

1. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION

Population is unevenly distributed among regions within OECD member countries. In 2003, approximately 40% of the OECD population was located in just 10% of regions (Figure 1.1). The concentration was greatest in Australia and Canada, where 10% of regions accounted for 64% and 61%, respectively, of the national population. Iceland (50%), the United States (49%) and Mexico (47%) followed with around half of their population living in 10% of regions. In contrast, the territorial distribution of the population was more balanced in the Slovak Republic (12%), the Czech Republic and Belgium (17%) and Denmark (18%).

During 1998-2003, concentration increased by approximately half a percentage point (0.6) across all OECD regions. It increased most significantly in Turkey (by 1.8 percentage points), New Zealand and Canada (1.6) and Iceland (1.3), and decreased the most in Ireland (-0.7) and Hungary (-0.4).

Concentration is rising...

The geographic concentration index compares the geographic distribution of population to the area of all regions, not just the top 10%. According to this statistic (Figure 1.2), Canada (82), Australia (81) and Iceland (67) had the highest concentration in 2003. In contrast, population was more evenly distributed in the Slovak Republic (12), the Czech Republic (20), Hungary (21), Belgium (23), the Netherlands and Poland (25). During 1998-2003, concentration decreased in only seven countries and increased particularly sharply in Iceland (1.7), Korea (1.3), New Zealand and Turkey (1.1).

... and urbanisation has accelerated the trend

The geographic distribution of a country's population is determined by factors such as

climatic and environmental conditions. These tend to discourage human settlement in some areas and favour concentration around a few urban centres. This pattern is reinforced by the increased availability in urban areas of economic opportunities and services. In 2003, almost half of the total OECD population (46%) lived in urban regions (Figure 1.3). Concentration in urban regions was particularly high in the Netherlands (85%), Belgium (83%) and the United Kingdom (70%).

Intermediate regions also attract a considerable share of the OECD population (31%), particularly in the Czech Republic (84%), the Slovak Republic and Iceland (63%), New Zealand (57%), Spain (52%) and Switzerland (50%). Predominantly rural regions account for a smaller, but still significant, proportion of the OECD population (23%). In 2003, the share (Figure 1.4) was particularly significant in Ireland (72%) and Finland (62%).

Rural populations are diminishing

During 1998-2003, the share of population living in urban regions increased by over 1 percentage point in New Zealand, Canada, Turkey and Finland, while it decreased by no less than 1 percentage point in Korea and Hungary. The share of population in intermediate regions increased by more than 1 percentage point in Korea, Iceland and Hungary and decreased by more than 1 percentage point only in New Zealand. Finally, the share of population living in rural regions increased only in Ireland, Hungary and the United Kingdom.

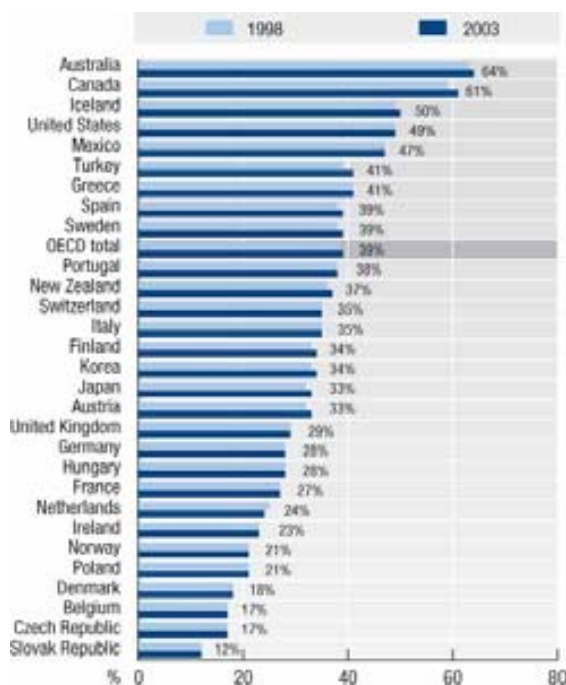
Definition

Total population is the number of inhabitants of a given region. 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 the 1st of January of two consecutive years (it is also referred to as the mean population).

