

Distribution of population and regional typology

The geographic distribution of population is explained by differences in climatic and environmental conditions that discourage human settlement in some areas and favour population concentration around a few urban centres. This pattern is reinforced by the increased availability of economic opportunities and wider availability of services stemming from urbanisation itself.

In 2012, almost half of the total OECD population (48%) lived in predominantly urban regions, which accounted for 6% of the total area. More than 60% of the population lived in predominantly urban regions in the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Korea (Figure 2.1).

Predominantly rural regions accounted for one-fourth of total population and more than 80% of land area. In Ireland, Finland, Norway and Slovenia, the share of the national population in rural regions was two times higher than the OECD average (Figure 2.1).

Rural regions in North America, European countries, and in Japan have been further classified as either close to a large urban centre or remote. Over the 25 OECD countries with rural regions, only in Estonia, Norway, Greece, Portugal Switzerland and Canada does more than half of the rural population live in remote rural regions (Figure 2.2).

Definition

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 (see Annex A for the detailed methodology).

This typology has been refined by introducing a criterion of distance (driving time) to large urban centres. Thus a predominantly rural region is classified as *predominantly rural remote* region (PRR) if a certain percentage of the regional population needs more than a fixed time to reach a large urban centre; otherwise, the rural region is classified as *predominantly rural close to a city* (PRC). The extended typology has been applied to North America, Europe and Japan (see Annex A for the detailed methodology).

Population is unevenly distributed among regions within OECD countries. In 2012, 10% of regions accounted for 40% of the total population in OECD countries (Figures 2.3).

The concentration of population was highest in Australia, Canada, Iceland and Chile, where more than half of the population lived in 10% of the regions with the largest population (Figure 2.3).

The regional population density varies from below 5 people per km² in some regions in Australia, Canada, Chile, Iceland, Mexico and the United States to above 1 000 people per km² in some predominantly urban regions in Europe, Canada, Japan, Korea and Mexico (Figures 2.4-2.7).

Source

OECD (2013), *OECD Regional Statistics* (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>.

See Annex B for data source and country-related metadata.

Reference years and territorial level

1995-2012; TL3.

Australia 1995-2011; Mexico 1995-2010.

TL2 regions in Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, the Russian Federation and South Africa.

Further information

OECD (2009), *Regional Typology: Updated Statistics*, www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/42392595.pdf.

Brezzi, M., L. Dijkstra and V. Ruiz (2011), "OECD Extended Regional Typology: The Economic Performance of Remote Rural Regions", *OECD Regional Development Working Papers*, No. 2011/06, OECD Publishing, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kg6z83tw7f4-en>.

Eurostat Regional Yearbook (2010), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. The EU has created a variant of the OECD typology using the population grid (Chapter 15).

Interactive graphs and maps: <http://rag.oecd.org>.

Figure notes

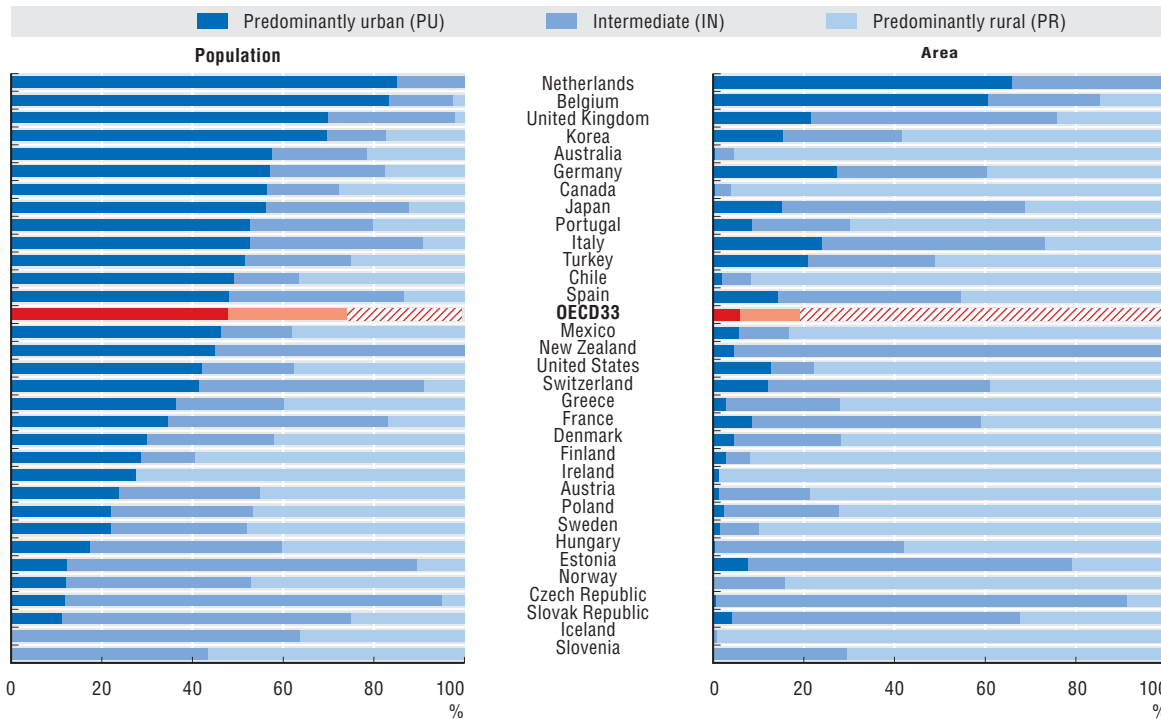
2.2: The extended typology is applied only to countries in Europe, North America and Japan.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

