

## 2. DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND REGIONAL TYPOLOGY

In 2009, almost half of the total OECD population (47%) lived in predominantly urban regions, which accounted for less than 6% of the total area. More than 60% of the population lived in predominantly urban regions in the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom (Figure 2.1).

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

Rural regions in North America and European countries have been further classified as close to a large urban centre or remote. In Norway, Greece, Portugal, Switzerland and Canada more than half of the rural population lives in remote rural regions (Figure 2.2).

As expected, remote rural regions experienced outmigration. As a result, most of them display a net decrease of population and smaller population growth than any other type of regions in all countries, with the exception of Ireland (Figure 2.3).

On the other hand, the share of the population living in predominantly urban regions increased in 20 OECD countries and significantly in Ireland, Turkey, New Zealand, and Canada (more than three percentage points) in the past 14 years. In Korea, Hungary and the United Kingdom, intermediate regions have increased their share of population recently, while in the United States rural regions have gained weight in population (Figure 2.4).

In India the absolute number of new people who moved to urban regions between 2000 and 2009 was equal to all the OECD countries together (more than 50 million). The share of people living in urban regions in China has increased from less than 30% in 1995 to around 45% in 2009, corresponding to some 150 million new urban dwellers in just ten years from 2000 to 2009 (Figure 2.5).

### 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 % 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 *remote rural 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 and Europe (see Annex A for the detailed methodology).

### Source

OECD Regional Database: <http://dotstat/wbos/>.

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

### Reference years and territorial level

1995-2009; TL3.

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

The extended OECD typology is applied only to North America and Europe.

### Further information

OECD (2009), *Regional typology: Updated statistics*.

M. Brezzi, V. Ruiz and L. Dijkstra (2011), *Refinement of the OECD regional typology: The economic performance of rural regions*, OECD regional development Working Papers 2011/3.

[www.oecd.org/gov/regional/statisticsindicators](http://www.oecd.org/gov/regional/statisticsindicators).

### Figure notes

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

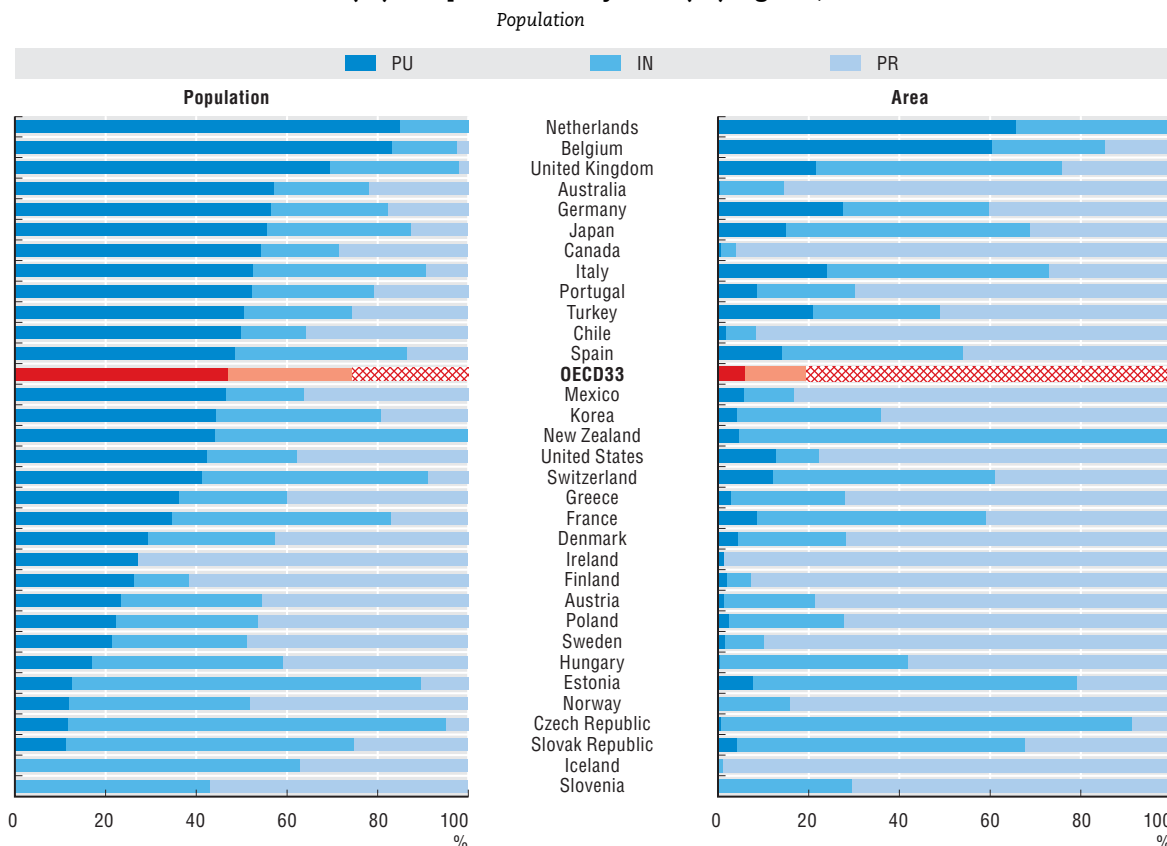
2.4: No predominantly urban regions in Iceland and Slovenia.

