Urban areas and localities in Iceland

Nordic Forum for Geography and Statistics: Meeting 2024

Kristín Ósk Ingvarsdóttir

Co-funded by the European Union

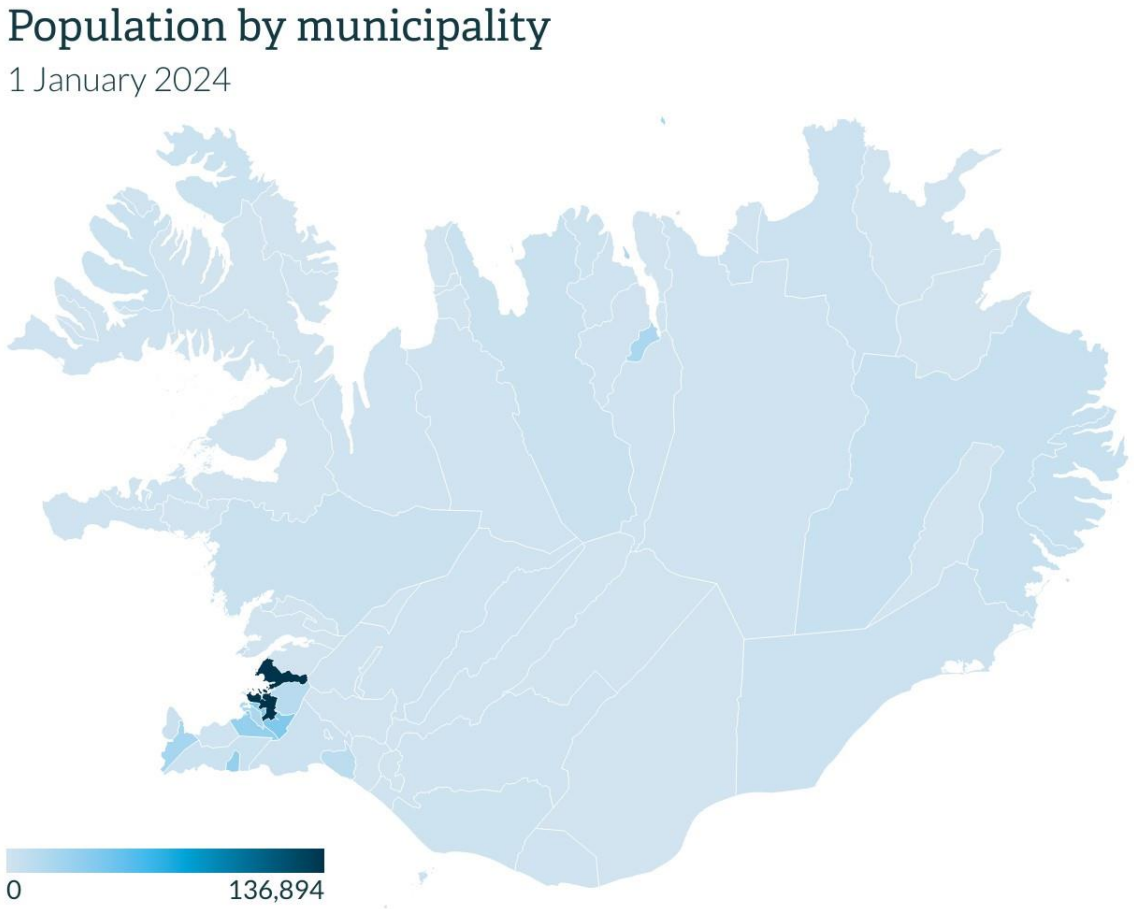
Statistics Iceland

Informed society

A sparsely populated country…

…but densely populated in the capital area

- Up until 2015, the definition of localities was based on municipal boundaries
- Statistical comparisons across municipalities rather difficult when one municipality has **over 100.000** inhabitants, but the majority has **less than 1000** inhabitants



