United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

World Urbanization Prospects 2025

Summary of Results

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Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Population Division

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United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division

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Preface

This report presents the results of the official United Nations estimates and projections of urbanization for 237 countries and areas of the world and for over 12,000 urban settlements with 50,000 inhabitants or more in 2025, as published in the *World Urbanization Prospects 2025*. The data in this revision are consistent with the total populations of countries and areas estimated and projected according to the medium variant of the *World Population Prospects 2024*. This revision updates and supersedes the previous estimates and projections of urbanization and city populations published by the United Nations.

The 2025 revision continues the Population Division's long-standing effort to provide rigorous and internationally comparable evidence on the changing distribution of the world's population across cities, towns and rural areas. Earlier editions were based on data reported by national statistical authorities according to country-specific definitions.

A key innovation of the 2025 revision is the full integration of new geospatial methods through the harmonized Degree of Urbanization methodology,[1] alongside country-specific definitions. Applying this new approach to gridded population and built-up area data allows this edition to measure cities, towns and rural areas consistently across countries and over time, while still retaining results based on national definitions for domestic policy use and statistical continuity. This dual track substantially improves international comparability and policy relevance, enabling a clearer understanding of settlement patterns and their implications for sustainable development at the global, regional and country levels.

Other products presenting the results of the 2025 revision include online datasets, an interactive data portal, detailed metadata and methodological report, all accessible on the Population Division's website.[2]

Responsibility for the 2025 revision rests with the Population Division. In preparing this revision, the Division relied on the invaluable collaboration of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat; its United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* and accompanying databases have provided access to official national population statistics. The Population Division also acknowledges the crucial support of national statistical offices that made data and reports from recent censuses and surveys available.

The Population Division is especially grateful for the collaboration with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Commission of the European Union. Their contribution to the creation of the global dataset for the Degree of Urbanization was instrumental to this new revision. The very productive interaction with the JRC team over the course of this project was essential to create this new set of estimates and projections, which for the first time are based on a globally consistent, harmonized methodology. Detailed methodological resources and geospatial datasets, including interactive data visualizations, are available on the European Commission's website.[3]

This new report is dedicated to the memory of Barney Cohen for his visionary role and foundational contribution to establishing this new stream of work on urbanization within the United Nations. His legacy endures in the Division's continuing efforts to advance an evidence-based understanding of how and where people live.

As with previous editions, this *Summary of Results* is intended for policymakers, researchers and practitioners working to implement the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. By pairing harmonized geospatial methods with official national statistics, the 2025 revision aims to support more informed, context-sensitive decisions that reflect the realities of cities, towns, and rural areas across the settlement continuum.

For further information about the 2025 revision, please contact the Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, Two United Nations Plaza, DC2-1950, New York, NY 10017, USA; tel.: +1 212-963-3209; email: population@un.org.

[1] A globally standardized method for classifying all areas of a country as cities, towns (or semi-dense areas), or rural areas. It uses a combination of population size, density, and contiguity thresholds based on 1 km² population grids and satellite data to provide a consistent measure of urbanization across countries.

[2] https://population.un.org/wup/.

[3] https://human-settlement.emergency.copernicus.eu/ghs_wup2025.php.

Explanatory notes

The following symbols have been used in the tables throughout this report:

A minus sign (-) before a figure indicates a decrease or negative number. A full stop (.) is used to indicate decimals.

Years given refer to 1 July.

Use of a dash (–) between years, for example, 1995–2000, signifies the full period involved, from 1 July of the first year to 1 July of the second year.

Numbers and percentages in this table do not necessarily add to totals because of rounding.

References to region, development group, country or area:

The designations employed in this publication and the material presented in it do not imply the expression of any opinions whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The term "country" as used in this report also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas.

In this publication, data for countries and areas are often aggregated in six continental regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America, and Oceania. Further information on continental regions is available from: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/. Countries and areas have also been grouped into geographic regions based on the classification being used to track progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (see: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/).

The designation of "more developed" and "less developed", or "developed" and "developing", is intended for statistical purposes and does not express a judgment about the stage in the development process reached by a particular country or area. More developed regions comprise all countries and areas of Europe and Northern America, plus Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Less developed regions comprise all countries and areas of Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean, and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand).

The group of least developed countries (LDCs) includes 44 countries, as of 10 February 2025, located in sub-Saharan Africa (31), Northern Africa and Western Asia (2), Central and Southern Asia (3), Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (4), Latin America and the Caribbean (1), and Oceania (3). Further information is available at: https://www.un.org/ohrlls/.

The classification of countries and areas by income level is based on gross national income (GNI) per capita as reported by the World Bank (May 2024). These income groups are not available for all countries and areas. Further information is available at: https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519.

