This article presents recent statistics on the number of both passenger cars and utility vehicles (lorries, road tractors and special vehicles) in the European Union (EU), as well as in the EFTA and candidate countries, down to the level of regions (NUTS 2).

*Source: Eurostat (tran_r_vehst)*
Regional characteristics within the EU

The number of passenger cars per inhabitant, shows significant disparities in car ownership within the EU: the highest regional rate is more than six times the lowest one. For the EU as a whole (EU-28), the average rate in 2017 was 0.5 passenger cars per inhabitant (Figure 1).
The regional rates are often linked to the economic situation, but can also be affected by specific circumstances: the highest rate within the European Union, in Valle d’Aosta, is influenced by a specific taxation rules and does not reflect the actual number of passenger cars per inhabitant in the region. The impact of high population density is different depending on the area in the EU being considered: in the Western Member States (notably in Germany and the United Kingdom) the capital regions show comparatively low ratios, while the opposite holds for Eastern Member States (such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Romania) and for Turkey, where the highest ratio is observed in the capital region.
The largest numbers of passenger cars per inhabitant are registered in Western European regions, at significantly higher levels than the regions of Central and Eastern Europe. For utility vehicles, however, the picture looks different, with less contrast between Western and Eastern European regions.

**Passenger cars**

**High number of passenger cars per 1000 inhabitants in regions of Northern Italy**

Figure 2 indicates that six out of the ten regions with the highest number of passenger cars per 1000 inhabitants are located in Italy. At the other end, four regions out of the ten with the lowest number of passenger cars per 1000 inhabitants in 2017 were located in Romania and Greece (Figure 3).

![Figure 2: EU-28 regions with the highest number of passenger cars per 1000 inhabitants, NUTS 2 level, 2017](image-url)
Figure 3: EU-28 regions with the lowest number of passenger cars per 1000 inhabitants, 2017 - Source: Eurostat (tran_r_vehst)

Figure 4 highlights, however, that between 1998 and 2017, Poland registered the second highest average annual growth over the period among the EU-28 Member States (+5.1 %), after Romania (+5.3 %). Turkey displayed a similar high increase with an average annual growth of +4.8 %.

At the opposite end of the scale, France (+0.2 %), Germany (+0.4 %), Sweden and Luxembourg (both +0.6 %), Austria (+0.7 %), Belgium and Italy (both +0.8 %) and the United Kingdom (+0.9 %) were the only countries recording average annual growth between 1998 and 2017 of less than 1 %. In general, the Baltic, Eastern and Central European Member States, as well as Turkey, have registered stronger growths over the 1998-2017 period than West European countries.
The motorisation rate registered in the various regions of the European Union is often linked to economic issues. A special case is the Italian region of Valle d’Aosta with a lower taxation on new vehicle registration, leading to the number of passenger cars per inhabitant being overestimated. A number of regions close to larger cities also have a high number of passenger cars, suggesting a larger number of commuters. Examples of this are Flevoland in the Netherlands, Lazio in Italy and Attiki in Greece. Map 1 highlights the significant disparities observed between West and East European Member States when considering the number of passenger cars per inhabitant in 2017. In general, East European countries register the lowest numbers of passenger cars per inhabitant. In comparison, West European countries record higher rates, but with various countries presenting marked regional disparities.
Noticeable disparities are, however, clearly observable for some specific countries on Map 1. There is a strong north/south contrast in Italy, with the northern regions recording higher numbers of passenger cars per inhabitant than southern regions. In Greece, strong regional differences can also be observed between the high rate registered in the capital region (0.75 passenger cars per inhabitant in the Attiki region in 2016) and the low rate observed for the other regions of the country.

Utility vehicles (lorries, road tractors and special vehicles)

The geographical position of the regions influences the stock of utility vehicles

