

Did you know?

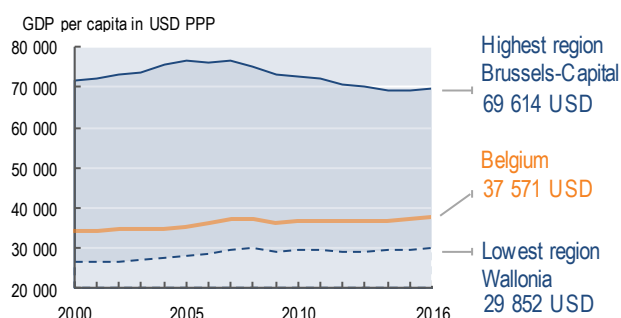
Within the OECD, Belgium has the 11th highest regional disparities in GDP per capita across small regions.

Metropolitan areas in Belgium with more than 500 000 inhabitants contributed 55% to national GDP growth in 2000-16 but only account for 45% of national population.

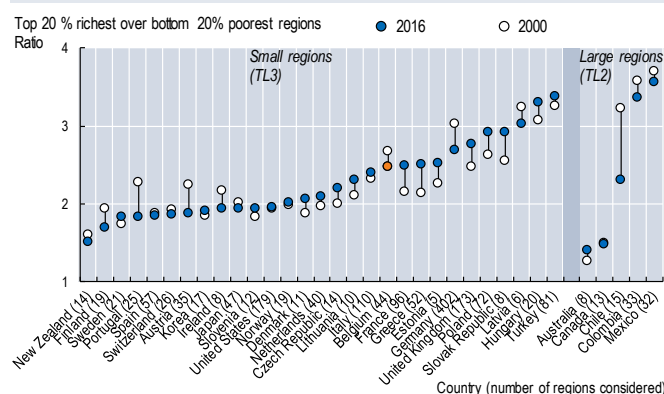
The share of public investment carried out by subnational governments in Belgium is the highest among OECD countries.

Economic trends in regions

Regional gap in GDP per capita, 2000-16



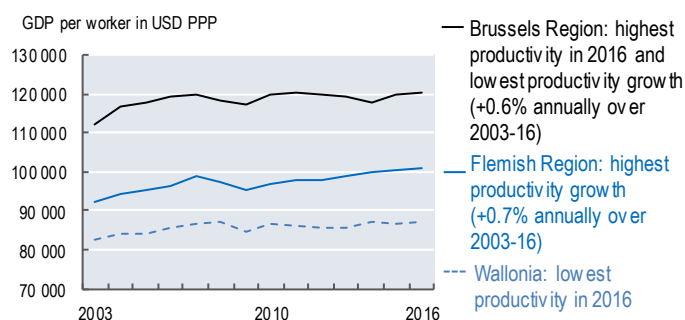
Index of regional disparity in GDP per capita, 2016



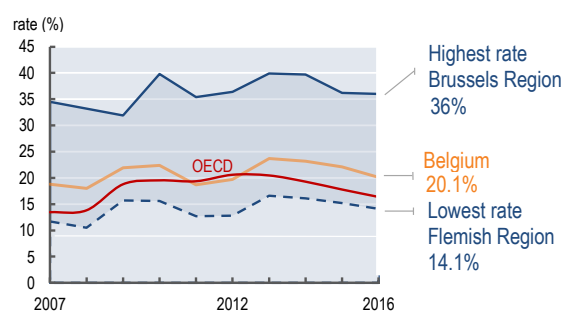
The gap in GDP per capita between Belgian regions has narrowed moderately over the last sixteen years. The narrowing disparities have been driven by the relatively faster economic growth in the region with the lowest GDP per capita, Wallonia (Région wallonne), which grew by 13% between 2000 and 2016, and a stagnation in the Brussels region. However, **regional economic disparities in Belgium remain higher than the OECD median.**

With a **productivity growth of 0.7% per year** over the period 2003-16, the Flemish region has slightly reduced the gap with the region of Brussels. The **youth unemployment rate** in Brussels region reached **36%** in 2016, more than twice the level observed in the Flemish region.

