



Urbanisation and its Impacts

Lesson Highlights

1. Meaning of urbanisation
2. Causes of urbanisation
3. Positive and negative impacts of urbanisation
4. Trends in urban population growth

The United Nations predicts that by 2030, 60% of the world's population will live in urban areas. It further projects that by 2050, 64.1% of the developing world and 85.9% of the developed world will be urbanised (UNDESA, 2014). What are the reasons behind this growth of population in urban areas?

URBANISATION

Urbanisation is a process in which people move from rural to urban areas because of which cities and towns begin to grow. This movement of people from rural to urban areas leads to an increase in the size of the urban population. Growth in population results in the expansion or extension of urban areas. Change in the size of population leads to other changes such as land use pattern, economic activities, type of housing societies and impact on culture.

Main Causes of Urbanisation

Industrialisation

Industrialisation creates employment opportunities. People from the rural areas migrate to the urban areas because there are more employment opportunities in the cities.

Social Factors

Many people migrate to cities to bring about changes in their social life. Unlike the rural areas, in the cities, caste is not linked with profession, therefore, the opportunities to work in favourable environment increases in the cities.



Fig. 5.1 Rural Migrants come to the Cities and Work as Labourers at Construction Sites and Factories

Financial Security

In rural areas, people depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. In India, agriculture depends mainly on monsoon which is quite uncertain. In case of drought, the rural people suffer great losses and often migrate to cities for better earnings and financial security.

Transport and Communication

Urban centres have a well-developed network of transport and communication. Railways and roadways, telephone and wireless services, postal services, etc. are all well-developed. These facilities attract the rural people to the urban areas.



Fig. 5.2 Well-developed Infrastructure in Cities

Better Opportunities of Education

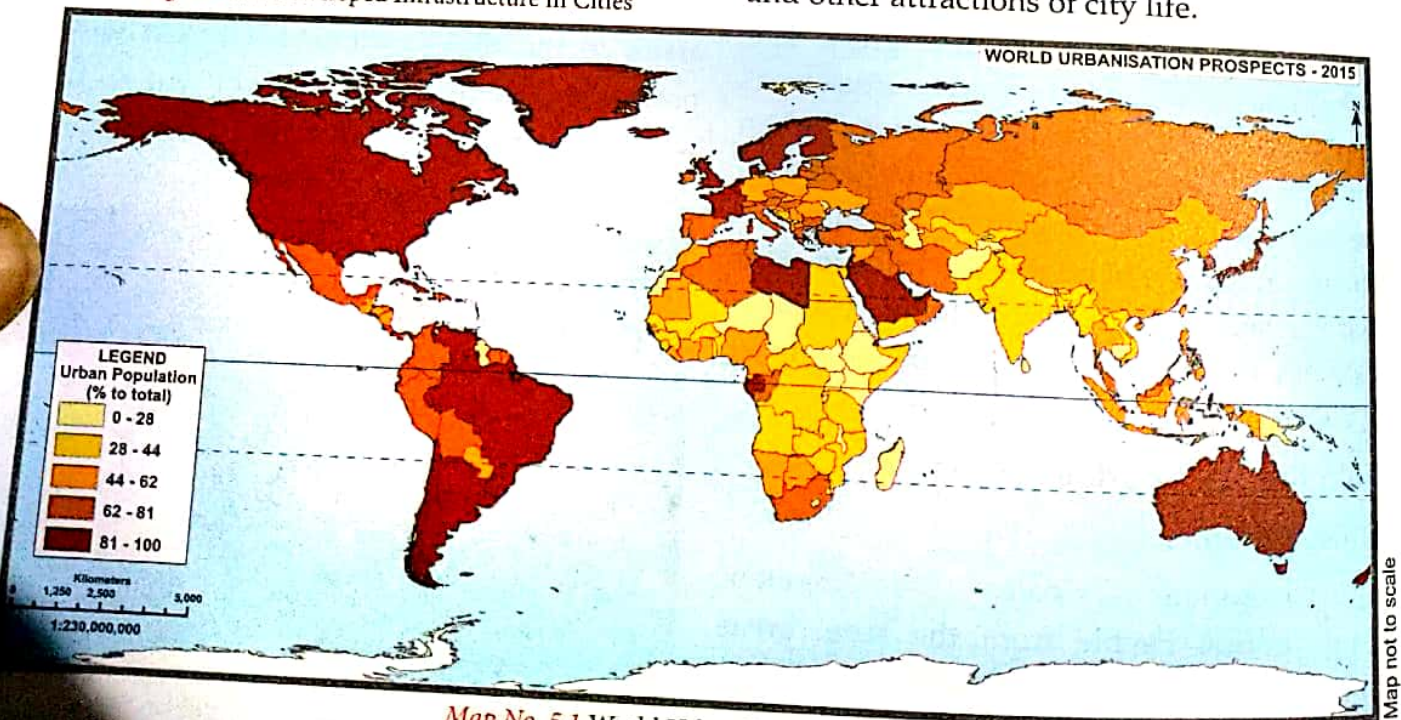
Cities have better opportunities for education. There are good schools, colleges, universities and professional colleges such as medical and engineering. So, young men and women are attracted to the cities for better and higher education.