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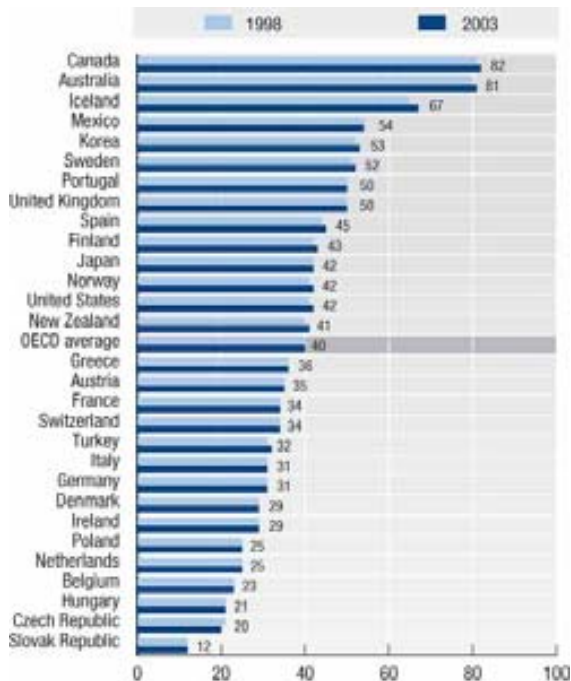
1.1. In 17 OECD countries more than one-third of the national population was concentrated in only 10% of regions in 2003

Per cent of national population who live in the 10% of regions with the highest number of people (TL3)



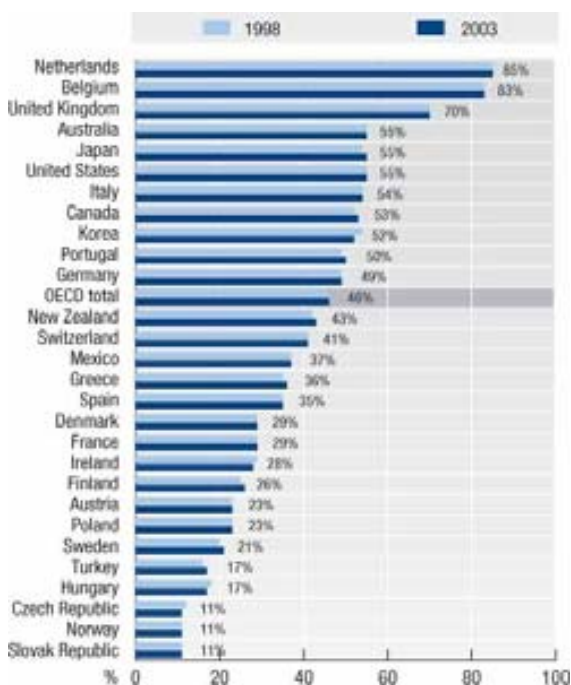
1.2. Canada, Australia and Iceland display the highest geographic concentration of population

Index of geographic concentration of population (TL3)



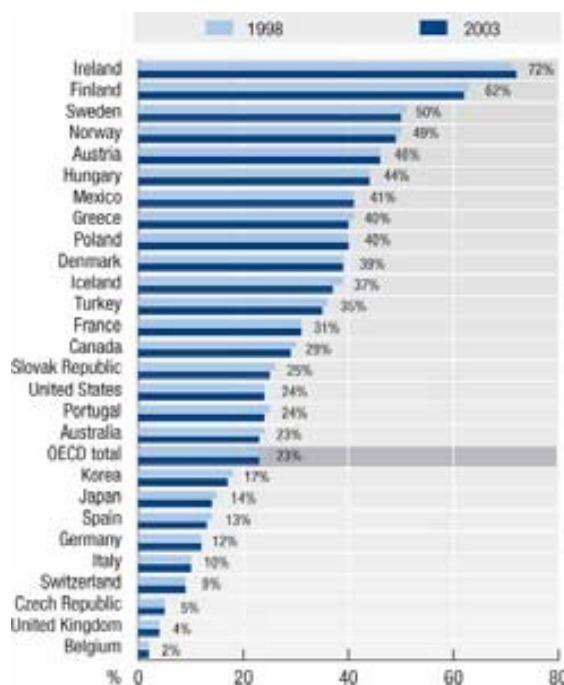
1.3. Between 1998 and 2003, the share of population living in urban regions increased in 18 out of 30 OECD countries

Distribution of the national population into predominantly urban regions (TL3)



1.4. Only Ireland experienced a significant increase in the share of the population living in rural areas between 1998 and 2003

Distribution of the national population into predominantly rural regions (TL3)

