

HM1.1 HOUSING STOCK AND CONSTRUCTION

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents available data on housing stock and housing construction across OECD 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, by *dwelling stock* or housing stock we refer 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.)” (UNECE, 2000).

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). Among dwellings that are not occupied, we define as *vacant dwellings* those that are not: secondary or holiday homes or dwellings meant for seasonal use.

Furthermore, we distinguish between dwellings located in *urban* and *rural* areas. Definitions of what constitutes an urban or rural area vary across countries, and are usually based on the size of locality and/or population density in a given area.

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

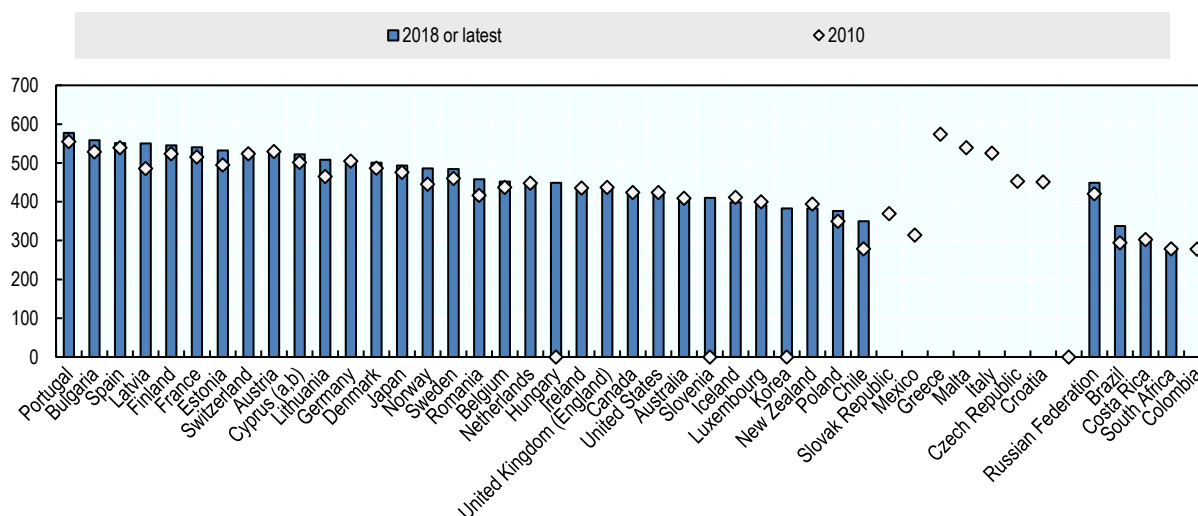
Key findings

The overall number of dwellings in relation to the population is highest in Bulgaria, Finland, France, Latvia, Portugal and Spain - and lowest in Chile, Korea, New Zealand and Poland.

Figure HM1.1.1 considers the availability of housing in OECD 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 2010 and 2018 in Table HM1.1.b in the on-line worksheet.

The number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants is very high in Portugal (over 570 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants), followed by Bulgaria, Spain, Latvia, Finland, (all above 540 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants). The ratio is also high in Greece (over 570), Malta and Italy (around 530) but these observations reflect Census data from 2010/11. France, Estonia and Switzerland, also have a relatively high number of dwellings compared to the population (all above 530 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants). In contrast, the number of dwellings reported is the lowest in Chile (350), followed by Poland (376) and Korea and New Zealand (383).

Figure HM1.1.1: Dwellings per thousand inhabitants
Total number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants, 2018 or latest year available¹



Notes:

a) Footnote by Turkey: 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. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of the United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”;

b) Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

1. Data refer to the responses as in the 2019 OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH), except for Hungary, Ireland, Slovenia, Korea, Mexico, Italy, Malta, Italy and Croatia where they refer to responses as in the 2016 QuASH.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing – QuASH (2016, 2019).

Vacancy rates vary across countries and are generally higher in rural areas

Information on the number of vacant dwellings is only available for some countries. Among those for which the information is available, shown in Figure HM1.1.2.a, Malta (18%) and Romania (both more than 15%) have the highest share of vacant dwellings. By contrast, vacancy rates are low in England (UK), Iceland, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

Furthermore, Figure HM1.1.2.b also distinguishes vacancy rates in urban and rural areas, for countries where the information is available. Data show higher vacancy rates in rural than in urban areas in most countries, except Greece.