Modernisation

Sophisticated technology, better infrastructure, communication, medical facilities, variety of entertainment facilities, etc. are some of the features of modernisation. Urban centres have modern facilities. The rural people migrate to cities because they think that they can enjoy the modern facilities and lead a comfortable life in cities.

Other Factors

The other factors which attract the rural people to migrate to cities are better standard of living, medical facilities and better social status. People are attracted to urban lifestyle and other attractions of city life.



Map No. 5.1 World Urban Population (2015)

Impact of Urbanisation

Some important changes have taken place because of rapid urbanisation. The impacts of urbanisation are positive as well as negative.

Positive Impacts of Urbanisation

Urbanisation can produce positive impacts if it takes place up to a desirable limit.

Some of the positive impacts are as follows:

- Migration of rural people to urban areas improves their standard of living.
- Growth in the prosperity of towns and cities is a sign of prosperous national economy.
- The coming together of economic and human resources in one place leads to innovation and development in business, science, technology and industry.
- Urbanisation leads to increase in employment opportunities.
- Access to education, healthcare services, social services and cultural activities are more readily available to people.
- Child survival rates are better than rural areas because of better access to health care.
- Schools, colleges and universities are established in cities to develop human resources.
- A variety of educational courses are available, offering students a wide choice for their future careers.
- People of many religions and economic classes live and work together in cities, which creates better understanding and harmony and helps in removing social and cultural barriers.

Negative Impacts of Urbanisation

Rapid population increase and unplanned growth of cities may result in negative economic, social and environmental impacts.

Some of the negative impacts are as follows:

- **Problem of overpopulation and housing:** Increasing population is a major problem in cities. This has given rise to the problem of accommodation, overcrowding in localities, growth of slums, shortage of basic amenities such as shelter, water and electricity, disposal of garbage, excessive traffic and congestion on roads, shortage of beds in hospitals and overcrowding in schools. In developing countries, about one-third of urban inhabitants live in slums. Slums are urban areas that are densely populated and have very poor housing and living conditions.



Fig. 5.3 A View of a Slum in India

- **Growth in the urban poor population:** Rapid urbanisation has led to the growth of the urban poor population. Squatter settlements can be seen on the outskirts¹ of cities or on the roadside. These are shelters made of waste materials or very cheap materials such as plastic sheets and tin shades and the living conditions are very poor. They are some of the

1. Outskirts: the parts of a town or city that are farthest from the centre

Can you tell why slums develop in urban centres?

poorest people in an urban area who do not have access even to safe drinking water and proper sanitation. These people have no legal ownership of the land they live upon.

- **Problem of wastes and pollution:** As population increases, there is more construction, increase in the number of buildings and increased demands on resources. Growth of industries in the cities cause problems of environmental pollution. Improper disposal of industrial waste is a major problem in industrial centres. Increasing number of vehicles on the roads, growing slums and squatter settlements add to air, land and water and noise pollution.
- **Cost of living:** High cost of living is a major problem in the cities. In metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Bangalore, etc. it is very difficult for lower income groups to maintain a decent standard of living.
- **Impact on health:** Urbanisation has negative effects on health mainly due to

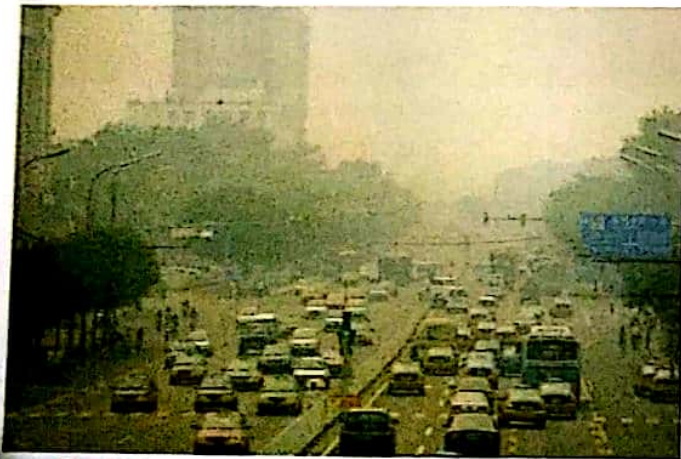


Fig. 5.4 Traffic-related Air Pollution in a Metro City

pollution and overcrowded living conditions. Contamination of waterbodies can cause epidemics of waterborne diseases. Polluted air causes respiratory diseases and have serious effects especially among the aged and children. Urbanisation can also put added pressure on food supply systems.