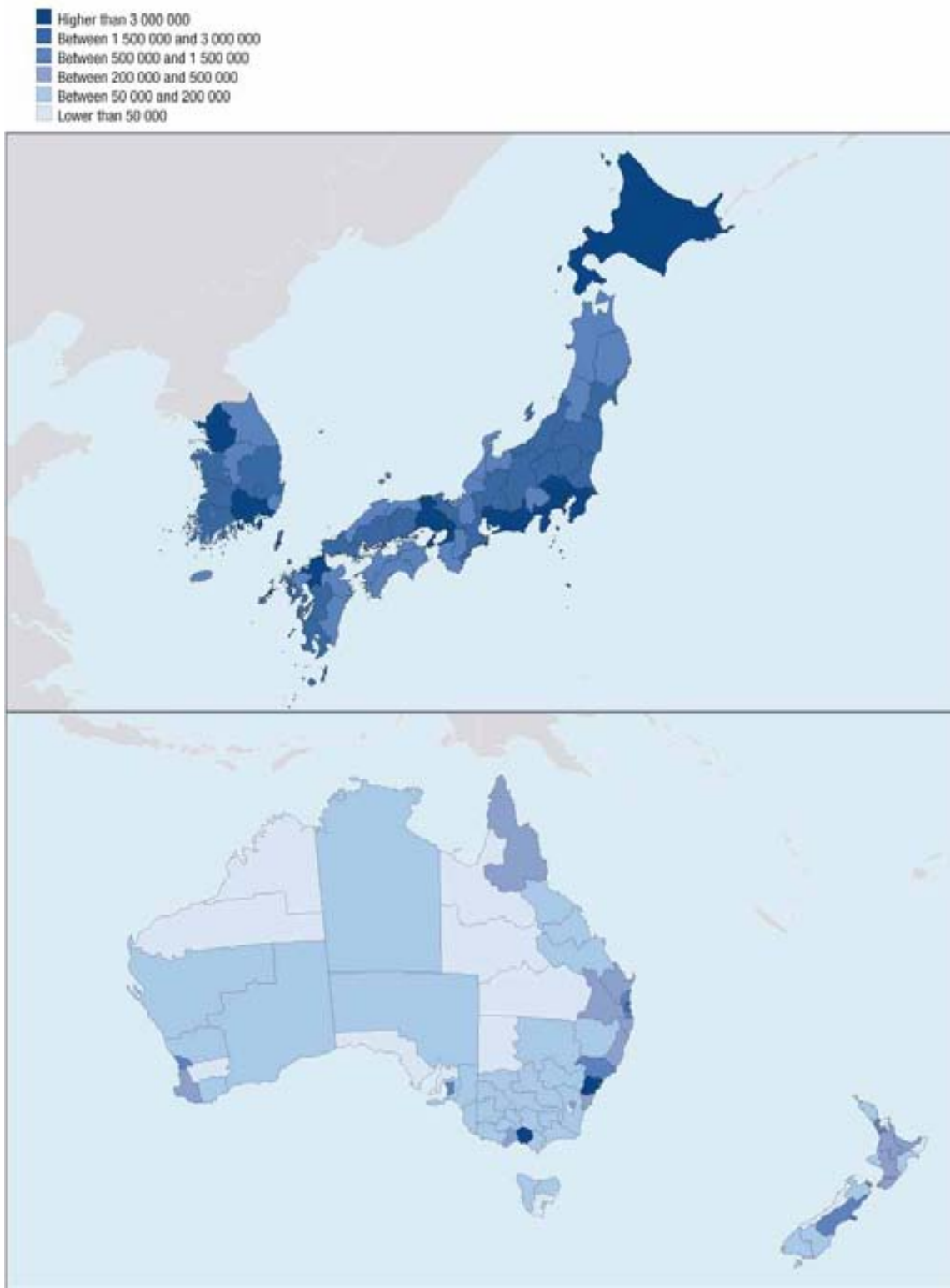



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1. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION

