

POPULATION BY REGION

Population is unevenly distributed among regions within countries. Differences in climatic and environmental conditions discourage human settlement in some areas and favour concentration of the population around a few urban centres. This pattern is reinforced by higher economic opportunities and wider availability of services stemming from urbanisation itself.

Definition

The number of inhabitants of a given region, i.e. its total population, can be measured as either its average annual population or as the population at a specific date during the year considered. The average population during a calendar year is generally calculated as the arithmetic mean of the population on 1 January of two consecutive years, although some countries estimate it on a date close to 1 July.

Comparability

The main problem with economic analysis at the sub-national level is the unit of analysis, i.e. the region. The word “region” can mean very different things both within and among countries, with significant differences in area and population.

The population across OECD regions ranges from about 600 inhabitants in Stikine, British Columbia (Canada) to 39 million in California (the United States).

To address this issue, the OECD has classified regions within each member country to facilitate comparability at the same territorial level. The classification is based on two

territorial levels: the higher level (TL2) consists of 362 large regions and the lower level (TL3) consists of 1 802 small regions. These two levels are used as a framework for implementing regional policies in most countries. In Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa only TL2 large regions have been identified. This classification (which, for European Union countries, is largely consistent with the Eurostat NUTS classification) facilitates comparability of regions at the same territorial level.

All the regional data refer to small regions with the exception of Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa.

In addition, the OECD has established a regional typology to take into account geographical differences and enable meaningful comparisons between regions belonging to the same type. Regions have been classified as predominantly rural, intermediate and predominantly urban on the basis of the percentage of population living in local rural units.

The metropolitan database identifies about 1 200 urban areas (with a population of 50 000 or more) in 30 OECD countries. Urban areas are defined on the basis of population density and commuting patterns to better reflect the economic function of cities in addition to their administrative boundaries. Functional urban areas can extend across administrative boundaries, reflecting the economic geography of where people actually live and work.

Urban areas in Turkey refer to the 144 cities classified according to the national definition and refer to the year 2012. Comparability with other countries is, therefore, limited.

Overview

In 2014, 10% of regions accounted for approximately 40% of the total population in OECD countries. The concentration of population was highest in Canada and Australia where differences in climatic and environmental conditions discourage human settlement in some areas.

In 2014, two-thirds of the OECD urban population live in cities (above 50 000 inhabitants). However the urban experience is very different from country to country. In Korea, 90% of the national population is concentrated in cities (more than 45 million people), while only 40% in the Slovak Republic live in cities (more than 2 million people).

In 2014, almost half of the total OECD population (48%) lived in predominantly urban regions, which accounted for around 6% of the total area.

Predominantly, rural regions accounted for one-fourth of the total population and 83% of land area. In Ireland, Finland and Slovenia the share of national population in rural regions was twice as high as the OECD average.

Sources

- OECD (2013), *OECD Regions at a Glance*, OECD Publishing.

Further information

Analytical publications

- OECD (2014), *OECD Regional Outlook*, OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2014), *OECD Territorial Reviews*, OECD Publishing.

Statistical publications

- OECD (2014), *OECD Labour Force Statistics*, OECD Publishing.

Online databases

- *OECD Regional Statistics*.

Websites

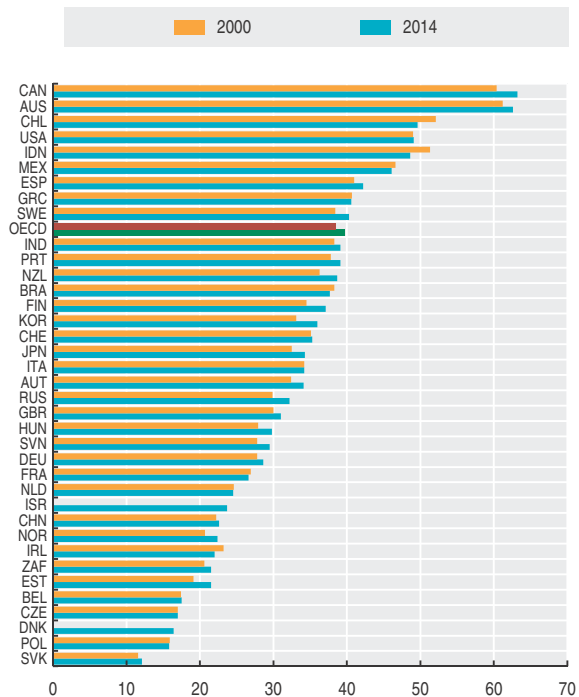
- *Regions at a Glance interactive*, rag.oecd.org.
- *Regional statistics and indicators*, www.oecd.org/gov/regional/statisticsindicators.



