

*Regions and Cities at a Glance 2020* provides a comprehensive assessment of how regions and cities across the OECD are progressing in a number of aspects connected to economic development, health, well-being and net zero-carbon transition. In the light of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the report analyses outcomes and drivers of social, economic and environmental resilience. Consult the full publication [here](#).

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## OECD REGIONS AND CITIES AT A GLANCE - COUNTRY NOTE

### BELGIUM

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- A. Resilient regional societies
- B. Regional economic disparities and trends in productivity
- C. Well-being in regions
- D. Industrial transition in regions
- E. Transitioning to clean energy in regions
- F. Metropolitan trends in growth and sustainability

The data in this note reflect different subnational geographic levels in OECD countries:

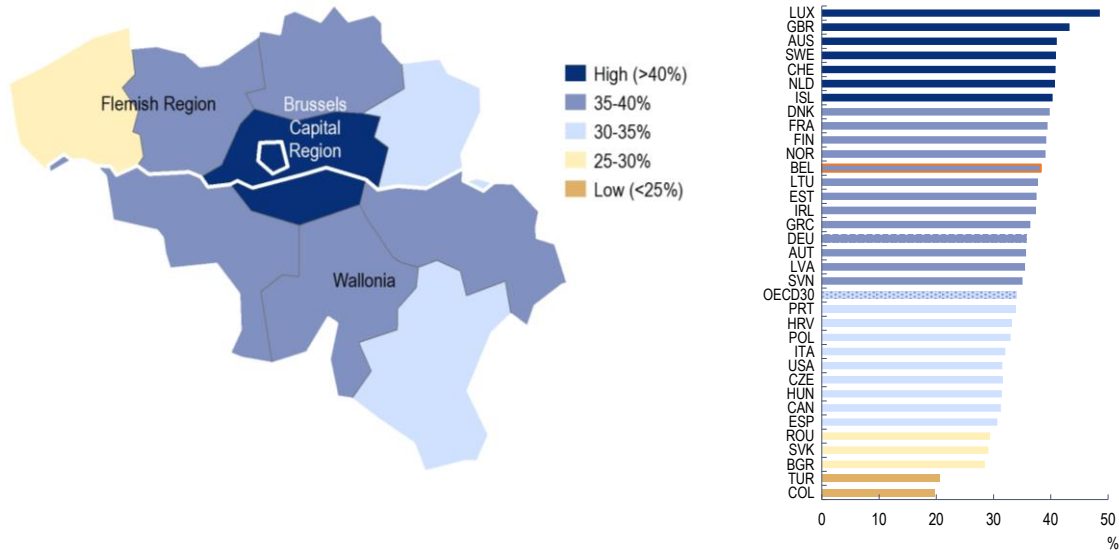
- **Regions** are classified on two territorial levels reflecting the administrative organisation of countries: large regions (TL2) and small regions (TL3). Small regions are classified according to their access to metropolitan areas (see <https://doi.org/10.1787/b902cc00-en>).
- **Functional urban areas** consists of cities – defined as densely populated local units with at least 50 000 inhabitants – and adjacent local units connected to the city (commuting zones) in terms of commuting flows (see <https://doi.org/10.1787/d58cb34d-en>). Metropolitan areas refer to functional urban areas above 250 000 inhabitants.

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## The Walloon Brabant region has the highest potential for remote working

A1. Share of jobs amenable to remote working, 2018

Belgian provinces (map)



The share of jobs amenable to remote working in Belgian provinces ranges from more than 50% in Walloon Brabant to less than 34% in West Flanders (Figure A1). **Such a difference depends on the task content of occupations and the difference in sectors in the regions**, which can be amenable to remote working to different extents.

In addition to the type of occupation, minimum digital skills is crucial to seize the opportunities offered by digitalisation. The use of internet is largely developed in the three large regions in Belgium (Figure A2).

