

3. REGIONS AND CITIES FACING DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Population growth across OECD cities and rural areas

Most OECD countries experienced an increase in the share of the population living in cities.

Over the last 50 years, the population in OECD countries has concentrated around large and densely populated regions. The concentration of the population within a country is shaped by many factors including the distribution of economic activities within the country and the presence of public services or amenities. In 2015, almost half of the population of OECD countries (49%) lived in cities, which represented only 6% of the total OECD surface area. Of the remaining population, 26% lived in towns and semi-dense areas and 24% in rural areas.

Across OECD countries, the distribution of population across different types of settlements is highly uneven. While more than 60% of the population lived in cities in Chile, Colombia, Japan and Korea, less than 20% of the population lived in such areas in the Slovak Republic and Slovenia (Figure 3.2). On average, rural areas accounted for around one-quarter of the population and 98.5% of the land area in OECD countries. In countries such as Ireland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, one out of two people lived in rural regions which is double the OECD average (Figure 3.1).

Since 2000, the share of the population living in cities has increased by around 3 percentage points (pp) across the OECD, mainly at the expense of rural areas (Figure 3.3). During this period, the share of the population in towns and semi-dense areas and rural areas has decreased on average by 1.3 and 1.5 pp respectively. The relative growth of cities was particularly strong in Iceland, New Zealand and Türkiye, where their population share rose by over 7 pp.

Sources

OECD (2022), *OECD Regional Statistics (database)*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>.

Reference years and territorial level

2000-15, TL3 regions are classified according to metropolitan access classification (see below for further details).

Definitions

Degree of urbanisation: This typology reflects the urban-rural continuum and proposes three classes instead of the dichotomy of urban or rural. The three classes are: i) cities (or densely populated areas); ii) towns and semi-dense areas (or intermediate density areas); and iii) rural areas (or thinly populated areas).

Access to metropolitan areas typology: The proposed classification distinguishes TL3 regions based on the level of access to metropolitan areas (Fadic et al., 2019). At a first level, regions where at least half of the regional population live in a metropolitan area of at least 250 000 inhabitants are considered “metropolitan” regions, and as “non-metropolitan” otherwise. Metropolitan regions are further distinguished as “large metro” regions if they include or are part of a metropolitan area of at least 1.5 million inhabitants. “Non-metropolitan” regions are sub-classified in regions “with access to a metro” if half of its population can reach a metropolitan area within a 60-minute drive. When half of the regional population can reach only a smaller-sized city (between 50 000 and 250 000 inhabitants), the region is classified as “with access to a small/medium city”. In all other cases, the region is classified as “remote”. The classification relies on the concept of FUAs (Dijkstra et al., 2019; OECD, 2012) to delineate metropolitan areas of at least 250 000 inhabitants or smaller-sized cities.

Further information

Territorial grids and regional typology (Annex B).

Eurostat (2013), *Urban-Rural Typology*, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/rural-development/methodology>.

Figure notes

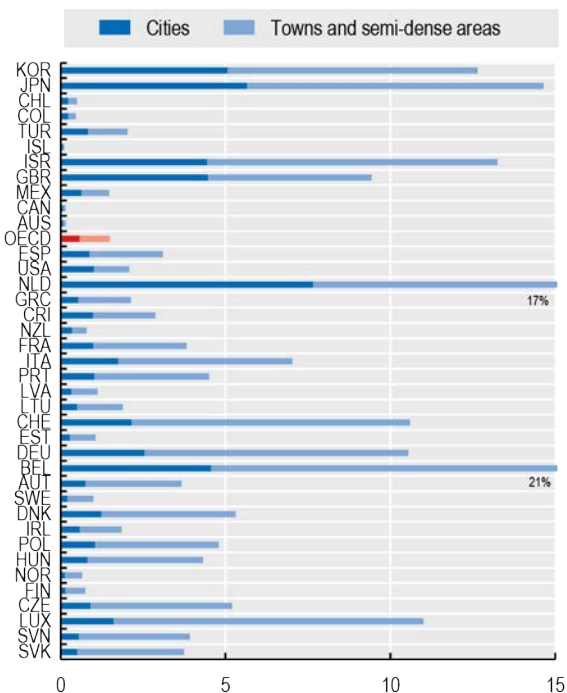
3.1-3.3: The OECD average corresponds to the population-weighted average of 38 OECD countries.

