

The number of hospital beds usually provides a measure of the resources available for delivering health services in hospitals.

It does not, however, provide a comprehensive measure of capacity since it does not capture the capacity of hospitals to furnish services for non-admitted patients (*e.g.* outpatient consultations, day care and ambulatory surgery).

Nor is it a measure of physical accessibility to hospital health services. In fact, a region may have a large number of hospital beds but accessibility may be low if the hospital is located far from the population.

Japan has the most beds per capita

In 2004, there were on average 5.6 hospital beds per 1 000 population in the regions of the 20 OECD member countries for which this information is available (Figure 33.1). Japan was the country with the most beds per capita. Mexico and Turkey were at the opposite end of the scale.

Alternative approaches have reduced the number of hospital beds

The development of varying degrees of alternatives to hospital care (home health care, for instance) across countries has been accompanied by a reduction in the number of hospital beds, in particular long-term beds. In fact, a shortage of hospital beds is often a factor in transfers to ambulatory care.

Some regions have double the national average

Regional disparities were particularly large in Mexico, Portugal, Turkey, Canada and France. In some regions of these countries, the number of beds per capita was between 1.5 and 2 times the national average (Figure 33.2). In Mexico in particular, regional disparities are large although there are, on average, more hospital beds per inhabitant than the OECD average. In the under-equipped regions of Canada and Turkey the number of hospital beds per capita is less than a half the national average. The relative variation in the number of beds per 1 000 population is particularly low in the Netherlands and Hungary.

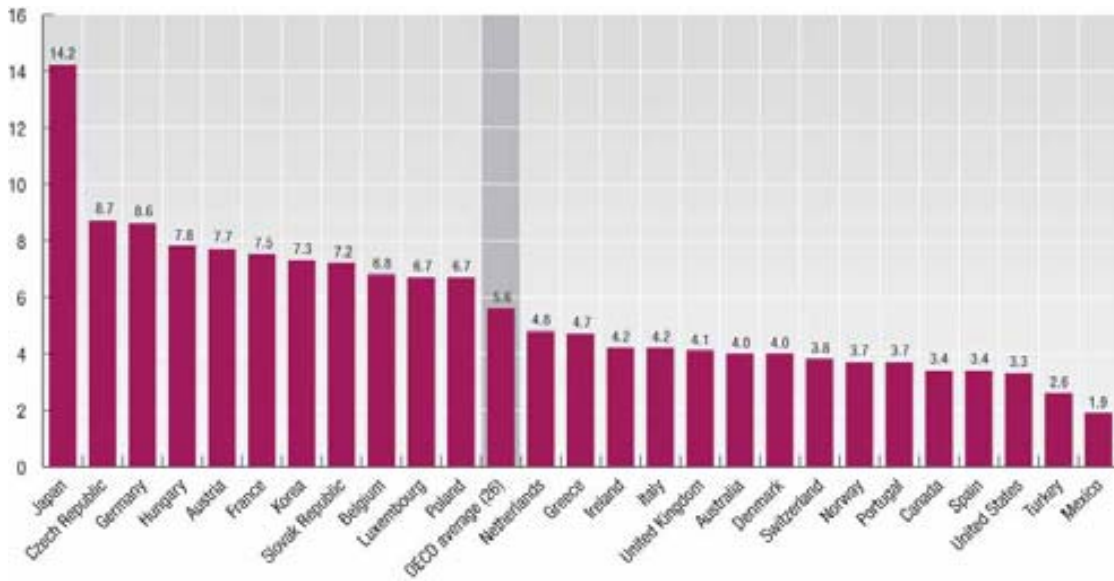
No general pattern for rural and urban areas

The distribution of hospital beds by type of region does not show any general patterns. In some countries, the number of beds per inhabitant is positively correlated with the proportion of regional population living in urban areas. The correlation is particularly strong in Hungary and the Slovak Republic (Figure 33.3). In Sweden and Germany, however, the number of beds per capita is positively correlated with the proportion of regional population living in rural areas.

