

Spain



Health systems

Economic classification: **High Income**

Health systems summary

Spain has a universal healthcare system that is consistently ranked among the best in the world. The national system (Sistema Nacional de Salud) is primarily funded by taxation and is mostly free at point of service. In addition to the national health service, there are other statutory provisions for civil servants, the armed forces and the judiciary. Public sector workers, for example, are eligible to opt out of the public system if they sign up to the government-subsidised health insurance called MUFACE. Despite the comprehensive health coverage in Spain, out of pocket (OOP) payments make up 23.9% of total health expenditure (greater than the European Union average). Most OOP payments are for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

Spain has the highest life expectancy in the European Union and has relatively low mortality rates from preventable and treatable causes. Obesity, however, has been increasing in recent years.

Indicators

Where is the country's government in the journey towards defining 'Obesity as a disease'?	Some progress
Where is the country's healthcare provider in the journey towards defining 'Obesity as a disease'?	Some progress
Is there specialist training available dedicated to the training of health professionals to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage obesity?	Yes
Have any taxes or subsidies been put in place to protect/assist/inform the population around obesity?	Yes
Are there adequate numbers of trained health professionals in specialties relevant to obesity in urban areas?	No
Are there adequate numbers of trained health professionals in specialties relevant to obesity in rural areas?	No
Are there any obesity-specific recommendations or guidelines published for adults?	Yes
Are there any obesity-specific recommendations or guidelines published for children?	Some progress
In practice, how is obesity treatment largely funded?	Not known

Perceived barriers to treatment

Lack of political will,
interest and action

Economic crisis

Stigma

Poor health literacy
and behaviour

Cultural norms and
traditions

Summary of stakeholder feedback

While seemingly not yet considered to be a disease by the government and healthcare providers, Spain has several prevention policies in place related to obesity. These include school-level interventions around physical activity and diet, and a sugar tax in the Catalonia region. Stakeholders and patients felt that obesity could be better prevented by the provision of cheaper fruit and vegetables, perhaps through subsidies.

Overall, the health system is generally not thought to be working in terms of obesity treatment. Having said that, one stakeholder felt that primary care centres were becoming better at addressing obesity, with several new and effective programmes being implemented. Generally, though, it appears that a high BMI is required before treatment is offered, and even then, there are long waiting lists. Long waiting lists are said to be one of the reasons individuals leave the health system without treatment.

There are insufficient numbers of obesity professionals in both urban and rural areas but in rural areas, there is said to be no possibility of receiving specialised treatment. There is no specialised obesity training available, except for training for bariatric surgeons.

Based on interviews/survey returns from 3 stakeholders

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