

## 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 which during a given year were completed and ready to be occupied.

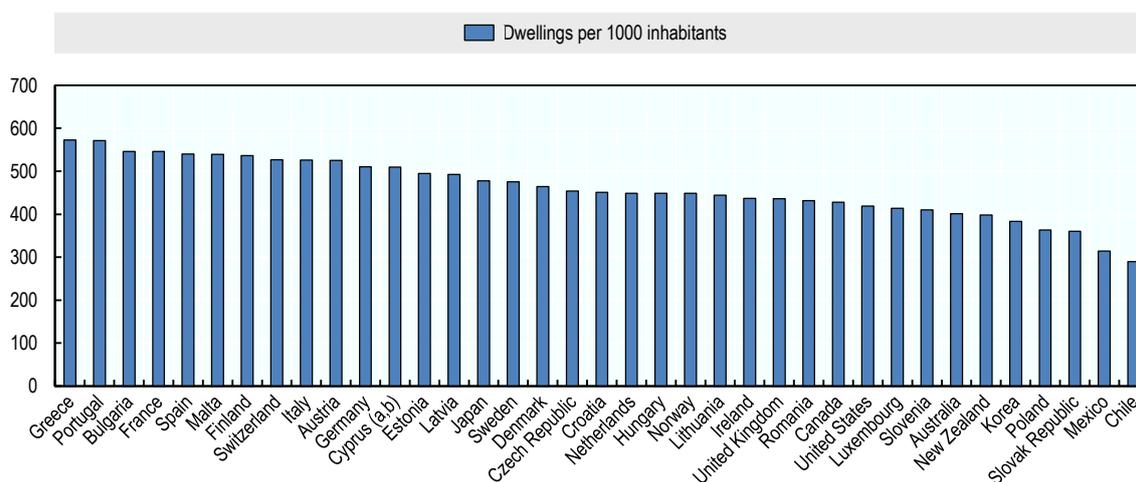
### Key findings

***The overall number of dwellings in relation to the population is highest in Greece, Portugal, Bulgaria, France and Spain - and lowest in Chile, Mexico, the Slovak Republic 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 year 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2015 in Table HM1.1.b in the accompanying Excel file.

The number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants is very high in Greece and Portugal (both over 570 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants), followed by Bulgaria, France and Spain (all above 540 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants). Malta, Finland, Switzerland, Italy Austria and Germany also have a relatively high number of dwellings compared to the population (all above 500 dwellings per 1000 inhabitants). By contrast, the number of dwellings reported is the lowest in Chile (290) followed by Mexico (314), the Slovak Republic (360) and Poland (363).

**Figure HM1.1.1: Dwellings per thousand inhabitants**  
Total number of dwellings per thousand inhabitants, 2015 or latest year available<sup>1</sup>



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 United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue";

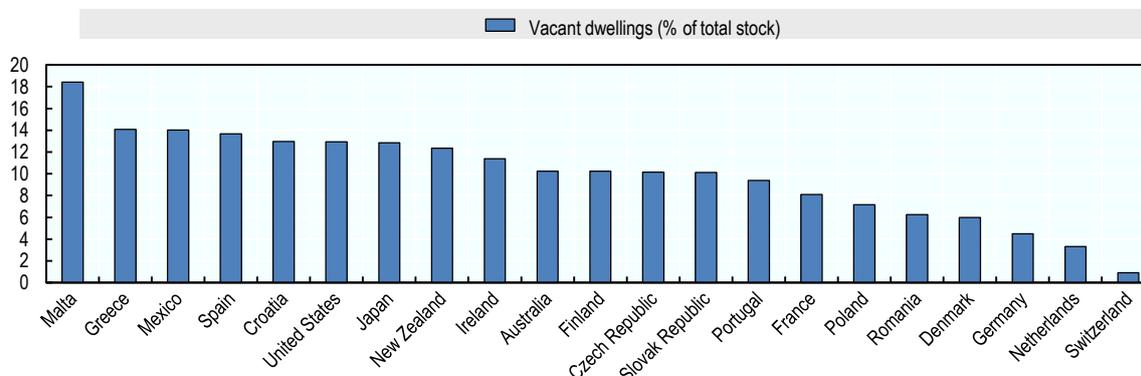
b) Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the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

1. Data refer to: 2010 for Cyprus and Mexico; 2011 for Canada the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Spain; 2013 for Chile, Croatia and Japan; 2014 for France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Information is missing for Belgium, Iceland, Israel and Turkey .

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing.

