

HM1.1. HOUSING STOCK AND CONSTRUCTION

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents available data on the housing stock and housing construction in OECD and EU countries. Data were collected through the OECD Questionnaire on Social and Affordable Housing, as well as from information available from national statistical institutes.

For the scope of this indicator, *dwelling stock* or housing stock refers to the total number of dwellings in a country. A *dwelling* is “a room or suite of rooms and its accessories in a permanent building or structurally separated part thereof, which by the way it has been built, rebuilt, converted, etc., is intended for private habitation. It should have a separate access to a street (direct or via a garden or grounds) or to a common space within the building (staircase, passage, gallery, etc.)” (OECD, 2001).

A dwelling is considered to be *occupied* if it provides the usual place of residence to a household, which can include one or more persons. *Vacant dwellings* are defined as dwellings that are not occupied, and are not seasonal or holiday homes or dwellings meant for seasonal use. Nevertheless, some national statistics for unoccupied dwellings include secondary and/or holiday homes. This is the case, for instance, in Australia, Chile, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Malta, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland, where it is not possible to disaggregate seasonal and holiday homes from the total stock of unoccupied dwellings. Therefore, data on vacant dwellings are presented separately for these countries.

Finally, data on *housing construction* refer to the number of dwellings that were completed during a given year and are ready to be occupied.

Key findings

There are wide cross-country differences in the number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants.

Figure HM1.1.1 reports the availability of housing in OECD and EU countries in relation to the population. Additional data, including the total number of dwellings in each country and the number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants, are provided for the years 2011, 2018 and 2022 in Table HM1.1.A1 in the online worksheet.

There are roughly 468 dwellings per thousand inhabitants, on average, among OECD countries, below the EU average of 517 dwellings per thousand inhabitants in 2022. There are nevertheless considerable differences across countries. Among OECD countries, the number of dwellings in relation to the population is highest in Italy, Greece, France, Portugal, Finland, Latvia, Spain and Austria, with over 550 dwellings per thousand inhabitants. In contrast, the number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants is lowest in and Costa Rica (310).

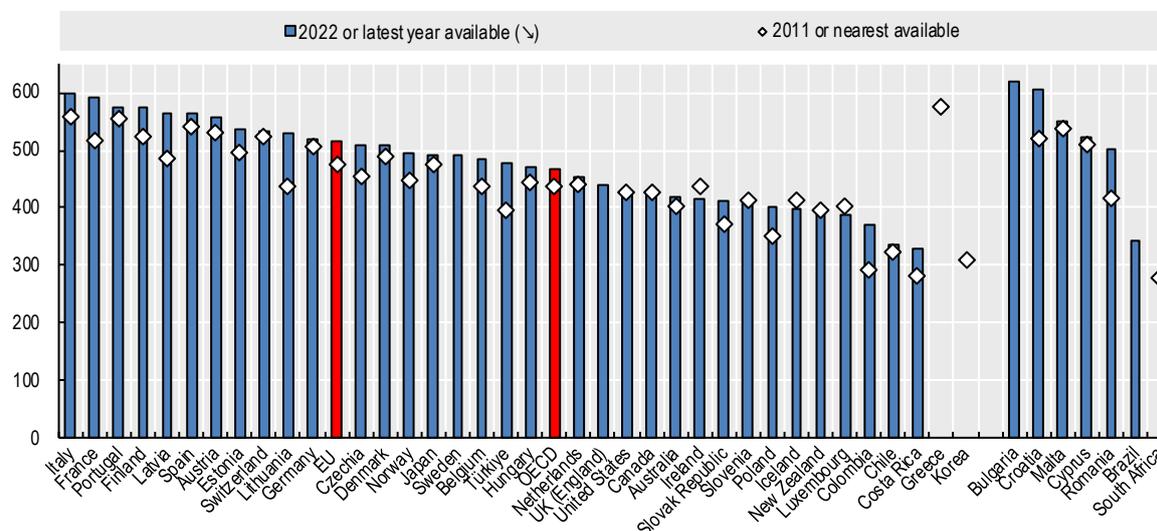
Between 2011 and 2022, the number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants increased in all but six countries. By contrast, Ireland, Slovenia, Iceland, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Türkiye and Colombia reported the biggest increase in the number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants over this period.

This document, as well as any data and any 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.

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Figure HM1.1.1. Dwellings per thousand inhabitants

Total number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants, around 2022 or latest year available^{1,2,3}



Note: 1. Data are for 2022, except for Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom (England), and the United States (2021); Belgium, Chile, Cyprus, and Luxembourg (2020); Brazil, Estonia, France, and Lithuania (2019); Japan (2018).