2. REGIONS AS DRIVERS OF NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

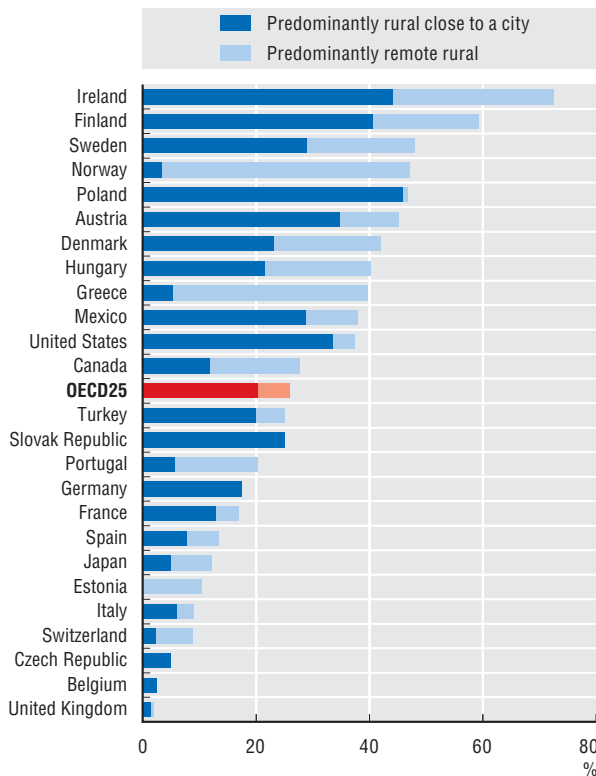
Distribution of population and regional typology

2.1. Distribution of population and area by type of region, 2012



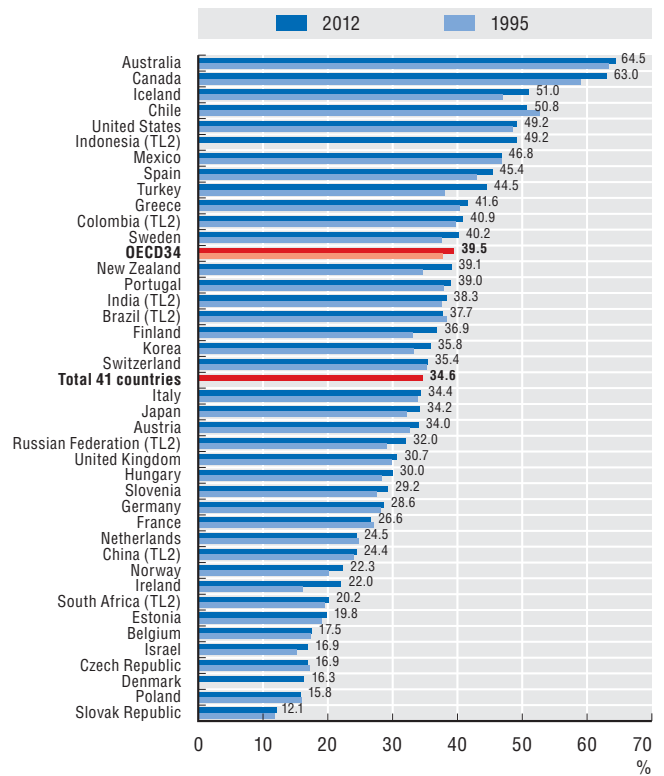
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913247>