The share of dwellings, which is considered as located in urban versus rural areas varies significantly across countries, but in general reflects the higher housing density in cities. Figure HM1.1.3 below shows the distribution of dwellings between urban and rural areas in a number of countries.

Figure HM1.1.2.a: Vacant dwellings in selected countries
 Percentage of vacant dwellings out of the total dwelling stock, 2018 or latest year available¹

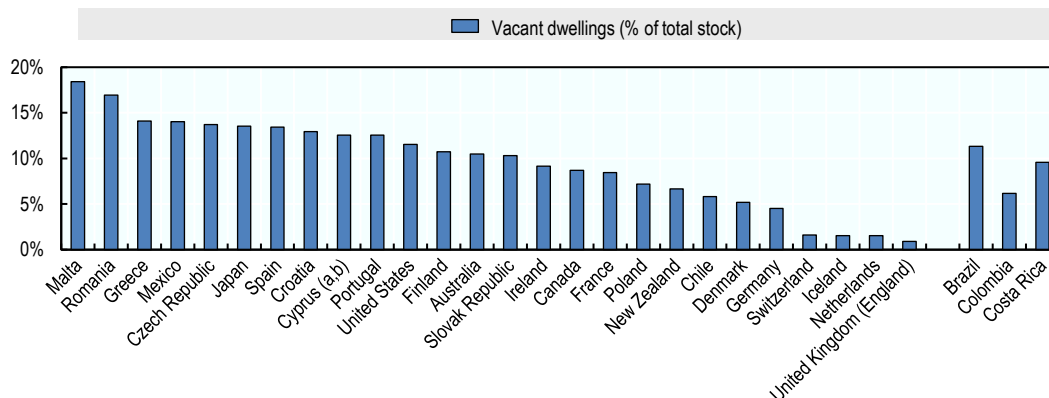
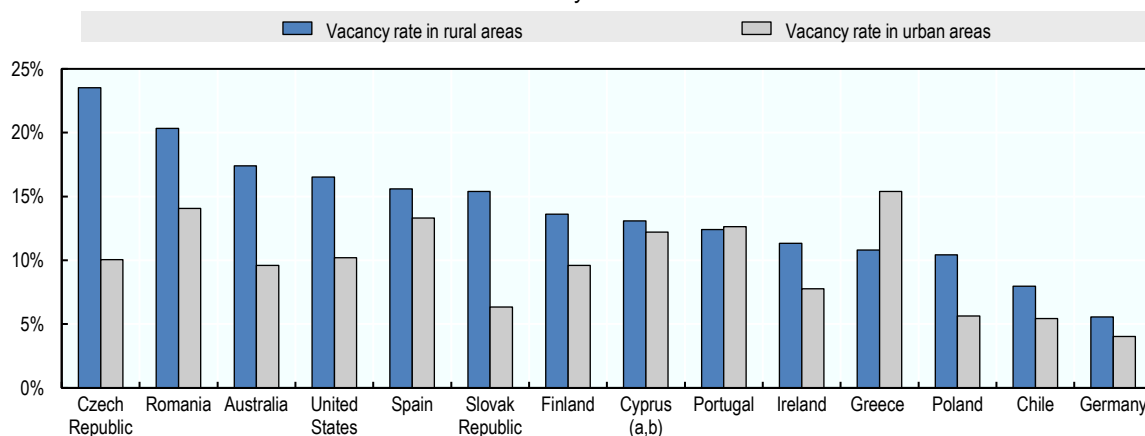


Figure HM1.1.2.b: Vacant dwellings in urban and rural areas, selected countries
 Percentage of vacant dwellings, out of the total dwellings in urban and in rural areas respectively, 2018 or latest year available¹²