List of boxes

List of abbreviations

DEGURBA	Degree of Urbanization (Eurostat term for the harmonized classification)
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
Eurostat	Statistical office of the European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCC	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GHSL	Global Human Settlement Layer
GIS	Geographic Information System
GNI	Gross National Income
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JRC	Joint Research Centre of the European Commission
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LLDCs	Landlocked Developing Countries
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
WPP	World Population Prospects
WUP	World Urbanization Prospects

Key messages

The world has become increasingly urban; more people live in cities today than in towns or rural areas.

- For the first time, the 2025 edition of the World Urbanization Prospects presents population estimates and projections for three "Degree of Urbanization" categories: cities, towns and rural areas.[4]
- In 1950, city living was relatively unusual: just 20 per cent of the world's 2.5 billion people lived in cities, defined as population centres with at least 50,000 inhabitants and a density of at least 1,500 people per km^2. Following many decades of urbanization, cities are now (in 2025) home to 45 per cent of the world's 8.2 billion people, more than double the proportion in 1950.
- The share of the global population living in towns, defined as population clusters of at least 5,000 inhabitants and a density of at least 300 people per km^2, declined gradually from 40 per cent in 1950 to 36 per cent in 2025.
- Rural communities are less densely populated than cities and towns. Today, they are home to just 19 per cent of the global population, a share that has fallen by half since 1950.
- Projections indicate that two thirds of the growth of the world's population between now and 2050 will take place in cities, with most of the remainder concentrated in towns. The size of the global rural population is expected to peak sometime during the 2040s and then begin to decline.
- Urbanization is one of the most significant demographic shifts in human history, fundamentally altering how and where people live, work and build communities across the globe.

The number of "megacities" (10 million inhabitants or more) continues to grow; over half are in Asia.

- The number of megacities quadrupled from eight in 1975 to 33 in 2025, with 19 in Asia. Projections indicate that there will be 37 megacities globally by 2050, as the populations of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dar es Salaam (United Republic of Tanzania), Hajipur (India) and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) grow to over 10 million.
- Jakarta (Indonesia) is the world's most populous city, with nearly 42 million inhabitants in 2025, followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh) with almost 37 million and Tokyo (Japan) with 33 million. Cairo (Egypt) is the only city among the world's ten largest that is not located in Asia.
- Fast-growing Dhaka is expected to become the world's largest city by mid-century. Karachi (Pakistan) will enter the top ten by 2030 and could rank fifth by 2050. Meanwhile, Tokyo is projected to fall in rank from third in 2025 to seventh in 2050, as its population shrinks to around 31 million.

More people live in small and medium-sized cities than in megacities; many of these smaller settlements are among the fastest growing, especially in Africa and Asia.

- The total number of cities worldwide more than doubled between 1975 and 2025. Among the world's 12,000 cities, 96 per cent have fewer than 1 million inhabitants, and 81 per cent have populations below 250,000. This distribution underscores that the majority of the world's urban population resides not in megacities, but in small and medium-sized urban centres that play a critical role in shaping sustainable urban development. By 2050, there could be more than 15,000 cities in the world, mostly with populations below 250,000.

[4] Throughout this report, "cities", "towns" and "rural areas" refer to standardized categories based on population size and density, as explained in box 1.1 where "towns", in particular, refers to "towns and semi-dense areas".

- Of the roughly 400 cities that grew faster than 4 per cent per year between 2015 and 2025, one third were in sub-Saharan Africa and another quarter were in Central and Southern Asia. Over two thirds had fewer than 250,000 inhabitants.
- Smaller settlements often lack the planning capacity and resources to manage their growth sustainably. They can benefit from improved access to basic services, better land-use management and increased connectivity.

Growth of the world's city population between now and 2050 will be concentrated in seven countries.

- Taken together, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Bangladesh and Ethiopia are expected to add more than 500 million city residents between 2025 and 2050, accounting for over half of the projected 986 million increase in the global number of city dwellers over that period.
- The success or failure of urbanization in these key countries will shape global development outcomes. Their ability to manage city growth sustainably will have profound implications not only for their populations but also for global progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals and climate objectives.

City population growth is uneven; most cities are growing, but thousands have shrinking populations.

- Worldwide, more than 3,000 cities experienced population decline between 2015 and 2025.
- Most cities with shrinking populations have fewer than 250,000 inhabitants in 2025. More than one third are in China and another 17 per cent are in India.
- Growth and decline can occur simultaneously within countries. Some cities' populations shrank even as their country's population grew. Conversely, some cities' populations grew despite shrinking national populations.
- Size does not guarantee growth. While most megacities' population grew faster than their countries overall between 2015 and 2025, a few very large cities, such as Mexico City (Mexico) and Chengdu (China), registered population declines.
- For roughly half of the world's cities, population density – the number of inhabitants per km^2 – is higher now (in 2025) than in 2000, including for 74 per cent of cities in sub-Saharan Africa. If urban population growth is poorly planned or managed, increases in density may reflect conditions of crowding or sprawl.
- Diverse city growth trajectories underscore the need for urban policies that can address both expansion and contraction of city populations. Growing cities must prepare to provide services and infrastructure to more people while managing a changing relationship with surrounding towns and rural areas. Cities with shrinking populations often face different challenges associated with maintaining essential services for fewer residents and adapting to changing economic conditions without the impetus of growth.