Definition

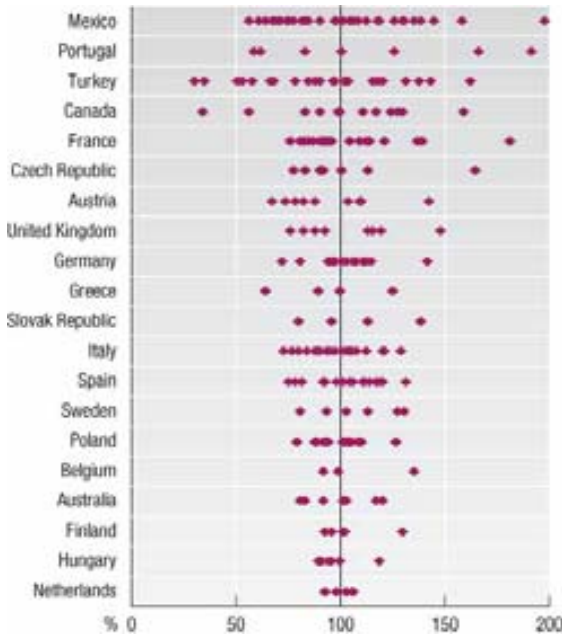
Number of hospital beds (occupied or unoccupied) immediately available for use by patients admitted to all types of hospitals (general hospitals, mental health hospitals and other specialist hospitals) in all sectors (public and private).

33.1. Number of hospital beds per 1 000 population, 2004



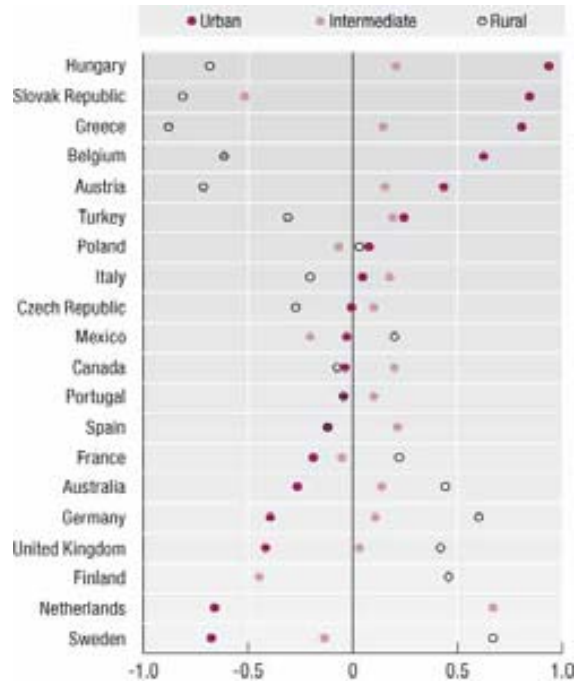
33.2. Variations in the number of hospital beds per 1 000 population

Percentage of the national average, 2004 (TL2)



33.3. Correlation between the number of beds per inhabitant and the share of population by type of regions

Spearman correlation coefficient, 2004 (TL2)

