

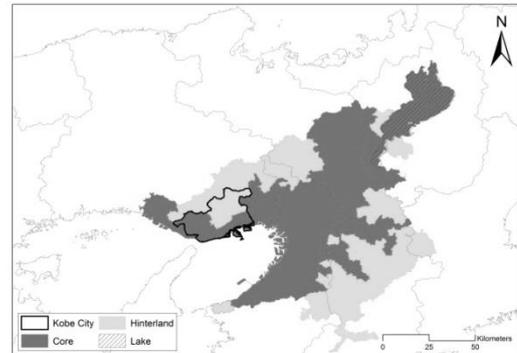
# KOBE, Japan

## Overview of Kobe

Kobe



Kobe and the Osaka Metropolitan Area



Source: Based on the OECD definition of functional urban areas. Own illustration OECD (2010), *OECD Metropolitan Database*.

## Kobe's administrative structure

Together with Osaka and Kyoto, Kobe is part of the Osaka Metropolitan Area. The city of Kobe consists of 9 wards (Higashi Nada, Nada, Chuo, Hyogo, Kita, Nagata, Suma, Tarumi and Nishi).

## Key figures

	Population (2015)	Unemployment rate (2010)	GDP growth (2011FY)
Kobe	1 537 860	6.4%	- 0.4%
Japan	128 060 000 (2010)	5.1%	-1.4%

## Challenges for Kobe's resilience

- *Urban redevelopment and improvement of resilience against natural disasters*

On 17 January, 1995, Kobe and the surrounding area were struck by the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake, causing 4 571 deaths. It was the first earthquake in Japan's modern history whose epicentre was in a metropolitan area. The majority of the damage fell within the city limits and significantly affected industry and commerce. Restoring the infrastructure and redeveloping urban areas while increasing the city's overall resilience against future natural disasters was the most pressing issue in the initial phase of the period after the earthquake. One of the challenges for Kobe is how to develop communities that are safe, comfortable and disaster-proof while drawing on the lessons learnt from the post-earthquake restoration and reconstruction.

- *Revitalisation of the economy and the creation of a new Kobe's industrial base*

The total economic damage (structural damage to the buildings, utilities, traffic network and port facilities, fire damage and liquefaction) caused by the earthquake was estimated at JPY 6.9 trillion (City of Kobe, 2015), approximately equal to Kobe's annual gross product. Many large manufacturers suffered damage to their main factories, and their production lines were interrupted. The effects of the earthquake and of Japan's ongoing economic slump have rapidly intensified Kobe's pre-existing systemic problems, such as the relocation of manufacturing plants to outlying areas and the decline of inner-city industry. As a result, the economic recovery has come to a temporary standstill, with only 80% of pre-disaster levels reached since 1997.

## ***Elements for building resilience in Kobe***

### **Economy**

- *Innovation in the biomedical industry drove economic growth in Kobe*, notably thanks to the Kobe Medical Industry Development Project (1998) which has become the largest biomedical cluster in Japan consisting of 316 organisations.
- *Collaboration with the national government and surrounding cities to leverage economic growth* by providing preferential treatment measures to attract investments is part of the city's strategy, through the Ordinance of Kobe Enterprise Zone that provides tax reductions, subsidies and loans.

### **Society**

- *The city uses Community development councils as the key to successful urban redevelopment*, adopting a collaborative approach that gives citizens a voice to design redevelopment proposals for instance under the Restoration Land Readjustment Project after the 1995 earthquake.
- *Risk communication increases the city's preparedness for natural disaster*, thanks to the creation of a Community Tsunami Preparedness Plan (2002) and BOKOMI (disaster preventive welfare community) in each district.
- *Kobe has an active volunteerism in communities*, with 759 registered non-profit organisations such as Plus Arts that aims to raise awareness through disaster education programmes.

### **Environment**

- *Kobe's investments in infrastructure to prepare for natural disasters* have been planned in the Restoration Plan (1995).
- *Kobe has developed an innovative water reservoir and water pipes to ensure emergency water supply*; learning from the lessons of the 1995 earthquake.
- *A new public transport system*, -either a bus rapid transit or a light rail transit- could increase access to services and jobs

### **Institutions**

- *Kobe has influential long-term vision*, the Fifth Master Plan (2010-2025), and mid-term action plan, the City Administrative and Fiscal Reform Plan (2015).
- *Kobe's integrated approach to planning and programming with national government* under the Kobe Environmental Future City Initiative (2012) to address environmental and other issues such as ageing population.
- *Kobe is undergoing a major administrative reform*, including cuts in the number of city employees, balancing of city bonds and implementation of effective management.

### **Conclusions**

- Based on the lessons learnt from the Great Hanshin-Awaji earthquake in 1995, Kobe has successfully developed a long-term restoration and disaster management strategy such as the Restoration Plan in Kobe and Fifth Master Plan, under which a number of preventive measures and risk communication activities are installed, supporting the city with better redundancy. Kobe has become the leading model in disaster risk management.
- Kobe's innovation policies such as the Kobe Medical Industry Development Project have set a very good target to lead the development of biomedical and pharmaceutical industries. These industries have become a major economic lever to improve the city's adaptive capacity.
- While the Kansai Innovation Comprehensive Global Strategic Special Zone provides a good backdrop for Kobe to develop an integrated innovation policy with the surrounding cities of Osaka and Kyoto, further efforts could be made to take full advantage of the expertise of universities, research institutions and the private sector in the Kansai region.
- After over 20 years since the earthquake, the city is encouraged to continue its effort for disaster risk reduction, in particular, raising people's awareness and developing urban infrastructure to mitigate damages. Kobe is expected to share its recovery experiences with other international communities.