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The GDP Question

By Bob Packwood

29 May 2009

There is a global trend in government spending as a percentage of gross domestic product, and that is up, up, up. Fifty years ago all governments in the United States — federal, state and local — together spent about 20 percent of the G.D.P. In 2010 that figure could approach 35 percent. This pattern is generally true of Western democracies. Thirty years ago, they typically spent less of their G.D.P. than they spend now. Today Britain exceeds 40 percent. France and Italy border on 50 percent and the Nordic countries spend even more.

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This article was first published in the [New York Times](#) online on 10 May 2009.

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