



## Urbanization Facts and Figures

Exactly 30 years ago, the United Nations convened the Habitat I conference in Vancouver in 1976. However, it would be true to say that in 1976, rapid urbanization and its impacts were barely on the radar screen of the UN, especially as only one-third of humanity lived in urban areas.

Then, the world's population was primarily rural. But since then, the world has started to witness the greatest and fastest migration into cities and towns in history. Now, 30 years later, the proportion of people living in urban areas has risen to fifty percent and will continue to grow to two-thirds, or 6 billion people, by 2050.

### The 10 largest cities (urban agglomerations) in the World

1975		2005	
Tokyo, Japan	26.6	Tokyo, Japan	35.3
New York-Newark, USA	15.9	Mexico City, Mexico	19.0
Shanghai, China	11.4	New York-Newark, USA	18.5
Mexico City, Mexico	10.7	Mumbai, India	18.3
Osaka-Kobe, Japan	9.8	Sao Paulo, Brazil	18.3
Sao Paulo, Brazil	9.6	Delhi, India	15.3
Buenos Aires, Argentina	9.1	Calcutta, India	14.3
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	8.9	Buenos Aires, Argentina	13.3
Paris, France	8.6	Jakarta, Indonesia	13.2
Beijing, China	8.5	Shanghai, China	12.7

Source: United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 revision*.

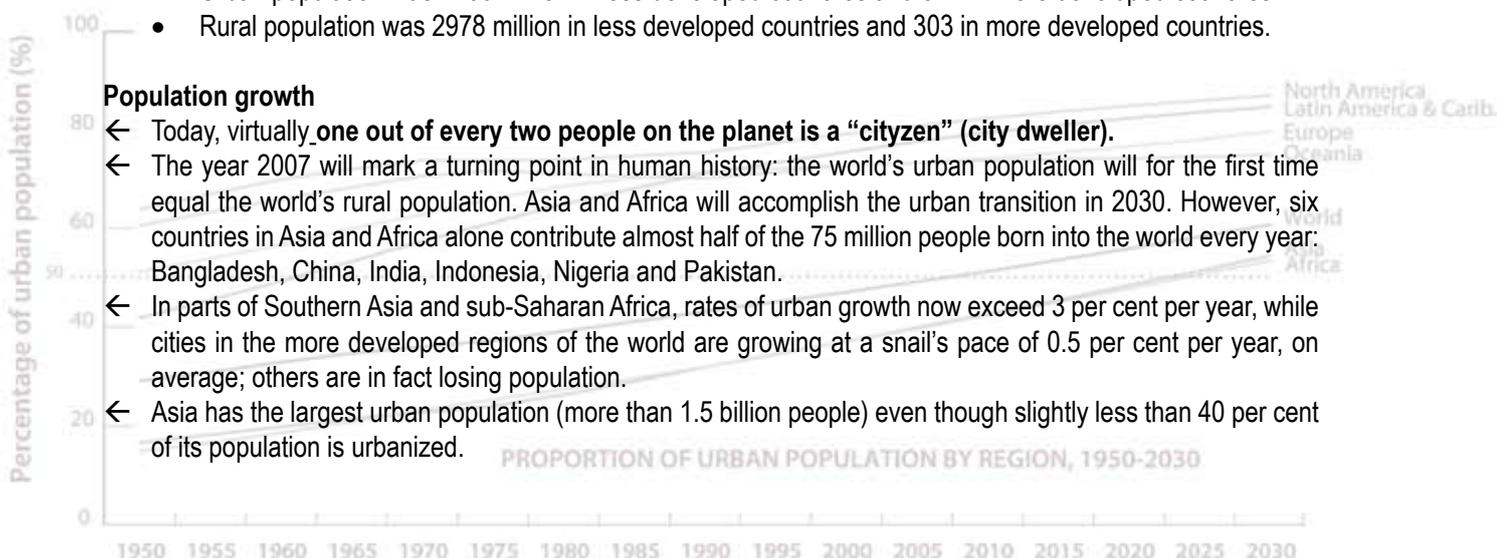
In 1975, 5 of the 10 largest cities were from less developed countries and 5 from more developed countries. In 2005, 8 of the 10 largest cities were from less developed countries.

In 1975:

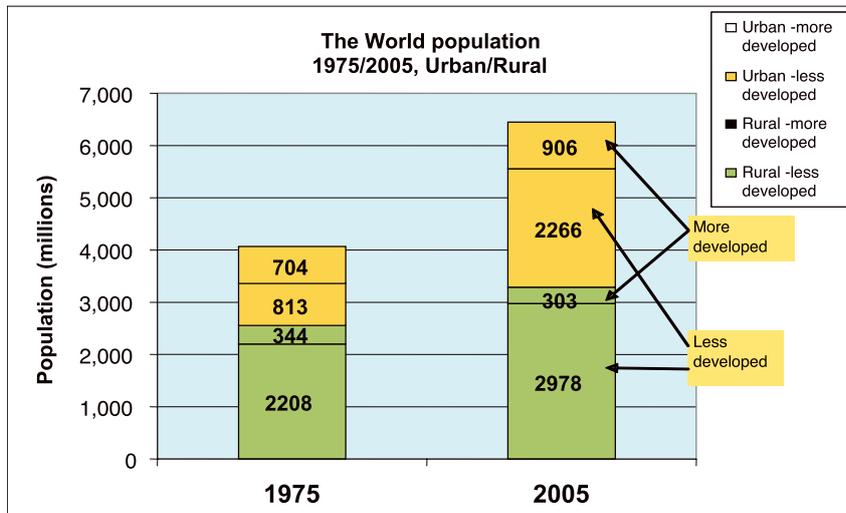
- Urban population was 813 million in less developed countries and 704 million in more developed countries.
- Rural population was 2208 million in less developed countries and 344 million in more developed countries.