2.5: **Measurement gap: OECD rural and urban typology and its extension to emerging economies:** The OECD regional typology classifies small regions into predominantly rural, intermediate or urban according to the density of population in local communities and the presence of an urban centre. This methodology is here applied to Brazil (municipalities) and South Africa (sub-places). The share of urban population in South Africa according to the OECD definition is slightly lower than by the national definition (1996 Census of population, currently under revision by Statistics South Africa). For lack of data on population and area in small communities, the OECD typology is not applied to China and India and national definitions are used, which distinguish only between urban and rural populations (respectively Central Bureau of Statistics of China and Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation of India).

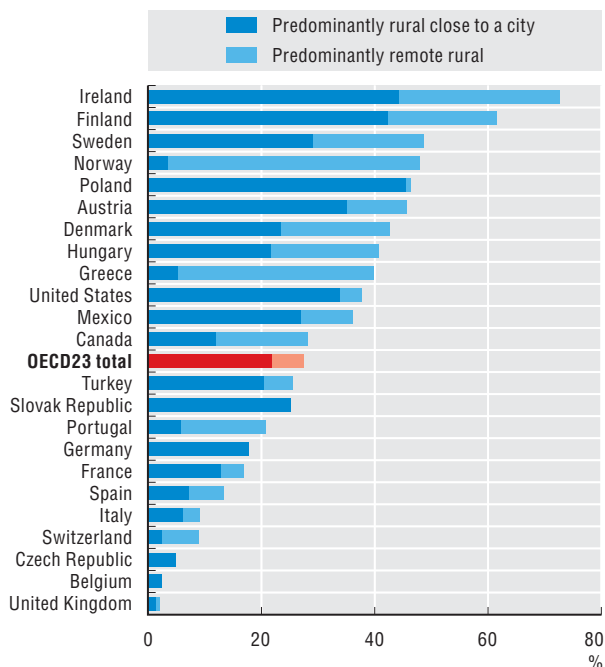
Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