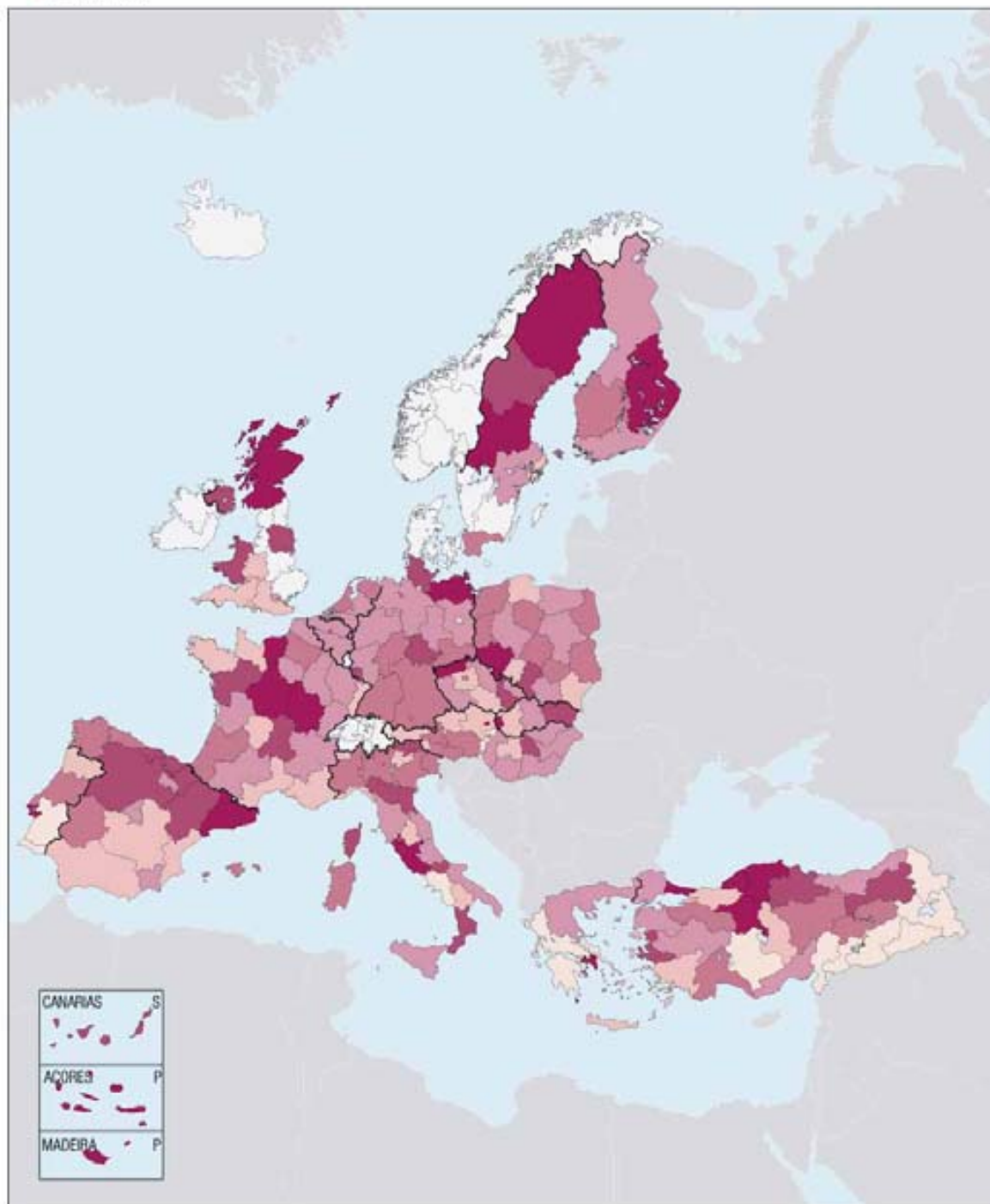



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33.5. Number of hospital beds per 100 000 inhabitants: Europe

