

Civic engagement and governance

The share of registered voters who are actively voting is higher in urban regions and this gap has further increased since 2000.

Civic engagement and quality of governance are important aspects of well-functioning democracies. Voter turnout, measured as the percentage of people who cast a ballot in the national election, is a type of civic engagement through formal politics (Ekman et al., 2009). On average, across OECD regions, voter turnout is 70%. Nevertheless, many regions show much lower values in this dimension; for example, in 35 out of 367 OECD regions (i.e., around 10% of the regions covered) electoral participation is below 50%. These regions are distributed across Chile (15), Poland (9), Switzerland (5), Portugal (2), Finland (1), Greece (1), Japan (1), and Slovenia (1) (Figure 2.16).

Such differences across OECD regions in terms of voter turnout are not necessarily driven by national patterns, as large differences are observed also within countries. In Mexico, Canada, Finland, and Greece, the difference between the region with the highest voter turnout and the one with the lowest is above 20 percentage points. Large regional disparities (e.g., above 15 percentage points) are present even in countries with high national levels of voter turnout (above the 75%) such as Australia and France (Figure 2.16).

On average, voter turnout in OECD countries has not significantly changed in the last 17 years – an increase of

2 percentage points. This slight increase has mainly occurred in predominantly urban regions, whereas voter turnout remained almost stable in predominantly rural regions. Registered voters are more willing to vote in predominantly urban regions in 12 out of 20 countries, with a difference of greater than 10% compared to rural regions in Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia and Hungary. Intermediate regions had higher voter turnout in Austria, Switzerland and Denmark (Figure 2.17).

Source

OECD (2018), *OECD Regional Statistics* (database), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/region-data-en>.

See Annex B for data sources and country-related metadata.

Reference years and territorial level

2000-2018; TL2.

Further information

Territorial grids and regional typology (Annex A).

Ekman, J. and E. Amna (2009), “Political Participation and Civic Engagement: Towards A New Typology”, Youth & Society, Orebro University.

Figure notes

2.16-2.17: 2018 was the latest available year for Italy; 2016 for Australia, United States, Spain, Slovak Republic, Iceland, and Ireland; 2015 for Canada, Finland, Greece, Portugal, Israel, Poland, United Kingdom, Turkey, Switzerland, Denmark, and Estonia; 2014 for Hungary, Japan, Slovenia, Belgium, and Sweden; 2013 for Luxembourg; and 2012 for Mexico.

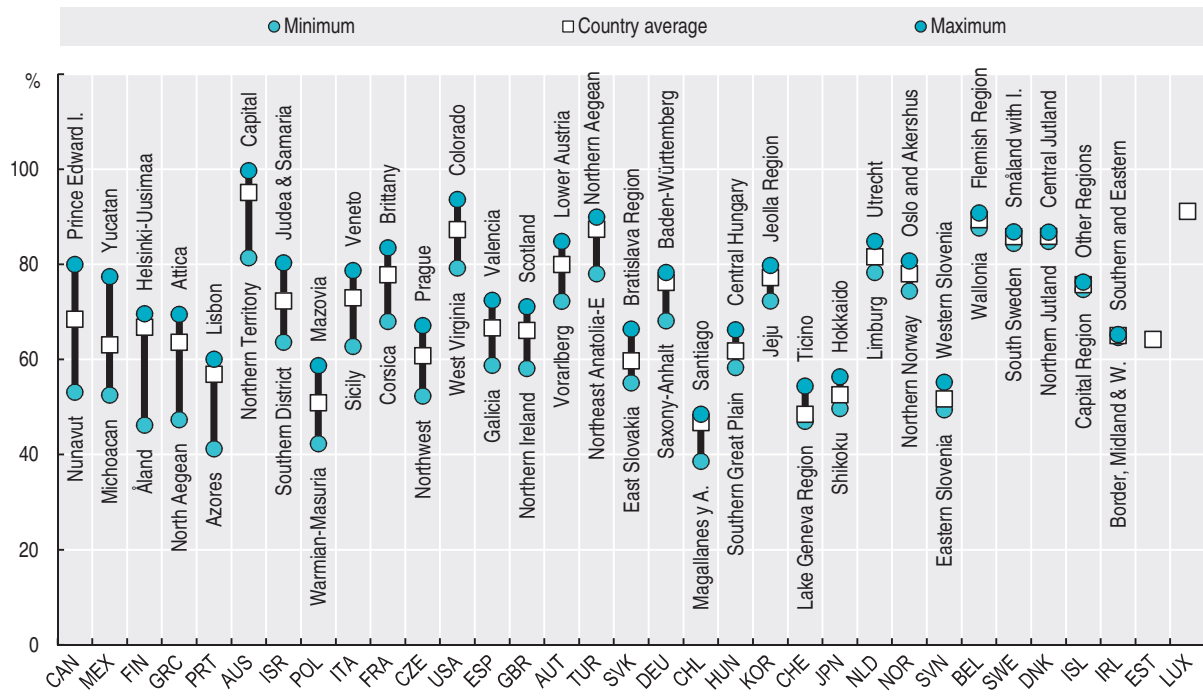
2.17: First available year was 2001 for the United Kingdom, Italy, Poland, Australia, Denmark, and Norway; 2002 for France, Turkey, Germany, Austria, the Slovak Republic, Portugal, Ireland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, and Sweden; 2003 for Belgium, Switzerland, Iceland, and Estonia; 2004 for Luxembourg; 2006 for Finland; and 2009 for Israel.