3. REGIONS AND CITIES FACING DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Population growth across OECD cities and rural areas

3.1. Distribution of area by the degree of urbanisation

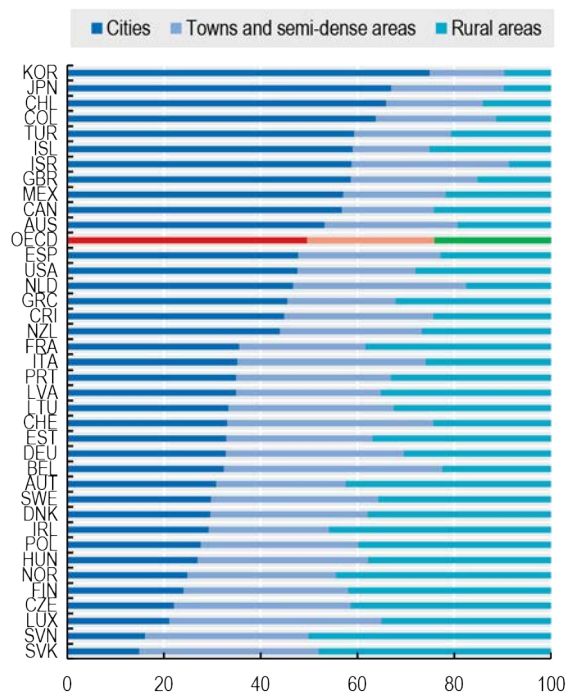
Area share of each type of settlement



StatLink <https://stat.link/5a4sv6>

3.2. Distribution of population by the degree of urbanisation

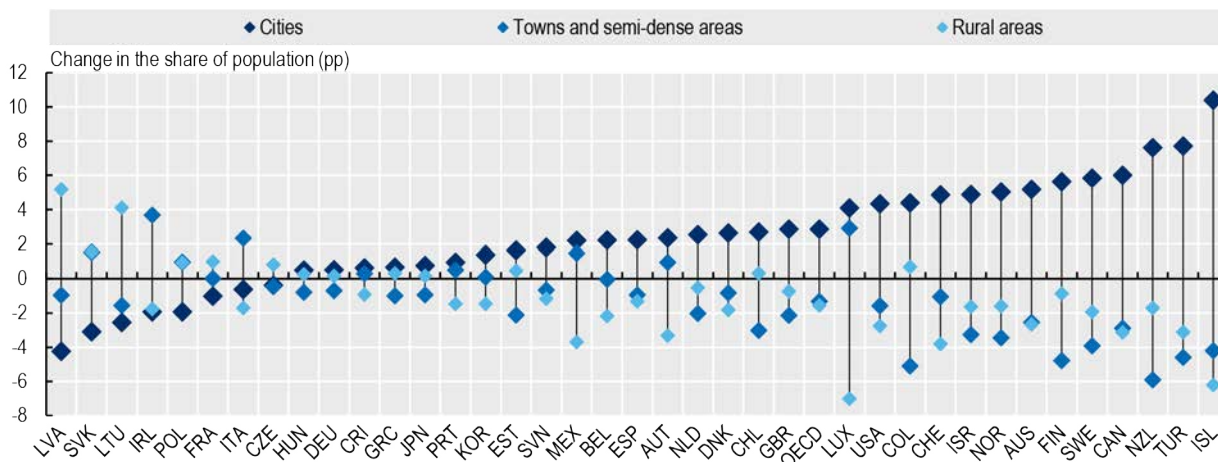
Population share of each type of settlement



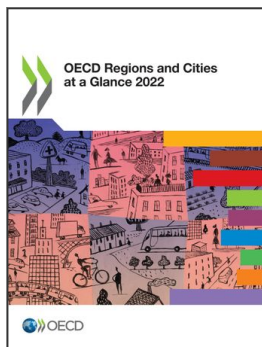
StatLink <https://stat.link/s1zfoj>

3.3. Change in the share of population by degree of urbanisation, 2000-15

Change in the share of population by type of area over the total population



StatLink <https://stat.link/lfxkrp>



From:
OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2022

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/14108660-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2022), "Population growth across OECD cities and rural areas", in *OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2022*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/b15dbcb7-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.