1.5. Regional population: Asia and Oceania

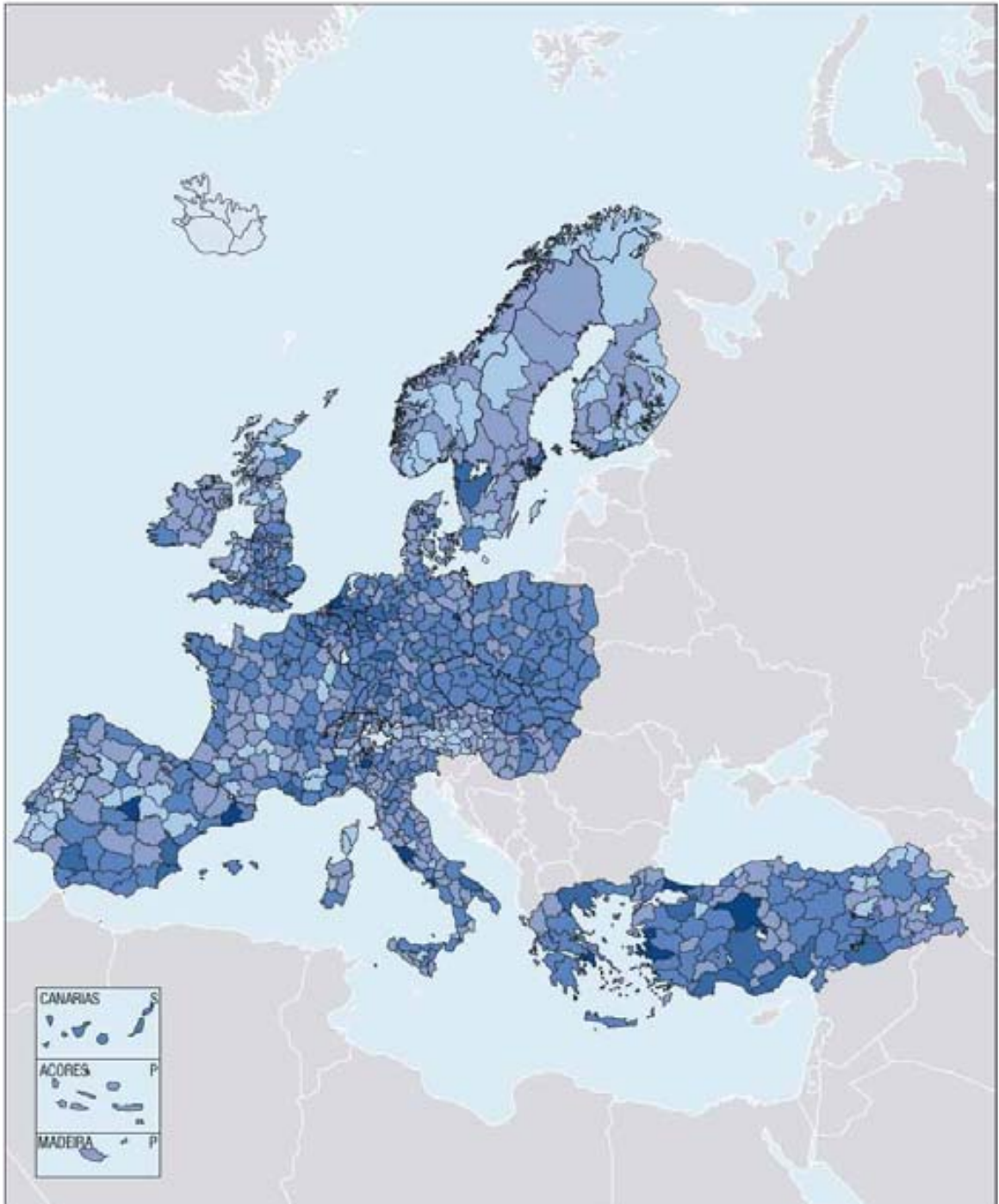
2003




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1.6. Regional population: Europe