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Share of national population in the ten per cent of regions with the largest population

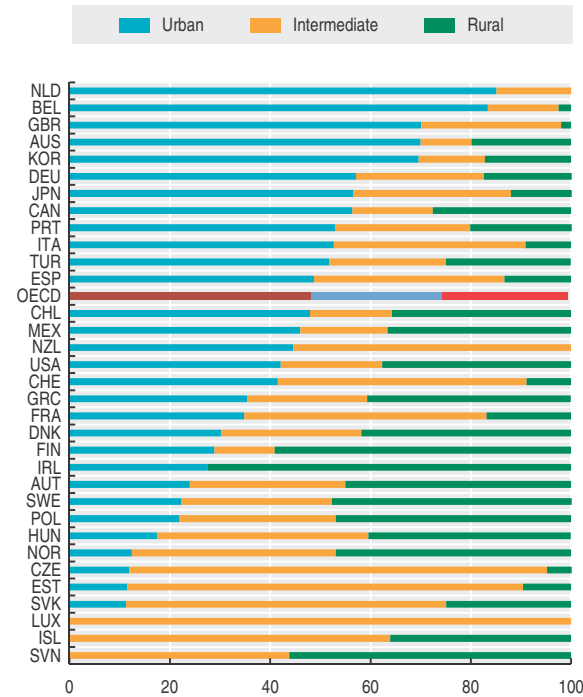
Percentage, 2000 and 2014



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335362>

Distribution of the national population into urban, intermediate and rural regions

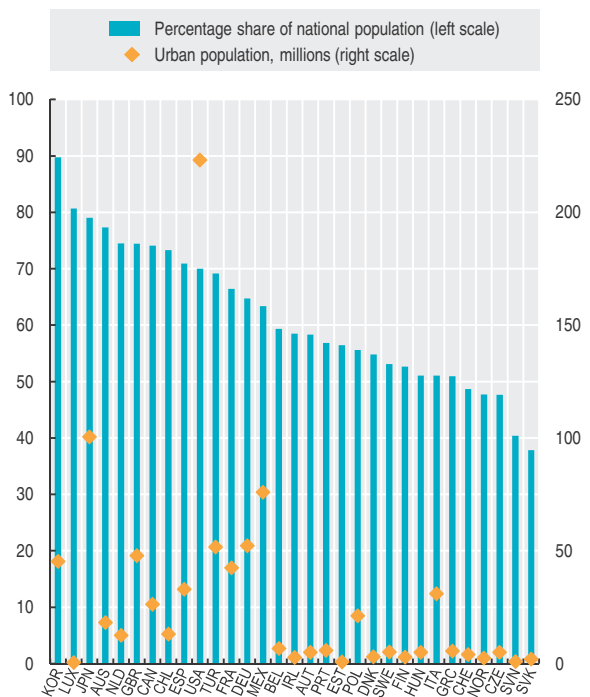
Percentage, 2014



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335957>

Urban population by city size

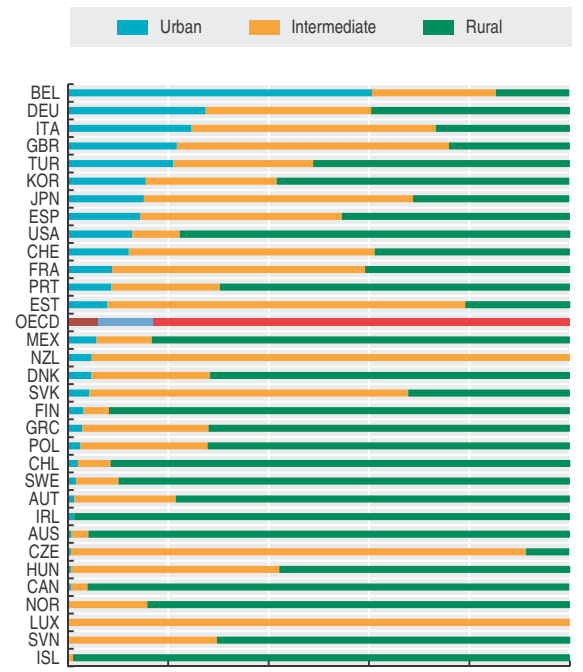
2014



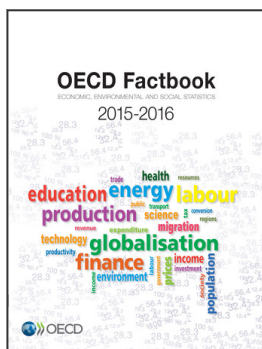
1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933335821>

Distribution of the national area into urban, intermediate and rural regions

Percentage, 2014



1 2 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933336019>



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