The picture is quite different when looking at utility vehicles (see definition under Data sources), where no systematic difference can be observed between West and East European regions. The share of utility vehicles (without trailers and semi-trailers) in the total number of road vehicles (without trailers and semi-trailers and motorcycles) in a region depends on a number of different factors. Among these are the regional transport systems and related infrastructure for different modes of freight transport, such as the capacity of motorways, railway lines, ports and airports. The economic characteristics of the region also play a role, i.e. whether the regional economy is dominated by manufacturing industries or services, and whether the region is located on key European freight corridors. Twelve of the top-15 EU regions with the lowest shares of utility vehicles in all types of vehicles are located in urbanised areas of Germany (ranging between 5.6 % and 8.9 %). (Figure 5)
The highest shares of utility vehicles are mostly registered in Southern European regions (Figure 6). Eleven of the 15 regions with the highest shares of utility vehicles are located in Greece alone, ranging between 52.7% and 27.5% (2016 data).
The average share of utility vehicles in all types of vehicles within the European Union was 15% in 2017. This was more than three times less than the highest regional rate observed in the Peloponnisos region in Greece (52.7%: 2016 data). This particularly highlights the disparities existing in the regional structure of vehicle stocks throughout the European Union. Two of the four NUTS 2 regions registering more than 800 thousand utility vehicles, Andalucía and Cataluña, are located on the Mediterranean (the other regions are Île-de-France, the Paris capital region and Rhône-Alpes). These two Spanish regions play a key role in freight transport in the West Mediterranean region, with direct ferry connections not only with the Spanish islands and Ceuta and Melilla, but especially between Andalucía and Morocco and Algeria, and between Cataluña and Italy. Lombardia, with its main city Milan, one of the key economic centres of Italy, as well as Rhône-Alpes (with Lyon, the third biggest city in France) also registered a high number of utility vehicles. The geographical position of these regions also seems to play a key role in the regional need for freight vehicles: Lombardia and Rhône-Alpes, located at the heart of international freight corridors between Italy, France, Switzerland and Austria, register a very high volume of trans-Alpine freight transport.
Map 2: Equipment rate for utility vehicles (lorries, road tractors and special vehicles), by NUTS 2 regions, 2017
(Source: Eurostat (tran_r_vehst))

Data sources

Eurostat collects regional statistics on the infrastructure of road, railways and inland waterways, as well as vehicle stocks and road accidents. The data are provided by the Member States, the candidate countries and some EFTA countries on a voluntary basis using the REGWEB online application. The data are collected at NUTS 2 level for these transport indicators.

Country-specific notes

The major events affecting comparability over time and possible discrepancies in the data are described in the Country Specific Notes.

Passenger cars

Road motor vehicle, other than a moped or a motor cycle, intended for the carriage of passengers and designed to seat no more than nine persons (including the driver). Included are: a) Passenger cars b) Vans designed and used primarily for transport of passengers c) Taxis d) Hire cars e) Ambulances f) Motor homes. Excluded are light goods road vehicles, as well as motor-coaches and buses, and mini-buses/mini-coaches. "Passenger car" includes microcars (needing no permit to be driven), taxis and passenger hire cars, provided that they have fewer than ten seats.
Number of passenger cars per inhabitant

For a given year, this indicator is calculated on the basis of the stock of vehicles as of 31st December and the population figures as of 1st January of the following year.

Utility vehicles

Utility vehicles correspond to the sum of lorries, road tractors and special vehicles. Trailers and semi-trailers are excluded. A lorry corresponds to a rigid road motor vehicle designed, exclusively or primarily, to carry goods. Road tractors are road motor vehicles designed, exclusively or primarily, to haul other road vehicles which are not power-driven (mainly semi-trailers). Agricultural tractors are excluded. Special purpose road motor vehicles are defined as road motor vehicles designed for purposes other than the carriage of passengers or goods. This category includes: a) Fire brigade vehicles b) Mobile cranes c) Self-propelled rollers d) Bulldozers with metallic wheels or track e) Vehicles for recording film, radio and TV broadcasting f) Mobile library vehicles g) Towing vehicles for vehicles in need of repair h) Other special purpose road motor vehicles.

Regional breakdown

The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) was established by Eurostat more than 30 years ago in order to provide a single uniform breakdown of territorial units for the production of regional statistics for the European Union. From 1 May 2004, the regions in the 10 new Member States were added and from 1 January 2007 the regions of Bulgaria and Romania.

Data used are figures at different levels of NUTS 2013 as defined in the following legal acts:


Certain smaller countries are not sub-divided in NUTS regions. This is the case for Estonia (EE), Cyprus (CY), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT) and Liechtenstein (LI).

For country codes see here.

Context
This article provides basic figures on the regional distribution of the stock of passenger cars and road utility vehicles. However, these data are only part of the wider set of regional transport statistics available in Eurostat’s databases. Regional transport statistics show patterns of variation across regions, where transport-related variables are often closely related to levels of economic activity. Transport policies are at the very heart of efforts to reduce regional inequality and improve regional cohesion. In the enlarged European Union, economic and infrastructure disparities are now more evident than before.

One of Eurostat’s long-term objectives is to expand the current regional transport indicators in order to provide a better understanding of the impact of transport policies on economic growth, transport needs and the environment.

Other articles
- Road freight transport statistics

Publications
- Regional yearbook 2017 - Chapter 11, Transport
- Regional yearbook 2016 - Chapter 11, Transport
- Illustrated glossary for transport statistics (4th edition)

Main tables
- Transport, see:
  Multimodal data (tran)
    Regional transport statistics (tran_r)
      Stock of vehicles by category and NUTS 2 regions (tran_r_vehst)

Database
- Transport, see:
  Multimodal data (tran)
    Regional transport statistics (tran_r)

Dedicated section
- Transport
Legislation


External links

- CARE Website
- UNECE website for transport statistics