

## 1. SPECIAL FOCUS ON METROPOLITAN AREAS

### Urban population in OECD countries

The world is urbanising with 70% of the world's population expected to live in urban areas by 2050 (UN, 2009). Today, two-thirds of the OECD population live in urban areas, according to the OECD-EC definition.

By adopting an economic concept, functional urban areas have been identified beyond their administrative boundaries in 29 OECD countries. They are characterised by densely populated urban cores and hinterlands with high levels of commuting towards the urban cores. The share of national population in functional urban areas ranges from 87% in Korea to less than 40% in Slovenia and the Slovak Republic (Figure 1.1).

Among the 1 179 OECD functional urban areas, 77 have more than 1.5 million people, 198 between 500 000 and 1.5 million people, 406 between 200 000 and 500 000 people, and 498 are small functional urban areas with a population below 200 000 and above 50 000 people.

Countries with similar shares of urban population may concentrate population in a few large urban areas or instead distribute in a polycentric system, with many, relatively small, urban areas. For example, around 70% of the national population lives in functional urban areas in Chile

#### Definition

Functional urban areas are defined in 29 OECD countries according to a harmonised methodology that identifies all the urban areas in a country with more than 50 000 people.

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 urban population in a country is given by the national population residing in functional urban areas.

Metropolitan areas refer to the functional urban areas with populations above 500 000 people.

and the Netherlands, but 70% of the urban population in Chile lives in cities larger than 500 000 population, while in the Netherlands this percentage is 50 (Figure 1.2). The share of urban population living in relatively small urban areas is higher in European countries than in North America or Asia (Figure 1.2).

In the last twelve years, the population of the hinterlands has been growing at a faster rate than the population of the core; sub-urbanisation is observed in the hinterlands of large metropolitan areas (with more than 1.5 million people), where the population grew at a rate of 1.6% a year (Figure 1.3).

Urbanisation in OECD countries has continued in the past decade, reinforcing the trend of OECD populations towards becoming increasingly concentrated in urban areas of different sizes (Figures 1.4 and 1.5).

#### Source

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

UN Population Database (2009)  
<http://esa.un.org/wup2009/unup/>.

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

#### Reference years and territorial level

2000-12; functional urban areas.

The functional urban areas have not been identified in Australia, Iceland, Israel, New Zealand and Turkey.

#### 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>.

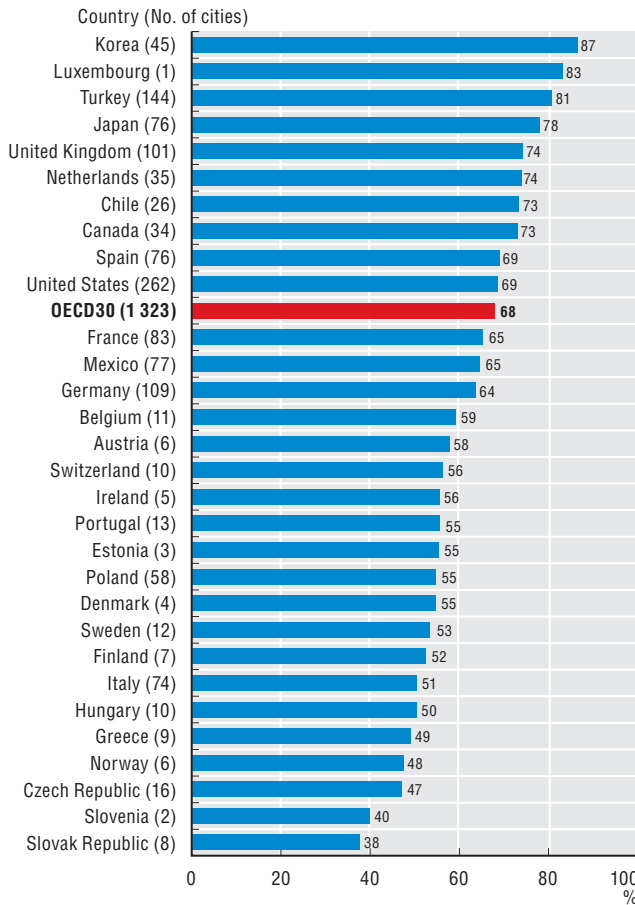
#### Figure notes

1.1-1.2: Turkey is included with values referring to the national definition of 144 urban areas; comparability with other countries is, therefore, limited.