2003



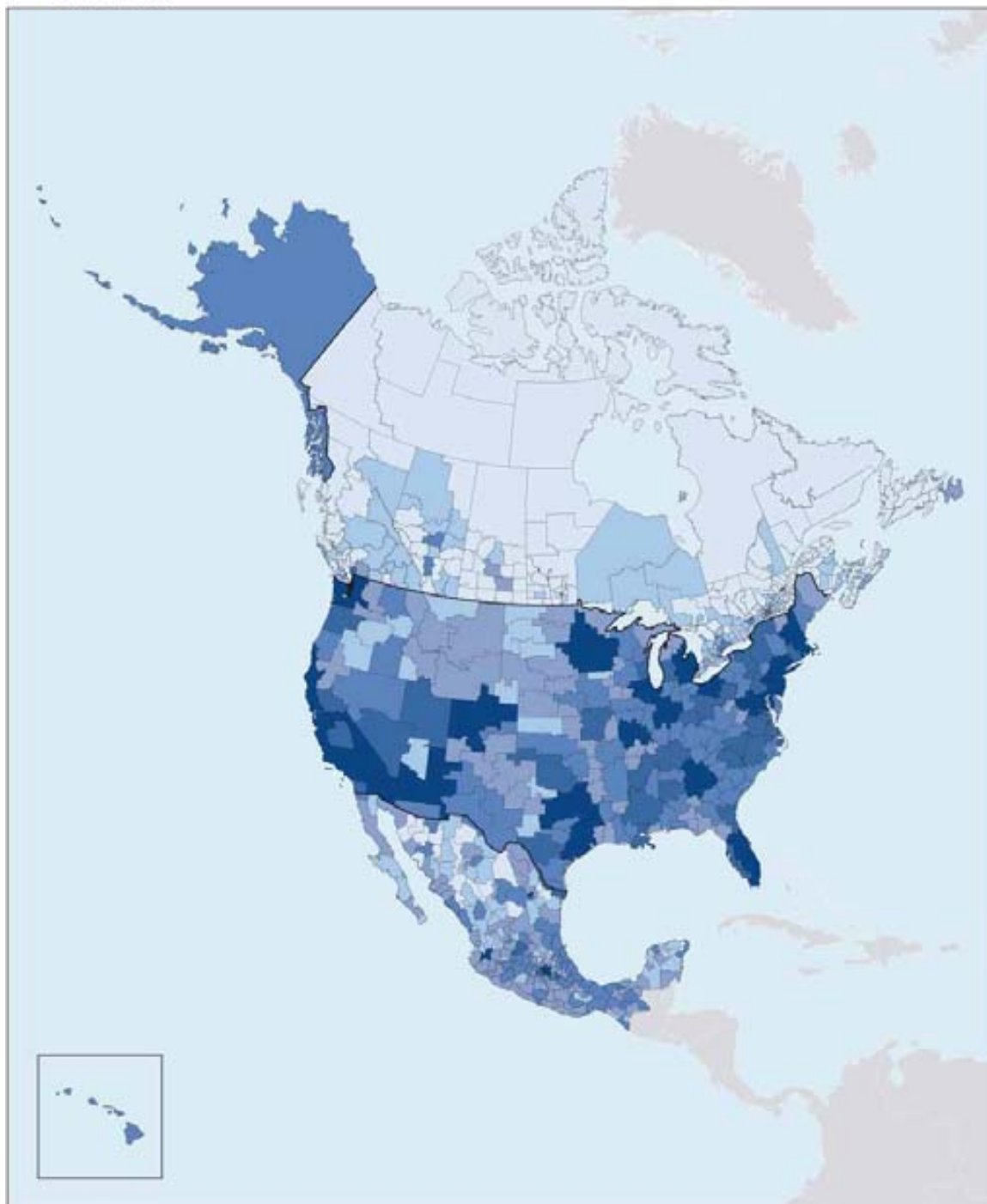
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1. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION

1.7. Regional population: North America

2003

- Higher than 3 000 000
- Between 1 500 000 and 3 000 000
- Between 500 000 and 1 500 000
- Between 200 000 and 500 000
- Between 50 000 and 200 000
- Lower than 50 000



StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/318785005507>

Large urban agglomerations: how much can they grow?

In OECD countries the population tends to concentrate in urban regions. In 2003, almost half of the total OECD population (46%) lived in urban regions. This concentration is mainly due to the benefits of “agglomeration economies”. People want to live where firms – and therefore job opportunities – are concentrated. For their part, firms want to locate where demand – and therefore population – is large. Thus, the presence of firms and workers in an urban region will attract firms and more workers from other regions, thus increasing concentration.