2.2. Per cent of national population in predominantly rural regions, 2012



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913266>

2.3. Population concentration by top 10% of TL3 regions with the largest population, 1995 and 2012



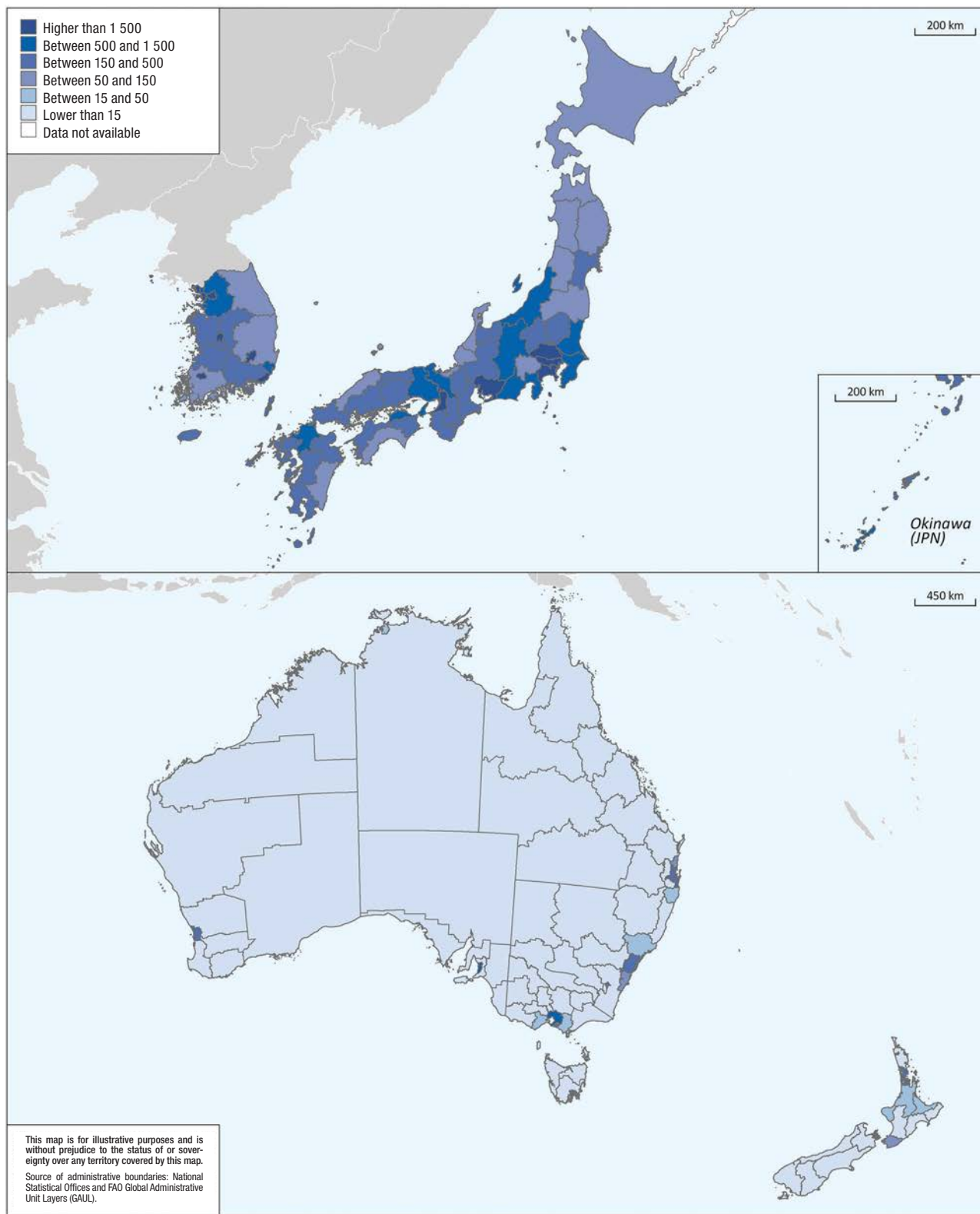
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913285>