Productivity trends, most and least dynamic regions, 2003-16



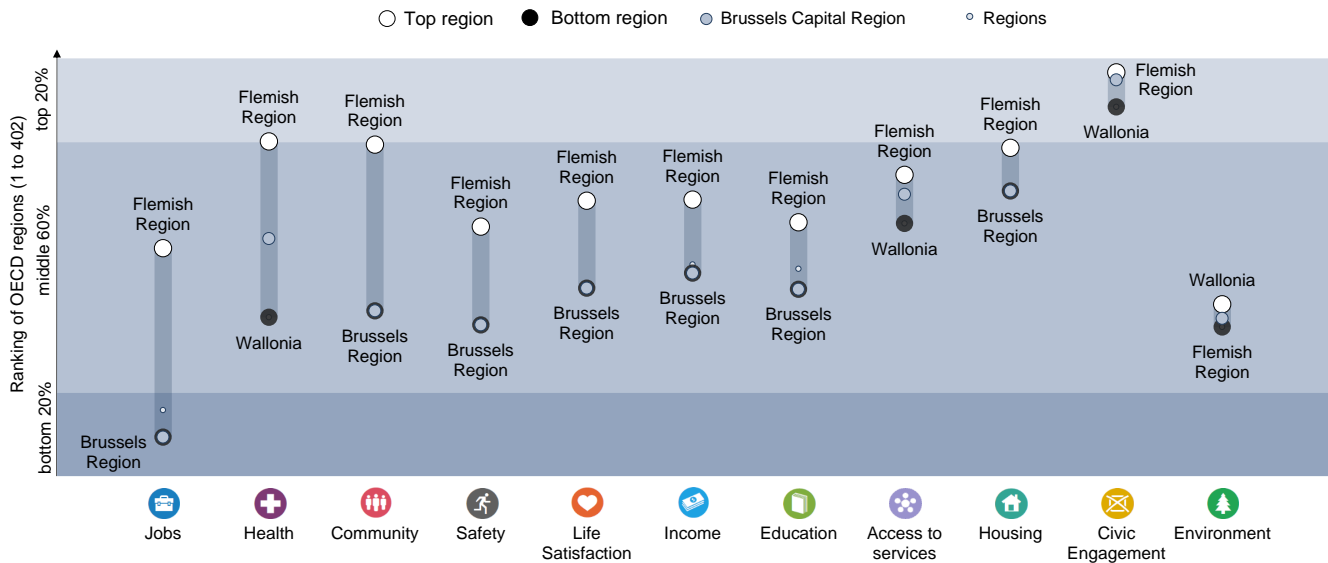
Youth unemployment rate, 15-24 years old, 2007-16



Source: OECD Regional Database.

Notes: (1) Figure on regional gap in GDP per capita: OECD regions refer to the administrative tier of subnational government (large regions, Territorial Level 2); Belgium is composed of 3 large regions. (2) Figure on index of regional disparity: top (bottom) 20% regions are defined as those with the highest (lowest) GDP per capita until the equivalent of 20% of national population is reached, this indicator provides a harmonised measure to rank OECD countries, using data for small regions (Territorial Level 3) when available. (3) Productivity is measured as GDP per employee at place of work in constant prices, constant Purchasing Power Parities (reference year 2010).

Differences in well-being across regions



Relative ranking of the regions with the best and worst outcomes in the 11 well-being dimensions, with respect to all 402 OECD regions. The eleven dimensions are ordered by decreasing regional disparities in the country. Each well-being dimension is measured by the indicators in the table below.

The top performing region in Belgium fares better than the OECD median for all 13 well-being indicators, with the exception of air pollution and employment rate. The latter is lower than the OECD median in all regions. On the other hand, the regions with the poorest performance in the country still fare better than the median OECD region in six well-being indicators, such as income, civic engagement, safety, access to services, housing and health (mortality rate).

Belgium has the fourth largest regional disparities in health among OECD countries. Large disparities are also found in jobs and community. All Belgian regions rank among the top 20% of OECD regions in terms of voter turnout, also due to the compulsory voting system.

	Country Average	OECD median region	Belgian regions	
			Top 20%	Bottom 20%
Jobs				
Employment rate 15 to 64 years old (%), 2017	62.5	67.7	67.0	56.2
Unemployment rate 15 to 64 years old (%), 2017	7.2	5.5	4.4	12.5
Health				
Life Expectancy at birth (years), 2016	81.5	80.4	82.6	79.8
Age adjusted mortality rate (per 1 000 people), 2016	7.5	8.1	6.9	8.7
Community				
Perceived social network support (%), 2013	92.5	91.4	94.5	90.2
Safety				
Homicide Rate (per 100 000 people), 2016	1.5	1.3	1.0	2.2
Life Satisfaction				
Life satisfaction (scale from 0 to 10), 2013	7.1	6.8	7.2	6.8
Income				
Disposable income per capita (in USD PPP), 2016	19 547	17 695	20 822	17 732
Education				
Labour force with at least upper secondary education (%), 2017	83.3	81.7	85.0	80.0
Access to services				
Households with broadband access (%), 2017	84.0	78.0	86.0	82.0
Housing				
Rooms per person, 2016	2.2	1.8	2.3	2.2
Civic engagement				
Voters in last national election (%), 2017 or latest year	89.4	70.9	90.8	87.6
Environment				
Level of air pollution in PM2.5 (µg/m³), 2015	14.5	12.4	13.8	14.9

Source: OECD Regional Database. Visualisation: <https://www.oecdregionalwellbeing.org>.