In 2005

- Urban population was 2266 million in less developed countries and 344 in more developed countries.
- Rural population was 2978 million in less developed countries and 303 in more developed countries.



- ← The total population of cities in the developing regions of the world already exceeds that of cities in all of the developed regions (by 1.3 billion people). By 2030, nearly 4 billion people, 80 per cent of the world's urban dwellers, will live in cities of the developing world.



Source: United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 revision*

### Urbanization patterns and demographic trends

- ← Today, the majority of urban migrants are moving from smaller towns and cities to larger ones, or moving between cities. Cities are not burgeoning any longer with rural in-migrants. Rural-to-urban migration is not any more a major urban growth factor (except few countries such as China...). Natural population increases are becoming a more significant contributor to urban growth, and reclassification of rural areas into urban areas is speeding the rate of urbanization.
- ← More than half of the world's urban population lives in cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants, and almost one-fifth lives in cities of 1 to 5 million inhabitants. These intermediate cities are predicted to grow at a faster rate than any other city. The relative absence of infrastructure, such as roads, water supply and communication facilities, in many small and intermediate-sized cities makes these cities less competitive locally, nationally and regionally and leads to a lower quality of life for their citizens.
- ← Coastal zones tend to be disproportionately urban: 65 per cent of the population of coastal areas is concentrated in cities. They have higher densities and are experiencing higher urban growth.
- ← "Metacities" – massive conurbations of more than 20 million people, above and beyond the scale of megacities – are now gaining ground in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Metacities are home only 4 per cent of the world's population and most have grown at the relatively slow rate of about 1.5 per cent annually. However, one metacity such as Greater Mumbai has a larger population than the total population of Norway and Sweden combined. These cities call for new, innovative and more decentralized forms of governance with better and stronger inter-municipal relations. The scale of environmental impact of metacities and megacities on their hinterlands is also significant and is likely to be a cause for concern in coming decades. However, lack of "manageability" is more related to failures of governance and urban planning, rather than to city size *per se*.
- ← For the first time ever, the elderly population in developed countries has surpassed the number of children aged 14 and younger, owing to increased life expectancy and, more significantly, low fertility. Many countries in Europe will be forced to import labour to make up for the shortfall. This may increase social and political tensions. By 2050, when nearly one in three people in the developed world is elderly, half of the people in 11 of the world's least-developed countries will be younger than 23.

## Urbanization trends and MDGs

- ← Meeting the Millennium Development Goals means addressing development issues in cities, especially because current trends predict the number of urban dwellers will keep rising, reaching almost 5 billion by 2030. Between 2005 and 2030, the world's urban population is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.78 per cent, almost twice the growth rate of the world's total population. Rural population growth will shrink after 2015.

## City economics

- ← In developed countries, cities generate over 80 per cent of national economic output, while in developing countries, urban economic activity contributes significantly to national revenue, generating up to 40 per cent of gross domestic product. Wealthy world cities are also increasingly operating like city-states and city-regions, independent of regional or national mediation. Today, several major cities play pivotal roles in global networks, not only producing goods and services and hosting international institutions, but also generating related economic and civil society activity.
- ← Cities offer the greatest potential for reducing poverty. However, cities that are adopting a world or regional image (e.g. Mumbai) have led to problematic policies regarding the presence of slum dwellers, raising questions about the "right to the city", or raising some questions about environmental sustainability.
- ← In the developing world, there has been a trend toward "informalization" of the urban economy, with increasing shares of incomes earned in unregulated employment. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 7 out of 10 new jobs in urban areas are created in the informal sector. Women account for a disproportionately larger share of the informal labour force than men (around 60 per cent in the world; 84 per cent in SSA).

## Social aspects

- ← *Insecurity*: While terrorism dominates the concerns of cities of the developed world, most cities in developing countries are contending with other forms of insecurity that threaten their lives and livelihoods. The security of the urban poor, in particular, is affected by their health status, which influences both their ability to work and their access to health care. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has particular implications for urban security as it leads to loss of household income, growth in the phenomenon of orphaned street children, and disintegration of the family unit. Many urban poor families also face the constant threat of eviction. Insecurity is exacerbated by insecure tenure with respect to both housing and land.
- ← *Inequalities*: Economic growth has not resulted in prosperity for all. On the contrary, intra-city inequalities have risen as the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. Although poverty remains a primarily rural phenomenon, large sections of the population in urban areas are suffering from extreme levels of deprivation that are often more debilitating than those experienced by the rural poor.
- ← UN-HABITAT analyses have shown that the incidence of disease and mortality is much higher in slums than in non-slum areas, and in some cases, such as HIV prevalence and other health indicators, is even higher than in rural areas. These disparities are often not reflected in national statistics, which mask the deprivation experienced in poor urban neighbourhoods.
- ← Inequality in access to services, housing, land, education, health and employment opportunities within cities have socio-economic, environmental and political repercussions, including rising violence, urban unrest, environmental degradation, and underemployment, which threaten to diminish any gains in income and poverty reduction.
- ← Income-based statistics should be viewed with caution as the true extent of urban poverty is likely higher than they suggest. The high cost of non-food items, such as transport, health, education, and water in cities – and poor living conditions, including inadequate housing and poor access to water and sanitation – impact the ability of the urban poor to rise out of poverty. When these items are included to measure poverty, estimates for urban areas are likely to rise significantly.

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