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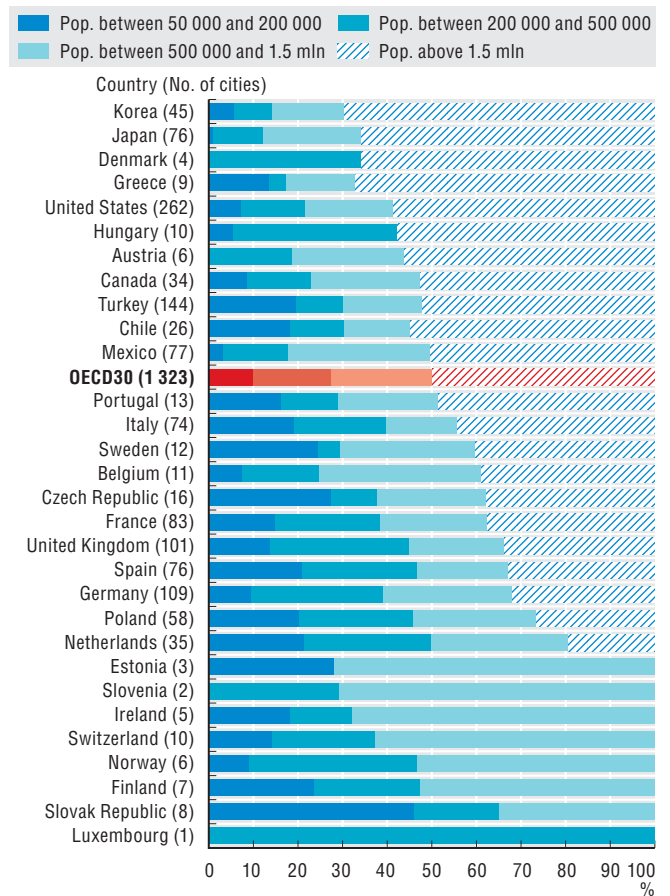
## Urban population in OECD countries

**1.1. Per cent of national population in urban areas, 2012**



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932912734>

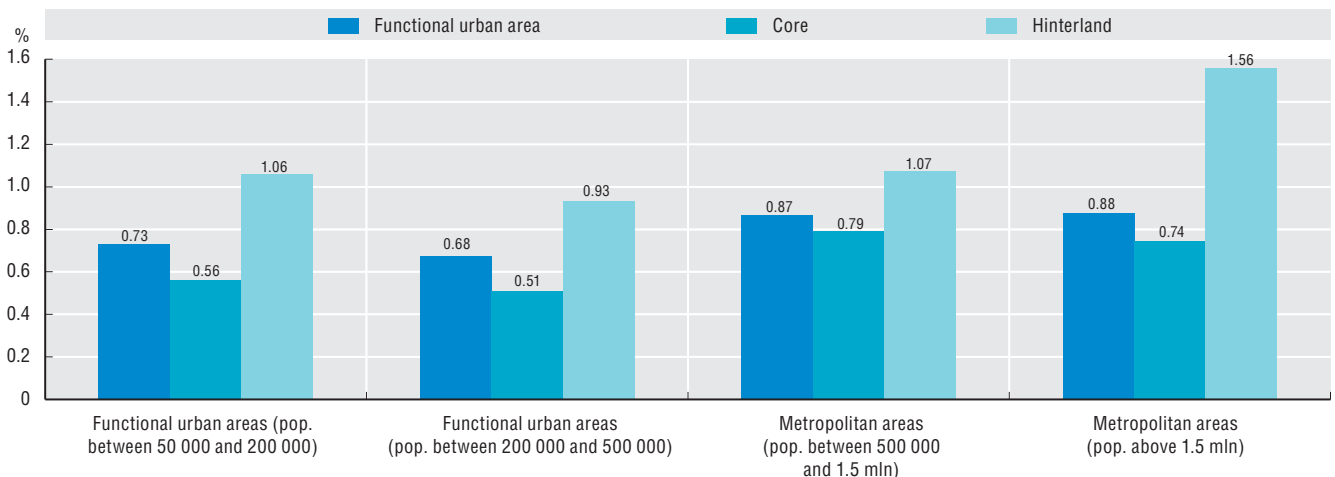
**1.2. Distribution of population by population size of urban area, 2012**



