



# Government borrowing and debt: international comparisons

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Section Economic Policy and Statistics Section

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This note provides international comparisons of government borrowing and debt. Data are presented for overall borrowing and structural borrowing. Public debt figures are provided on both gross and net measures.

The data are from the OECD [Economic Outlook](#), published in May 2012. Other organisations, such as the IMF and European Commission, also publish international comparisons of the public finances.

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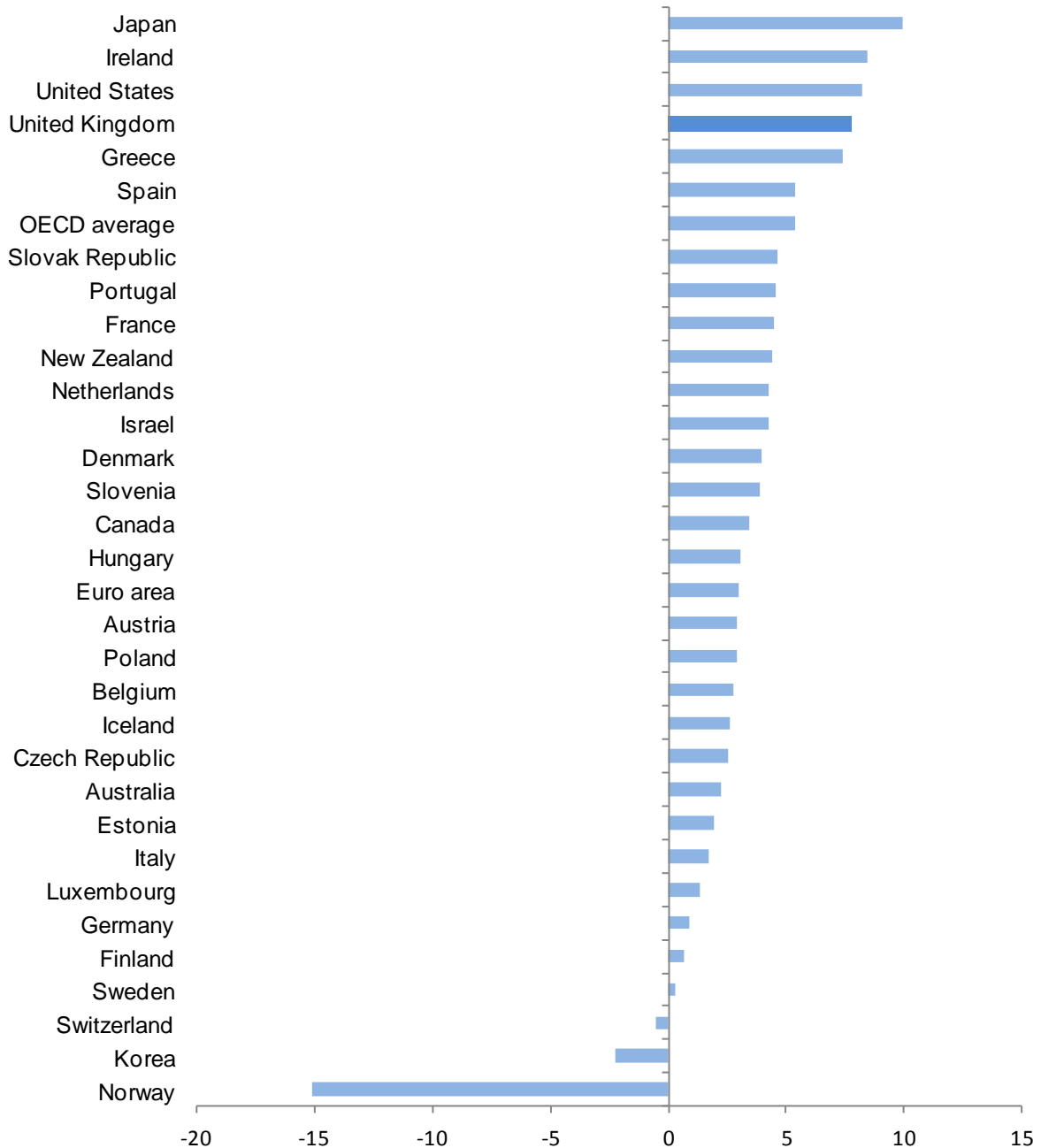
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# 1 Government borrowing

## 1.1 Overall borrowing

The UK is forecast to borrow 7.7% of GDP in 2012, lower than Japan, Ireland and the US, marginally higher than Greece but higher than all the other advanced economies for which the OECD provide data. The OECD average is 5.3%. (see the table in the Appendix for details of the OECD forecast for the UK and the other advanced economies).