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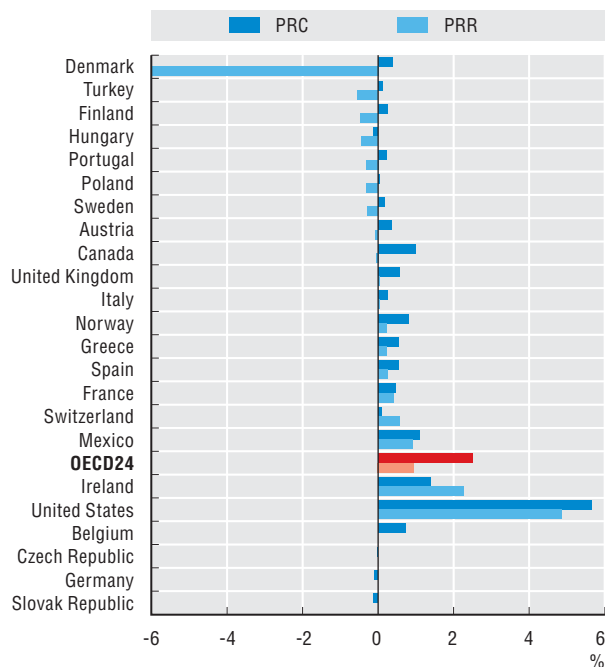
### 2.1. Distribution of population and area into predominantly urban (PU), intermediate (IN) and predominantly rural (PR) regions, 2009



### 2.2. Percentage of the national population living in predominantly rural regions close to a city and predominantly remote rural, 2009

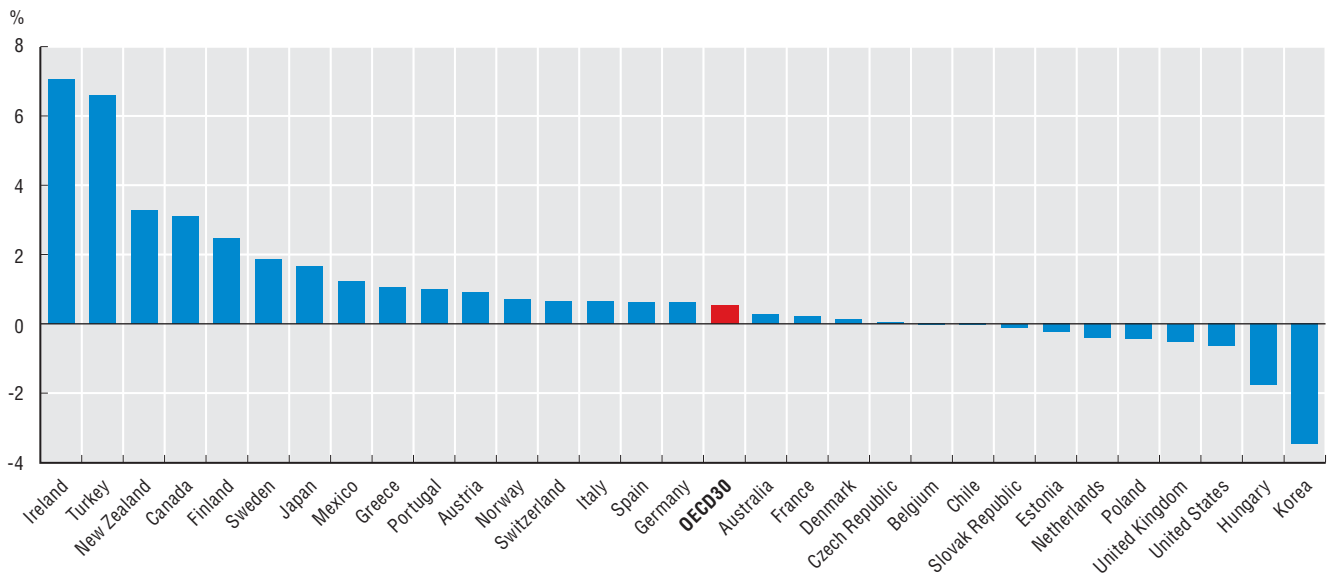


### 2.3. Annual growth rate of population in predominantly rural regions close to a city (PRC) and predominantly remote rural (PRR), 1995-2009