Notes: (1) OECD regions refer to the first administrative tier of subnational government (large regions, Territorial Level 2); Belgium is composed of 3 large regions. (2) Household income per capita data are based on USD constant PPP, constant prices (year 2010).

Metropolitan areas in the national economy



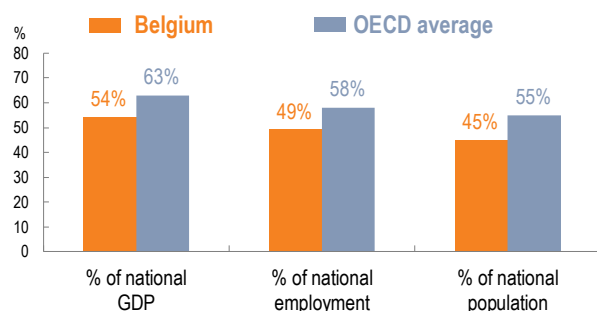
OECD population is concentrated in cities* Percentage of population in cities, 2016



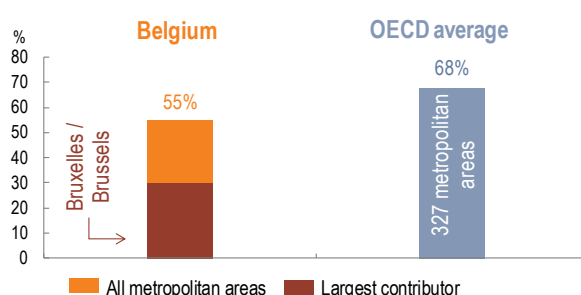
Source: OECD Metropolitan Database. Number of cities: 11 in Belgium and 1 138 in the OECD.

In Belgium, 59% of the population lives in cities of more than 50 000 inhabitants. The share of population in cities with more than 500 000 people is 45% compared to 55% in the OECD area.

Importance of metropolitan areas Cities above 500 000 people, 2016



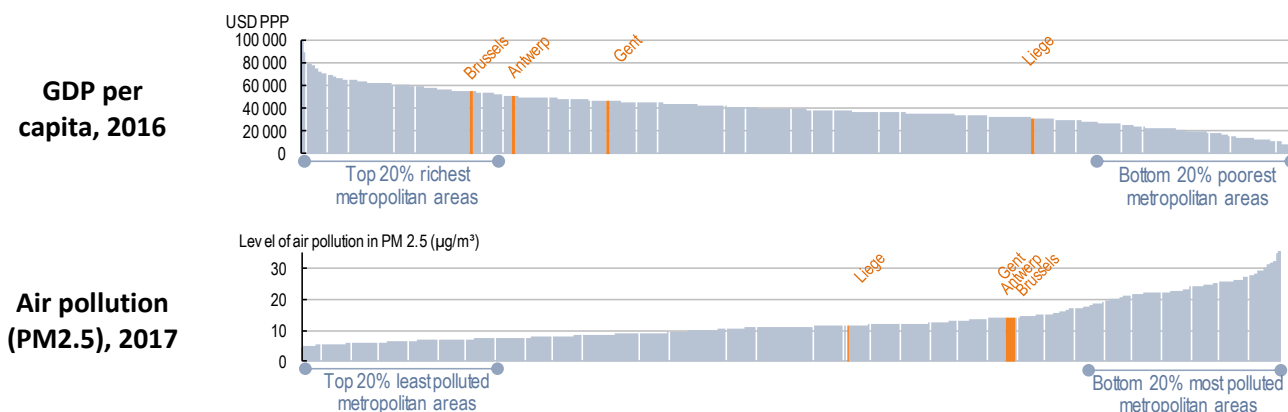
Contribution of metropolitan areas to GDP growth Cities above 500 000 people, 2000-16



Metropolitan areas (cities above 500 000 people) in Belgium account for 54% of national GDP and 49% of employment. Between 2000 and 2016 they generated 55% of national GDP growth.

In terms of GDP per capita, Brussels ranks among the 327 OECD metropolitan areas. Belgian metropolitan areas have levels of air pollution – as measured by people's exposure to PM 2.5 – above the OECD median, with the population of Liège having a better air quality compared to Gent, Antwerp and Brussels.

