

AQA Geography GCSE

Urban Issues for Growing Cities Detailed Notes

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What is an Urban Area?

The world can be divided into **rural** and **urban** areas:



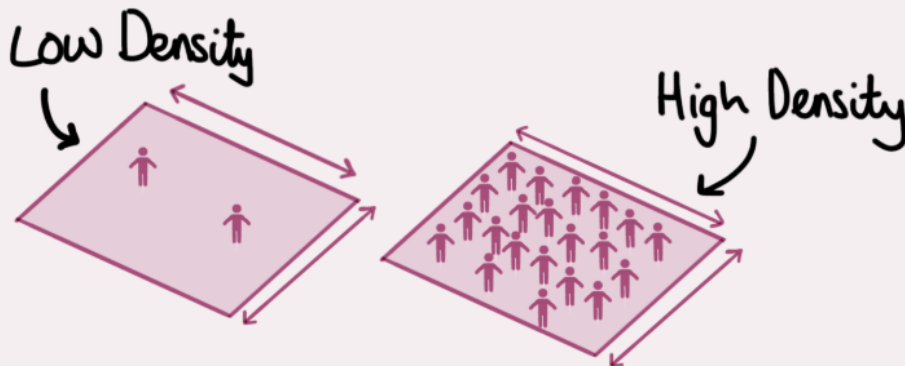
Rural areas tend to have a **small population density** and large proportion of open, green spaces. Rural people may work in agriculture, tourism or running shops in the local village.



Urban areas tend to be towns and cities, with **large population density** and limited open, green spaces. Urban residents tend to work in offices, factories or running services in the city.

Topic Recap: Population Density

Population density is a measure of how spread out the population is. For example, for the same square of land, how many people live in each region?



Space is important to some countries, as regions with high population density are more at risk from disease and there is a greater pressure to provide resources - such as internet, electricity and water. Think about how your internet speed becomes slower with more people in the house - this is the same for water supplies, food and electricity!

More of the world's population is living in urban areas - cities are **expanding** and the urban population is growing. The **infographic** (a diagram which represents statistics) below shows each country's **urban population**, in millions, and the **percentage** of their entire population that live in urban rather than rural.





So some cities have a population the size of an entire country. This is why **urban environments** are important to understand and manage.

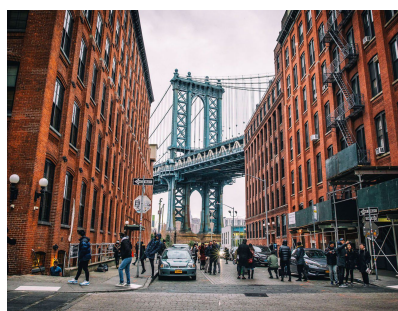
Contrasting Urban Areas - HIC v LIC

Urban cities can look very different around the world. Cities have different **characteristics**, which can depend on their level of development, politics and population.

HIC Cities



London, UK
Source: The Independent



New York, USA
Source: Earth Trekkers



Reykjavik, Iceland
Source: Cupofio

HIC cities are some of the most **influential** places in the world, due to their **economic** and **cultural** importance. Many cities - such as London, Paris and New York - are major **tourist** attractions, visited by 20 million tourists each day! HIC cities are seen as stylish and modern, so many major **TNCs** set up their headquarters and offices here.

LIC Cities

		
<p style="text-align: center;">Kabul, Afghanistan Source: UN Peacekeeping</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Source: Live and Let's Fly</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Port-au-Prince, Haiti Source: Nationalpedia</p>

Developing countries have **developing cities**, where the quality of life and buildings are improving. LICs have **smaller** urban populations, since there aren't as many **business opportunities** in the city to attract rural workers to migrate. In addition, many LIC cities have temporary housing or poorly built communities, called **shanty towns**, where the poorest urban families live.

Growing Urban Cities

Rural-Urban Migration

Most urban cities around the world are growing. This may be because the **population** on a whole is growing, with a global **birth rate** higher than the global **death rate** (more people are being born than dying). This is because:

- **Healthcare** & medical knowledge is improving, especially in LICs.
- Many countries, especially in South Asia, have built better warning systems for **natural disasters**, so fewer lives are lost.
- Better knowledge of **midwifery**, which reduces pregnancy fatalities, and **government policies** that allow time off & better care in workplaces for pregnant women.

