

9. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION

In 2005, 10% of regions accounted for approximately 40% of the total population in OECD countries (Figure 9.1).

The geographic distribution of population is explained by differences in climatic and environmental conditions which discourages human settlement in some areas and favours 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 urbanization itself.

During the past ten years population in OECD countries grew, on average, 1% per year reaching almost 1 167 million in 2005. According to the OECD classification, regional population ranges from about 300 inhabitants in Australian Capital Territory (Australia) to almost 23 million in the region of New York-Newark-Bridgeport (United States).

The concentration of population was highest in Australia, Canada, Iceland and the United States, where more than half of the population lived in 10% of regions (Figure 9.1).

The geographic concentration index offers a picture of the spatial distribution of the population within a country, as it compares the population weight and the area share over all the regions in a given country. The index shows that Canada, Australia and Iceland were the countries with the most uneven population distribution; in contrast geographic concentration was lowest in the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Belgium.

In the past ten years, the geographic concentration of population has increased significantly in Iceland, Turkey, New Zealand, Korea, Norway and Finland (more than two times higher than the OECD average), while slightly decreased in the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the Slovak Republic and Belgium (Figure 9.2).

The most populated region in each country ranges from 23 million inhabitants in the region of New York (includes Newark and Bridgeport – United States) to 187 000 in the Capital Region of Iceland. In ten countries more than one-fifth of the national population is concentrated in the most populated region. The per cent of national population living in the most populated region ranges from 3% in Inner London East in the United Kingdom to 62% in the Capital Region of Iceland (Figure 9.3).

Definition

The total population of a given region can be either the annual average population or the population at a specific date during the year considered.

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 335 large regions and the lower level (TL3) consists of 1 681 small regions. These two levels are officially established and are used as a framework for implementing regional policies in most countries.

The geographic concentration index offers a picture of the spatial distribution of the population within each country, as it compares the population weight and the land area weight over all TL3 regions (see Annex C for the formula). The index ranges between 0 and 100: the higher its value, the larger the regional concentration of population. International comparisons of the index can be affected by the different size of regions in each country.

Source

OECD Regional Database, <http://dotstat/wbos/>, theme: Regional Statistics.

See Annex B for data sources and country related metadata.

Reference years and territorial level

1995-2005; TL3

Further information

Territorial grids, www.oecd.org/gov/regional/statisticsindicators.

Figure notes

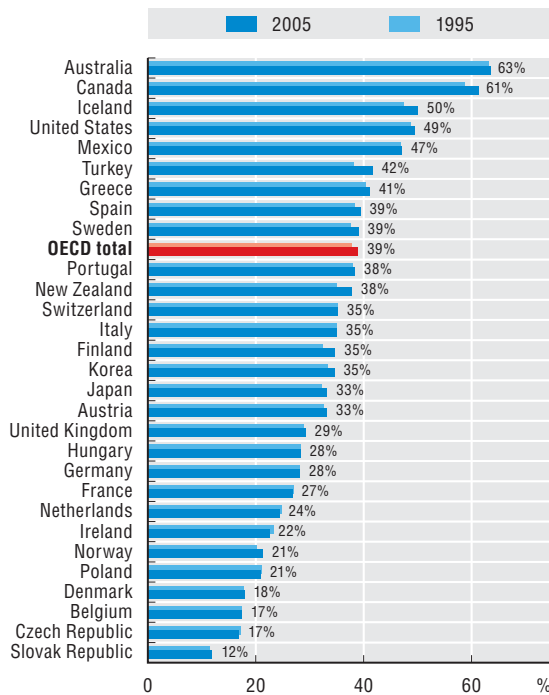
Figures 9.1 and 9.2: Available data: New Zealand 1996-2005.

Figure 9.3: Distrito Federal (Mexico) includes the following delegations: Azcapotzalco, Coyoacan, Cuajimalpa de Morelos, Gustavo A. Madero, Iztacalco, Iztapalapa, Magdalena Contreras, Alvaro Obregon, Tlalpan, Xochimilco, Benito Juarez, Cuauhtemoc, Miguel Hidalgo, Venustiano Carranza (DF).