2. Data are for 2011, except for Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Spain, Türkiye and the United Kingdom (England) (2010); the Netherlands (2012); Croatia, Japan, Korea, and Switzerland (2013); Colombia (2015).

3. EU and OECD average only refer to countries with data for both periods.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (2021 and 2023), OECD Statistics - Population, RESH - Structural Housing Indicators - ECB Statistical Data Warehouse (europa.eu) for Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy and Malta, Eurostat - Housing in Europe for Greece and Slovak Republic, DANE - Proyecciones de Vivienda 2018-2050 for Colombia, Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana - Estimación del Parque de Viviendas for Spain, Federal Statistical Office - Construction and Housing for Switzerland, Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government - Live tables on dwelling stock and ONS - Population estimates for United Kingdom - England.

Note by the Republic of Türkiye: The information in this document with reference to "Cyprus" relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Türkiye recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Türkiye shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue".

Note by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Union: The Republic of Cyprus is recognised by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Türkiye. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Residential vacancy rates vary considerably across countries.

Information on the number of vacant dwellings is only available for some countries. Where data on vacancy rates are available, some countries consider seasonal and holiday homes as part of the vacant dwelling stock, while other countries exclude them, making cross-country comparison difficult.

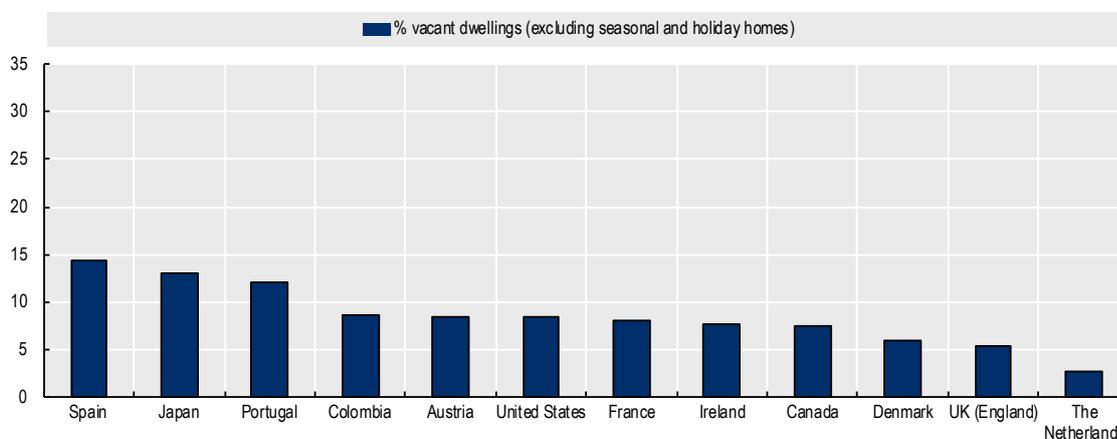
Among countries that do not consider seasonal or holiday homes in data on vacant dwellings (Figure HM1.1.2, Panel A), Spain, Japan and Portugal record the largest share of vacant dwellings, representing over 12% of the total housing stock. By contrast, vacancy rates (excluding seasonal and holiday homes) are lowest in Denmark, the United Kingdom (England) and the Netherlands, at less than 6%.

Nationally reported vacancy rates tend to be higher in countries that include seasonal and holiday homes in the data (Figure HM1.1.2, Panel B). These range from over 23% in Portugal, Malta, Spain, and Estonia to less than 2% in Switzerland and Sweden.