### Government borrowing, % GDP, 2012

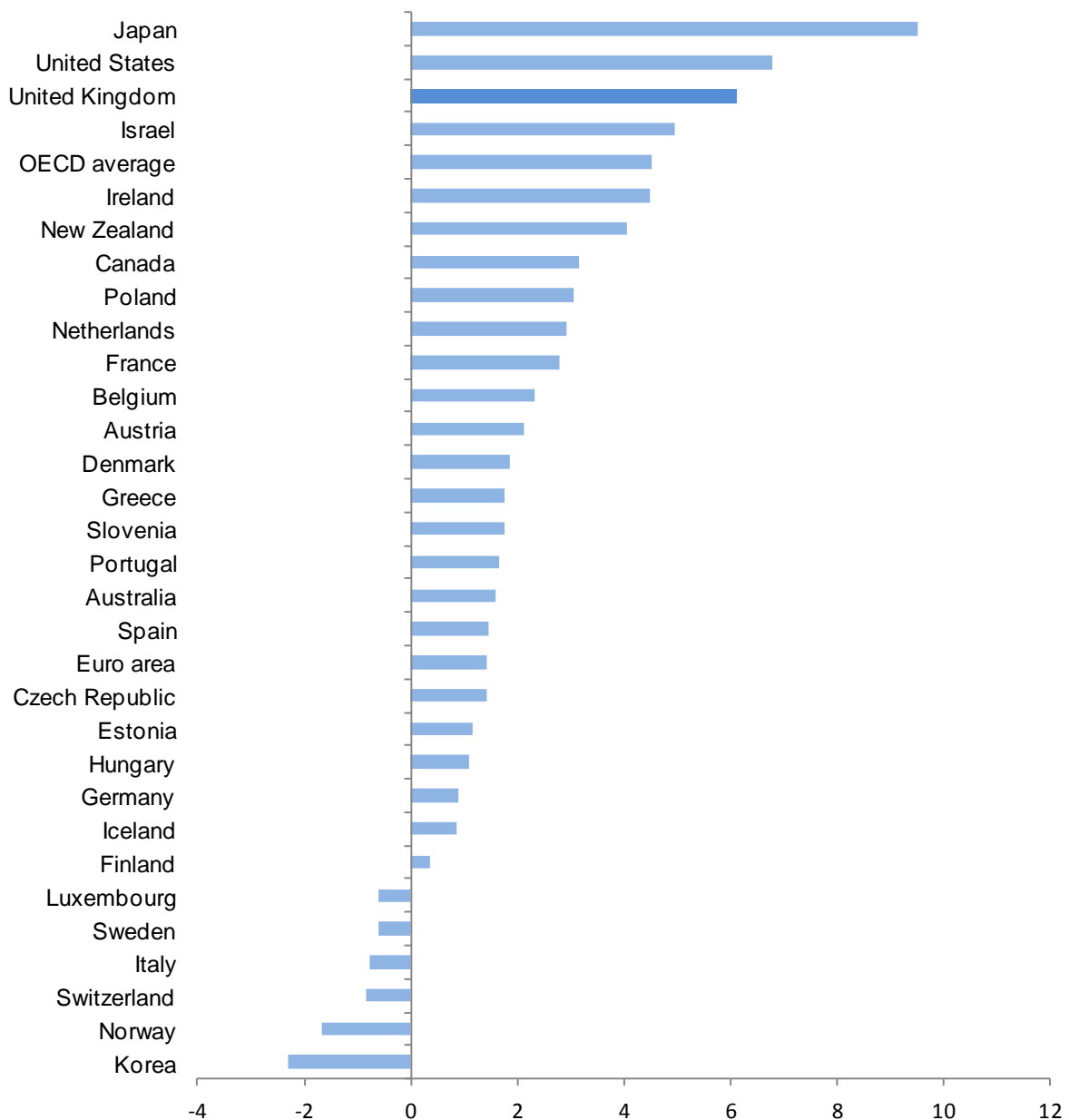


## 1.2 Structural borrowing

Structural, or cyclically-adjusted, borrowing is that part of borrowing which is unrelated to the economic cycle. It represents “underlying” borrowing or the element of borrowing which will remain even when economies move out of recession. Structural borrowing cannot be measured directly but is estimated based on a judgement about how far the actual level of output differs from its trend level. Making these estimates is by no means straightforward so estimates of the structural deficit need to be treated with caution.

The OECD estimates that the UK’s structural deficit will be 6.1% of potential GDP in 2012. This is lower than Japan and the US only, but higher than the OECD average of 4.5%.