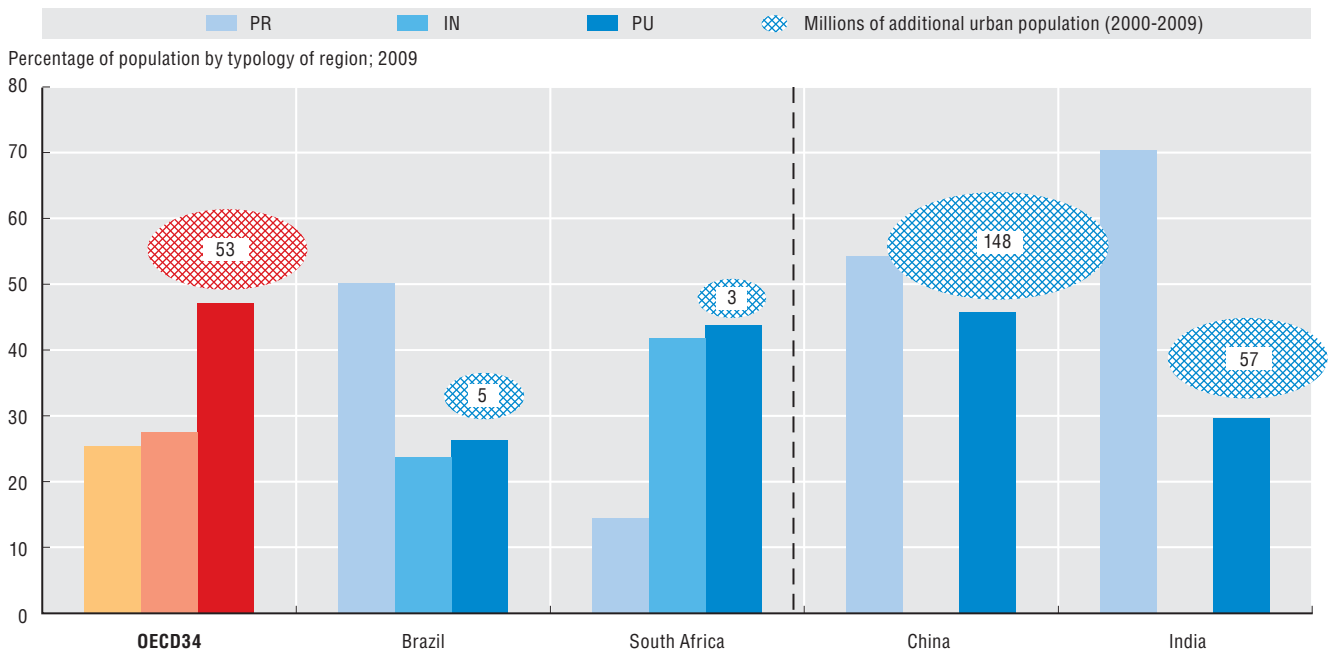
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2.4. Percentage point change in the share of population living in predominantly urban regions, 1995-2009



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932439406>

2.5. Share of population living in predominantly rural (PR), intermediate (IN) or predominantly urban regions (PU) in 2009 and millions of new urban dwellers: OECD countries, Brazil, South Africa, China and India, 2000-2009