In addition, urban populations are growing more rapidly than rural populations. This is because some rural workers **migrate** to an urban city for work opportunities and a **better quality of life**. This is called **rural-urban migration**. An individual might feel pushed from their rural home and pulled towards living in an urban city, through **push and pull factors**:



PUSH

- Rural jobs are mainly in **farming**. This is **intensive** work and not well paid.
- **Climate change** is making farming more difficult. The soil is becoming poorer quality (through **desertification**) and **droughts** are more common, leading to frequent **crop failures**.
- In rural towns and villages, **access to services** is limited. Families may have to travel far to their local hospital or school.
- Rural towns tend to be **isolated** because they are far away from a nearby city. This means electricity, water and food supplies are limited and the town must rely on themselves rather than import supplies in.



PULL

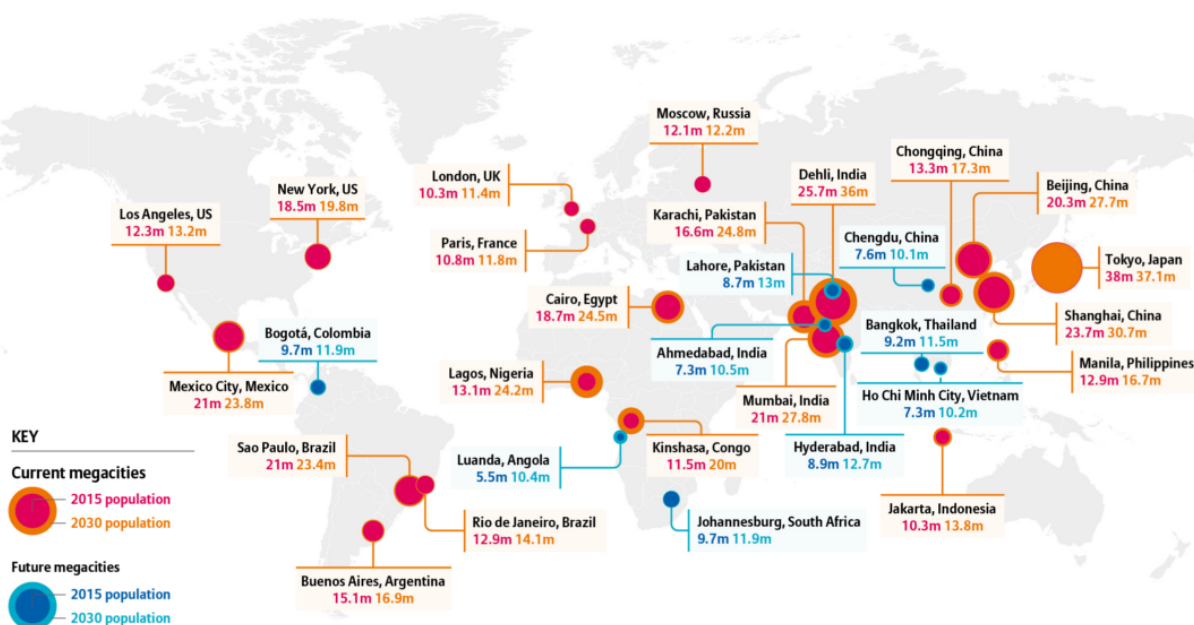
- In the city, there are **higher paid jobs** and more opportunities, since there are many more businesses located here.
- Better **education** for children, as many colleges and universities are located in cities rather than rural villages.
- **Public transport** allows residents to be more mobile, even if they can't afford a car!
- Residents don't need to travel as far for **hospitals** and **medical care**.
- City life is more **entertaining**, with more shops, cinemas, clubs and restaurants than in rural villages.

However, not all pull factors are as they seem. People can decide to migrate based on a **dream** or **reputation**. Sometimes, when they arrive in the city, the reasons that they moved away from home for aren't true.

Megacities

Megacities are defined as cities with populations over **10 million people**. This is larger than some countries' entire population: Greece, Sweden, Israel, New Zealand, etc.

Figure 1 Selected current and future megacities 2015 to 2030



Source: World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision



Megacities can be found across the world but are especially concentrated in **South Asia**. Some megacities **steadily grow**, so their infrastructure - water supplies, food, doctors, schools - can cope with the population and there is **little inequality**. This is the case for Tokyo and Los Angeles.



Tokyo, Source: Architectural Digest



Los Angeles, Source: Business Insider

However, some megacities have **rapidly expanded**. Sometimes, this means that not all the residents can be looked after and the infrastructure is under **high pressure**. This leads to **inequalities**, where some residents live in luxury apartments whereas others live in **squatter settlements**. For example, Mumbai and Mexico City are rapidly growing megacities.



Mexico City, Source: Thousand Wonders



Mumbai, Source: Money Control

Issues with Growing Cities

Developing and expanding a city to cope with the growing population can be tricky. Governments want to look after their people and provide a safe place for their residents to live. But governments might also have other interests:

- Attracting high income investors to live or work in their cities. Governments can tax investors more, and their businesses can provide employment opportunities for the city.
- Governments may want to protect the city's culture for tourism and its national identity.
- More sustainable governments don't want the city to sprawl outwards and destroy green land surrounding.