### A2- Internet infrastructure

○ % individuals who used the internet in the last three months, 2019

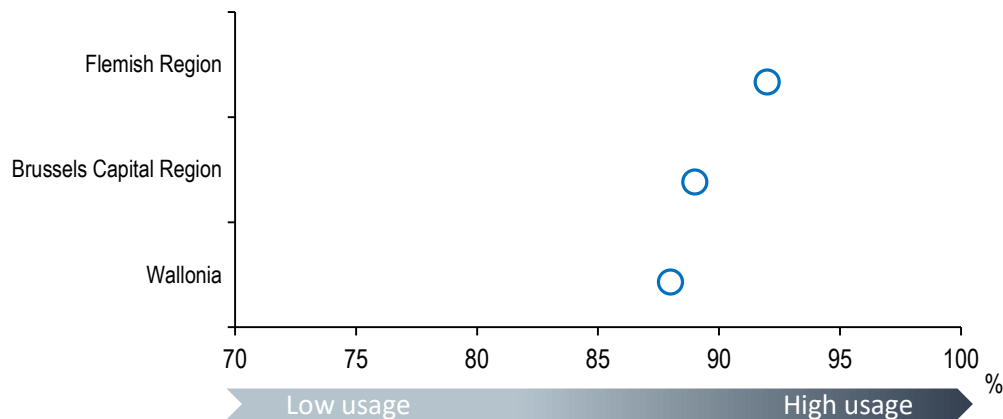
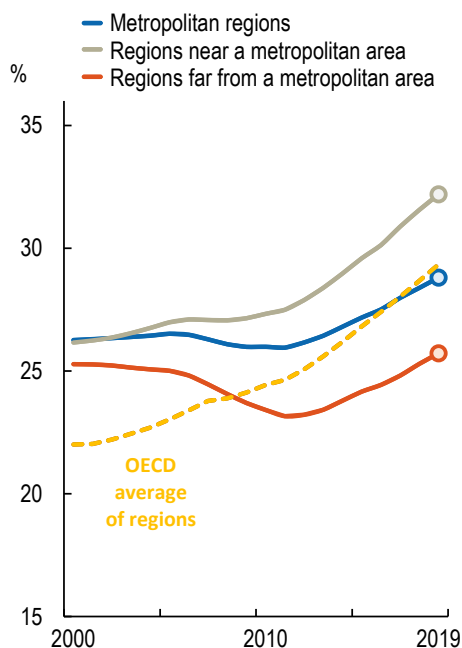


Figure [A1]: The lower percentage range (<25%) depicts the bottom quintile among 370 OECD and EU regions, the following ranges are based on increment of 5 percentage points. Further reading: OECD (2020), Capacity to remote working can affect lockdown costs differently across places, <http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/capacity-for-remote-working-can-affect-lockdown-costs-differently-across-places-0e85740e/>

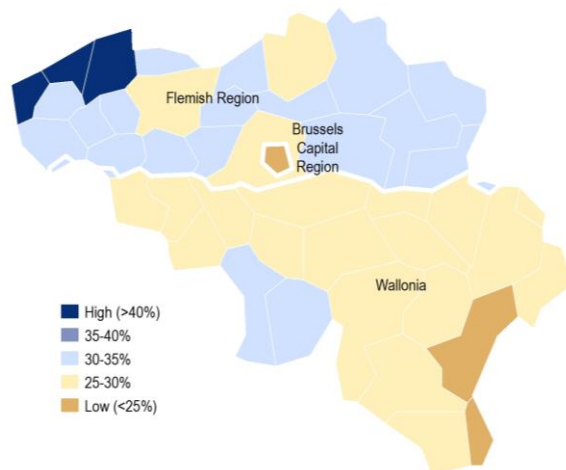
## Ageing challenges western regions more strongly

The elderly dependency rate, defined as the ratio between the elderly population and the working age (15-64 years) population, has increased in all types of regions in Belgium since 2012. Regions with access to a metropolitan area show the highest elderly dependency rate (32%) among the different types of regions (Figure A3). The Western part of the country faces stronger ageing trends. In three Arrondissements in the Flemish region (Veurne, Oostende and Bruges), there are two elderly for every five persons in their working-age in 2019 (Figure A4).