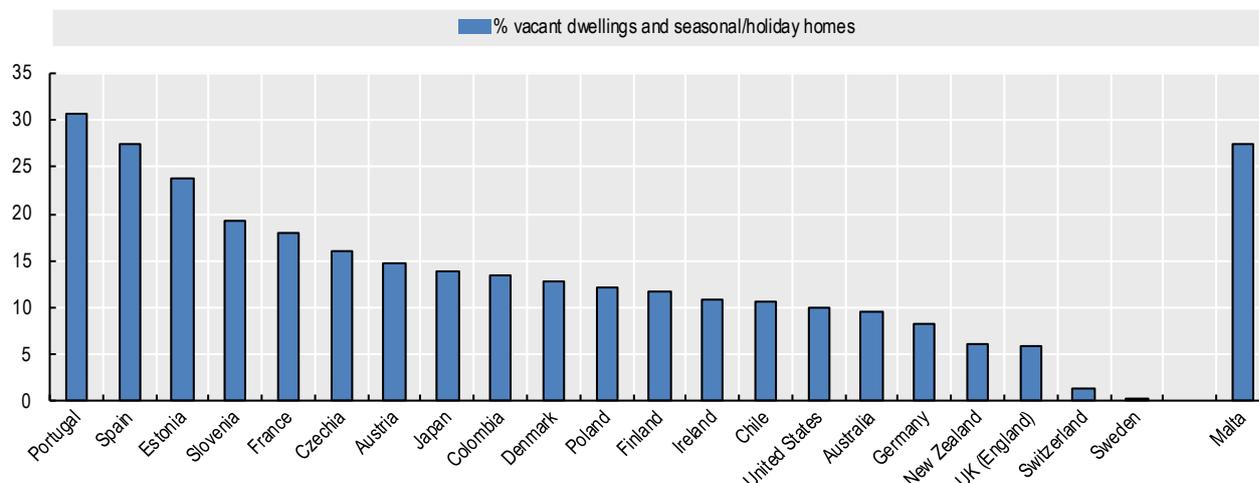
Further, as shown in Figure HM1.1.2 (Panel C), in countries for which it is possible to disaggregate the data, seasonal and holiday homes often account for a large share of the unoccupied dwelling stock. This is the case, for instance, in Portugal, Spain, France, Austria and Denmark, where seasonal and holiday homes account for at least 40% of all unoccupied dwellings. In other countries – Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom (England) – seasonal and holiday homes make up a much smaller share (less than 20%) of all unoccupied dwellings.

Figure HM1.1.2. Vacant dwellings and seasonal and holiday homes in selected countries^{1,2}

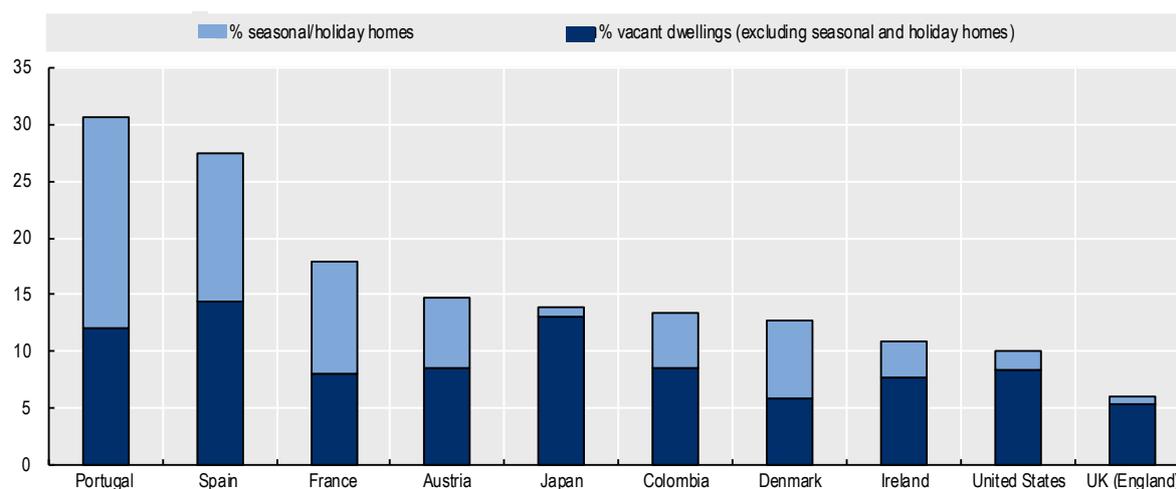
A. Percentage of vacant dwellings as a share of the total dwelling stock, 2022 or latest year available



B. Percentage of vacant dwellings and seasonal/holiday homes as a share of the total dwelling stock, 2022 or latest year available



C. Percentage of vacant dwellings and seasonal/holiday homes as a share of the total dwelling stock, 2022 or latest year available



Note: 1. Vacant dwellings are defined as dwellings that are not the usual place of residence to a household, which can include one or more persons, and are not secondary or holiday homes or dwellings meant for seasonal use. Nevertheless, some national statistics for vacant dwellings include secondary and/or holiday homes. Where possible, national statistics have been disaggregated to report vacant dwellings and seasonal/holidays homes separately, to allow for cross-country comparison.

2. Data refer to 2022, except for Denmark, the Netherlands and Iceland (2023); Australia, Canada, Czechia, Estonia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (England), the United States (2021); Colombia, Germany, Japan, New Zealand (2018); Austria, Chile (2017).