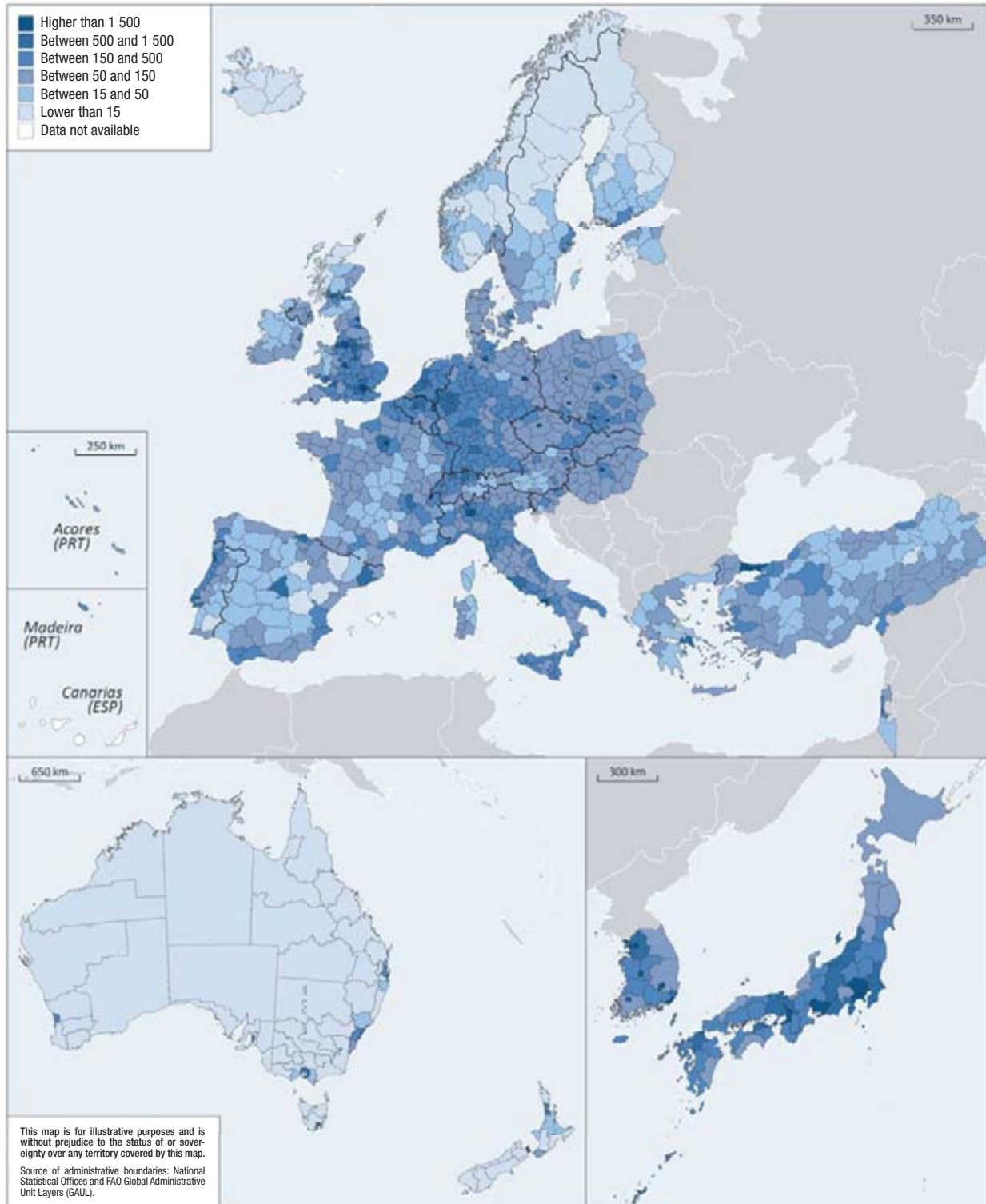


StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932439425>

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### 2.6. Regional population density: Asia, Europe and Oceania, 2009