**A3. Elderly dependency rate**  
By type of small regions in Belgium



**A4. Elderly dependency rate, 2019**  
Small regions, TL3



## Hospital beds per capita in Brussels Capital region dropped since 2000

All regions in Belgium have significantly decreased their number of hospital beds per capita since 2000, especially in Brussels Capital region (Figure A5). With 5.1 beds per 1000 inhabitants in 2013, Wallonia has the lowest number of hospital beds per capita in Belgium, although still above the OECD average.

**A5 - Hospital beds per 1000 inhabitants**  
Large TL2 regions

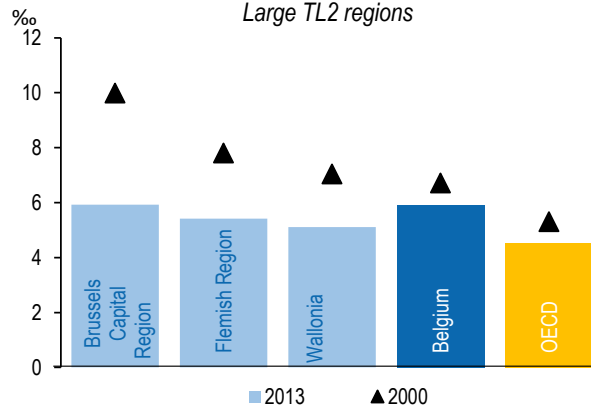


Figure notes. [A3]: OECD (2019), Classification of small (TL3) regions based on metropolitan population, low density and remoteness <https://doi.org/10.1787/b902cc00-en>. [A4]: Small (TL3) regions contained in large (TL2) regions. TL3 regions in Belgium are composed by 44 Arrondissements.