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932912753>

**1.3. Population growth by population size of urban area and core/hinterland**

Average yearly growth rates 2000-12



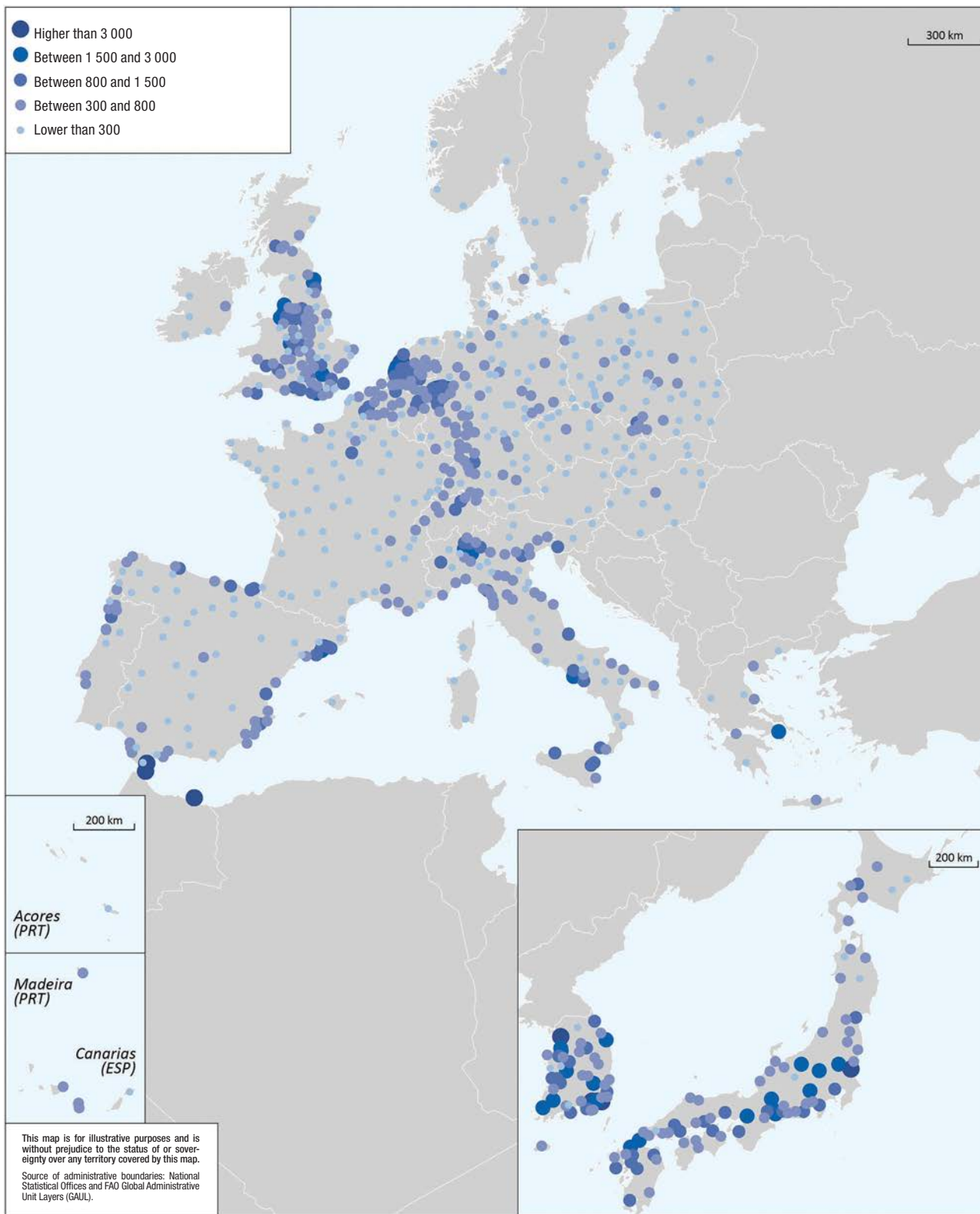
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932912772>

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## Urban population in OECD countries