However, governments face many problems with expanding cities:



Healthcare & Education - As cities' populations increase, the **demand** for **doctors**, **dentists**, **teachers**, and **schools** also increases. This doesn't usually mean the amount of doctors or teachers increases too. In many cases, cities can be left with not enough facilities for their population.

→ **Note:** *these problems aren't just faced by developing countries. There may be oversubscribed schools in your area which are really hard to get into. Or maybe you find it difficult to get a doctor's appointment.*

To try to combat the lack of doctors and teachers being trained, the government could try to **encourage** more children in **education**. This would mean local young people can be trained to fill gaps in services, instead of encouraging more **migration**. However, especially in poorer families, children might not attend school and instead try to **work for money**.

Squatter Settlements - With a rising number of **rural workers** migrating to the city, there is very **limited affordable housing** available. In addition, these migrants arrive in the city with very little money since they didn't earn enough back home to save up. Many migrants must settle for **make-shift housing**, where they salvage any waste materials and build their own on the outskirts of the city. Settlements tend to be built on **unfavourable land**, such as next to railway tracks or on steep mountain sides.



Source: Huffington Post

Squatter settlements are large clusters of these **temporary houses**, which residents hope to move out of quickly when they save up from their new job. However, this doesn't happen. Instead, in many cities such as Rio-de-Janeiro and Mumbai, squatter settlements become a **permanent** and growing residence for much of the urban population. Unfortunately, there are many issues with squatter settlements:

- ❖ Locals don't pay **rent** or own the land, so could be **evicted** from their homes at any time
- ❖ Squatter settlements have **high crime rates**, since there are no police patrols and no street lighting at night. **Gangs** can establish, which leads to gun crime, violence and territory disputes.
- ❖ There are no **water pipes** or **electricity cables** established, so residents make their own supplies. This could mean taking some from someone else or digging their own water pump, which could be at risk from sewage contamination or over-extraction.
- ❖ Since houses are built very close, **infectious diseases** and **fire** could spread through the settlement very rapidly. This could cause many **fatalities**.

Unemployment - Migrants coming to the city aren't guaranteed a job. Many are coming from rural villages with **no internet** and limited telephone signal, so they can't find jobs online before they migrate. Instead, many move in the hope that there is a better job available for them. With high **rural-urban migration** rates, there are



Picture Source: Wander Smile



few job opportunities left for **unskilled** rural workers.

Migrants can't move back home - many only have enough money for a one-way journey. Instead, migrants try to make a living with **informal work**. Informal work includes any job that is **temporary**, with limited regulations or self-employed jobs. Informal work includes:

- Street Sellers
- House Help & Cleaners
- Rag Picker

However, these jobs don't contribute to **tax** because they are in the **informal sector** which means they are often paid in cash. These jobs are often open to exploitation.

Air Pollution - Urban cities face many **environmental challenges**. As the number of people increases, so does the number of cars and buses on the road and so **traffic congestion** increases. When car engines run, **greenhouse emissions** such as carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide are produced. In addition, with more businesses setting up in the city, there are more factories and warehouses. **Factories** can produce air pollution as well as the machinery & vehicles that operate inside, such as forklift trucks, lorries and production conveyors.



Increasing air pollution can impact locals' **health**. For example, cities with high levels of air pollution also have high levels of **respiratory conditions**, such as asthma or lung disease. Across the world, 5.5 million people die from polluted air.

Source: SItrib.com

Waste & Sewage - With growing populations, cities have growing volumes of waste to deal with. Waste can be from **households** - food waste, packaging, sewage - or from **industries** - waste chemicals, rubble. If waste isn't properly collected and managed, the city can quickly **deteriorate**:

- ❖ In **squatter settlements**, roads are too narrow for rubbish bins to travel through. Instead, residents abandon their waste in the street, which can encourage **rats** that spread **disease**.
- ❖ Industries may cut corners and dispose of their waste **illegally**, to avoid charges for waste removal. This waste may be **hazardous** to wildlife and humans. Sometimes, industries pollute waterways with **poisonous chemicals** (such as lead) which causes liver cancer if drunk.
- ❖ **Sewage** must be taken away from the city, so sewage doesn't **contaminate** any waterways and cause disease such as cholera. However, in parts of the city that don't have infrastructure built (such as the squatter settlements), sewage is being dumped close to homes.



Managing the Growing City

There are many **strategies** that governments can use to manage their cities or reduce any problems caused by their growing population.