- **Increase in crime rates:** Urban centres are known for high rate of crimes because of the disparity between the rich and poor and social deprivation. Therefore, crimes such as theft, dacoity, cheating, fraud, pick-pocketing, and murder are common in urban areas.
- **Impersonal relations:** Urban centres are characterised by highly secondary relations². The concept of neighbourhood and community life are almost absent in cities. Urban life is highly monotonous³. This may have adverse psychological effects on individuals. People are often self-centred and they have less concern for fellow human beings.
- **Disintegration of joint family:** It is difficult to maintain a joint family in cities because of high cost of living. Therefore, people prefer to live in nuclear type of families and often senior citizens are neglected.
- **Stress:** Urban life is characterised by stress which may even strain family relations. In cities, most of the women are working-women to meet the increasing cost of living. Changing role of women in the family is creating stress in the family which may strain family relations.

2. Secondary relations: less important relationships 3. Monotonous: boring because they remain the same day after day

Ways to Reduce the Negative Impacts of Urbanisation

Urbanisation has its own merits and demerits. Urbanisation can't be avoided but the negative impacts of urbanisation can be minimised. Youth should be the agents of change to reduce problems caused due to urbanisation and industrialisation.

Here are some ways to reduce the negative impacts of urbanisation.

- Developing sustainable⁴ and environment friendly cities.
- Government should pass laws for the protection of environment and enforce them strictly.
- Government should encourage sustainable use of urban resources and support an economy based on sustainable environment such as investment in green infrastructure, sustainable industries, recycling, environmental campaigns, pollution management, renewable energy, green public transportation, and water recycling.
- Government should make provisions for essential social services such as education, health, sanitation and clean water, electricity, and food at lower rates.
- Create more jobs.
- Control diseases and population growth.
- Conserve natural ecosystems.

Trends in Urban Population Growth

The global pattern in urbanisation is not the same in all parts of the world. At present, Asia and Africa have the highest rates of urbanisation. Fig 5.5 shows a comparison of patterns of urbanisation in more developed and less developed regions of the world.

4. Sustainable: use of natural resources in a way that does not harm the environment

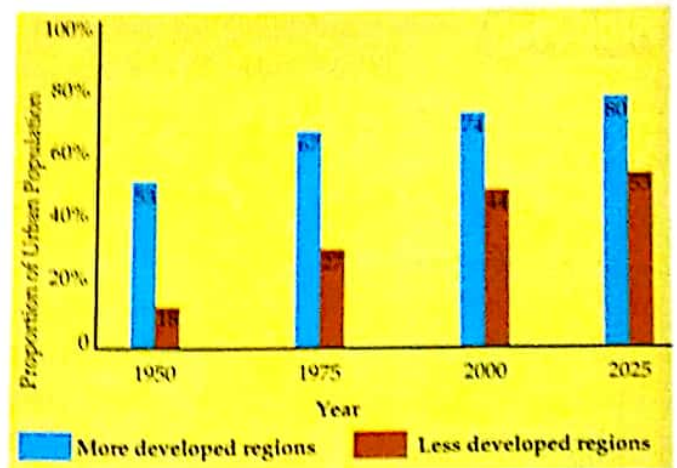


Fig 5.5 Trends in Urban Population Growth

Analysis of Fig 5.5 shows that the growth of urban population in less developed regions of the world is increasing at a faster rate than developed regions. In 2000, in the more developed parts of the world, 74% of the population lived in urban areas and a small increase to 80% is forecast by 2025. In less developed regions of the world, there was a much smaller proportion living in urban areas in 2000 (only 44%) but this is expected to increase significantly to 53% by 2025.

Geo Fact

- **LARGEST CITY:** Karachi, Pakistan is the world's largest city with a population of 15.5 million in 2010. Shanghai, China is second with 14.9 million, followed by Mumbai, India with 13.9 million.
- **QUALITY OF LIFE:** Vienna, Austria offers the best quality of life, according to the Quality of Living Survey. The Swiss cities of Zurich and Geneva rank second and third, respectively.
- **LIVABILITY:** The three most livable cities in the world are, in order: Vancouver, Canada; Vienna, Austria; and Melbourne, Australia, according to a 2010 livability survey by the London-based Economist Intelligent Survey (EIU). At the bottom of the list are Algiers, Algeria; Dhaka, Bangladesh; and Harare, Zimbabwe.

(Source: World Statistics Day, 20 October 2010, Cities Alliance statistics on cities, urbanisation and slums)

□ Answer the following questions.

1. What do you mean by the word 'urbanization'?
2. List any three factors responsible for urbanization of a place.
3. Mention three ways in which the environment is affected as a result of increased urbanization.
4. What are the positive impact of urbanization?
5. How does urbanization negatively impact the lives of people?
6. What are slums? How do they effect the cities?
7. Explain the ways of reducing the negative impact of urbanization.