### 1.4. Population density in urban areas: Asia, Europe and Oceania, 2012

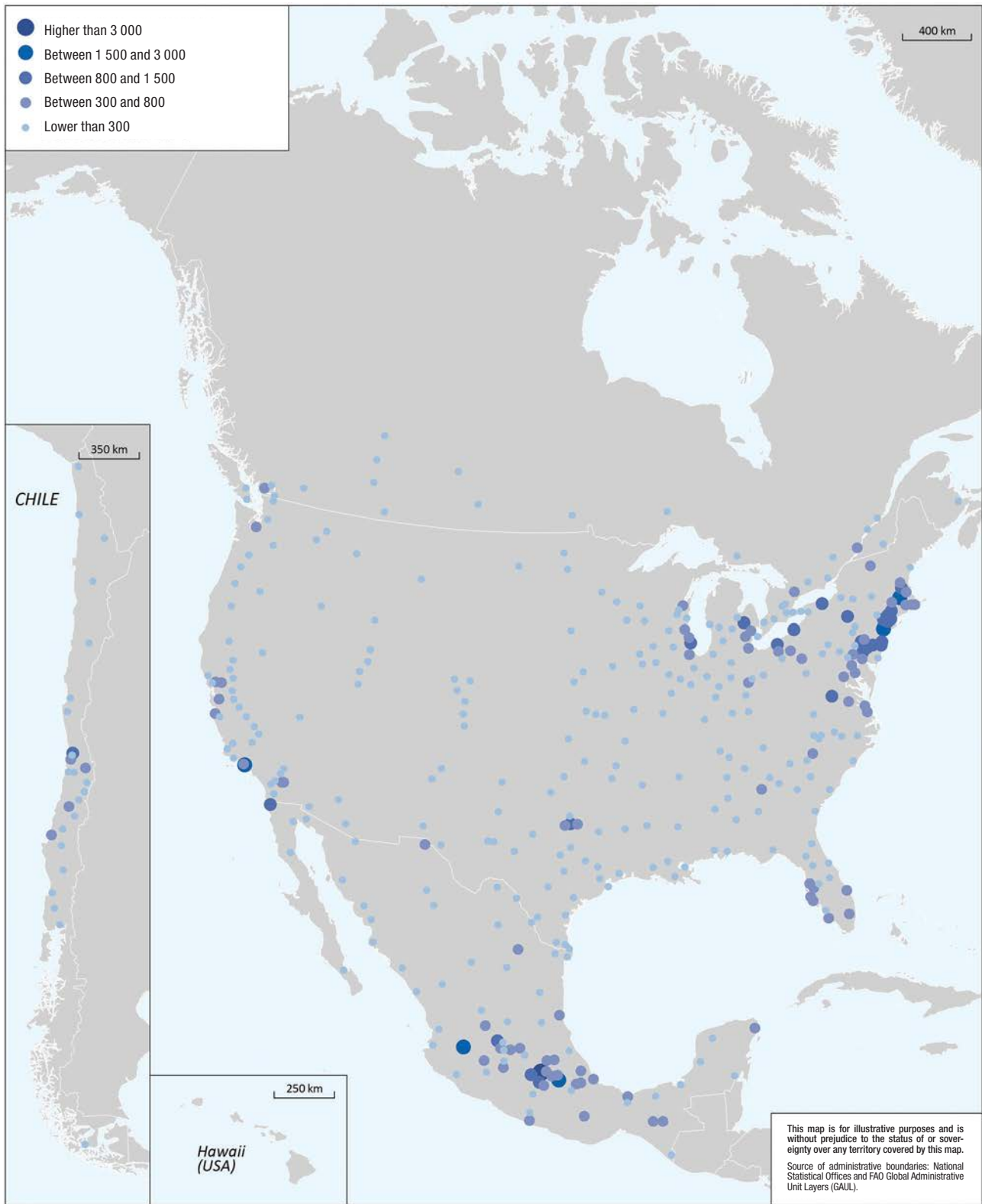
Inhabitants per square kilometre



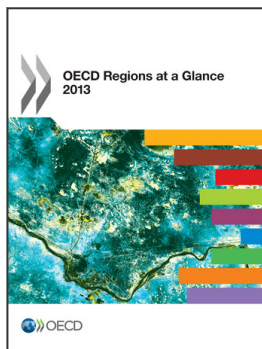
StatLink  <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932915299>

1.5. Population density in urban areas: Americas, 2012

Inhabitants per square kilometre



StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932915318>



**From:**  
**OECD Regions at a Glance 2013**

**Access the complete publication at:**  
[https://doi.org/10.1787/reg\\_glance-2013-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/reg_glance-2013-en)

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2013), "Urban population in OECD countries", in *OECD Regions at a Glance 2013*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1787/reg\\_glance-2013-6-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/reg_glance-2013-6-en)

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