Percentage of national average, 2004

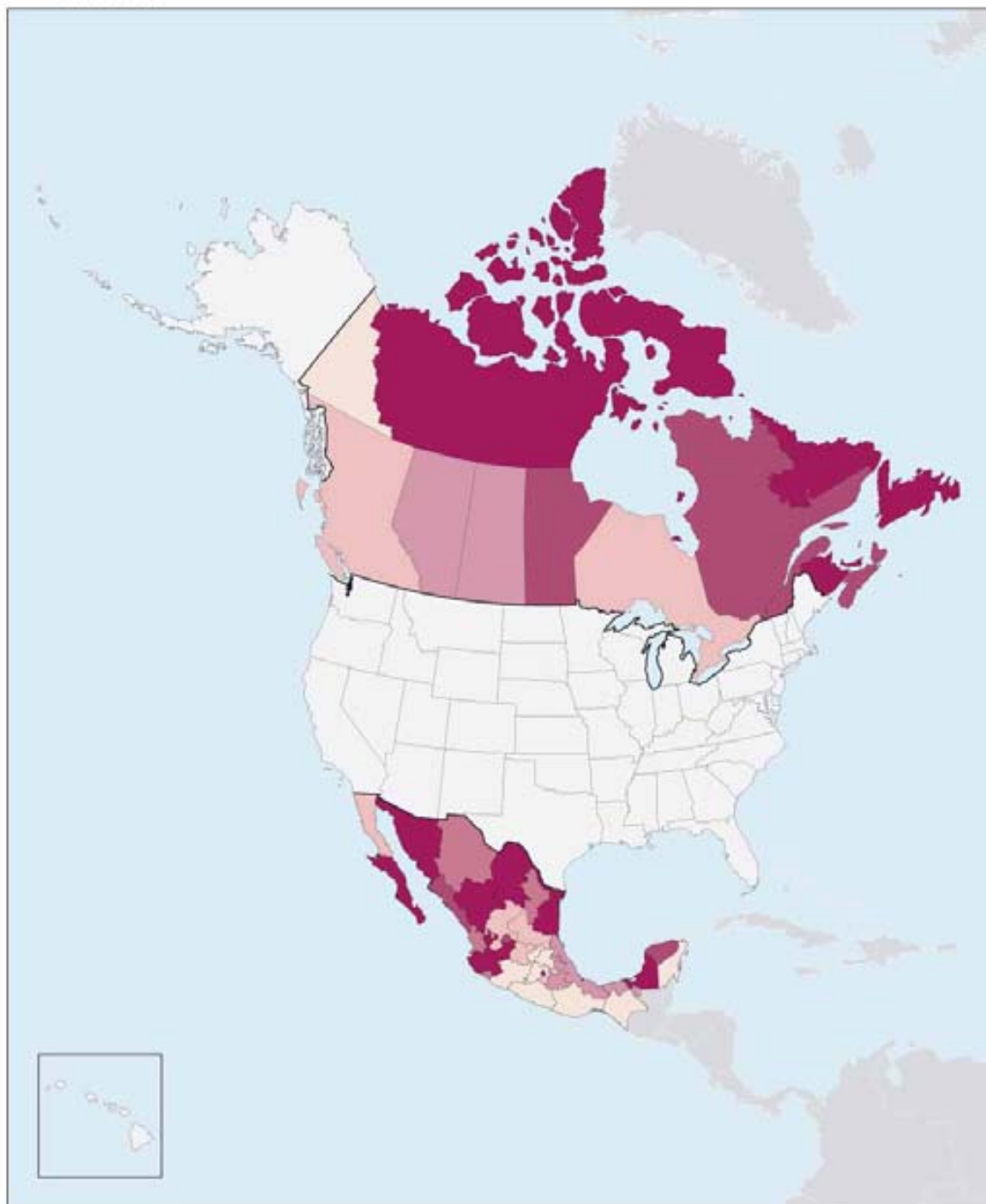
- Higher than 125%
- Between 110% and 125%
- Between 100% and 110%
- Between 90% and 100%
- Between 75% and 90%
- Lower than 75%




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33.6. Number of hospital beds per 100 000 inhabitants: North America
 Percentage of national average, 2004

- Higher than 125%
- Between 110% and 125%
- Between 100% and 110%
- Between 90% and 100%
- Between 75% and 90%
- Lower than 75%



StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/782006473176>

The distribution of hospital beds for long-term and acute care

Beds for long-term care are those for in-patients who need assistance on a continuing basis owing to chronic impairments and a reduced degree of independence in daily activities. These beds are provided in hospitals, geriatric facilities or other types of medical institution. In many OECD countries, health-care policies have promoted the transfer of long-term healthcare provision from medical institutions to care in the community. Home care or housing adapted to the frail elderly results in a decrease in the number of long-term beds. Regions vary in their use of alternatives to hospital care for such patients.