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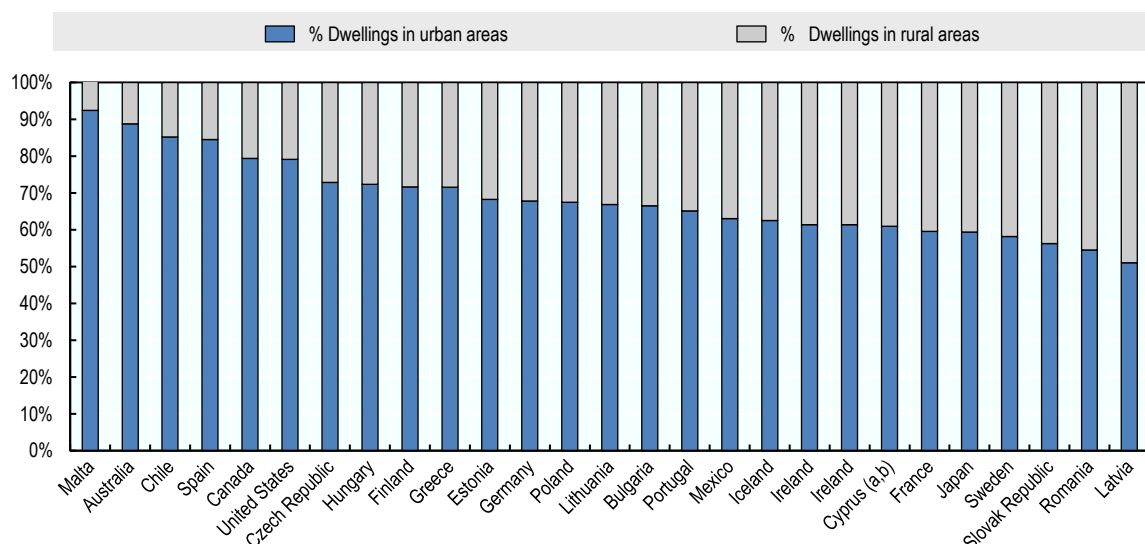
1. Figure HM1.1.2.a Data refer to the responses as in the 2019 OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH), except for Mexico, Malta, and Croatia where they refer to responses as in 2016 QuASH.

2. Figure HM1.1.2.b Data refer to the responses as in the 2019 OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH).

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (2016, 2019).

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

Number of dwellings out of the total dwelling stock, located in urban and rural areas respectively, 2018 or latest year available¹



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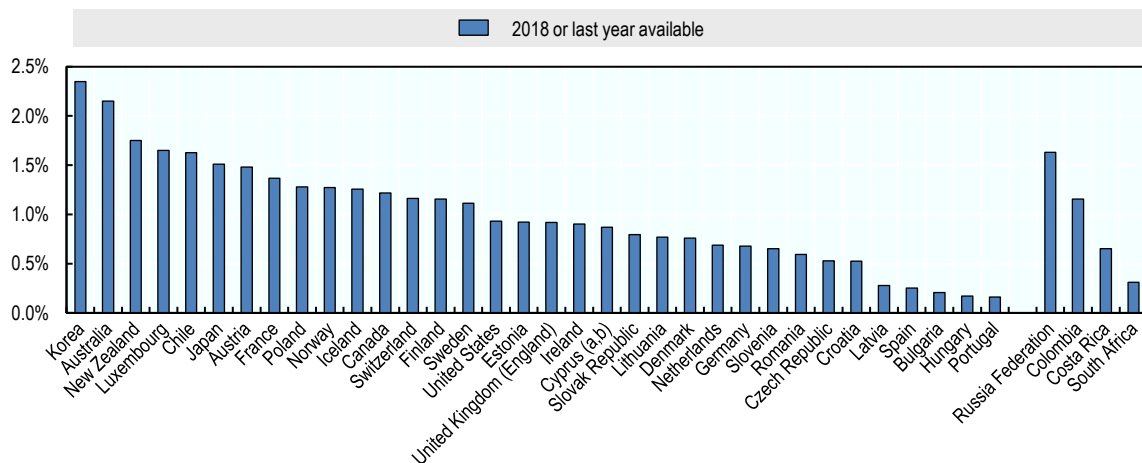
Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (2019).

Data on housing construction, i.e. the number of dwellings completed in a given year, are available for the years 2000, 2010 and 2018 (not reported here, see the on-line worksheet). To make the information comparable across countries, the number of dwellings completed in 2018 (or latest year available) is presented as a share of the total housing stock. Furthermore, although there were significant gaps in the data provided, for a number of countries it was possible to compare housing construction in 2018 with observations for years around 2000 and 2010.