Inhabitants per square kilometer, TL3 regions

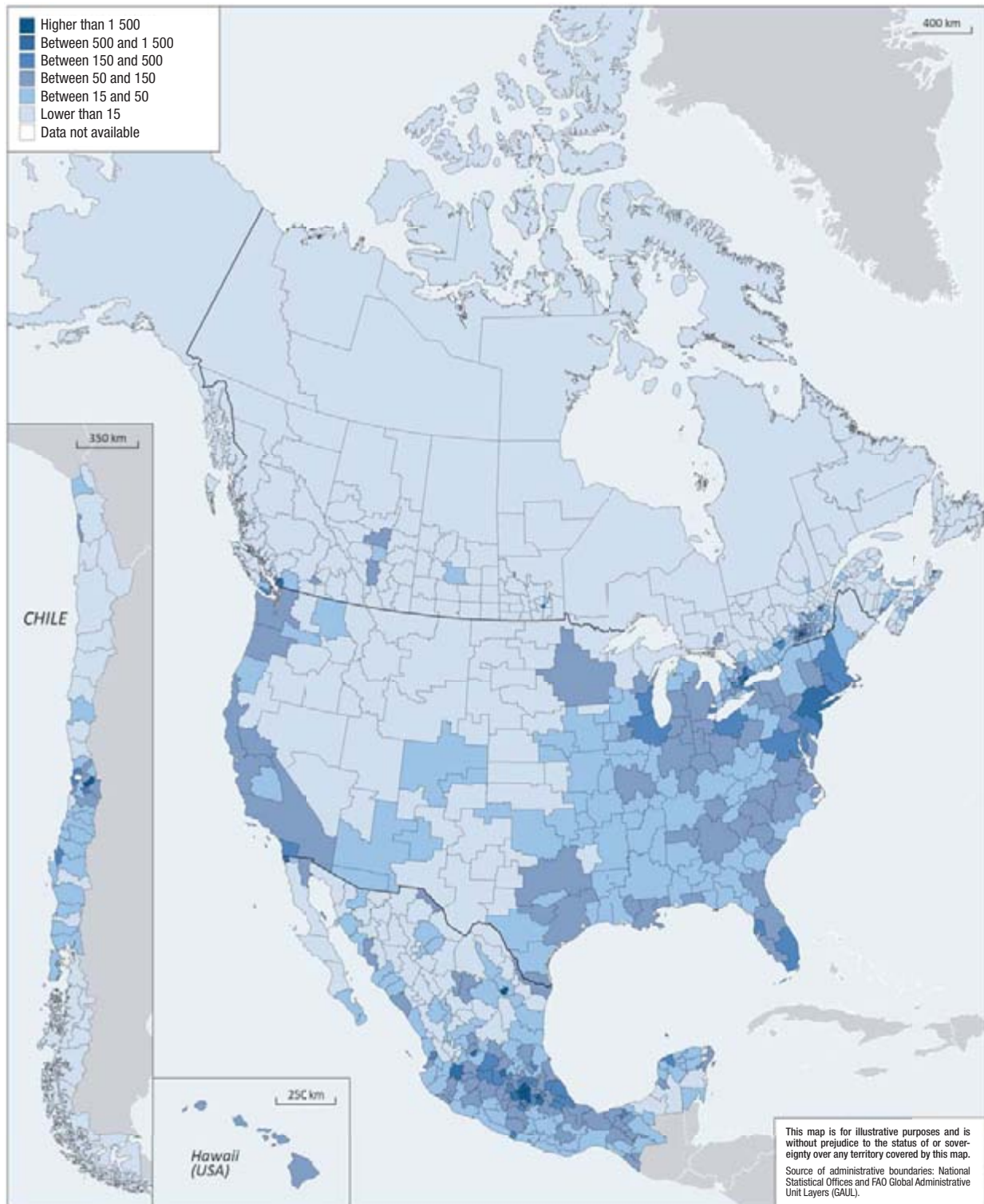


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### 2.7. Regional population density: Americas, 2009