Population: 383.726

Co-funded by the European Union

Statistics Iceland

Statistics Iceland

Informed society

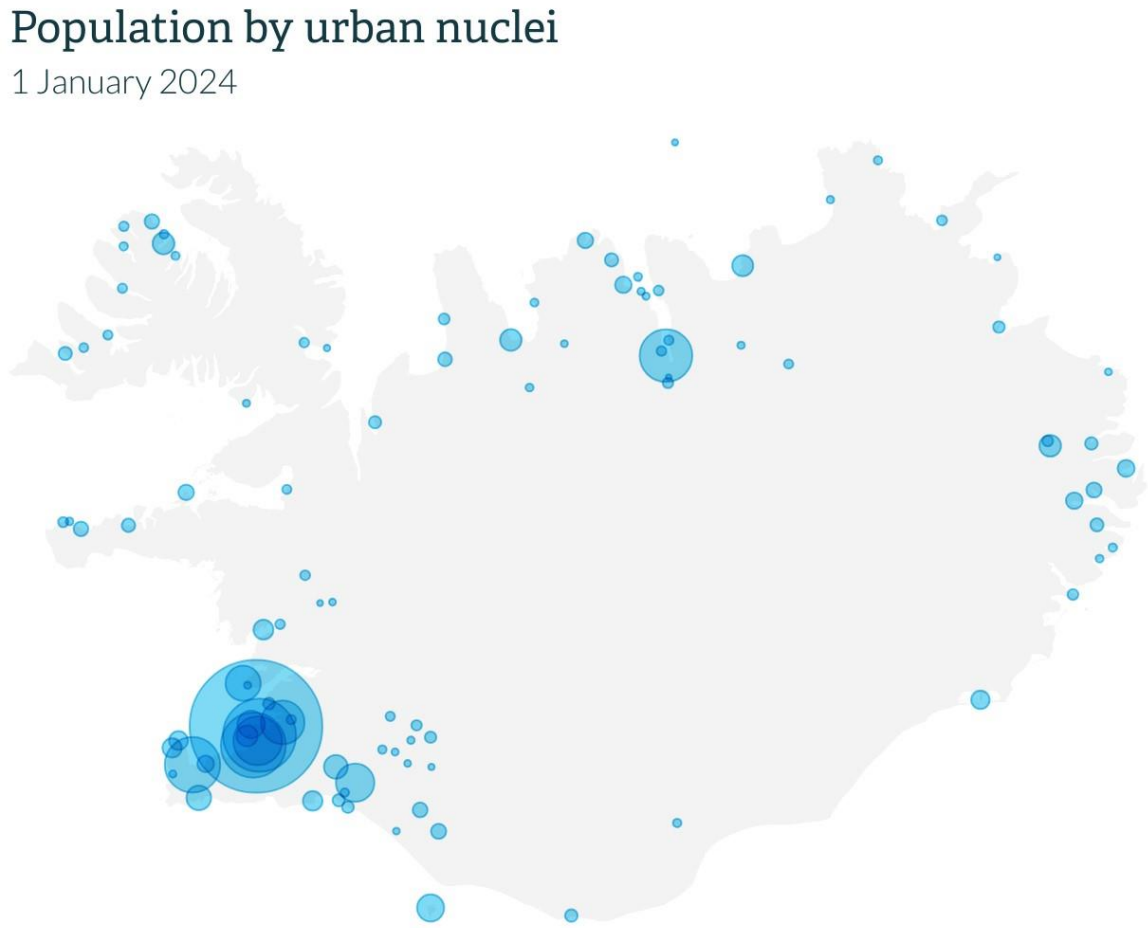
Moving away from administrative borders

- In 2015, a new definition of urban nuclei and localities came into force:
  - **Urban nucleus** (*is. Byggðakjarni*): a contiguous cluster of addresses that are less than 200 meters from each other within a municipality, with at least 50 inhabitants.
  - **Locality** (*is. Þéttbýli*): Similar to an urban nucleus, but with two key differences: (1) a locality is not confined by municipal boundaries, and (2) it must have at least 200 inhabitants.
  - Statistics Iceland revises the boundaries of urban nuclei every 5 years

Co-funded by the European Union

Geocoding of Addresses

- Statistics Iceland has geocoded nearly all addresses in urban areas since 1990, enhancing the accuracy of population statistics and **enabling new data presentation possibilities**
  - Creating geographical boundary around the localities and urban nuclei



Co-funded by the European Union

Statistics Iceland

Statistics Iceland

Informed society

New possibilities using geospatial data…

…BUT

- Almost no GIS knowledge within Statistics Iceland
  - Staff turnover
  - GIS people go elsewhere
- Luckly, Iceland has strong geospatial knowledge related to nature monitoring
  - Collaboration with subcontractors with strong technical knowledge
  - Icelandic Met Office, University of Iceland, The Cadastral Office

Co-funded by the European Union

GeoSocietal View of Iceland

- Co-funded by the EU
  - 2023-IS-GEOS
- To formalize and strengthen institutional collaboration
- Create national knowledge networks…
  - …by working together on a common project where we integrate geospatial information and official statistics…
  - …with the aim of creating a user-friendly data portal for public use…
  - …which has been coined “The Geo Societal View of Iceland (GeosView)”

Co-funded by the European Union

Statistics Iceland

Informed society

Concepts and Functions

- Matching geospatial information with already published statistics (HVD, SDGs)
  - Coordinate and standardize classifications across published SI data
    - Data Warehouse approach
  - Create geospatial auxiliary database (or data tables)
    - Statice Geolocation Registry
- Increase the number of available datasets for integration with geospatial data
- Create an automatic data pipeline for published (or publishable) data into the GeosView

Co-funded by the European Union

Knowledge sharing is the passport to the future

- Close collaboration with the Cadastral Office & University of Iceland
- Cross departmental team approach within Statistics Iceland
  - “No Silo” approach
    - A project shared by a new department of innovation together with the department of communication
  - Possible because of recent organizational change
    - Focus on data and innovation
- Together - Contribute to the sustained growth and long-term success of the project

Co-funded by the European Union