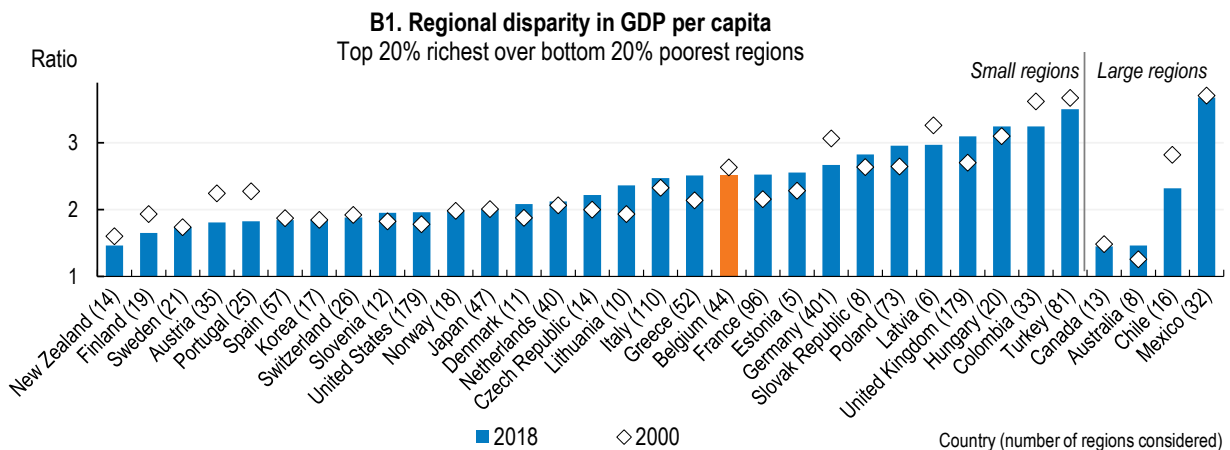


## B. Regional economic disparities and trends in productivity

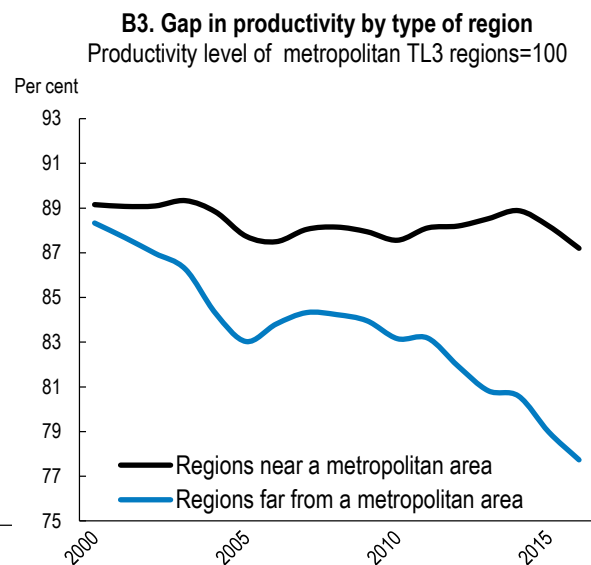
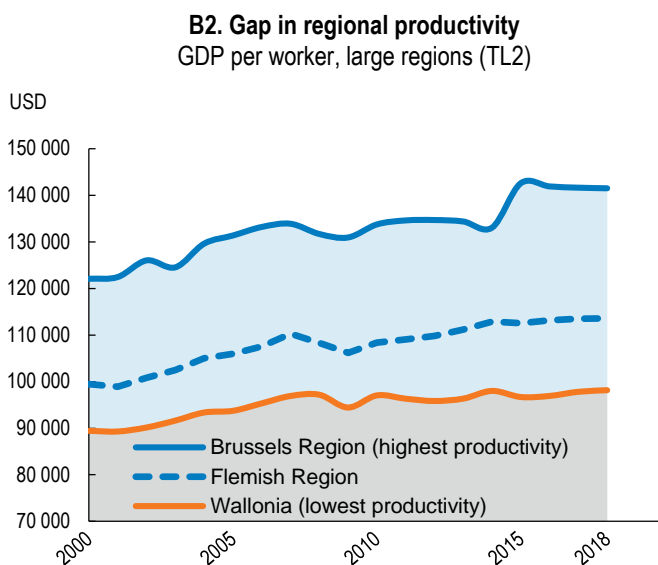
### Regional economic gaps have declined since 2000, partially due to lower growth of Brussels capital region, the richest Belgian region in terms of GDP per capita

The relatively faster economic growth in the arrondissements of Wallonia (région wallonne), which grew by 18% between 2000 and 2018, drove the narrowing of regional economic disparities of Belgium during the same period. The growth of Wallonia coexisted with a stagnation of GDP per capita in the Brussels region, due in part to a fast population growth in the latter region. On the other hand, total employment increased at lower pace in Brussels than in Wallonia, partially explaining the higher growth of the labour productivity over the period 2000-18 (Figure B2).

Productivity trends in regions near a metropolitan areas have followed those in metropolitan regions since 2000, while the productivity gap with regions far from a metropolitan area has increased further during the same period (Figure B3).