### Structural government borrowing, % potential GDP, 2012



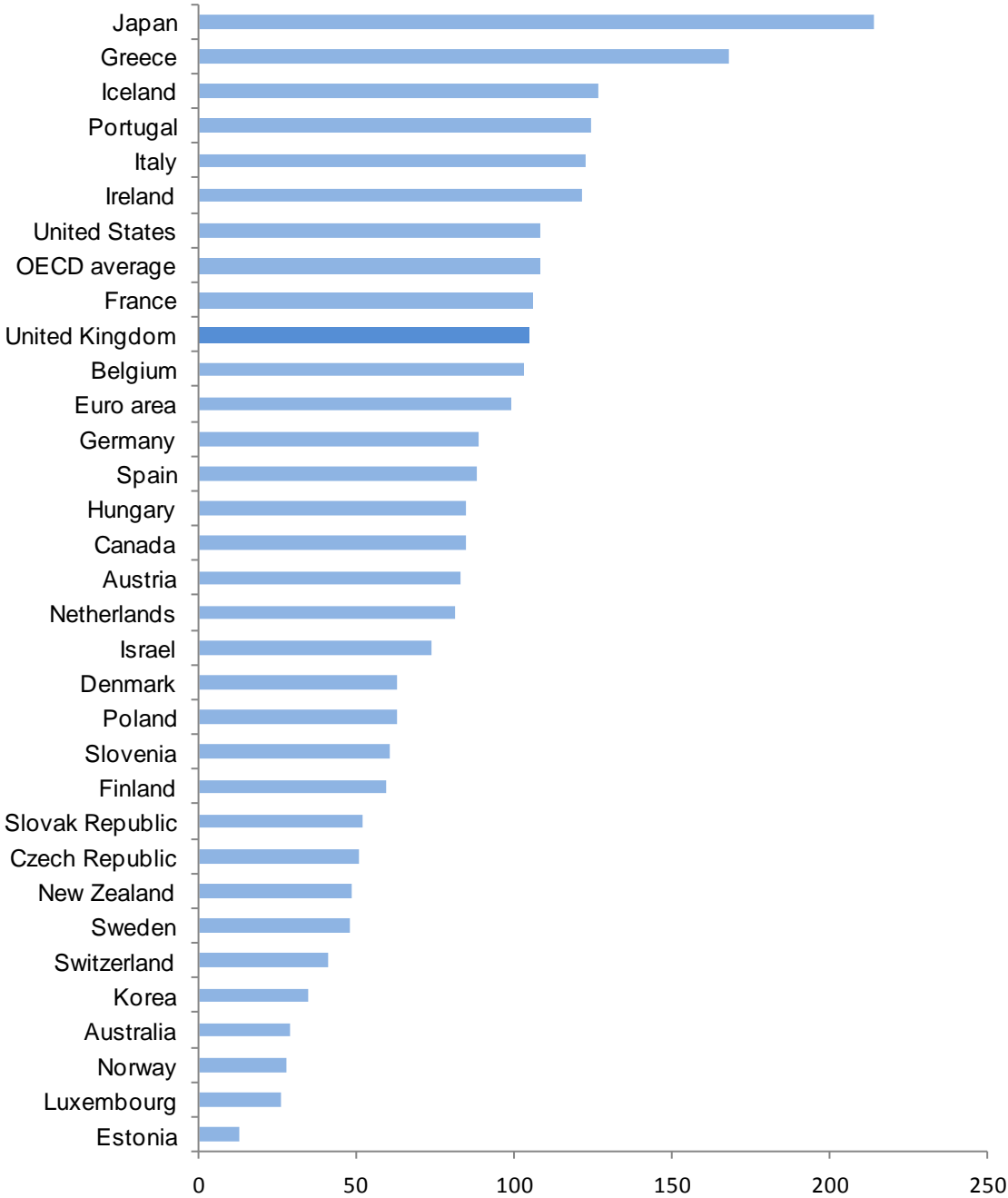
## 2 Government debt

Data on government debt are published on both a gross and a net basis. Net debt subtracts financial assets from gross debt.

### 2.1 Gross debt

UK debt is forecast to reach 104.2% of GDP in 2012. This is slightly lower than the OECD average of 107.6%, but higher than the Euro area average of 99.1%. Japan's gross debt is forecast to reach 214.1% of GDP in 2012, while Greece's is forecast to reach 168% of GDP.