**Figure HM1.1.2.a: Vacant dwellings in selected countries**  
 Percentage of vacant dwellings out of the total dwelling stock, 2015 or latest year available<sup>1</sup>

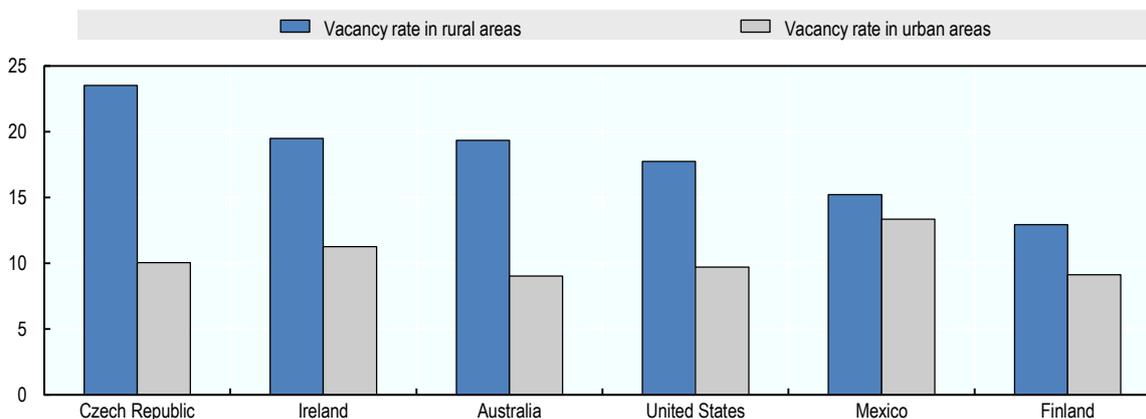


1. Year of reference: 2010 for Mexico; 2011 for Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Spain; 2013 for Croatia, Ireland, Japan and New Zealand; 2014 for France and Switzerland.

Information is missing for Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Korea, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Norway, and the United Kingdom. Furthermore for Hungary, Italy, Latvia and Slovenia only the total number of unoccupied dwellings is available. As that may include dwellings for seasonal use and/or secondary homes, data are not comparable.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing.

**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, 2015 or latest year available<sup>1</sup>



1. Year of reference: 2010 for the United States and Mexico; 2011 for Australia, the Czech Republic and Ireland.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing.

***Vacancy rates vary across countries, from 18% in Malta to less than 1% in Switzerland – with higher incidence in rural areas***

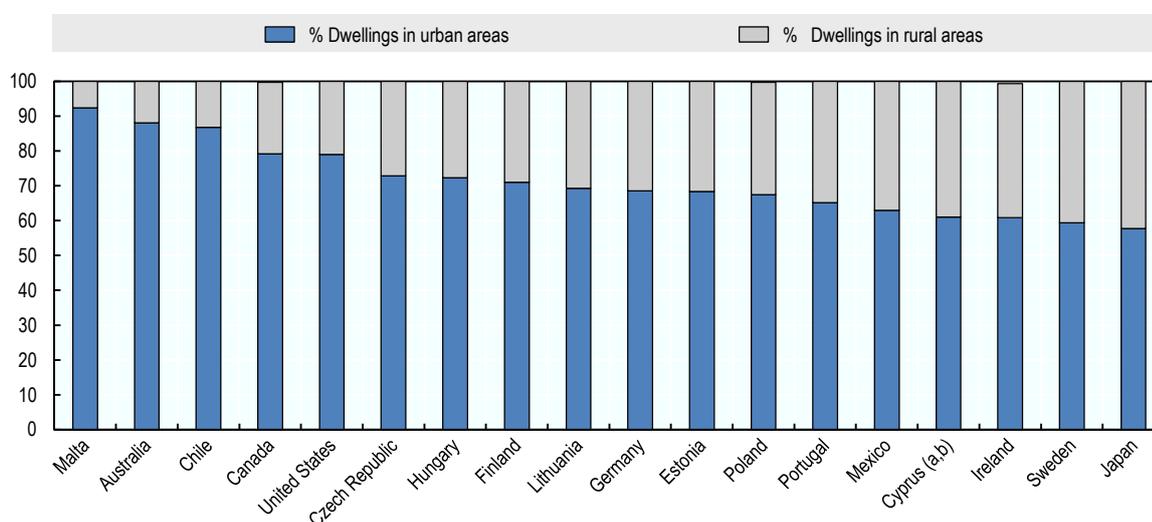
Information on the number of vacant dwellings is only available for some countries. Among those for which the information is available, shown in Figure HM1.1.2.a, Malta (18%), Greece and Mexico (both

about 14%) have the highest share of vacant dwellings. On the contrary, Switzerland has a vacancy rate below 1%.

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

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 HM1.1.3: Dwelling stock in urban and rural areas**  
Number of dwellings out of the total dwelling stock, located in urban and rural areas respectively, 2015 or latest year available<sup>1</sup>



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 United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the “Cyprus issue”;

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1. Data refer to: 2010 for the United States and Mexico; 2011 for Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Malta, and Portugal; 2013 for Chile, Cyprus and Japan; 2014 for Germany, Lithuania and Poland.

Information is missing for Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Source: OECD Questionnaire on Affordable and Social Housing.

Data on housing construction, i.e. the number of dwellings completed in a given year, are available for the year 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2015 (not reported here, see the on-line data annex). To make the information

comparable across countries, the number of dwellings completed in 2015 (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 2015 with years near 2000.