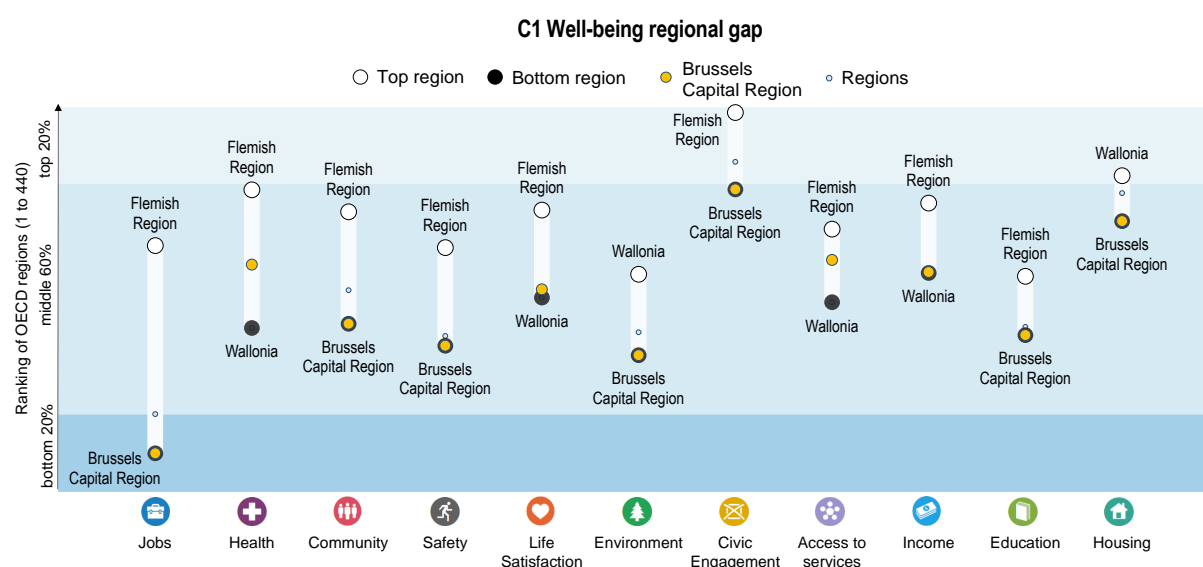


Note: A ratio with a value equal to 2 means that the GDP per capita of the richest regions accounting for 20% of the national population is twice as high as the GDP of the poorest regions accounting for 20% of the national population.



## C. Well-being in regions

### In Belgium, regional disparities in people's well-being are largest in the dimensions of jobs and health



Note: Relative ranking of the regions with the best and worst outcomes in the 11 well-being dimensions, with respect to all 440 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.

While most Belgian regions rank in the middle 60% of OECD regions in most well-being dimensions, the three Belgian regions rank among the top 25% of the OECD regions in civic engagement, with the Flemish region being in the top 5%. In contrast, the country shows large regional disparities in jobs and community. While the Flemish region is in the top third of OECD regions in jobs, Brussels ranks among the bottom 10% (Figure C1).

The top performing Belgian regions fare better than the top 20% of OECD regions only in 1 out of 13 well-being indicators, namely voter turnout (Figure C2).

#### C2. How do the top and bottom regions fare on the well-being indicators?

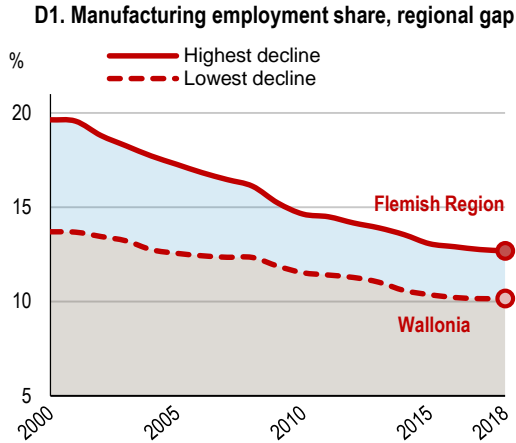
	Country Average	OECD Top 20% regions	Belgian regions	
			Top 20%	Bottom 20%
<b>Jobs</b>				
Employment rate 15 to 64 years old (%), 2019	65.3	76.0	70.3	58.0
Unemployment rate 15 to 64 years old (%), 2019	5.4	3.3	3.3	10.2
<b>Health</b>				
Life Expectancy at birth (years), 2018	81.6	82.6	82.6	80.0
Age adjusted mortality rate (per 1 000 people), 2018	7.6	6.6	7.0	8.6
<b>Community</b>				
Perceived social network support (%), 2014-18	91.8	94.1	93.0	89.9
<b>Safety</b>				
Homicide Rate (per 100 000 people), 2016-18	1.5	0.7	1.0	2.2
<b>Life Satisfaction</b>				
Life satisfaction (scale from 0 to 10), 2014-18	6.9	7.3	7.1	6.6
<b>Environment</b>				
Level of air pollution in PM2.5 (µg/m³), 2019	14.5	7.0	11.2	14.2
<b>Civic engagement</b>				
Voters in last national election (%), 2019 or latest year	89.7	84.2	92.2	84.9
<b>Access to services</b>				
Households with broadband access (%), 2019	85.3	91.3	86.7	82.7
<b>Income</b>				
Disposable income per capita (in USD PPP), 2018	23 034	26 617	24 557	20 962
<b>Education</b>				
Population with at least upper secondary education, 25-64 year-olds (%), 2019	78.7	90.3	81.6	73.9
<b>Housing</b>				
Rooms per person, 2018	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.2

Note: OECD regions refer to the first administrative tier of subnational government (large regions, Territorial Level 2); Belgium is composed of three large regions. Visualisation: <https://www.oecdregionalwellbeing.org>.