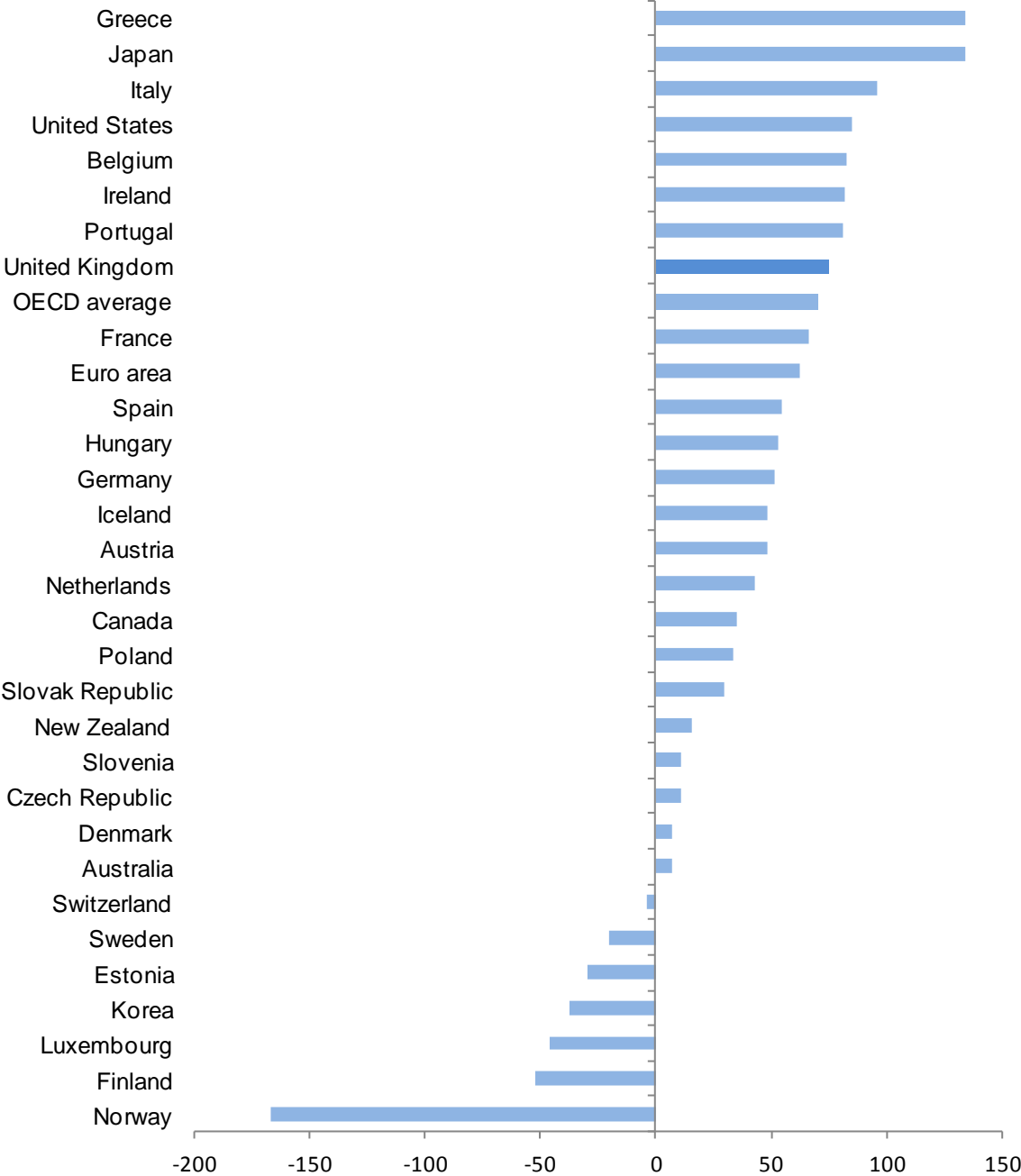
**General Government Gross Debt, % GDP, 2012**



**2.2 Net debt**

The OECD estimates that UK net debt will be 74.4% of GDP in 2012. This is higher than the OECD average of 69.1% and the Euro area average of 62.7%.