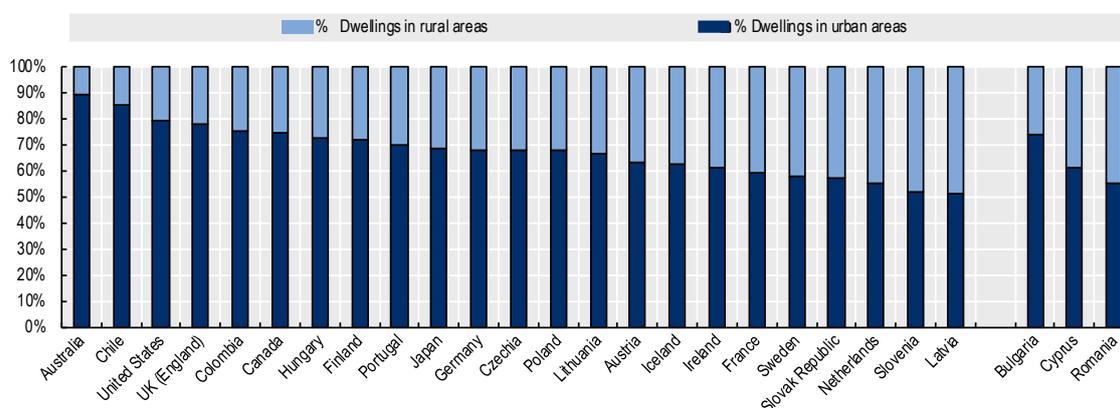
Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (2021 and 2023) except for Austria where data refers to Statistics Austria - Inventory of Methods for National Accounts; Colombia, where data refer to Population Projections-DANE; Estonia, Germany, and Slovak Republic where data refer to RESH - Structural Housing Indicators - ECB Statistical Data Warehouse (europa.eu); Malta where data refer to National Statistics Office - Census 2021; Switzerland where data refer to Federal Statistical Office - Construction and Housing, and for the UK (England), where data are obtained from the Census 2021.

Most dwellings in OECD countries are located in urban areas.

Figure HM1.1.3 reports the distribution of the dwelling stock between urban and rural areas. In all countries for which data are available, a larger share of dwellings is recorded in urban areas, relative to rural areas, although there are considerable differences in the relative shares across countries. The largest share of dwellings in urban areas is recorded in Australia (89%), Chile (85%) and Spain (84%). By contrast, the share of dwellings in urban areas is less than 60% of the total dwelling stock in France (59%), Sweden (58%), the Slovak Republic (57%), Romania (55%), the Netherlands (55%), Slovenia (52%), Romania (55%), Austria (54%) and Latvia (51%).

Figure HM1.1.3. Dwelling stock in urban and rural areas

Percentage of dwellings located in urban and rural areas, 2021 or latest year available^{1,2}.



Note: 1. Data are for 2021, except for Colombia (2023), the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (England) (2022), France, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, and Lithuania (2018), Chile, Finland, and Latvia (2017), Ireland (2016), Sweden (2013).

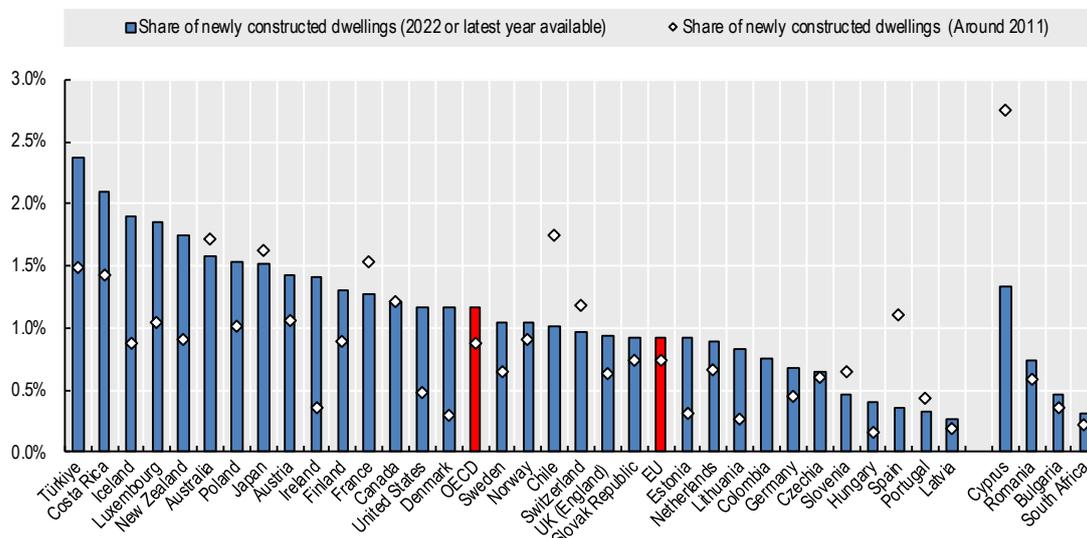
Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (2023, 2021 & 2019).