Acute-care beds are those used for all types of medical services, excluding day care and long-term care.

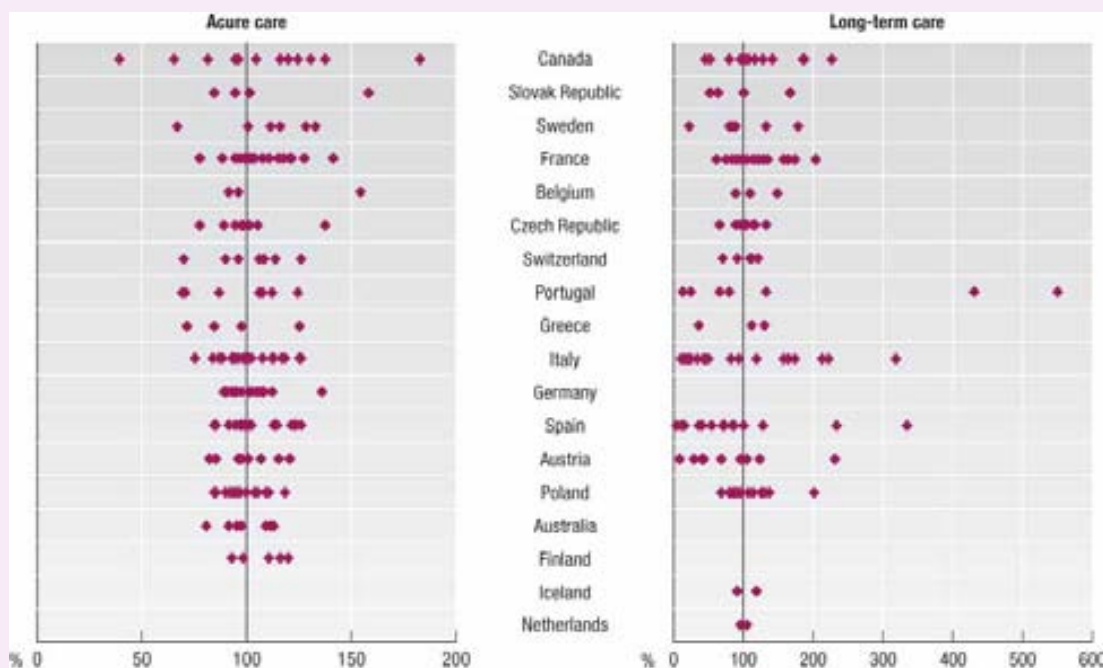
Disparities in the distribution of total hospital beds are due to disparities affecting acute-care beds but especially long-term beds. This is because the greatest regional variations for acute-care beds range from 39% to 182% of the national average (in Canada), whereas the figures for long-term beds range from 11% to 548% of the national average (in Portugal).

There are large regional disparities in the number of long-term beds in southern European countries. The territorial distribution of acute-care beds in these countries is markedly more uniform.

By and large, the supply of acute-care beds is uniform across the regions. Only Canada stands out for its larger disparities.

33.7. Variation in the number of long-term care and acute-care beds per 1 000 inhabitants

Percentage of the national average, 2004 (TL2)



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/088748303170>

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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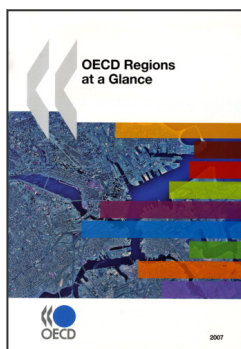
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