2. REGIONS AS DRIVERS OF NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Distribution of population and regional typology

2.4. Regional population density: Asia and Oceania, 2012

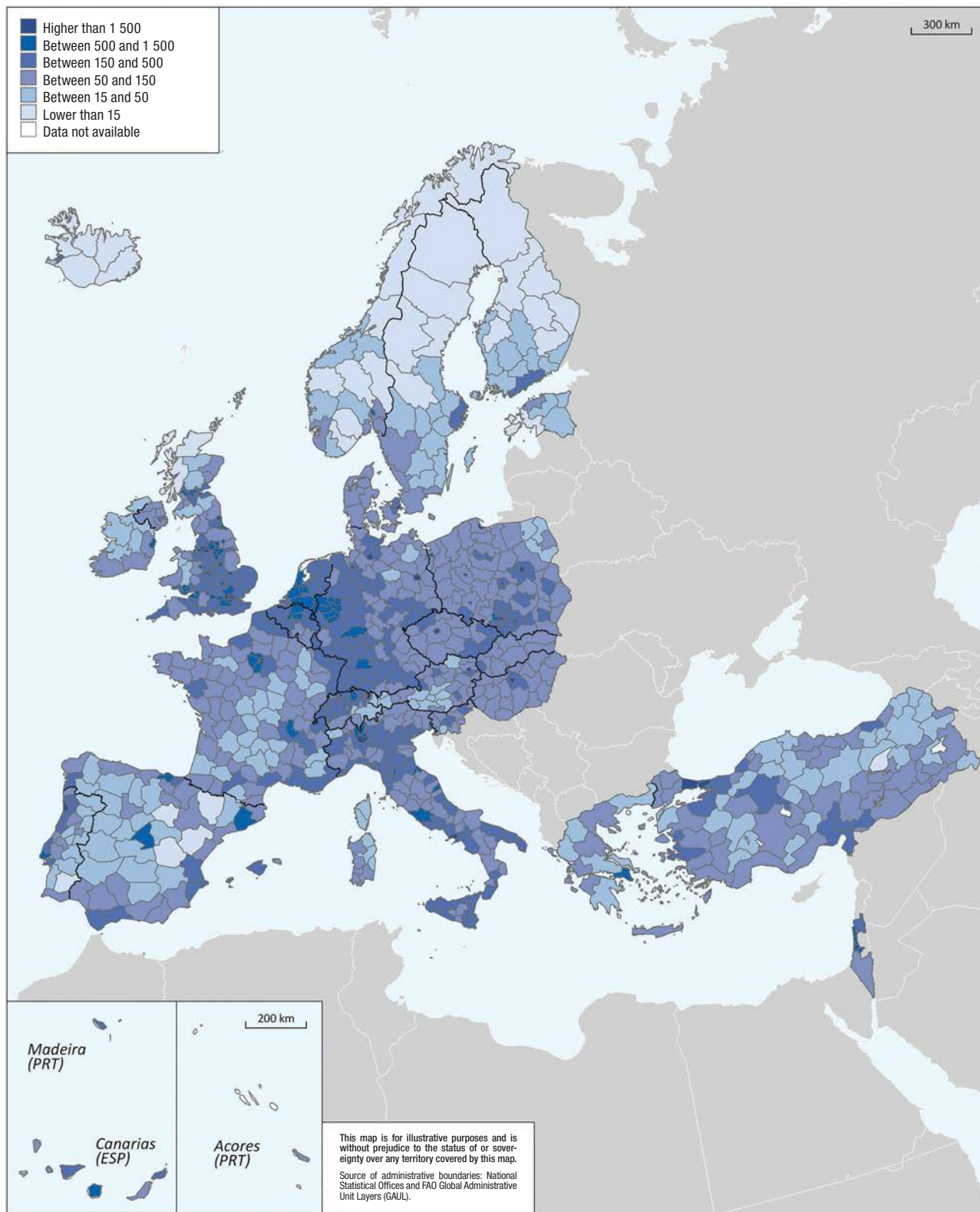
Inhabitants per square kilometre, TL3 regions



StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932915546>

2.5. Regional population density: Europe, 2012

Inhabitants per square kilometre, TL3 regions



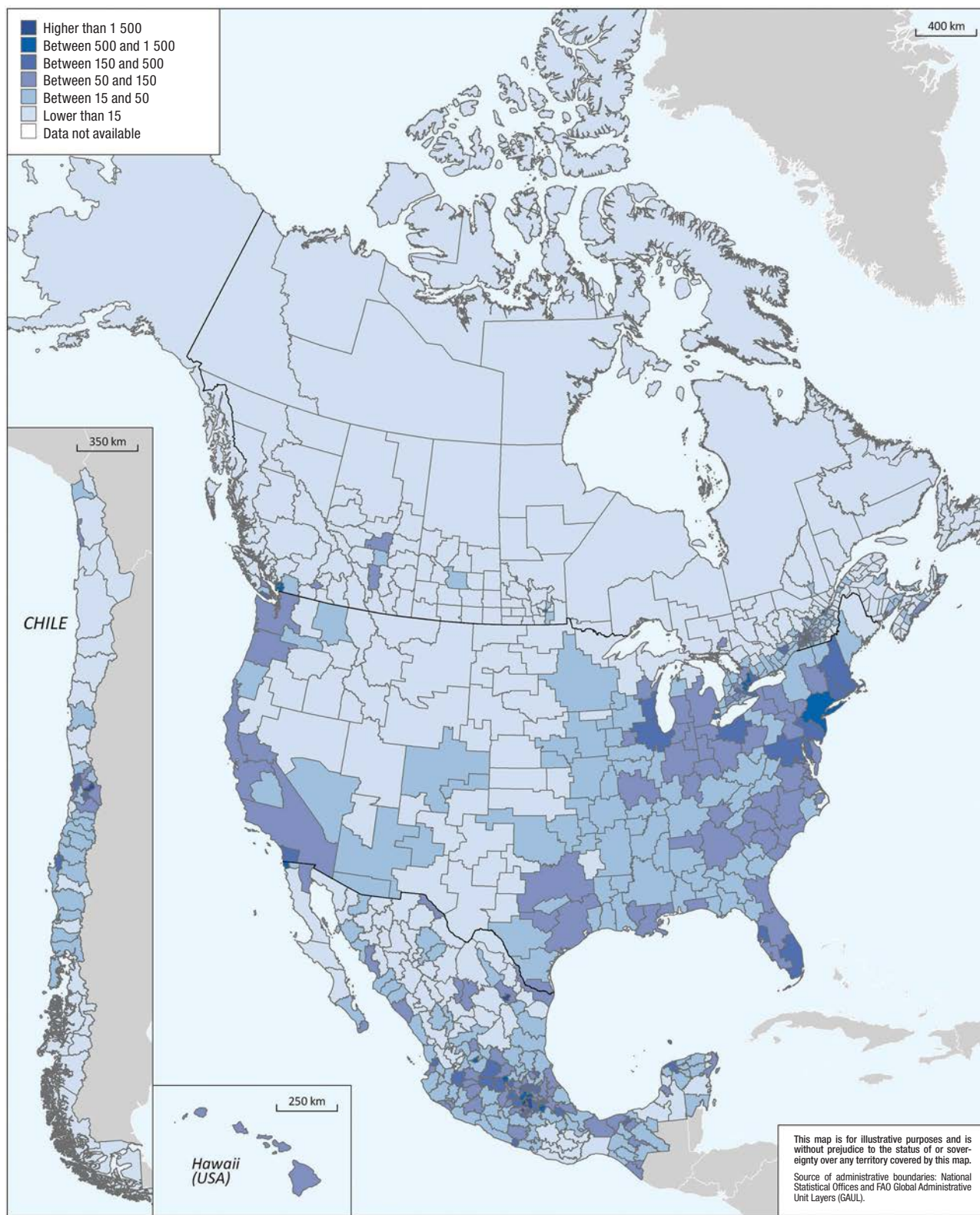
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932915603>