## D. Industrial transition in regions

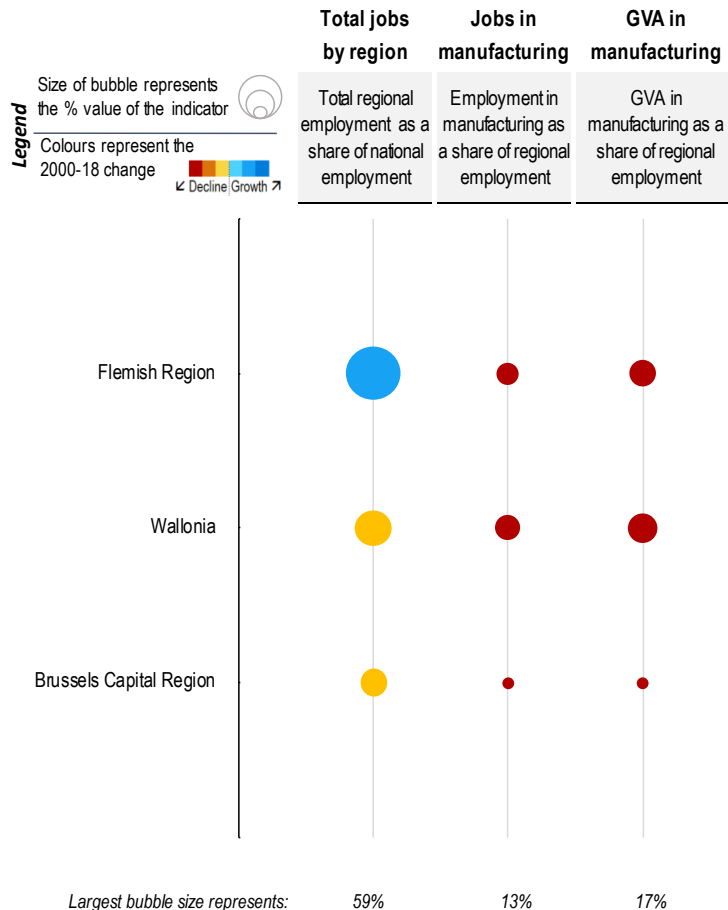
Manufacturing employment have decreased in all Belgian regions since 2000, following a reduction trend in manufacturing gross value added during the same period



Between 2000 and 2018, all large regions in Belgium experienced a decline in the share of manufacturing employment. With a reduction of 7 percentage points in the share of manufacturing employment, the Flemish region recorded the largest decrease (Figure D1).

The Flemish region accounted for a larger share of total employment in 2018 compared to that in 2000. Decline in employment in manufacturing coincides with a reduction in manufacturing gross value-added in all Belgian regions (Figure D2).

**D2. Manufacturing trends, 2000-18**



Note figure D.2. : Regions are ordered by regional employment as a share of national employment. Colour of the bubbles represents the evolution of the share over the period 2000-18 in percentage points: red: below -2 pp; orange: between -2 pp and -1 pp; yellow: between -1 pp and 0; light blue: between 0 and +1 pp; medium blue: between +1 pp and +2 pp; dark blue: above +2 pp over the period.



## E. Transitioning to clean energy in regions

### Most Belgian regions have stopped coal-fired electricity generation. However, more efforts are needed in transitioning to renewable sources

In 2017, the Flemish region and Wallonia produced 99% of Belgian electricity – each region accounting for around 60% and 40% of total electricity, respectively. While the use of coal for electricity production has been abandoned in Wallonia and Brussels, more efforts are needed to support the Flemish region towards this objective – in 2017 only 5% of the electricity produced in the region came from coal-fired power. On the other hand, the use of renewable sources remains a challenge for the main electricity producers in Belgium. In both the Flemish region and Wallonia, only 21% or less of the electricity was generated using renewables in 2017 (Figure E1).