Towns are home to more than a third of humanity and are critical for sustainable development.

- Despite the global shift towards city life, towns remain (in 2025) the most common settlement type in 71 countries. Countries in all regions and at diverse levels of economic development are found within this group, including Germany, India, Uganda and the United States of America.
- Together, India and China host more than 1.2 billion town dwellers, representing over 40 per cent of the global population of towns.
- The towns of sub-Saharan Africa and of Central and Southern Asia are expected to continue to experience robust population growth between 2025 and 2050. In other regions, however, the number of people living in towns has levelled off or begun to decline.

- Towns often serve as connectors between rural areas and cities, providing essential services and supporting local economies. Proactive urban planning for towns can promote balanced territorial development, reduce pressure on large cities and contribute to more sustainable and inclusive growth.

As the world's rural population approaches its peak size, it faces unprecedented challenges.

- Rural areas continue to be (in 2025) the most common settlement type for 62 countries or areas, compared to 116 countries or areas in 1975 and 44 in 2050. These include, for example, several countries in Europe, such as Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, France, Poland and Romania, as well as numerous countries in sub-Saharan Africa, like the Central African Republic, Chad, Eswatini, Mali, Mozambique, South Sudan and Zambia, among others.
- In 26 countries, including Bhutan, Eswatini, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Zimbabwe, more than half of the population still resides in rural areas.
- Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that experienced substantial growth in the size of its rural population over recent decades. Nearly all future growth of the world's rural population will take place in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In the region encompassing Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand, the number of rural dwellers has been declining since 2015.
- Many rural communities face growing pressures from population ageing and out-migration, as young people move to cities and towns in search of education and employment opportunities. Strengthening urban-rural linkages is key to reducing intraregional disparities.

The expansion of built-up areas is outpacing population growth worldwide.

- Between 1975 and 2025, the extent of the built-up area occupied by humans grew almost twice as fast as the global population. As a result, the built-up area per person rose from 43 to 63 square meters.
- Populations in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand use the most land per capita for buildings and other structures. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean has the second highest built-up area per capita, while countries in Central and Southern Asia have the lowest.

The Degree of Urbanization methodology yields estimates of the populations living in cities, towns and rural areas that are comparable across countries and over time. Using this new metric, the world appears to be more urbanized than national statistics suggest.

- Many countries maintain definitions of urban and rural areas based on criteria that differ from those given priority in specifying the categories of settlements used for the Degree of Urbanization. While most countries use administrative criteria to define urban areas, many also use population thresholds (e.g. from as low as 200 inhabitants in Denmark to 50,000 in Japan), and others additionally include economic or functional criteria. These national definitions are valuable because they are tailored to specific contexts and policy requirements. Accordingly, the *World Urbanization Prospects* presents estimates and projections of urban and rural populations that are aligned with national definitions alongside those derived using the Degree of Urbanization methodology.
- Comparing population estimates for urban areas according to national definitions to those for cities and towns according to the Degree of Urbanization indicates that national definitions tend to classify fewer settlements as urban, and this can lead to lower urban figures than the combined population of cities and towns. This

occurs because many settlements that meet the definition of "town" by consistent criteria of population size and density are seen and classified by countries as "rural" areas rather than being included in their national urban population totals. This is especially true for many countries in Central and Southern Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa.

- Aggregating estimates of urban population across disparate national definitions suggests that 58 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas in 2025, which is well below the combined population of cities (45 per cent) and towns (36 per cent) according to the Degree of Urbanization.
- The positive association between level of urbanization and national income is much stronger when using national definitions than when cities and towns are identified using the Degree of Urbanization approach. Countries with similar income levels have quite disparate shares of their populations living in cities and towns, suggesting that the link between a country's level of development and the share of its population living in relatively large and densely populated settlements is mediated by factors associated with the national definition of urban space. In other words, a country's choice of how to conceptualize and measure the urban-rural dichotomy may be related to its success in development, either by direct causation or by association with another factor.

Sustainable development requires integrated planning that treats cities, towns and rural areas as interconnected and interdependent.

