

# 1. SPECIAL FOCUS ON METROPOLITAN AREAS

## Administrative organisation of metropolitan areas

Metropolitan areas are continuously changing their spatial organisation, reflecting the evolution of economy and society. These changes affect the quality of life, the demand for transport infrastructure, and the global environmental footprint of urbanisation, among other factors. Regional, metropolitan and local governments' decisions depend critically on the physical structure of the city. On average, 80% of the OECD urban population lives in the cores of metropolitan areas and only 20% in the hinterlands, but in a few European countries the share of population in urban cores is below 50% (Figure 1.30). While most of the metropolitan areas have grown with contiguous urban cores, 30 metropolitan areas show a polycentric structure with more than one urban core.

Metropolitan areas are important units for public policy. However, their boundaries do not generally match the administrative ones. The number of local governments inside the boundaries of a metropolitan area gives an indication of possible challenges for efficient and equitable service delivery, policy co-ordination, and distribution of wealth in a city, among others. The average population size by local government in metropolitan areas ranges from 4 000 people in the Czech Republic to over 200 000 in Ireland, the United Kingdom and Mexico (Figure 1.31).

### Definition

The metropolitan areas are defined as the functional urban areas (FUA) with population above 500 000.

The functional urban areas are defined as densely populated municipalities (urban cores) and adjacent municipalities with high levels of commuting towards the densely populated urban cores (hinterland). Functional urban areas can extend across administrative boundaries, reflecting the economic geography of where people actually live and work.

The number of local governments in a metropolitan area are identified as:

- only one local level of government, notably the lowest tier.
- only general-purpose local governments, the specific function governments are excluded (for example school districts, health agencies, etc.).

Annex B includes the list of local governments by country.

The administrative fragmentation is defined as the ratio between the number of local governments and the population in a metropolitan area.

The number of local governments per 100 000 people – a measure of administrative fragmentation of the metropolitan area – varies from around 25 in the Czech Republic to less than 0.5 in Ireland and the United Kingdom (Figure 1.32). While on average the number of local governments increases for larger metropolitan areas, the territorial organisation of countries has an important impact: for cities of similar population size the territorial fragmentation can be as different as 33 local governments per 100 000 population in Strasbourg (France) to 6 in Cheongju (Korea) and 0.9 in El Paso (United States).

Rouen (France) and Brno (Czech Republic) are the OECD metropolitan areas with the highest administrative fragmentation, 49 and 38 local governments per 100 000 inhabitants, respectively (Figure 1.33).

### Source

OECD (2013), "Metropolitan areas", *OECD Regional Statistics* (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/data-00531-en>.

See Annexes A and B for data sources and country-related metadata.

### Reference years and territorial level

2012; metropolitan areas.

The functional urban areas have not been identified in Australia, Iceland, Israel, New Zealand and Turkey. The FUA of Luxembourg does not appear in the figures since it has a population below 500 000.

### Further information

OECD (2012), *Redefining "Urban": A New Way to Measure Metropolitan Areas*, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264174108-en>.

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

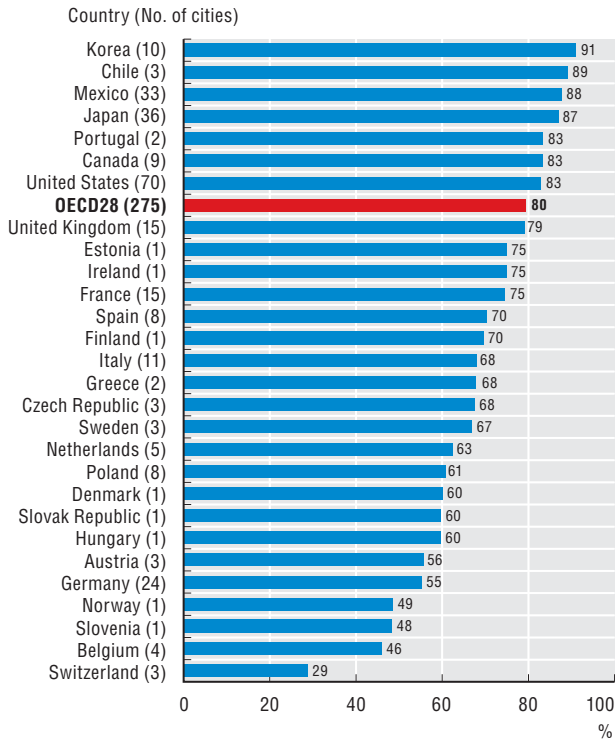
### Figure notes

1.30-1.33: The number of local governments refers to circa 2001. (Annex B).

