

## REGIONAL POPULATION

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 the higher economic opportunities and wider availability of services stemming from urbanisation itself.

### Definition

The number of inhabitants of a given region, the total population, can be either the average annual population or 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 (it is also referred to as the mean population). However, some countries estimate it on a date close to 1 July (mid-year population).

The index of geographic concentration offers an accurate picture of the spatial distribution of the population, as it takes into account the area of each region.

The index compares the economic weight and the geographic weight over all regions in a given country and is constructed to account for both within- and between-

country differences in the size of all regions. It lies between 0 (no concentration) and 100 (maximum concentration) in all countries and is suitable for international comparisons.

### 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 smallest OECD region (Melilla, Spain) has an area of 13 square kilometres whereas the largest (Northwest Territories and Nunavut, Canada) has over 3 million square kilometres. Similarly, the population in OECD regions ranges from about 400 inhabitants in Balance ACT (Australia) to more than 47 million in Kanto (Japan).

To address this issue, the OECD has classified regions within each member country. The classification is based on two territorial levels. The higher level (Territorial Level 2) consists of 335 macro regions and the lower level (Territorial Level 3) is composed of 1 679 micro regions. Territorial Level 0 indicates the territory of the whole country while Level 1 denotes groups of macro regions. This classification which, for European Union countries, is largely consistent with the Eurostat NUTS classification facilitates greater comparability of regions at the same territorial level. Indeed, these two levels, which are officially established and relatively stable in all member countries, are used by many as a framework for implementing regional policies.

### Overview

The concentration of population is highest in Australia, Canada, Iceland, the United States, and Mexico where 10% of regions account for no less than 47% of their population. In contrast, the territorial distribution appears more balanced, according to this statistic, in the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Belgium and Denmark.

For the OECD as a whole, regional population density ranges from close to zero in Kitikmeot Region (Canada) to 20 504 persons per km<sup>2</sup> in Paris (France). The variation is particularly large in France, Korea and the United Kingdom. In these countries, there is a sharp contrast between predominantly urban regions which record densities of more than 6 000 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and predominantly rural regions where population densities do not exceed 100 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> (for a definition of regional typology, see chapter on Regional GDP).

In all OECD countries, almost half (47%) of the population live in predominantly urban regions. In the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, the United States, Italy, Canada and Korea, urban regions account for more than 50% of the national population.

The index of geographic concentration shows that Canada, Australia and Iceland are the countries with the most uneven population distribution; in contrast, geographic concentration is lowest in the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Belgium, the Netherlands and Poland.

### Source

- OECD (2007), *OECD Regions at a Glance: 2007 Edition*, OECD, Paris.

### Further information

#### Analytical publications

- OECD (2001), *OECD Territorial Outlook, 2001 Edition*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2006), *OECD Territorial Reviews – Competitive Cities in the Global Economy*, OECD, Paris.
- OECD (2007), *OECD Territorial Reviews*, OECD, Paris.
- Spiezia, V. (2003), “Measuring Regional Economies”, OECD Statistics Brief, No. 6, October, OECD, Paris, [www.oecd.org/std/statisticsbrief](http://www.oecd.org/std/statisticsbrief).

#### Statistical publications

- OECD (2007), *Labour Force Statistics*, OECD, Paris.

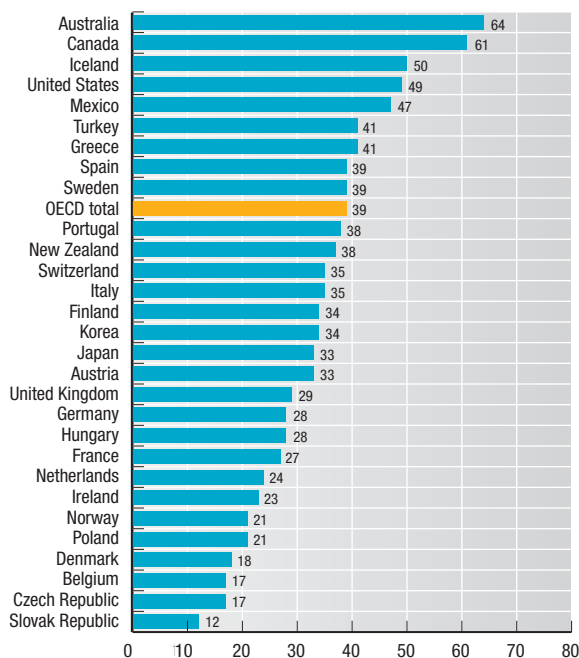
#### Online databases

- OECD Regional Database.