- Cities, towns and rural areas are fundamentally interdependent. About 60 per cent of the land converted to urban space since 1970 was formerly productive farmland.
- National urban policies that coordinate housing, land use, mobility and basic services across cities and towns can relieve pressure on large cities and foster balanced territorial development. Bridging the urban-rural divide requires coordinated investments in transport, digital connectivity, infrastructure and essential services, along with support for smallholder agriculture and rural enterprises. Planning for rapidly growing towns and peri-urban areas that reflects local migration patterns and settlement hierarchies can yield shared benefits across cities, towns and rural hinterlands.
- Policies that recognize the unique roles of all settlement types, that spur investment in rural infrastructure and services and that promote economic activity in small and medium-sized towns can lead to compact urban growth and help to protect agricultural lands and natural ecosystems.
- Better data are key to effective planning. Conducting censuses at regular intervals and integrating geospatial and other statistical information can enable better monitoring of settlement patterns and service access. Indicators that track both people and land, such as built-up land per capita and population density, provide useful information about human interactions with the environment.

Introduction

What is urbanization? At its core, urbanization refers to the increasing concentration of people in settlements that exhibit urban characteristics, such as places with higher population density, greater connectivity and more developed infrastructure, as commonly found in cities and towns. Traditionally, this process has been described as the movement of people from "rural" to "urban" areas, but such a dichotomy oversimplifies the reality of human settlement patterns. In practice, urbanization occurs along a continuum. At one end are rural areas, which are sparsely populated and geographically distant from major population centers. Moving along the spectrum, towns represent intermediate settlements, which are more densely populated and connected than rural areas but smaller and less complex than cities. At the other end are cities, which vary greatly in size and density, from small urban centers to megacities with tens of millions of inhabitants. Larger and denser cities can be considered "more urban" than smaller and less densely populated ones.

The world has witnessed an unprecedented shift since 1950, with the proportion of people living in more urbanized settlements rising dramatically and projected to continue increasing significantly through 2050. Countries across Europe and Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean, East and South-Eastern Asia, and Australia and New Zealand have notably high percentages of people living in cities, while most other nations in Asia and Africa are undergoing rapid increases in the proportion of people living in cities – a trend anticipated to persist for decades.

As a complex socioeconomic process intertwined with the demographic transition, urbanization has brought profound changes to human lifestyles, leading to smaller families, longer life expectancies, increased mobility and more people living in cities and towns worldwide.

Moreover, the increase in the population living in cities and towns has significant implications for economic and social development, as well as environmental sustainability. Urbanization is driven by a range of powerful forces – including economic opportunities, infrastructure development and demographic shifts – which make it a persistent and accelerating global trend. Because of this momentum, urbanization is widely regarded as an inevitable part of modern development. Ensuring that this process is well-planned and effectively managed is therefore essential for achieving sustainable local development. This priority is reflected in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which aims to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The New Urban Agenda further complements SDG 11 by enabling its implementation in a comprehensive and integrated manner (United Nations General Assembly, 2016).

To monitor progress in achieving SDG 11 and implementing the New Urban Agenda, it is essential to have data based on internationally standardized definitions of urbanization. However, a fundamental question remains: What defines an urban area? Similarly, how should we define cities? And should towns be considered as part of urban areas? Historically, countries have utilized diverse criteria, including population size, density, administrative status and economic function, to distinguish urban and rural areas in accordance with their national contexts. These varied definitions reflect the specific contexts and priorities of each country, allowing national policymakers to tailor strategies to their unique development challenges. For instance, countries facing issues such as population ageing may define urban areas in ways that help plan for healthcare and infrastructure needs, while those facing rapid urban growth may focus on identifying informal settlements and expanding access to services and employment (UN-Habitat, 2022). However, this diversity of definitions poses challenges for consistent measurement, reliable monitoring and meaningful international comparisons of urbanization levels and trends.

The Degree of Urbanization methodology was developed and implemented to address definitional challenges and facilitate a robust global analysis.[5] It provides a harmonized, spatially based framework for classifying the entire territory of a country along an urban-rural continuum, identifying cities, towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas based on consistent population size and density thresholds applied globally (European Commission, Statistical Office of the European Union, 2021). Endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission as a recommended method for international statistical comparisons, the Degree of Urbanization complements, rather than supplants, the national definitions that countries may continue to use for their specific policy needs.[6] However, it is important to recognize that while harmonization enhances comparability, global classifications may not capture all nuances reflected in country-specific definitions, which often evolve to address national priorities and contexts.