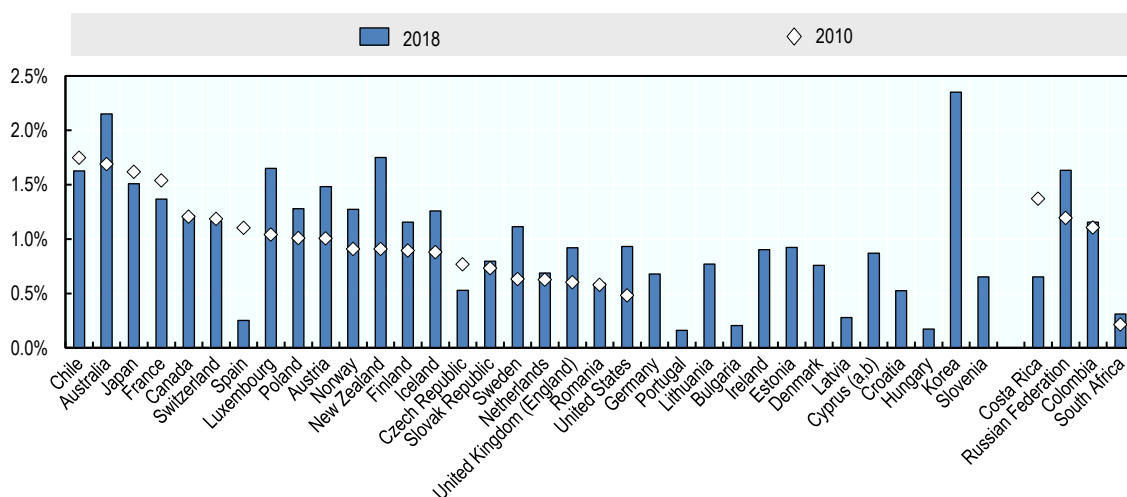
Relative to 2010, construction activity has increased except in Bulgaria, Chile, France, Japan, Portugal and Switzerland, and particularly in the Czech Republic and Spain. Historical trend data (see the on-line worksheet) suggest that the Great Recession sharply reduced new construction – albeit after a prolonged ‘housing boom’ in Cyprus, Ireland and Spain (see Lu et al. 2014; Norris and Byrne, 2015).

Figure HM1.1.4: Housing construction over time

Panel A: Total number of dwellings completed in the year, as a percentage of the total existing housing stock (2018 or latest year available) ¹



Panel B: Total number of dwellings completed in the year, as a percentage of the total existing housing stock (2010 and 2018) ^{1 2}



1. Data for 2010 and 2018 refer to the responses as in the 2019 OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH), except for Korea, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Hungary where they refer to responses as in the 2016 QuASH. Data for around 2000 refer to the responses as in the 2016 OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing (QuASH)

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Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing.

Data and comparability issues

Data on the stock of dwellings are mainly drawn from statistics at the national level, which limits comparability in different ways. First, data are not available for the same reference year(s) across countries and they are not always up to date. While some countries rely on regular housing surveys, other countries provided data from the general Population and Housing Census, which is typically carried out every ten years. Furthermore, national definitions do not always allow for cross-country comparison. For example this applies to the distinction between unoccupied dwellings (including those which are only temporarily vacant such as second homes) and vacant dwellings (which should include only permanently vacant homes). In practice, some countries may include second homes as vacant, resulting into elevated vacancy rates.

Sources and further reading:

European Statistical System, Census Hub website

<https://ec.europa.eu/CensusHub2/query.do?step=selectHyperCube&qhc=false>

Eurostat (2015), *People in the EU: who are we and how do we live?*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7089681/KS-04-15-567-EN-N.pdf/8b2459fe-0e4e-4bb7-bca7-7522999c3bfd>

Lu, Y. et al. (2014), "Cyprus: Selected Issues", *IMF Country Reports* 14/314, International Monetary Fund, Washington.

Norris, M., and Byrne, M. (2015), *Asset Price Keynesianism, Regional Imbalances and the Irish and Spanish Housing Booms and Busts*. UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy, Dublin. <http://hdl.handle.net/10197/6872>

UNECE (2000) *Bulletin of Housing and Building Statistics for Europe and North America*, Annex II, Definitions and General Terms, page 82. United Nations, Geneva. http://www.unece.org/hlm/prgm/hsstat/Bulletin_00.html

UNSTATS website, Housing Statistics, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/sconcerns/housing/index.cshtml>