Definition

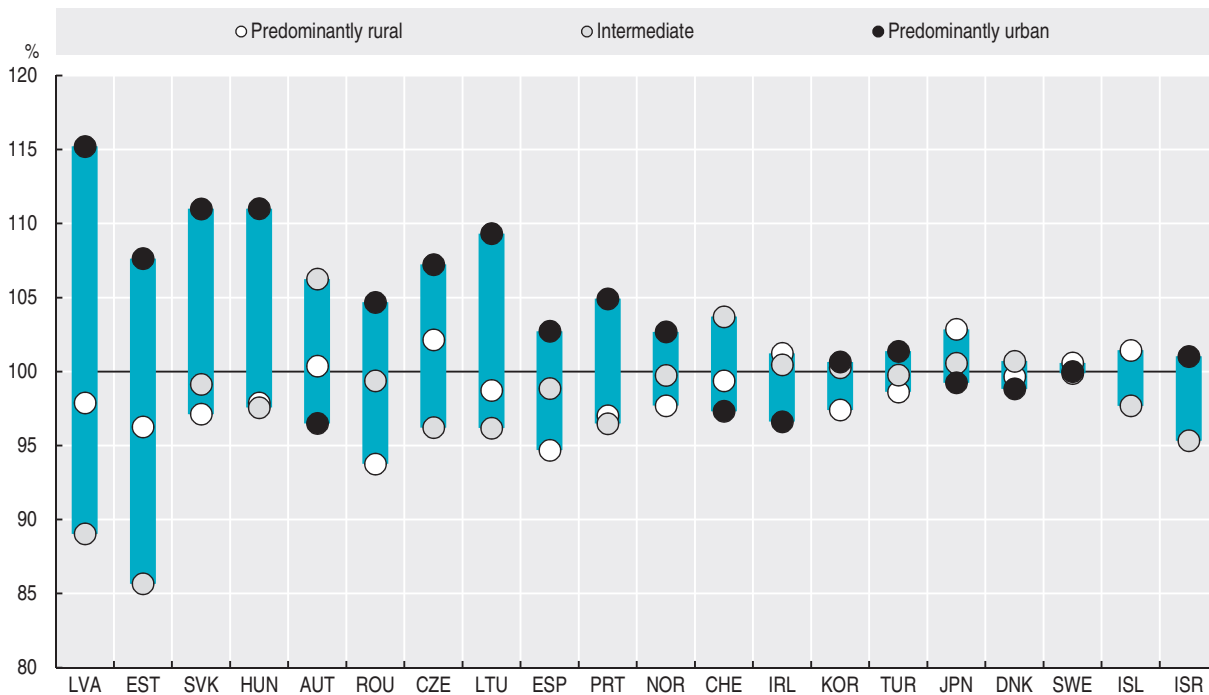
Voter turnout refers to the extent of electoral participation in national elections. It is defined as the percentage of individuals who cast a ballot in a national election with respect to the population registered to vote. Data on voter turnout are gathered by National Statistical Offices and National Electoral Management Bodies.

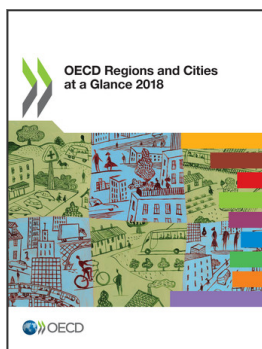
The OECD has established a regional typology to take into account geographical differences and enable meaningful comparisons between regions belonging to the same type. All regions in a country have been classified as predominantly rural, intermediate and predominantly urban.

2.16. Regional disparities in voter turnout, 2017 (TL2)

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933817276>

2.17. Voter turnout by type of regions as a percentage of national average, 2017

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933817295>



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