2. REGIONS AS DRIVERS OF NATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS

Distribution of population and regional typology

2.6. Regional population density: Americas, 2012

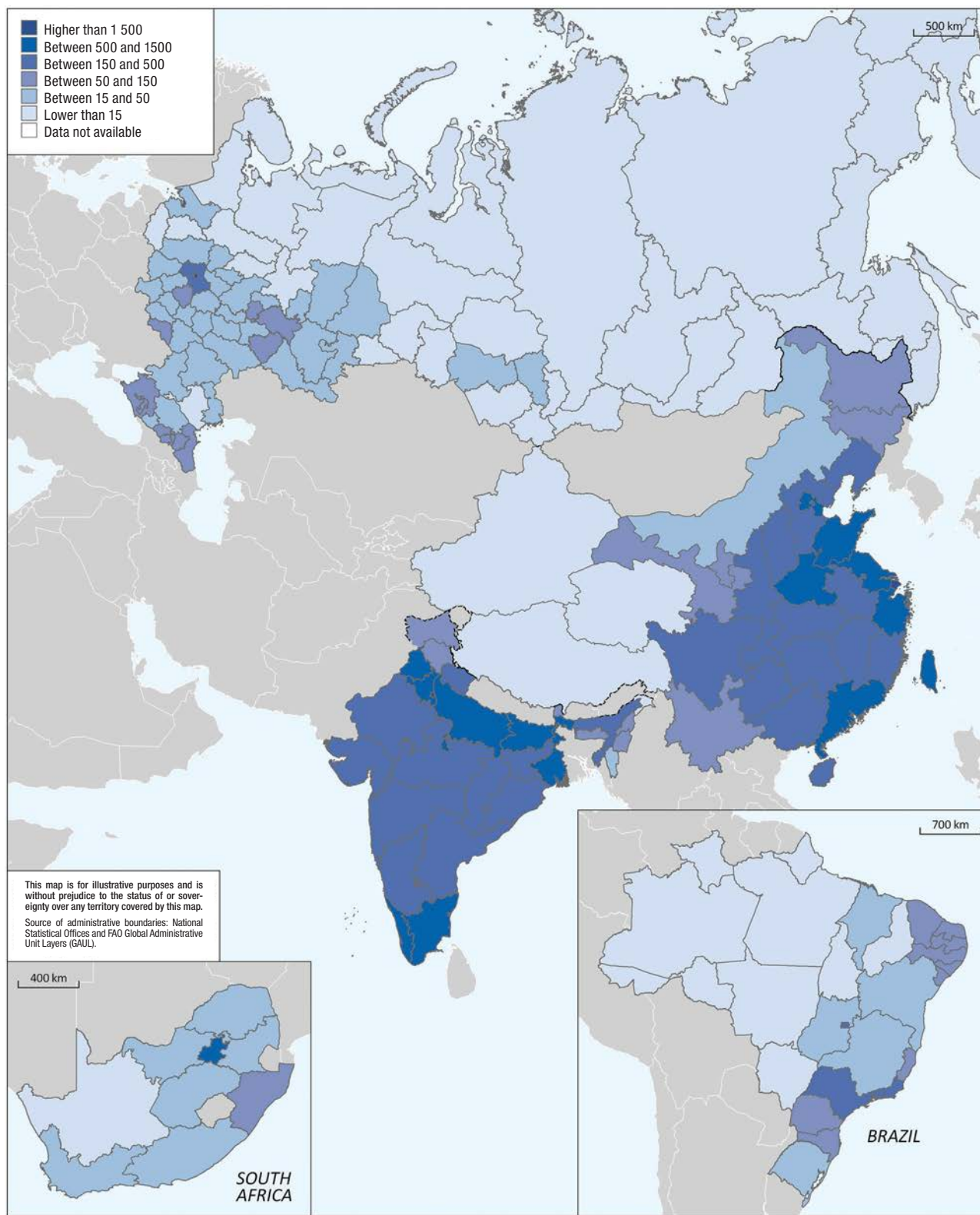
Inhabitants per square kilometre, TL3 regions



StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932915622>

2.7. Regional population density: Emerging economies, 2012

Inhabitants per square kilometre, TL2 regions



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932915641>



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