**General Government Net Debt, % GDP, 2012**



### 3 Annex tables

#### 3.1 Government borrowing

##### OECD estimates and forecast of government borrowing, % GDP

|                 | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Australia       | -2.3  | -1.8  | 0.8   | 4.5   | 4.7   | 3.9   | 2.2   | -0.4  |
| Austria         | 1.7   | 1.0   | 1.0   | 4.2   | 4.5   | 2.6   | 2.9   | 2.3   |
| Belgium         | -0.3  | 0.1   | 1.0   | 5.7   | 3.9   | 3.9   | 2.8   | 2.2   |
| Canada          | -1.6  | -1.4  | 0.4   | 4.9   | 5.6   | 4.5   | 3.5   | 2.4   |
| Czech Republic  | 2.4   | 0.7   | 2.2   | 5.8   | 4.8   | 3.1   | 2.5   | 2.2   |
| Denmark         | -5.0  | -4.8  | -3.3  | 2.7   | 2.7   | 1.9   | 3.9   | 2.0   |
| Estonia         | -2.5  | -2.4  | 2.9   | 2.0   | -0.3  | -1.0  | 2.0   | 0.3   |
| Finland         | -4.0  | -5.3  | -4.2  | 2.7   | 2.9   | 0.9   | 0.7   | 0.0   |
| France          | 2.4   | 2.7   | 3.3   | 7.6   | 7.1   | 5.2   | 4.5   | 3.0   |
| Germany         | 1.7   | -0.2  | 0.1   | 3.2   | 4.3   | 1.0   | 0.9   | 0.6   |
| Greece          | 6.0   | 6.8   | 9.9   | 15.6  | 10.5  | 9.2   | 7.4   | 4.9   |
| Hungary         | 9.4   | 5.1   | 3.7   | 4.5   | 4.3   | -4.2  | 3.0   | 2.9   |
| Iceland         | -6.3  | -5.4  | 13.5  | 10.0  | 10.1  | 4.4   | 2.6   | 1.4   |
| Ireland         | -2.9  | -0.1  | 7.3   | 14.0  | 31.2  | 13.0  | 8.4   | 7.6   |
| Israel          | 2.5   | 1.5   | 3.8   | 6.4   | 5.0   | 4.4   | 4.3   | 4.2   |
| Italy           | 3.4   | 1.6   | 2.7   | 5.4   | 4.5   | 3.8   | 1.7   | 0.6   |
| Japan           | 1.3   | 2.1   | 1.9   | 8.8   | 8.4   | 9.5   | 9.9   | 10.1  |
| Korea           | -3.9  | -4.7  | -3.0  | 1.1   | -1.3  | -1.8  | -2.3  | -2.8  |
| Luxembourg      | -1.4  | -3.7  | -3.0  | 0.8   | 0.9   | 0.6   | 1.4   | 1.1   |
| Netherlands     | -0.5  | -0.2  | -0.5  | 5.5   | 5.0   | 4.6   | 4.3   | 3.0   |
| New Zealand     | -5.3  | -4.5  | -0.4  | 2.6   | 4.2   | 8.2   | 4.4   | 2.9   |
| Norway          | -18.3 | -17.3 | -18.8 | -10.6 | -11.2 | -13.6 | -15.1 | -16.3 |
| Poland          | 3.6   | 1.9   | 3.7   | 7.4   | 7.9   | 5.1   | 2.9   | 2.2   |
| Portugal        | 4.6   | 3.2   | 3.7   | 10.2  | 9.8   | 4.2   | 4.6   | 3.5   |
| Slovak Republic | 3.2   | 1.8   | 2.1   | 8.0   | 7.7   | 4.8   | 4.6   | 2.9   |
| Slovenia        | 1.4   | 0.0   | 1.9   | 6.1   | 6.0   | 6.4   | 3.9   | 3.0   |
| Spain           | -2.4  | -1.9  | 4.5   | 11.2  | 9.3   | 8.5   | 5.4   | 3.3   |
| Sweden          | -2.2  | -3.6  | -2.2  | 1.0   | 0.1   | -0.1  | 0.3   | -0.3  |
| Switzerland     | -0.8  | -1.7  | -2.3  | -1.0  | -0.6  | -0.8  | -0.6  | -0.6  |
| United Kingdom  | 2.7   | 2.8   | 5.0   | 11.0  | 10.3  | 8.4   | 7.7   | 6.6   |
| United States   | 2.2   | 2.9   | 6.6   | 11.6  | 10.7  | 9.7   | 8.3   | 6.5   |
| Euro area       | 1.4   | 0.7   | 2.1   | 6.4   | 6.2   | 4.1   | 3.0   | 2.0   |
| Total OECD      | 1.2   | 1.3   | 3.4   | 8.1   | 7.5   | 6.3   | 5.3   | 4.2   |