Inhabitants per square kilometer, TL3 regions

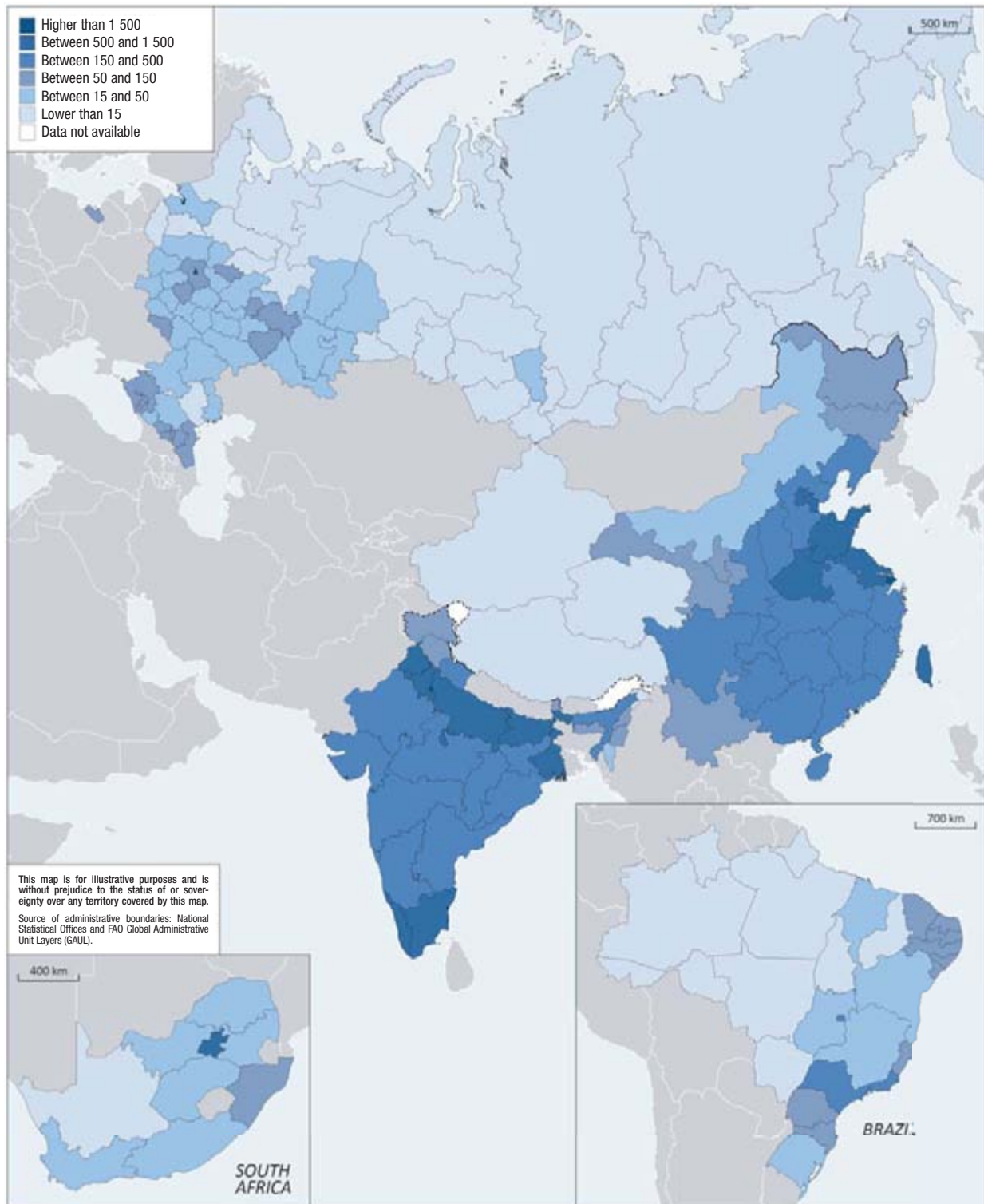


StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932440033>

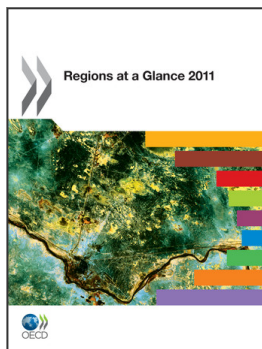
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### 2.8. Regional population density: Emerging economies, 2009

Inhabitants per square kilometer, TL2 regions



StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932440033>



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