

Human settlement



Figure 1: Surface area, 1995

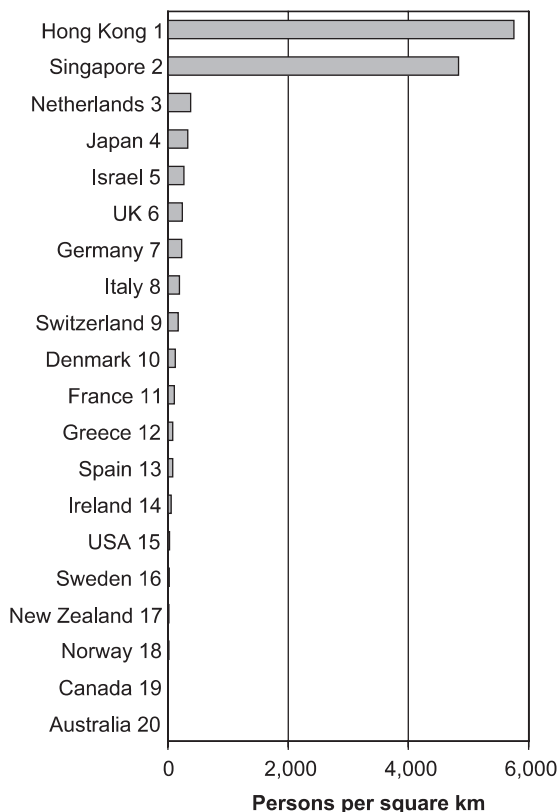


Figure 2: Population density, 1995

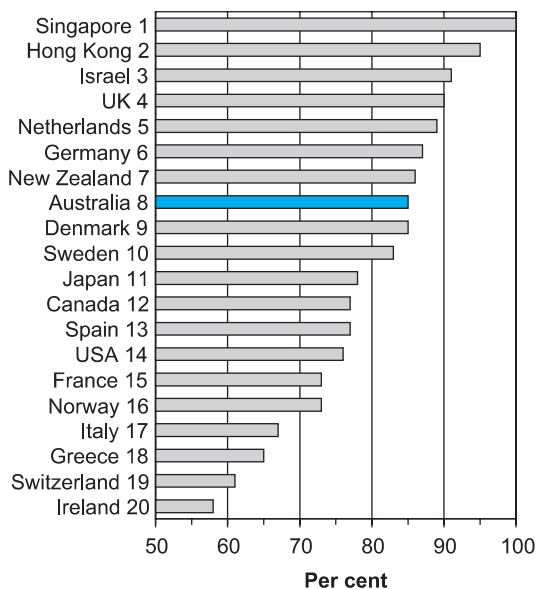


Figure 3: Urbanisation, 1995

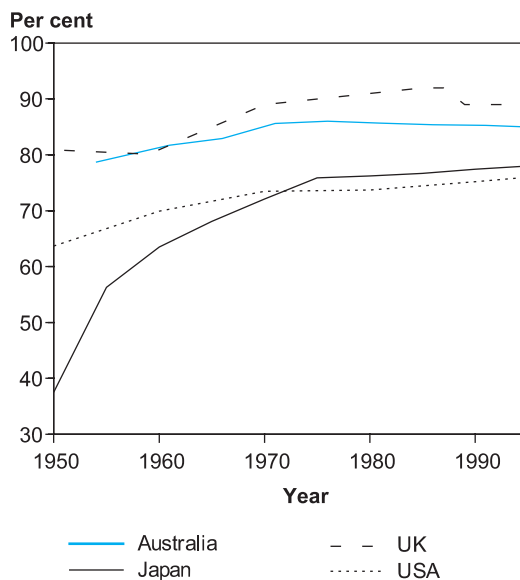


Figure 4: Urban population growth, 1950 to 1995

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Surface area, population density and urbanisation, 1995

Country	Surface area (km ²)	Population estimate ('000 persons)	Population density (persons/km ²)	Urban population ^(a) (per cent)
Australia	7,741,220	18,063	2	85
Canada	9,970,610	29,606	3	77
Denmark	43,094	5,228	121	85
France	551,500	58,143	105	73
Germany	356,733	81,642	229	87
Greece	131,957	10,458	79	65
Hong Kong	1,075	6,190	5,758	95
Ireland	70,284	3,582	51	58
Israel	21,056	5,545	263	91
Italy	301,268	57,187	190	67
Japan	377,801	125,197	331	78
Netherlands	40,844	15,451	378	89
New Zealand	270,534	3,542	13	86
Norway	323,877	4,360	13	73
Singapore	618	2,987	4,833	100
Spain	505,992	39,210	77	77
Sweden	449,964	8,831	20	83
Switzerland	41,284	7,040	171	61
UK	244,100	58,258	239	90
USA	9,363,520	263,034	28	76

(a) The definition of 'urbanisation' may vary from country to country.

Source: United Nations 1997.

- Australia is one of the world's largest countries, with an area of some 7.7 million square kilometres. It is more than 14 times larger than France, 20 times larger than Japan and 32 times larger than the United Kingdom. Victoria, one of Australia's smaller states, is approximately three times the size of the Netherlands. Among developed countries, Australia's surface area is exceeded only by Canada and the United States (Figure 1).
- In terms of overall population numbers, Australia is much smaller than many developed countries. In 1995, Australia's estimated resident mid-year population was 18,063,256 persons—ranking ninth behind Canada. It has the lowest net population density among all developed countries—2 persons per square kilometre—followed closely by Canada. In comparison, Singapore and Hong Kong have small surface areas and high population densities (Figure 2).
- Australia is, however, highly urbanised with most of Australia's population living in the south-east seaboard region and in particular the major capital cities. The inhospitable interior has led to only sparse settlement away from the coastal regions. It is estimated that in 1995, 85 per cent of Australians lived in settlements with a population of 10,000 persons or more (Figure 3).
- Urban density in Australian capital cities is low if compared to other international cities. Only certain parts of Sydney, Australia's largest city, approach the densities found in some of the cities overseas (State of the Environment Advisory Council 1996).
- The proportion of Australians living in urban settlements has been steady for the past two decades, and is similar in proportion to the United Kingdom (Figure 4). Japan experienced rapid urbanisation between 1950 and 1970. Since then, Japan's growth in urbanisation has paralleled the United States. However, both Japan and the United States are less urbanised than Australia.

For more information, see:

United Nations 1997. 1995 demographic yearbook. New York: United Nations.