Housing construction has increased only slightly in many OECD and EU countries relative to 2011.

Figure HM1.1.4 presents data on housing construction, measured as the share of dwellings completed in the year as a percentage of the total existing housing stock. Relative to 2011, construction activity increased, on average, across OECD and EU countries, with the exception of Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Czechia, France, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland and particularly Spain. Costa Rica and Türkiye recorded the highest rates of new housing construction, with newly constructed dwellings accounting for more than 2% of the total existing dwelling stock in 2022. Iceland, Luxembourg, and New Zealand also recorded relatively high rates of new construction activity, where new dwellings represented between 1.8% and 1.9% of the total existing dwelling stock. However, in 16 countries, the rate was less than 1%. Historical trend data (see the online worksheet) suggest that the Great Recession led to a sharp decline in new construction – albeit after a prolonged housing boom in Ireland and Spain (see Norris and Byrne, 2015).

Figure HM1.1.4. Housing construction over time

Total share of dwellings completed in the year, as a percentage of the total existing housing stock (2022 or latest year available)^{1,2}.



Note: 1. Data are for 2022, except for Austria, Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom (England), United States (2021); Chile, Cyprus (2020); France, Hungary, Japan, Lithuania, New Zealand, Türkiye (2018); Luxembourg (2017); Canada, South Africa (2016). 2. Data are for 2011, except for Japan, Switzerland (2013); the Netherlands (2012); Costa Rica, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye (2010); United Kingdom (England) (2009). 3. EU and OECD average only refer to countries with data in both periods.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (2023 & 2021) except for Australia where data refer to ABS - Building Activity, Austria where data refer to Statistics Austria - Building Completions, Bulgaria where data refer to Bulgaria National Statistical Institute, Chile where data refers to INE - CRF, Colombia where data refer to DANE - Proyecciones de Vivienda 2018-2050, Czechia where data refer to Czech Statistical Office - Housing Construction, Estonia where data refer to Statistic Estonia - Dwelling Completions & Conventional Dwellings by Type, Latvia where data refer to Official Statistics of Latvia - Building permits and dwellings commissioned, Luxembourg where data refer to Lu'Stat - Finished building by type, Poland where data refer to Statistic Poland - Local Data Bank, Portugal where data refer to INE - Completed dwellings, Slovak Republic where data refer to Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic - Started, completed and under construction, Spain where data refer to Ministerio de Transportes, Movilidad y Agenda Urbana - Estimación del Parque de Viviendas & Observatorio de Vivienda y Suelo, Sweden where data refer to Official Statistics of Sweden - Number of Dwellings by region, Switzerland where data refer to Federal Statistical Office - Dwellings by period & New residential buildings.

Data and comparability issues

Data on the dwelling stock are mainly drawn from statistics at national level, which limits comparability in different ways.

First and foremost, assessing residential vacancy can be challenging, and there are different approaches, including through housing surveys, the population Census, tax data, as well as nightlight, energy consumption and/or other geospatial data. Most vacancy data reported in this indicator are derived from the Census.

A second challenge is that data are not available for the same reference year(s) across countries, and are not always up to date. While some countries rely on regular housing surveys, others provide data from the general Population and Housing Census, which is typically carried out every five to ten years. Further, national definitions do not always facilitate cross-country comparison. For example, this applies

to the distinction between unoccupied dwellings (including those which are only temporarily vacant, such as seasonal or holiday homes) and vacant dwellings (which should include only long-term vacant homes). In practice, as reported in Figure HM1.1.2, Panel B, some countries include seasonal and holiday homes in housing vacancy data, resulting in elevated vacancy rates. Even among dwellings categorised as vacant, comparability is limited, as in some countries, dwellings left unoccupied due to e.g., the tenant/owner being in prison or a care facility or the dwelling requiring major repair work are included in the counts, while in other countries they are not captured.

Cross-country definitional differences of urban and rural areas are also present. For further discussion, please see OECD (2012), *Redefining Urban: A New Way to Measure Metropolitan Areas*.

Sources and further reading

European Central Bank, RESH - Structural Housing Indicators - ECB Statistical Data Warehouse (europa.eu).

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