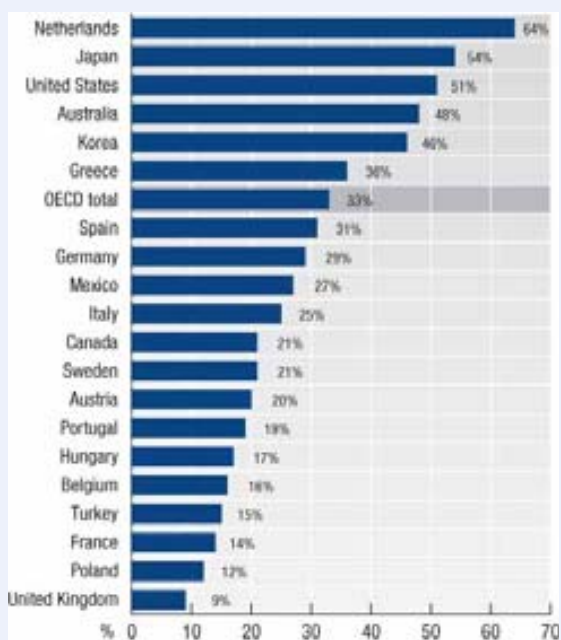
This cycle is likely to continue up to a certain threshold, beyond which “diseconomies of agglomeration” tend to arise. When the concentration of people and firms in the same place is too great, increased pollution, traffic congestion, real estate prices and social tensions generate costs that eventually exceed the initial benefits from agglomeration.

In 2003, one-third of the OECD population lived in large urban agglomerations, i.e. urban regions with more than 1.5 millions inhabitants. The importance of urban agglomeration, however, varies significantly among countries. In the Netherlands, two-thirds of the national population lived in highly populated urban regions, while the share in Japan, the United States, Australia and Korea was approximately one half of the total (Figure 1.8). In contrast, there were no urban regions in 2003 with more than 1.5 million inhabitants in the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, the Slovak Republic and Switzerland.

With 22 million inhabitants, the region of New York has the largest population among all OECD urban regions, accounting for about 8% of the total population of the United States (Figure 1.9). The highest concentration of population in one urban region occurs in Greece, where more than one-third of the total population (36%) lives in the urban region of Attiki (Athens).

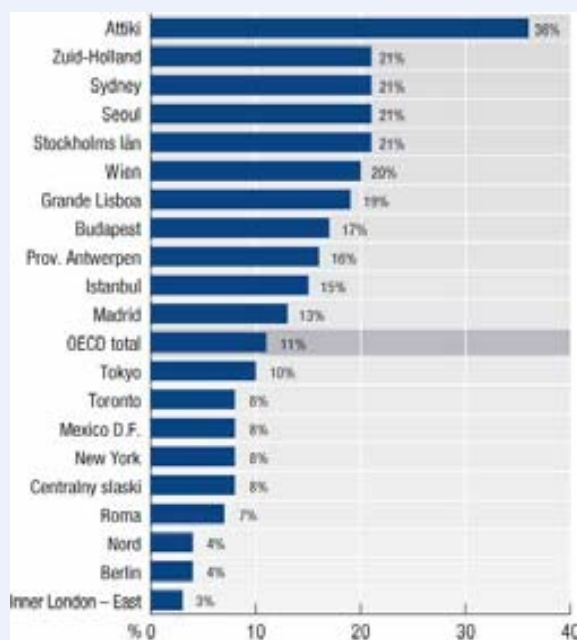
1.8. About half of the population of the Netherlands, Japan, the United States, Australia and Korea lives in large urban regions

Per cent of national population living in urban regions larger than 1.5 million inhabitants, 2003 (TL3)



1.9. In six countries more than one-fifth of the population was concentrated in one large urban region in 2003

Per cent of national population living in the largest urban region larger than 1.5 million inhabitants, 2003 (TL3)



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Symbols and Abbreviations

OECD (25) average	Unweighted average of 25 OECD countries.
OECD (25) total	Sum over all regions of 25 OECD countries.
OECD (25)	Range of variation over all regions of 25 OECD countries.
TL2	Territorial Level 2.
TL3	Territorial Level 3
NOG	Non Official Grid
*	Differences in the definition of data or regions. Please check the “Sources and Methodology” section.
PU	Predominantly Urban
IN	Intermediate
PR	Predominantly Rural
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
USD	United States Dollar





I. REGIONS AS ACTORS OF NATIONAL GROWTH

1. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION
2. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION
3. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF GDP
4. REGIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO GROWTH IN NATIONAL GDP
5. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF INDUSTRIES
6. REGIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT
7. GEOGRAPHIC CONCENTRATION OF PATENTS

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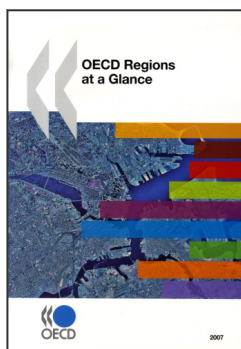
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