

### 3. REGIONS AND CITIES FACING DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

## Presence of international migrants by type of region

### Eight out of every ten migrants live in metropolitan regions in OECD countries, but only seven out of ten native-born.

In a context of widespread ageing and shrinking working-age population across OECD regions, international migration is one important source of potential inflows of people in regional economies. In 2019, 5.3 million new permanent migrants settled in OECD countries, an increase of around 25% since 2010. New migrants come with a variety of skills and socio-demographic characteristics and include for instance highly-qualified foreign doctors, nurses and scientists, as well as individuals working in low-skilled occupations. While regional data is not yet available for 2020, permanent migration inflows to OECD countries are estimated to have fallen by more than 30%, due in part to widespread restrictions on international travel and migration. This halted population growth in several OECD countries, including Australia and Germany (OECD, 2022a).

The share of migrants (foreign-born population) over the total population has a very diverse magnitude across OECD countries. For example, while 14% of the population in OECD were migrants in 2019, that share was 47% in Luxembourg and only 1% in Mexico (OECD, 2022b). The presence of migrants also differs within OECD countries. In some regions, migrants represent one-fourth of the population, while in others a negligible share. On average, the regional variation is stark, with a 15-percentage point difference between the region with the highest and lowest share of migrants within the same country (Figures 3.15 and 3.16). Belgium and the UK record the largest regional differences (above 35 percentage points) among OECD countries, while Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland display relatively small regional variations.

Compared to the native-born population, migrants are more likely to settle in large and dense regions, where they can benefit from agglomeration advantages including employment opportunities and social networks. Accordingly, more than half of the foreign-born population (53%) in the 22 OECD countries with available data live in large metropolitan regions, i.e. regions that contain a metropolitan area of more than 1.5 million inhabitants, 13 pp higher than for native-born population (Figure 3.13). In contrast, less than a fifth (19%) reside in non-metropolitan regions, compared to almost a third (30%) of the native-born population. The difference in the location of migrants and native-born populations is particularly striking in remote regions and regions near a metropolitan area. Remote regions account for 5% of the native-born population while only 3% of migrants. Similarly, regions near small/medium-sized cities account for 12% of the native-born population, but only 6% of migrants (Astruc-Le Souder et al., forthcoming).

In most OECD countries, migrants continue concentrating in cities. On average, cities host 68% of the migrant population, while towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas host 22% and 9% of migrants over the total population respectively (Figure 3.14). Since 2015, the share of migrants has increased in all types of areas, but more strongly in cities. Between 2015 and 2019, the share of migrants living in cities increased from 11% to 14%. During the same period, the share of migrants in towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas increased by two and one pp respectively.

#### Sources

OECD (2022), *OECD Migrant Municipal Database*, OECD, Paris (accessed June 2022).

#### Reference years and territorial level

2019 or latest available year, NUTS1 or NUTS2 (TL2) depending on data availability.

2015-20, municipalities

### Definitions

**International migrants:** The terms “migrants and “foreign-born” are used interchangeably. Migrants are defined by place of birth. The migrant population is defined as the population born in a country different from the one of residence. Unlike citizenship, this criterion does not change over time, it is not subject to country differences in legislation and it is thus adequate for international comparisons.

**Access to metropolitan areas typology:** The proposed classification distinguishes TL3 regions based on the level of access to metropolitan areas (Fadic et al., 2019). At a first level, regions where at least half of the regional population live in a metropolitan area of at least 250,000 inhabitants are considered as ‘metropolitan regions, and as ‘non-metropolitan’ otherwise. Metropolitan regions are further distinguished in ‘large metro’ regions if they include or they are part of a metropolitan area of at least 1.5 million inhabitants. ‘Non-metropolitan’ regions are sub-classified in regions’ with access to a metro’ if half of its population can reach a metropolitan area within a 60-minute drive. When half of the regional population can reach only a smaller-sized city (between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants), the region is classified as ‘with access to a small/medium city’. In all other cases, the region is classified as ‘remote’. The classification relies on the concept of functional urban areas (FUAs) (Dijkstra et al., 2019; OECD, 2012) to delineate metropolitan areas of at least 250,000 inhabitants or smaller-sized cities.

**Degree of urbanisation:** This typology reflects the urban-rural continuum and proposes three classes instead of only the dichotomy urban or rural. The three classes are 1) cities (or densely populated areas); 2) towns and semi-dense areas (or intermediate density areas), and; 3) rural areas (or thinly populated areas).