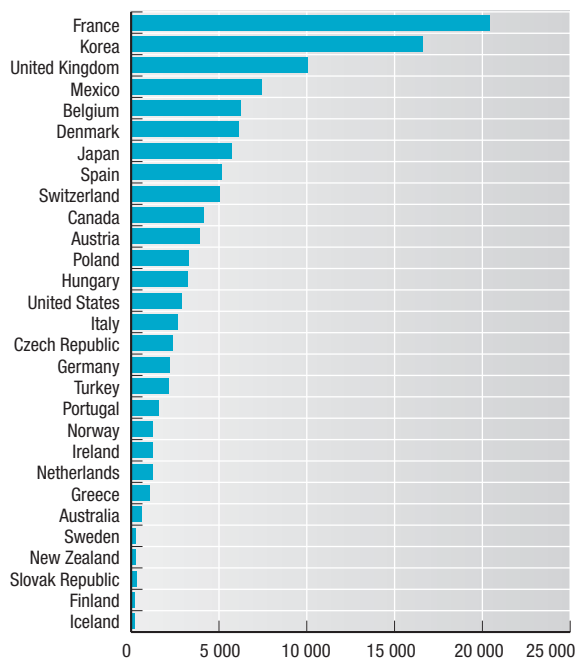
**Share of national population in the 10% of regions with the largest population**

Percentage, 2004



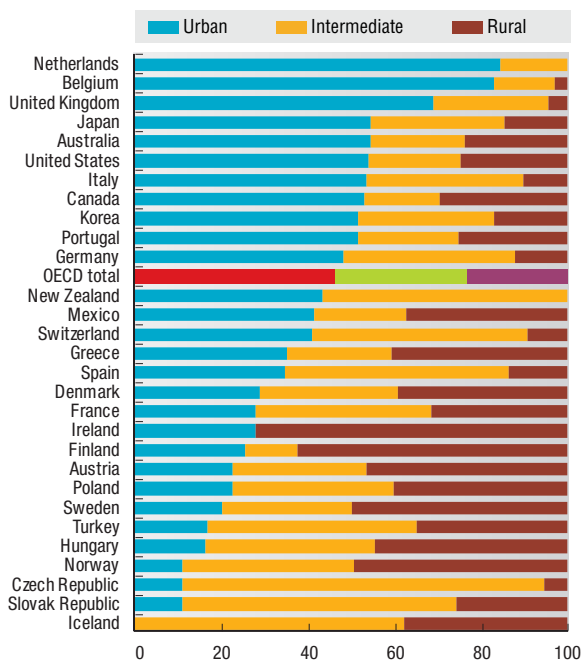
**Range of variation in regional population density**

Maximum – minimum number of persons per km<sup>2</sup>, 2004



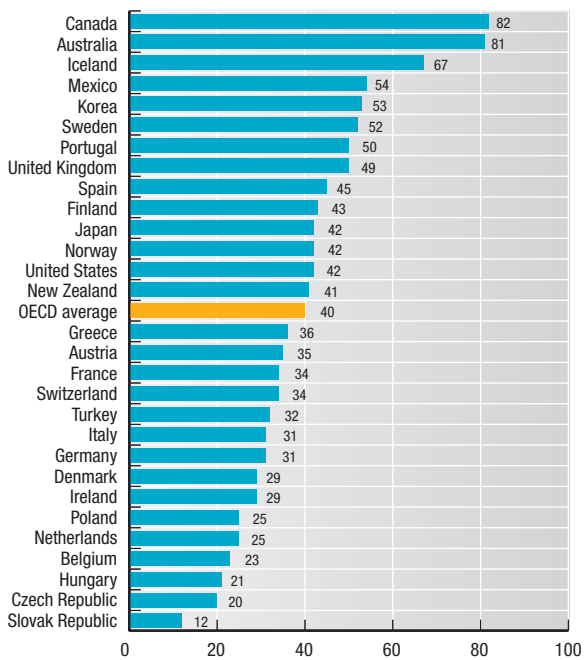
**Distribution of the national population into urban, intermediate and rural regions**

Percentage, 2004

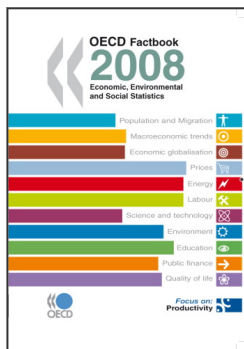


**Index of geographic concentration of population**

Year 2004



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