Source: OECD Economic Outlook

### 3.2 Structural borrowing

#### OECD estimates and forecasts of structural government borrowing, % potential GDP

|                | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Australia      | -2.0 | -1.1 | 1.3  | 4.4  | 4.4  | 3.4  | 1.6  | -1.0 |
| Austria        | 2.2  | 2.3  | 2.4  | 3.4  | 3.4  | 2.1  | 2.1  | 1.3  |
| Belgium        | 0.4  | 1.5  | 2.3  | 4.8  | 3.4  | 4.0  | 2.3  | 1.6  |
| Canada         | -0.8 | -0.5 | 1.0  | 3.9  | 4.8  | 4.1  | 3.2  | 2.3  |
| Czech Republic | 3.7  | 3.0  | 4.4  | 5.3  | 4.5  | 2.8  | 1.4  | 1.1  |
| Denmark        | -3.0 | -2.3 | -1.2 | 1.5  | 0.3  | -0.2 | 1.9  | 0.3  |
| Estonia        | 0.3  | 1.4  | 5.1  | -1.5 | -3.0 | -1.8 | 1.2  | -0.1 |
| Finland        | -2.8 | -2.9 | -2.1 | 1.0  | 1.9  | 0.7  | 0.4  | -0.1 |
| France         | 3.4  | 4.2  | 4.4  | 6.5  | 5.6  | 3.9  | 2.8  | 1.1  |
| Germany        | 1.5  | 0.6  | 0.9  | 1.6  | 3.3  | 1.0  | 0.9  | 0.7  |
| Greece         | 8.4  | 9.9  | 12.5 | 16.4 | 9.6  | 5.4  | 1.8  | -0.8 |
| Hungary        | 11.8 | 7.0  | 5.2  | 3.1  | 2.5  | -5.2 | 1.1  | 1.0  |
| Iceland        | -4.0 | -2.6 | 17.0 | 9.6  | 7.2  | 1.8  | 0.9  | 0.3  |
| Ireland        | 0.1  | 3.5  | 8.8  | 11.1 | 25.6 | 8.8  | 4.5  | 4.2  |
| Israel         | 2.5  | 2.2  | 4.6  | 6.2  | 5.4  | 5.3  | 5.0  | 4.7  |
| Italy          | 4.5  | 3.2  | 3.6  | 3.5  | 2.5  | 2.2  | -0.8 | -2.4 |
| Japan          | 1.8  | 3.1  | 2.5  | 7.5  | 7.8  | 8.8  | 9.5  | 10.0 |
| Korea          | -3.7 | -4.2 | -2.7 | 0.6  | -1.4 | -1.8 | -2.3 | -2.8 |
| Luxembourg     | -0.4 | -1.6 | -1.2 | 0.0  | -0.5 | -0.8 | -0.6 | -1.1 |
| Netherlands    | -0.5 | 0.8  | 1.1  | 5.8  | 4.2  | 3.9  | 2.9  | 1.1  |
| New Zealand    | -4.8 | -3.6 | -0.4 | 1.8  | 3.9  | 7.8  | 4.1  | 2.8  |
| Norway         | -0.9 | -2.2 | -1.0 | 0.6  | 0.0  | -0.5 | -1.7 | -2.8 |
| Poland         | 3.4  | 2.1  | 4.1  | 7.1  | 7.8  | 5.4  | 3.0  | 2.2  |
| Portugal       | 4.7  | 3.9  | 4.0  | 8.9  | 8.9  | 2.8  | 1.6  | 0.0  |
| Slovenia       | 2.6  | 2.9  | 5.4  | 5.5  | 5.4  | 5.4  | 1.8  | 0.4  |
| Spain          | -1.2 | -0.3 | 5.4  | 9.5  | 6.6  | 5.5  | 1.5  | -1.3 |
| Sweden         | -0.5 | -1.4 | -1.4 | -1.7 | -1.0 | -0.3 | -0.6 | -1.1 |
| Switzerland    | -0.7 | -1.0 | -1.5 | -1.3 | -0.7 | -0.8 | -0.8 | -0.9 |
| United Kingdom | 3.8  | 4.6  | 6.1  | 9.7  | 8.9  | 7.1  | 6.1  | 5.2  |
| United States  | 3.3  | 4.0  | 6.8  | 9.8  | 9.0  | 8.0  | 6.8  | 5.2  |
| Euro area      | 2.1  | 2.1  | 3.2  | 5.1  | 4.7  | 3.0  | 1.4  | 0.1  |
| Total OECD     | 2.2  | 2.6  | 4.2  | 7.0  | 6.6  | 5.5  | 4.5  | 3.4  |