OECD Metropolitan areas ranking Cities above 500 000 people

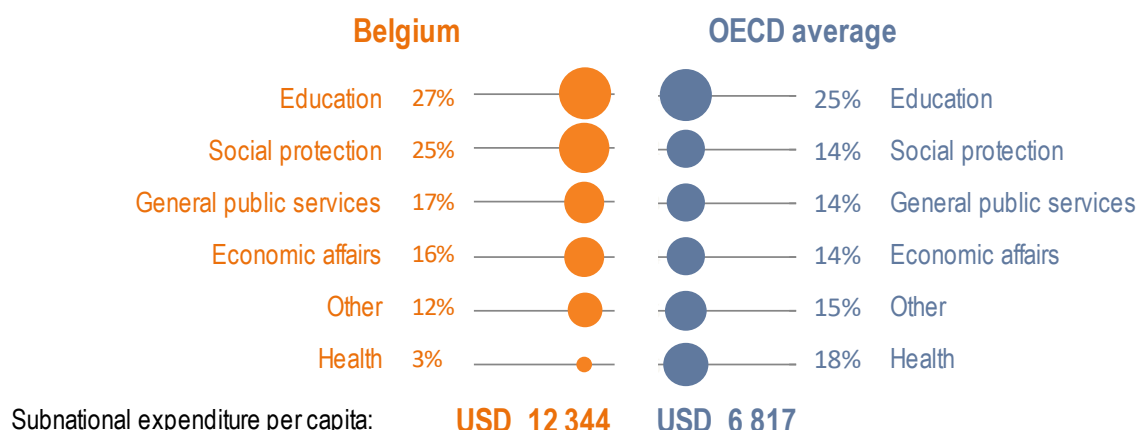


Source: OECD Metropolitan Database. Number of metropolitan areas with a population of over 500 000: 4 in Belgium compared to 327 in the OECD.

* Note: Cities are defined here as functional urban areas, which are composed by high-density urban centres of at least 50 000 people and their areas of influence (commuting zone). For more information, see: <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/functionalurbanareasbycountry.htm>.



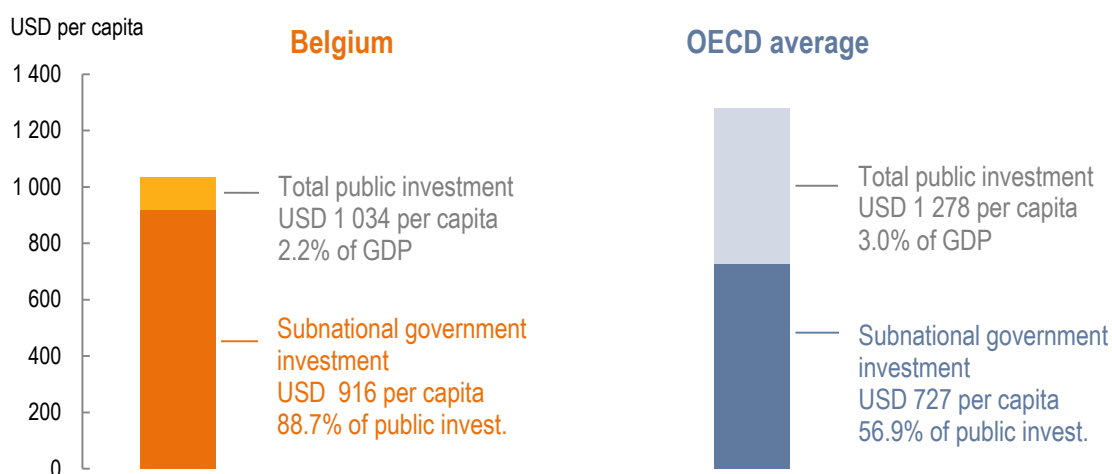
Subnational government expenditure by function As a share of total subnational government expenditure, 2016



Subnational government expenditure amounts to **USD 12 344 per capita** in Belgium compared to an OECD average of USD 6 817. In Belgium, this is equivalent to **49.8% of total public expenditure** and to **26.5% of GDP**. In comparison, across the OECD, subnational government expenditure accounts for 40.4% of total public expenditure and for 16.2% of GDP. Education and social protection are the two largest spending items for subnational governments in Belgium: together they represent **52%** of subnational expenditure compared to 39% in the OECD area.

In Belgium, **88.7% of total public investment** was carried out by subnational governments, compared to an OECD average of 56.9%. The proportion of public investment carried out by subnational governments in Belgium is the highest among OECD countries.

Role of subnational governments in public investment Subnational government public investment per capita, 2016



Source: OECD Subnational Government Structure and Finance Database.

Note: The function 'Other' includes housing and community amenities, recreation, culture and religion; environment; public order and safety.

OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance 2018

The 2018 edition of OECD Regions and Cities at a Glance shows how regions and cities contribute to national growth and the well-being of societies. It updates its regular set of region-by-region indicators, examining a wide range of policies and trends and identifying those regions that are outperforming or lagging behind in their country.

Consult this publication on line: <https://oe.cd/pub/2n9>

