Nations, Geneva, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/sna1993>.

Extracts of the SNA publication are available in:

- OECD (2000), *System of National Accounts, 1993 – Glossary*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Finally, additional information and complementary tables can be found in:

- OECD (2010), *OECD Factbook 2010: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Online data

National Accounts at a Glance – Database edition

The database edition of *National Accounts at a Glance* is continuously updated on line and contains longer time series than the publication: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00369-en>. Data are available as far back as 1970 for some countries.

An inventory of the series published in *National Accounts at a Glance* is available on line. The inventory includes the titles of the individual time series along with the corresponding database codes. This inventory may be accessed via: www.oecd.org/statistics/nationalaccounts/ata glance.

Detailed National Accounts data

The *National Accounts at a Glance* dataset is published as part of the OECD National Accounts Statistics online database which can be accessed via <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/na-data-en>. This database includes very detailed information from the annual national accounts as well as financial and general government accounts.

The following is a list of the datasets which are available:

Aggregate national accounts

- Gross domestic product.
- Disposable income and net lending/borrowing.
- Population and employment by main activity.
- PPPs and exchange rates.

Detailed national accounts

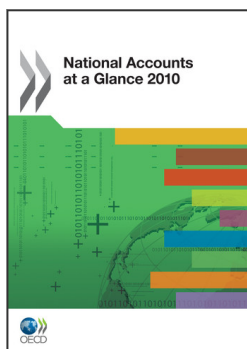
- Balance sheets for non-financial assets.
- Capital formation by activity.
- Final consumption expenditure of households.
- Fixed assets by activity and by type of product.
- Labour input by activity.
- Non-financial accounts by sectors.
- Simplified non-financial accounts.
- Value added and its components by activity.

Financial accounts

- Consolidated financial accounts (flows).
- Non-consolidated financial accounts (flows).
- Consolidated financial balance sheets (stocks).
- Non-consolidated financial balance sheets (stocks).

General government accounts

- Government expenditure by function.
- Maastricht debt.
- Main aggregates.
- Taxes and social contributions receipts.



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