Source: OECD economic outlook

### 3.3 Gross debt

#### OECD estimates and forecasts of General Government Gross Debt, % GDP

|                 | 2006  | 2007  | 2008  | 2009  | 2010  | 2011  | 2012  | 2013  |
|-----------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Australia       | 15.6  | 14.5  | 13.8  | 19.4  | 23.5  | 26.6  | 28.7  | 27.8  |
| Austria         | 66.4  | 63.4  | 68.7  | 74.4  | 78.1  | 79.7  | 83.0  | 84.4  |
| Belgium         | 91.6  | 87.9  | 92.9  | 99.9  | 100.0 | 102.3 | 103.1 | 102.0 |
| Canada          | 70.4  | 66.7  | 71.2  | 82.4  | 84.0  | 83.8  | 84.5  | 81.4  |
| Czech Republic  | 32.5  | 31.0  | 34.4  | 41.0  | 45.5  | 48.3  | 50.7  | 52.6  |
| Denmark         | 41.2  | 34.3  | 41.4  | 51.2  | 54.8  | 61.8  | 63.0  | 64.8  |
| Estonia         | 8.0   | 7.3   | 8.5   | 12.7  | 12.5  | 10.0  | 12.7  | 12.8  |
| Finland         | 45.6  | 41.4  | 40.4  | 51.8  | 57.6  | 57.2  | 59.1  | 61.8  |
| France          | 71.2  | 73.0  | 79.3  | 91.2  | 95.8  | 100.1 | 105.5 | 107.3 |
| Germany         | 69.8  | 65.6  | 69.8  | 77.4  | 86.8  | 87.2  | 88.5  | 87.8  |
| Greece          | 117.0 | 115.4 | 118.7 | 134.0 | 149.6 | 170.0 | 168.0 | 173.1 |
| Hungary         | 71.9  | 72.9  | 77.0  | 86.2  | 86.4  | 84.7  | 84.8  | 84.1  |
| Iceland         | 57.4  | 53.3  | 102.1 | 120.0 | 125.2 | 128.3 | 126.7 | 124.7 |
| Ireland         | 29.0  | 28.6  | 49.5  | 71.1  | 98.4  | 114.1 | 121.6 | 126.9 |
| Israel          | 84.7  | 78.1  | 77.1  | 79.5  | 76.1  | 74.2  | 73.9  | 73.2  |
| Italy           | 116.7 | 112.1 | 114.6 | 127.7 | 126.5 | 119.7 | 122.7 | 122.1 |
| Japan           | 166.7 | 162.4 | 171.2 | 188.8 | 192.7 | 205.5 | 214.1 | 222.6 |
| Korea           | 28.5  | 28.7  | 30.4  | 33.5  | 34.6  | 34.7  | 34.5  | 33.9  |
| Luxembourg      | 11.5  | 11.3  | 18.3  | 18.0  | 24.7  | 23.9  | 26.0  | 28.7  |
| Netherlands     | 54.5  | 51.5  | 64.8  | 67.5  | 70.6  | 75.2  | 81.0  | 83.6  |
| New Zealand     | 26.6  | 25.7  | 28.9  | 34.5  | 37.4  | 44.3  | 48.4  | 50.5  |
| Norway          | 59.0  | 56.8  | 54.3  | 48.9  | 49.6  | 34.0  | 28.1  | 20.2  |
| Poland          | 55.2  | 51.8  | 54.5  | 58.4  | 62.3  | 63.3  | 62.9  | 62.3  |
| Portugal        | 77.3  | 75.4  | 80.7  | 92.9  | 103.2 | 117.6 | 124.3 | 130.1 |
| Slovak Republic | 34.1  | 32.9  | 32.0  | 40.4  | 47.1  | 46.8  | 52.1  | 54.2  |
| Slovenia        | 33.8  | 30.7  | 30.4  | 44.3  | 48.4  | 56.4  | 60.3  | 63.2  |
| Spain           | 46.2  | 42.3  | 47.7  | 62.9  | 67.1  | 75.3  | 87.9  | 90.9  |
| Sweden          | 53.9  | 49.3  | 49.6  | 51.8  | 48.9  | 48.7  | 48.0  | 46.0  |
| Switzerland     | 50.2  | 46.8  | 43.6  | 42.5  | 41.7  | 41.0  | 40.8  | 39.4  |
| United Kingdom  | 46.0  | 47.2  | 57.4  | 72.4  | 81.9  | 97.9  | 104.2 | 108.2 |
| United States   | 66.4  | 67.0  | 75.9  | 89.7  | 98.3  | 102.7 | 108.6 | 111.2 |
| Euro area       | 74.7  | 71.8  | 77.0  | 87.8  | 93.1  | 95.1  | 99.1  | 99.9  |
| Total OECD      | 76.0  | 74.5  | 81.0  | 92.5  | 98.7  | 103.0 | 107.6 | 109.3 |

