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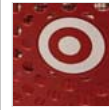
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July 9, 2012, 8:47 AM

Greeks Hide Tens of Billions From Tax Man

Article

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By Justin Lahart

Originally posted in [Overheard](#).

If Greece's government was as adept as its banks at figuring out what its citizens earn, the world might be a very different place.

That Greeks have a penchant for evading taxes isn't exactly news — when tax collectors started comparing swimming-pool ownership with incomes, wealthy Greeks camouflaged their pools. And because hidden income is hidden, figuring the size of the tax dodge is difficult.

Armed with data from one of Greece's ten largest banks, economists **Nikolaos Artavanis**, **Adair Morse** and **Margarita Tsoutsoura** recently [set themselves](#) to the task. The banks, with tens of thousands of customers across the country, provided loan and credit-card application and performance data. That not only gave the economists access to self-reported incomes, but also allowed them to infer the banks' estimates of true incomes — which are likely closer to the mark.

The economists' conservatively estimate that in 2009 some €28 billion in income went unreported. Taxed at 40%, that equates to €11.2 billion — nearly a third of Greece's budget deficit.

Why hasn't Greece done more to stop tax evasion? The economists were also able to identify the top tax-evading occupations — doctors and engineers ranked highest — and found they were heavily represented in Parliament.

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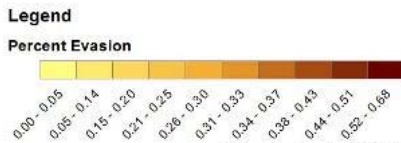
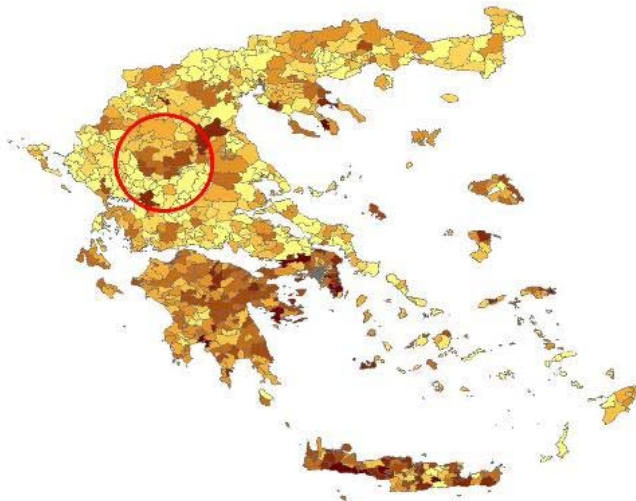
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Source: Nikolaos Artavanis, Adair Morse, Margarita Tsoutsoura

Depicted is the zip code-plotting of tax evasion. The authors of the study pool all individuals in a zip code covered in all samples (over all the years covered by each sample) and plot the average zip code percent of estimate true income evaded. Darker colors denote more tax evasion. The circled area (specifically, the dark area in the middle of the circle) is Larissa, an area targeted by news reports that has the largest number of Porsche Cayennes in Europe.

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6:46 pm July 10, 2012

Dick Hertz wrote :

Delicious propaganda to sell like red meat to the lions at the zoo. The Porsches likely belong to the German bankers who managed to swindle Greece and then swindle Germany into covering their losses on Greek and other debts.

11:36 am July 10, 2012

King Cash wrote :

Wow, according to the present day Republican argument that lower taxes means more jobs, hell, everyone in that country should be employed well, and they would be importing immigrants by the boatload! How's that working out?

4:16 am July 10, 2012

dandraka wrote :

@WW III : This claim is at least as false as the "largest number of Porsche Cayennes in Europe". If you have any actual evidence of this, I'd love to see it.

Greece certainly has a lot of problems, and a good number of them are indeed caused by Greeks themselves. But shouting around ridiculus arguments helps noone, least of all Americans.

3:55 am July 10, 2012

Giorgos wrote :

As many have noted already, the Cayennes sold in Larissa (my hometown) argument is invalid. In any case, your chart is wrong: Larisa is to the east of the circle you have drawn, closer to the sea. The towns circled are Trikala and Karditsa. It would be nice if data were checked a bit more before being published.

11:03 pm July 9, 2012

Jim wrote :

Just to be clear, Porsche has said that they've sold perhaps 1,500 Cayennes in Greece total. There's much to be desired about the truthiness of Larissa's Porsche ownership being reported by conservative American media. I'm sure it gives certain readers a chance to bob a cheap, self-righteous little nod, but the "news reports" cited in the article are based on baloney statistics.

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