**E1. Transition to renewable energy, 2017**

	Total electricity generation (in GWh per year)	Regional share of renewables in electricity generation (%)	Regional share of coal in electricity generation (%)	Greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generated (in Ktons of CO <sub>2</sub> eq.)	
Flemish Region	48 839	21%	5%	10 582	Fle.
Wallonia	33 601	12%	0%	4 514	Wal.
Brussels Capital Region	477	100%	0%	0	Bru.

Carbon efficiency in the production of electricity varies across Belgian regions but is higher than the average of OECD regions (of 380 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per gigawatt hour of electricity produced). In 2017, the Flemish region emitted around 215 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per gigawatt hour of electricity produced, while Wallonia emitted less than 135 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per gigawatt hour (Figure E2).

**E2. Contribution to total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from electricity production, 2017**

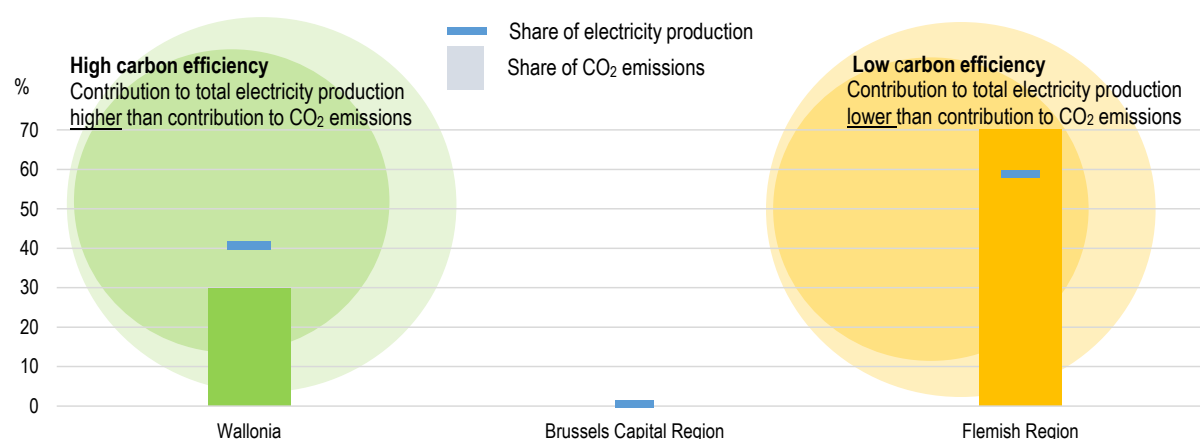


Figure notes: Regions are arranged in Figure E1 by total generation, and in Figure E2 according to gap between share of electricity generation and share of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (most positive to most negative). These estimates refer to electricity production from the power plants connected to the national power grid, as registered in the Power Plants Database. As a result, small electricity generation facilities disconnected from the national power grid might not be captured. Renewable energy sources include hydropower, geothermal power, biomass, wind, solar, wave and tidal and waste. See [here](#) for more details.