There has been a significant reduction in construction activity in a number of countries since 2000. Data do not allow for identifying the precise time when housing construction started to shrink, but the global financial crisis is known to have had a particularly significant curbing effect on the housing market after a prolonged period of ‘housing boom’ in Cyprus, Ireland and Spain (see for instance Lu et al. 2014; Norris and Byrne, 2015), the countries with the largest reduction in housing construction between the two reference years. By contrast, Canada, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Estonia and Latvia are building more homes than in the early 2000s.

### 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:

Dol, K. and Haffner, M. (eds) (2010), *Housing statistics in the European Union*, Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, the Hague

European Statistical System, Census Hub 2011 website, <https://ec.europa.eu/CensusHub2/query.do?step=selectHyperCube&qhc=false> (accessed on 12 December 2016)

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.

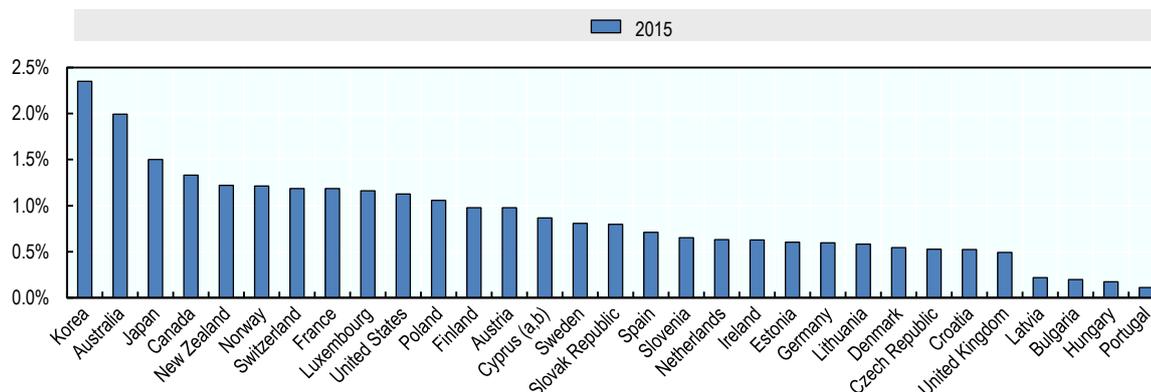
Norris, M., and Byrne, M. (2015), *Asset Price Keynesianism, Regional Imbalances and the Irish and Spanish Housing Booms and Busts*. UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy, Dublin. <http://hdl.handle.net/10197/6872>

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](http://www.unece.org/hlm/prgm/hsstat/Bulletin_00.html)

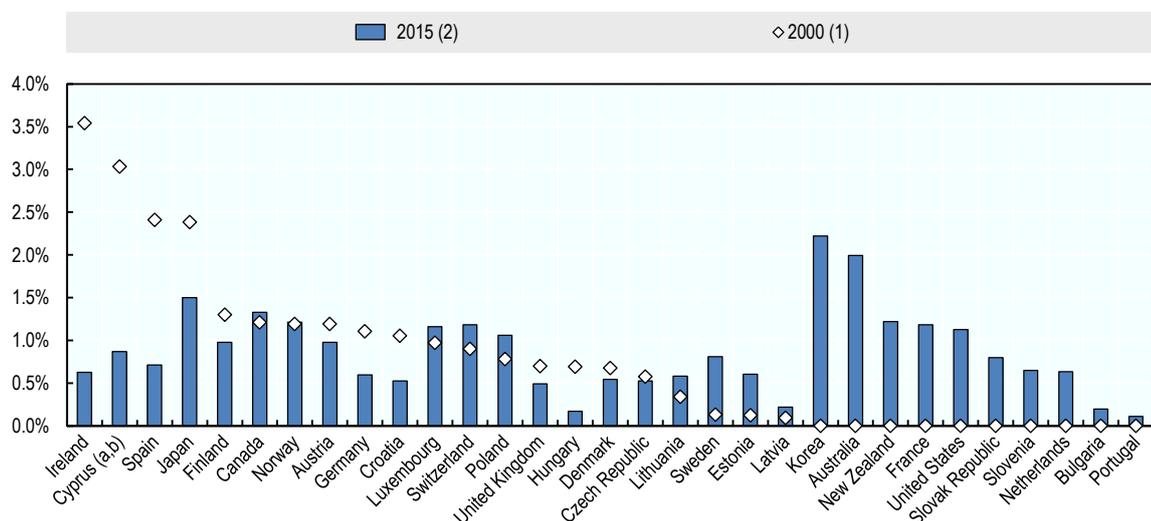
UNSTATS website, Compendium of Housing Statistics, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/sconcerns/housing/chs2011.htm>

#### 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 (2015 or latest year available) <sup>1</sup>



Panel B: Total number of dwellings completed in the year, as a percentage of the total existing housing stock (2000 and 2015)<sup>1 2</sup>



1. Data included for the year 2015 actually refer to: 2011 for Latvia and Lithuania; 2013 for the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Slovenia and Spain; 2014 for Australia, Denmark and Poland.

2. Data included for the year 2000 actually refer to: 1998 for Japan; 2001 for Austria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Luxembourg, Norway and Spain; 2003 for Cyprus.

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