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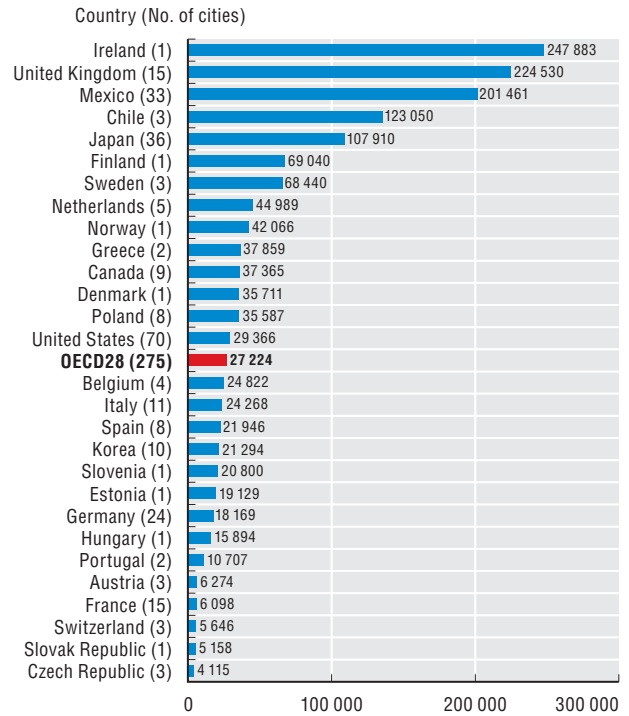
## Administrative organisation of metropolitan areas

**1.30. Per cent of metropolitan area population in the urban core, 2012**



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913171>

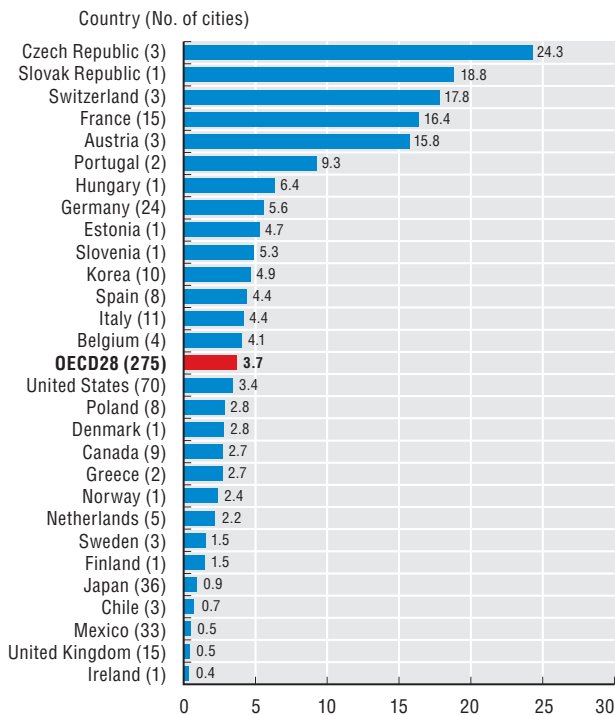
**1.31. Average population size per local government in metropolitan areas, 2012**



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913190>

**1.32. Administrative fragmentation of metropolitan areas, 2012**

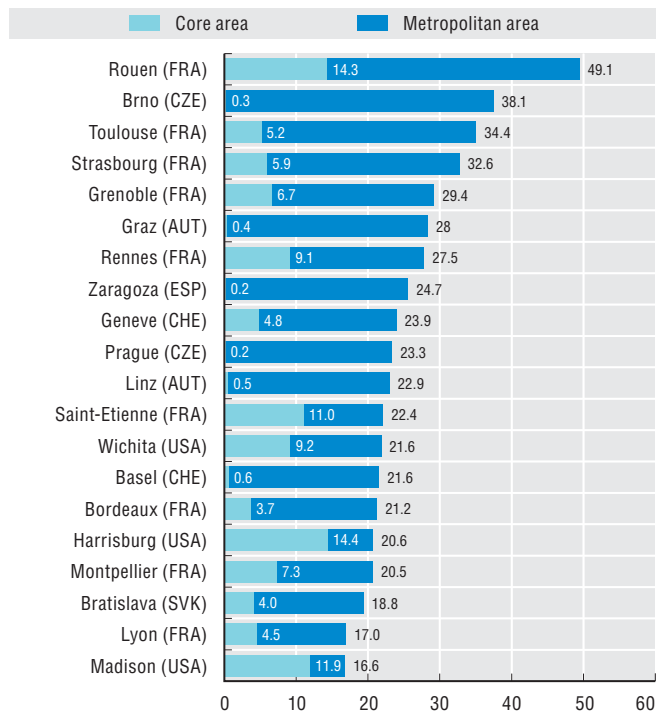
Number of local governments per 100 000 population



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913209>

**1.33. Top 20 administratively fragmented metropolitan areas, 2012**

Number of local governments per 100 000 population



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932913228>



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