This new approach represents a paradigm shift in understanding urbanization, moving from the traditional urban-rural dichotomy to an urban-rural continuum. Studies indicate a general alignment between the Degree of Urbanization methodology and national definitions for cities and rural areas, respectively. However, differences arise regarding whether towns should be categorized as urban or rural. For instance, towns are typically considered urban in Europe, Northern America, and Latin America and the Caribbean, while they are often classified as rural in Asia and Africa (OECD and European Commission, 2020; UN-Habitat, 2022). Indeed, studies comparing the Degree of Urbanization classifications with national systems in specific countries have found general agreement at the extremes of the urban-rural continuum but noted significant divergence in these intermediate "middle ranges" encompassing towns, semi-dense areas and dense rural settlements (Balk and others, 2021). When cities are grouped with towns and semi-dense areas under the Degree of Urbanization framework, urbanization levels – measured as the percentage of the population in urban areas – appear significantly higher than estimates based on national definitions. It is important to consider the distinct characteristics of towns and semi-dense areas alongside cities within the urban-rural continuum. In addition, moving away from the dichotomous definition allows us to see new patterns, such as the fact that while the proportion of people living in cities grew, the proportion of people living in towns barely changed in many parts of the world.

The Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs has long published resources tracking global urbanization levels and trends based on national definitions (Buettner, 2015). *World Urbanization Prospects 2025*[7] is the twenty-second edition of global estimates and projections of urbanization published by the United Nations since 1963. This new edition builds on the partnership with the European Commission of the European Union and its work on the development and application of the Degree of Urbanization methodology for global monitoring.[8] The current report examines, for the first time, the levels and trends in urbanization for the estimation period from 1950 to 2025 and projections up to 2050 at the global, regional and country levels using the Degree of Urbanization methodology and dataset developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission[9] alongside national definitions.[10]

[5] The methodology of the Degree of Urbanization was jointly developed by six organizations: the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and The World Bank.

[6] United Nations Statistical Commission Report on the fifty-first session (3–6 March 2020). Available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/2020-37-FinalReport-E.pdf

[7] See https://population.un.org/wup/

[8] Methods used for this report include built-up surface 1975–2020 estimates (Pesaresi and others, 2024), built-up surface 2025–2100 projections (Jacobs-Crisioni and others, 2025), population 1975–2020 estimates (Pesaresi and others, 2024), population 2025–2100 projections (Jacobs-Crisioni and others, 2025), the Degree of Urbanization methodology (European Commission, Statistical Office of the European Union, 2021), 1950–1970 population backcasting by Degree of Urbanization (Jacobs-Crisioni, Schiavina, Alessandrini and others, 2025), multitemporal dynamics of urban centres (Pesaresi and others, 2024), and urban centres 1950–1970 population backcasting (Jacobs-Crisioni, Schiavina, Alessandrini and others, 2025).

[9] Datasets used for this report include the GHS-WUP projection data package (European Commission, 2025), built-up surface grids (Pesaresi and others, 2025), population grids (Schiavina and others, 2025), Degree of Urbanization grids (Schiavina and others, 2025) and statistics by country (Schiavina and others, 2025), and multitemporal urban centre statistics (Schiavina and others, 2025).

[10] In 1967 and 1968, the Population Division published its first set of global estimates and projections (*Urban and Rural Population Growth 1920–1960 with Projections,* and *World Urbanization Trends, 1920–1960*) followed by its first major analytical report on urbanization, entitled "Growth of the world's urban and rural population: 1920-2000", in which the first attempt was made to use both national definitions and an internationally comparable definition of urban areas based on the population living in cities of 20,000 or more inhabitants (United Nations, 1969).

By focusing predominantly on analysis using the Degree of Urbanization alongside comparisons with results based on traditional national definitions, this report highlights the insights gained from a harmonized approach. Understanding urbanization, particularly through comparable measures such as the Degree of Urbanization, is vital not only for measuring demographic trends accurately but also for guiding sustainable development strategies that ensure urban areas become thriving engines of equitable growth and resilience. In addition, having data for the first time on built-up areas enabled us to conduct new analyses examining the expansion of human settlements, which have important implications for sustainable development.

The report is organized as follows: after the introduction on understanding urbanization in a global context, chapter I examines the distribution of population by Degree of Urbanization, analyzing changes in population size and share over time at the global scale, across SDG regions, by country, and for selected aggregates for countries in special situations. Chapter II focuses on cities, exploring the distribution of cities by size, trends among megacities, the ranking of the world's ten largest cities and city growth dynamics, highlighting both rapidly expanding and shrinking urban centers. Chapter III presents trends in the amount of built-up land per capita as well as city population density to provide insights into urban spatial development patterns. Chapter IV then compares national definitions of urbanization with the Degree of Urbanization approach, assessing the implications for estimated levels and trends across SDG regions and individual countries, and evaluating the relationship between urbanization and economic development (national income). The report concludes with a discussion of the key findings and policy recommendations.