### Further Information

Territorial grids and regional typology (Annex B)

Astruc-Le Souder, M., J. Hesse, C. Hoffmann, L. Kleine-Rueschkamp, C. Mas, C. Özgüzel (forthcoming), “Going granular - A new database on migration in municipalities across the OECD”. OECD Regional Development Working Papers

Dijkstra, L., H. Poelman and P. Veneri (2019), “The EU-OECD definition of a functional urban area”, OECD Regional Development Working Papers, No. 2019/11, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d58cb34d-en>.

Fadic, M., J.E. Garcilazo, A. Moreno-Monroy and P.Veneri (2019), “Classifying small (TL3) regions based on metropolitan population, low density and remoteness”, OECD Regional Development Working Papers, No. 2019/06, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b902cc00-en>.

OECD (2022a), *International Migration Outlook 2022*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/30fe16d2-en>.

OECD (2022b), *The Contribution of Migration to Regional Development*, OECD Regional Development Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/57046df4-en>.

OECD (2012), *Redefining “Urban”: A New Way to Measure Metropolitan Areas*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264174108-en>.

### Figure notes

3.13: The underlying sample covers the entire local resident population.

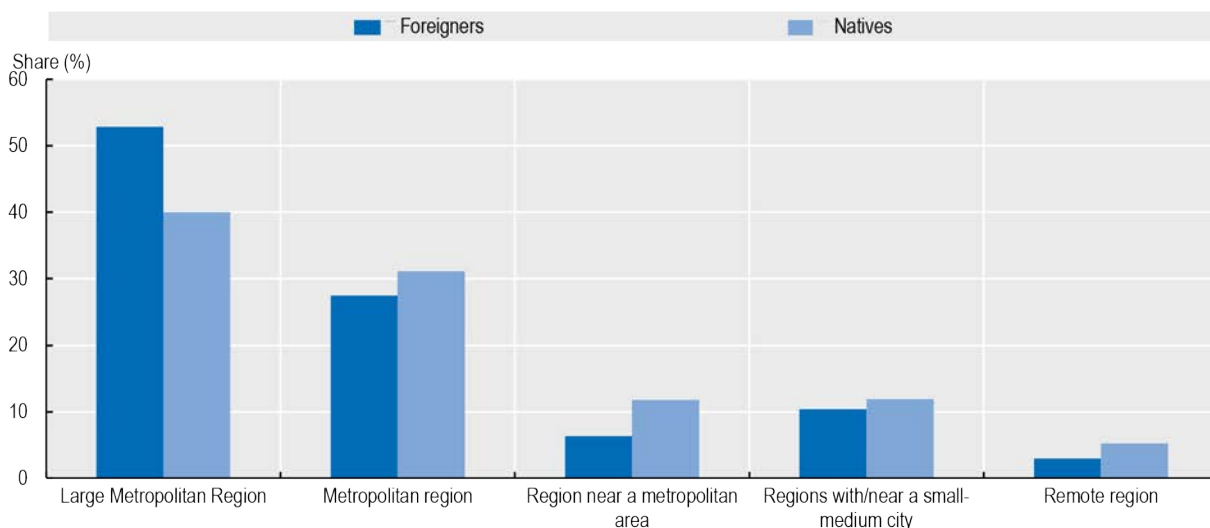
3.14: 2019 or latest available year. Data for the UK are limited to England and Wales. The underlying sample covers the entire local resident population.

3.15-3.17: The figures present the share of foreign-born among 15-64-year-olds.

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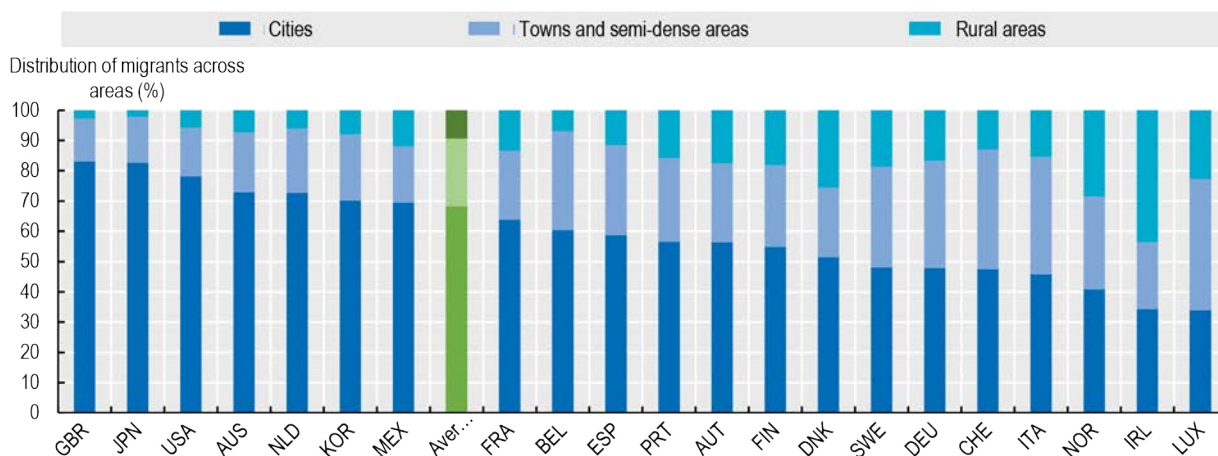
3.13. Distribution of the foreign- and native-born population by type of TL3 region, 2019 or the latest available year