Source: OECD economic outlook



### 3.4 Net debt

#### OECD estimates and forecasts of General Government Net Debt, % GDP

|                 | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   | 2009   | 2010   | 2011   | 2012   | 2013   |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Australia       | -4.6   | -7.3   | -7.6   | -3.7   | 1.8    | 5.3    | 7.3    | 6.5    |
| Austria         | 34.0   | 31.4   | 34.9   | 40.7   | 44.0   | 46.2   | 48.0   | 48.9   |
| Belgium         | 77.0   | 73.1   | 73.5   | 79.6   | 80.1   | 81.6   | 82.4   | 82.0   |
| Canada          | 26.5   | 23.1   | 22.8   | 28.5   | 30.6   | 33.3   | 35.3   | 36.3   |
| Czech Republic  | -12.5  | -15.5  | -6.7   | -2.7   | 5.1    | 8.3    | 10.6   | 12.6   |
| Denmark         | 1.9    | -3.8   | -6.1   | -4.5   | -1.7   | 3.5    | 7.4    | 9.2    |
| Estonia         | -31.4  | -28.9  | -26.3  | -29.6  | -36.5  | -33.4  | -29.8  | -27.7  |
| Finland         | -69.5  | -72.6  | -52.2  | -62.8  | -65.1  | -52.6  | -52.2  | -50.1  |
| France          | 37.4   | 35.7   | 45.9   | 52.0   | 57.4   | 63.0   | 66.3   | 67.6   |
| Germany         | 47.8   | 42.6   | 44.7   | 49.3   | 50.5   | 52.0   | 51.5   | 50.2   |
| Greece          | 87.1   | 82.6   | 91.0   | 100.7  | 114.6  | 134.6  | 134.2  | 141.4  |
| Hungary         | 51.4   | 53.1   | 51.8   | 59.6   | 60.5   | 52.0   | 53.1   | 54.0   |
| Iceland         | 7.9    | -1.0   | 26.0   | 39.9   | 48.3   | 49.7   | 48.1   | 46.1   |
| Ireland         | 1.9    | 0.0    | 12.9   | 26.3   | 57.4   | 74.2   | 81.8   | 87.0   |
| Italy           | 90.2   | 86.8   | 89.7   | 100.6  | 99.3   | 93.7   | 96.2   | 95.6   |
| Japan           | 81.0   | 80.5   | 95.3   | 106.2  | 112.8  | 125.5  | 134.1  | 142.7  |
| Korea           | -36.8  | -40.3  | -37.7  | -39.0  | -37.4  | -37.2  | -37.5  | -38.1  |
| Luxembourg      | -51.0  | -55.0  | -50.9  | -55.8  | -51.6  | -48.2  | -46.2  | -43.5  |
| Netherlands     | 31.6   | 27.8   | 27.0   | 29.7   | 34.4   | 39.0   | 43.2   | 45.3   |
| New Zealand     | -1.2   | -5.5   | -5.0   | -1.0   | 3.3    | 11.4   | 15.5   | 17.6   |
| Norway          | -133.7 | -138.9 | -123.5 | -156.7 | -164.9 | -160.9 | -166.8 | -174.6 |
| Poland          | 22.4   | 17.0   | 17.3   | 22.4   | 28.0   | 32.7   | 33.7   | 34.2   |
| Portugal        | 49.9   | 49.6   | 54.1   | 64.5   | 69.4   | 74.2   | 81.2   | 85.1   |
| Slovak Republic | 6.5    | 7.3    | 9.1    | 17.7   | 25.2   | 27.0   | 30.0   | 31.5   |
| Slovenia        | -9.9   | -16.9  | -5.0   | 0.1    | 1.0    | 7.2    | 11.2   | 14.1   |
| Spain           | 22.4   | 17.8   | 22.6   | 34.3   | 40.2   | 48.6   | 54.4   | 57.4   |
| Sweden          | -18.9  | -22.5  | -14.9  | -22.4  | -24.0  | -21.1  | -20.4  | -19.9  |
| Switzerland     | 5.4    | 0.9    | 2.8    | -1.8   | -2.4   | -3.1   | -3.6   | -4.2   |
| United Kingdom  | 27.5   | 28.4   | 33.3   | 44.1   | 53.8   | 68.3   | 74.4   | 78.4   |
| United States   | 48.4   | 48.0   | 53.6   | 65.7   | 72.9   | 80.1   | 85.3   | 88.3   |
| Euro area       | 46.6   | 42.7   | 47.5   | 54.6   | 57.8   | 60.7   | 62.7   | 63.2   |
| Total OECD      | 42.2   | 40.2   | 45.7   | 54.0   | 59.3   | 65.3   | 69.1   | 71.3   |

Source: OECD economic outlook