A view of Medellín's slums and the innovative cable car on the Aburrá valley in Colombia, 2012. A. Padrós/UN-Habitat

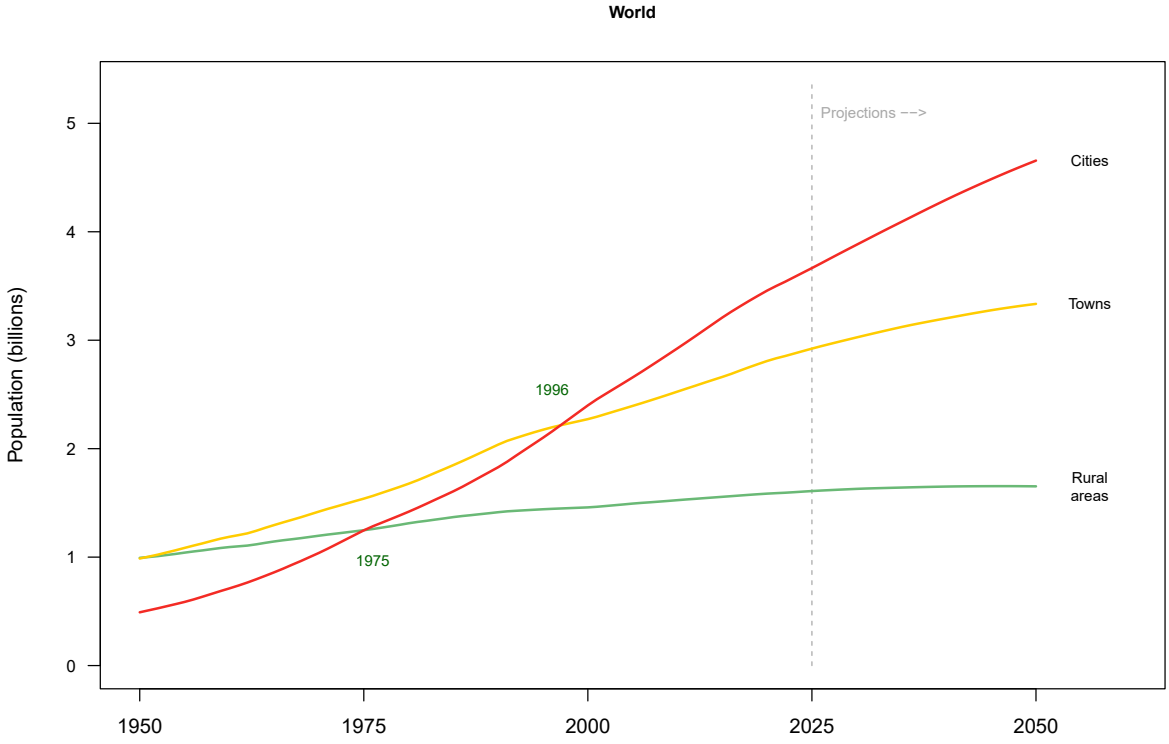
Chapter I. The urban transformation: a global shift in how we live

I.A Variation in the Degree of Urbanization globally

Today, more people live in cities than either in towns[11] or in rural areas, but that has not always been the case. At the middle of the twentieth century, city living was relatively unusual. Close to 500 million people lived in cities in 1950, equivalent to just one fifth of the world's 2.5 billion total population. The remaining four fifths were evenly split between towns and rural areas (figure 1.1). In the decades that followed, the number of people living in cities and towns grew rapidly, while the rural population increased only slowly. By the mid-1970s, city dwellers outnumbered those in rural areas, but towns remained the most common living environment globally. The balance tipped again some twenty years later, in 1996, when the collective population of cities overtook that of towns. Since then, both the number of city dwellers and their share of the global population have continued to grow. In 2025, 45 per cent of the world's 8.2 billion people lived in cities, 36 per cent lived in towns, and the remaining 19 per cent lived in rural areas.

Most of the future growth of the world's population will occur in cities. Cities are expected to account for two thirds of the projected growth of the world's population by 2050, with most of the remaining one third of growth concentrated in towns. The global rural population is expected to peak sometime during the 2040s and then begin to gradually decline.

Figure 1.1
World population living in cities, towns and rural areas, estimates, 1950–2025, and projections, 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

[11] Throughout this report, "towns" refers to the Degree of Urban classification termed "towns and semi-dense areas" (see box 1.1).

Box 1.1

Three types of areas, based on population density and size: the Degree of Urbanization

Understanding urbanization globally is challenging because the definitions of cities and urban and rural areas vary widely by country. To enable robust international comparisons and consistent comparisons over time, a harmonized definition called the Degree of Urbanization is applied worldwide (see box 1.2). This method consistently classifies the entire territory of a country along the urban-rural continuum based on population size and density thresholds applied to 1 km² grid cells at a given time (i.e. the reference year of the population grid). It identifies three main types of areas: cities (densely populated areas), towns and semi-dense areas (intermediate density areas, often representing the transition between rural and urban) and rural areas (thinly populated areas).

The essential definitions of the Degree of Urbanization at level 1 are as follows in the table below:

Low- or middle-income country examples

Cities (densely populated areas): These are areas with a high density (at least 1,500 inhabitants per km²) and a large population (at least 50,000 inhabitants).