StatLink <https://stat.link/vwpybs>

#### 3.14. Migrants live mainly in cities

The distribution of foreign-born population by the degree of urbanisation, 2020 or latest available year

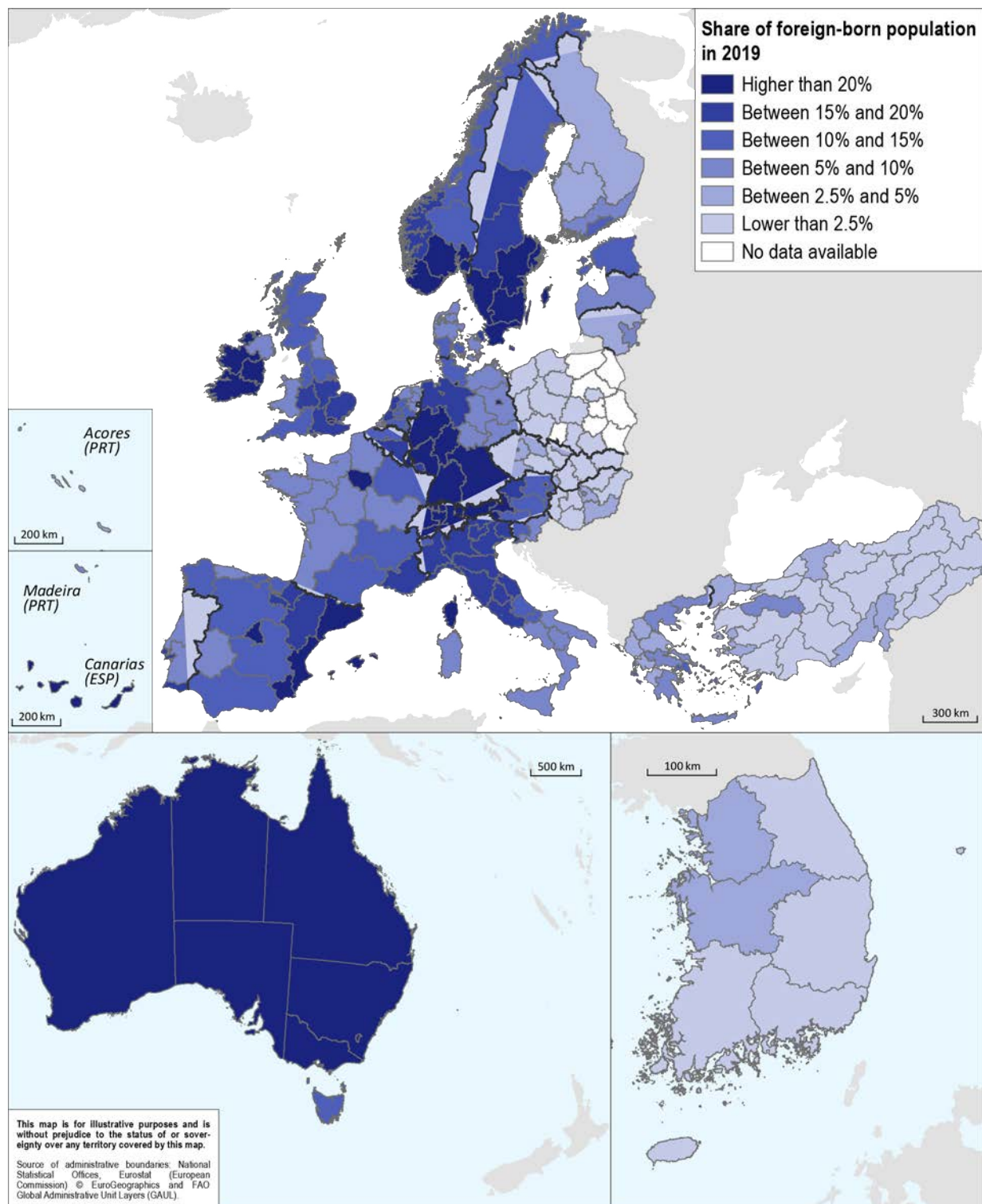


StatLink <https://stat.link/j83flh>

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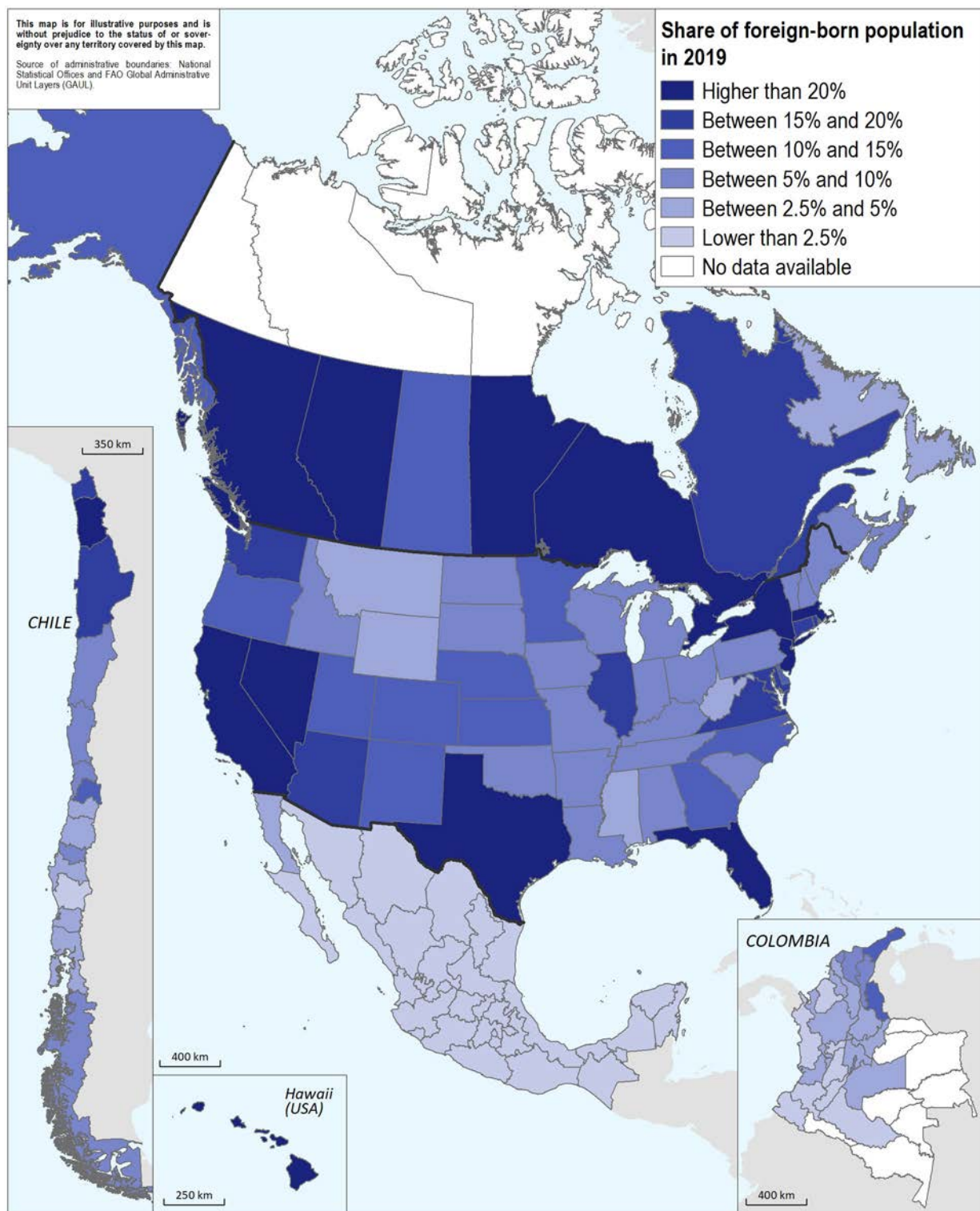
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3.15. Migrant population across OECD regions, Europe, Asia and Oceania, 2019

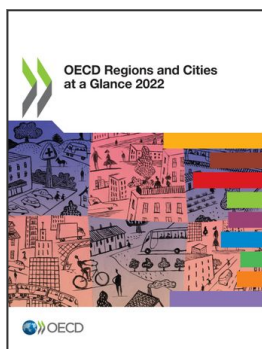


StatLink <https://stat.link/a5zrb4>

3.16. Migrant population across OECD regions, Chile and Colombia and the US, 2019



StatLink <https://stat.link/dp73cz>



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