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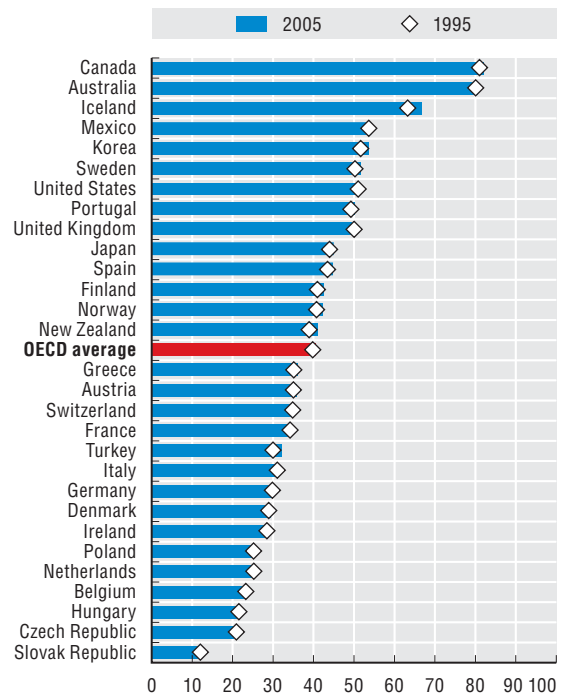
9.1 Per cent of national population living in the 10% of the TL3 regions with the largest population

Almost 40% of OECD population lived in only 10% of regions in 2005.



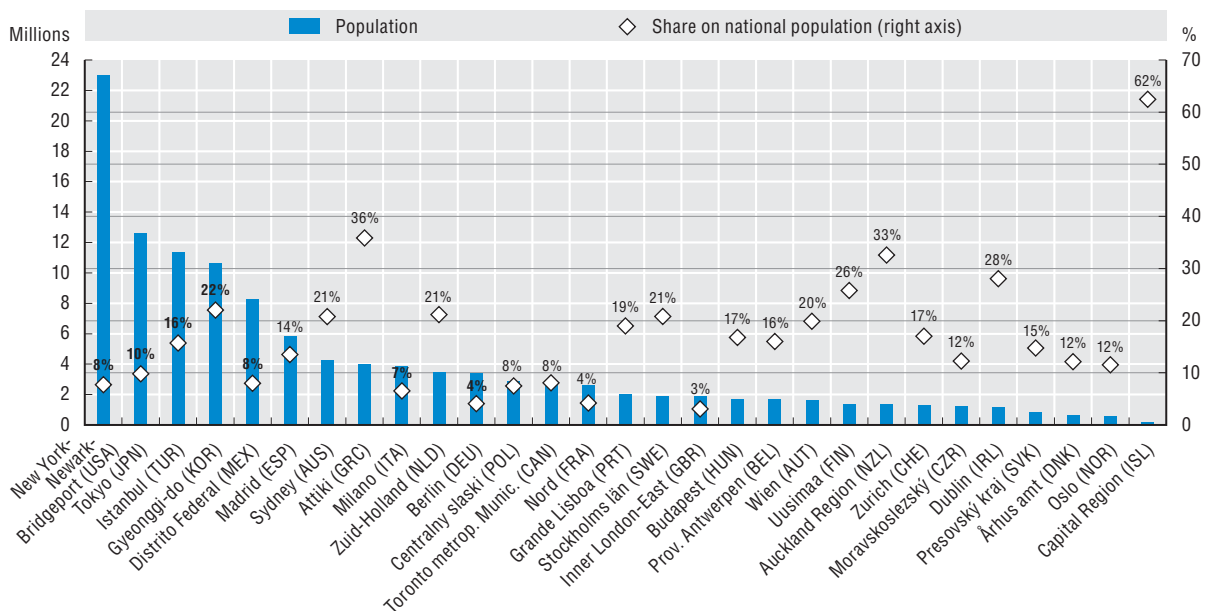
9.2 Geographic concentration index of population (TL3 regions)

Population was most concentrated relative to land area in Canada, Australia and Iceland.

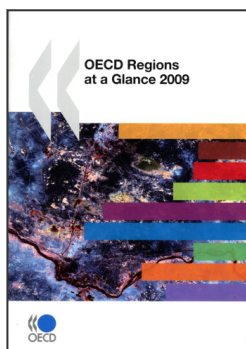


9.3 Largest TL3 region within each country when ranked by population size, 2005

In 2005, New York – Newark – Bridgeport was the largest TL3 region in the US, representing 8% of the US population.



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