Bangladesh: Dhaka city

Banani, Dhaka, Bangladesh (2017). Mohammad Rahmatullah/Pixabay.

Towns and semi-dense areas (intermediate density areas): These are urban clusters outside of cities with a moderate density (at least 300 inhabitants per km²) and a population of at least 5,000 inhabitants. This category includes dense towns, semi-dense towns and suburban or peri-urban areas.

Colombia: Barichara town

An aerial view of a town with mountains in the background (2024). Ricky Beron/Unsplash.

Rural areas (thinly populated areas): These consist of grid cells with a density below 300 inhabitants/km², or denser cells not part of a city, town or semi-dense area. This category includes villages, dispersed rural areas and very dispersed rural areas.

Madagascar: rural village in Ankililoaka (Atsimo-Andrefana)

Traditional Malagasy village in Ankililoaka (2025). Léonide Mahajanjy/Pexels

Box 1.1 (continued)

This harmonized perspective reveals that these areas often have distinct characteristics regarding quality of life, access to services and economic opportunities. Importantly, the population distribution across these categories and the nature of these areas can differ significantly depending on the region of the world and income level, including between low- and middle-income and high-income countries.

High-income country examples

Cities (densely populated areas): These are areas with a high density (at least 1,500 inhabitants per km²) and a large population (at least 50,000 inhabitants).

Germany: Berlin city

Berlin, city (2021). wal_172619/Pixabay.

Towns and semi-dense areas (intermediate density areas): These are urban clusters outside of cities with a moderate density (at least 300 inhabitants per km²) and a population of at least 5,000 inhabitants. This category includes dense towns, semi-dense towns and suburban or peri-urban areas.

Poland: Giżycko town

Bird's-eye view of Giżycko town in summer (2023). Dominik Kaźmierczak/Pexels.

Rural areas (thinly populated areas): These consist of grid cells with a density below 300 inhabitants/km², or denser cells not part of a city, town or semi-dense area. This category includes villages, dispersed rural areas and very dispersed rural areas.

France: rural village near Mont Saint Michel

Village, farms, horse image. (2024). Alain General/Pixabay.

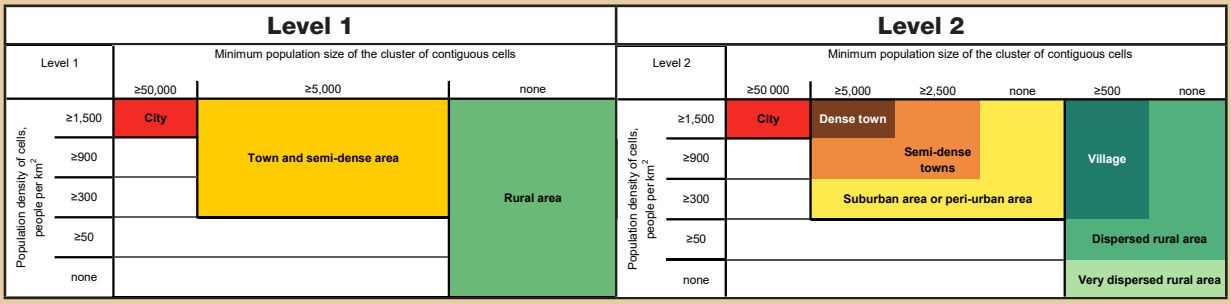
Box 1.2

Measuring the Degree of Urbanization: Overview of the Degree of Urbanization methodology

The Degree of Urbanization is a globally harmonized methodology endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission to classify areas along the urban-rural continuum using a two-stage process: first, 1 km² grid cells are classified based on population density, contiguity and population size thresholds. In the second stage of the method, the grid cell classification is used to classify small spatial units (e.g. municipalities or other territorial subdivisions) into mutually exclusive classes, based on the type of grid cells in which most of their population resides. In this way, population counts by municipality can be broken down by Degree of Urbanization.

This report uses a standardized grid system to classify settlements because this method ensures consistent international comparison. Unlike national definitions, which vary widely and rely on different administrative or statistical boundaries, the grid system provides a uniform framework that can be applied globally. Currently, no open, worldwide dataset exists with the digital boundaries of small spatial units such as neighborhoods or districts. Therefore, this analysis relies on the grid level classification. For simplicity, we refer to the grid-based categories using the more familiar terms used for the small spatial units: cities, towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas. These correspond to the technical classifications of urban centres, urban clusters and rural grid cells. A manual provides further details on the methodology (European Commission, Statistical Office of the European Union, 2021), and defines urban areas as cities plus towns and semi-dense areas. It also encourages the use of the three categories because it is more informative than the urban-rural dichotomy. The division of spatial units into the three classes shown in figure 1.2 (left panel) is referred to as level 1.