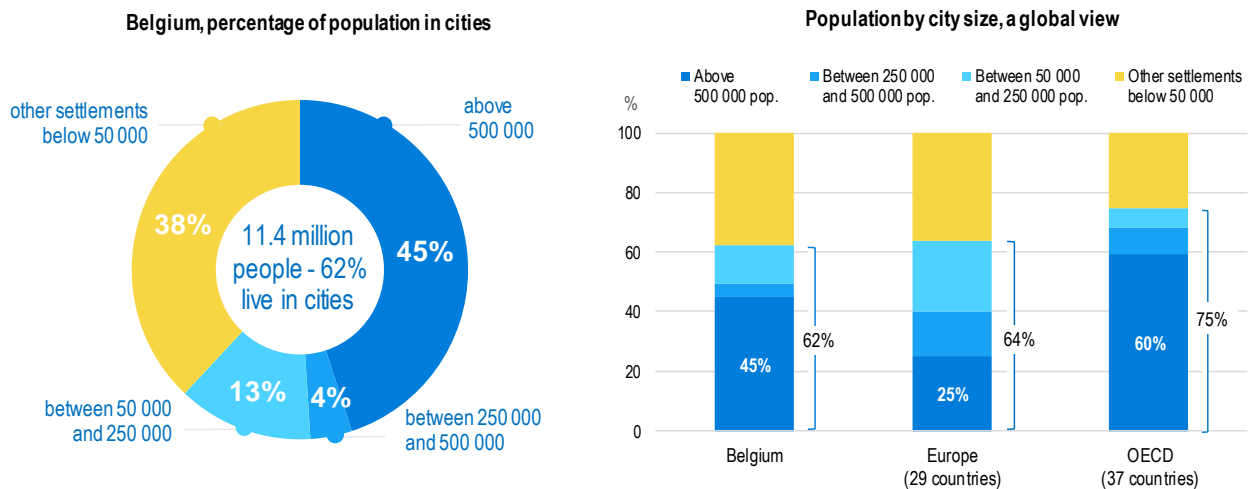


F. Metropolitan trends in growth and sustainability

**With respect to other OECD countries, Belgium has higher shares of population in small settlements below 50 000 inhabitants, outside functional urban areas**

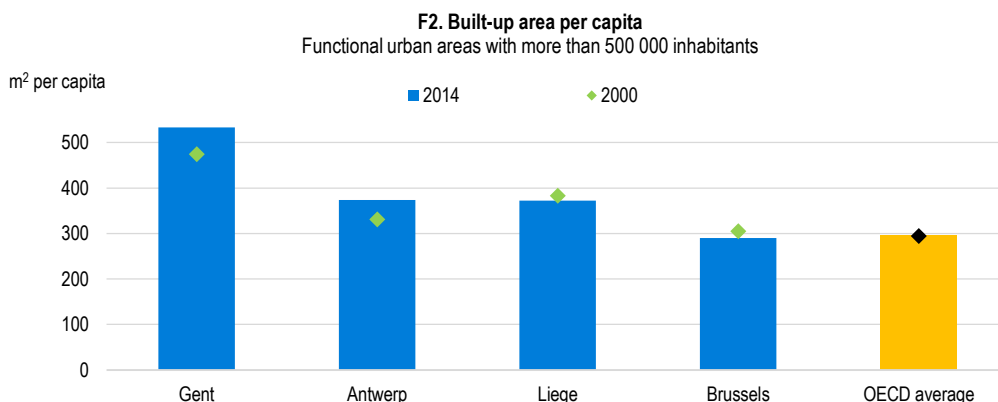
In Belgium, 62% of the population lives in cities of more than 50 000 inhabitants and their respective commuting areas (functional urban areas, FUAs). The share of population in FUAs with more than half a million people is 45%, lower than the OECD average of 60% (Figure F1).

**F1. Distribution of population in cities by city size**  
Functional urban areas, 2018



**Built-up areas have increased faster than population in Gent and Antwerp metropolitan areas, where built-up area per capita were already higher than the OECD average in 2000**

Built-up area per capita rose in functional urban areas since 2000 in Gent and Antwerp, where the difference between the growth of urbanised area and population is the more pronounced (Figure F2).



Source: OECD Metropolitan Database. Number of metropolitan areas with a population of over 500 000: 4 in Belgium compared to 349 in the OECD.



## Gent has experienced the highest GDP per capita growth since 2000 among Belgium metropolitan areas

Brussels metropolitan area ranks among the top 5% of OECD metropolitan areas with more than 500 000 people in terms of GDP per capita. With a growth of 1.6% per year in GDP per capita, Gent is catching up to Brussels and has a similar growth than Eindhoven metropolitan area in the Netherlands (Figure F3).

**F3. Trends in GDP per capita in metropolitan areas**  
Functional urban areas above 500 000 people