Figure 1.2
Schematic representation of the Degree of Urbanization



Source: Eurostat (2021). *Dense urban clusters and rural clusters have an upper population size limit of 50,000 and 5,000 respectively.

Level 2 is a subclassification of level 1 and includes seven classes. Cities remain as a single class. Towns and semi-dense areas are subdivided into 1) dense towns, 2) semi-dense towns and 3) semi-dense areas, meaning suburban or peri-urban areas. Rural areas are split into 1) villages, 2) dispersed rural areas and 3) very dispersed rural areas. Cities, towns and villages constitute individual settlements. As a result, these settlements can be counted and statistics per settlement can be produced. Suburban or peri-urban areas and (very) dispersed rural areas are not settlements. Therefore, they cannot be counted and only aggregated data can be produced for these classes.

This classification relies heavily on remote sensing technology, which provides data on built-up areas, a key covariate for generating population grids and delineating human settlements (see box 3.1). The Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL) project utilizes satellite imagery to produce multi-temporal and multi-dimensional datasets, including built-up area grids (GHS-BUILT) and population grids (GHS-POP), which serve as crucial inputs for applying the Degree of Urbanization. However, heterogeneity in the scale and

Box 1.2 (continued)

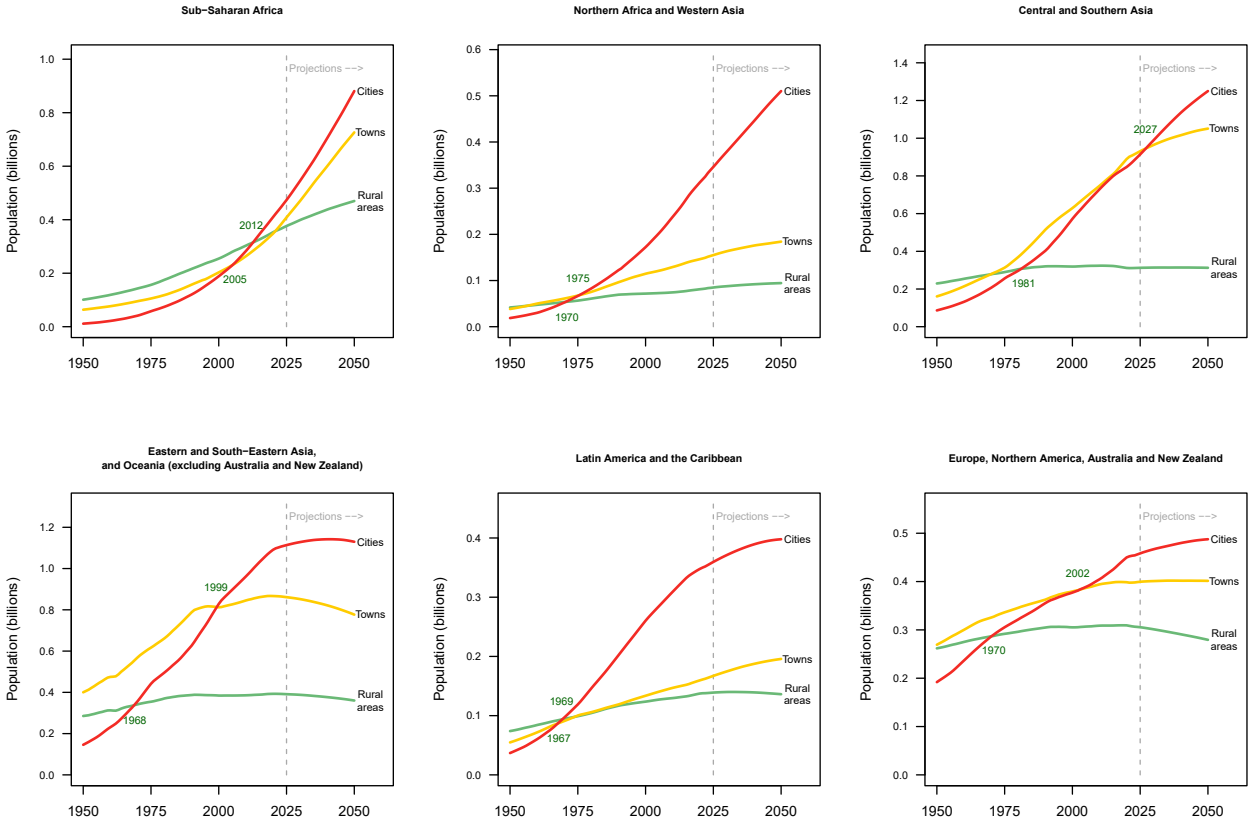
resolution of the initial population data used in different countries to create these grids can contribute to uncertainty in the Degree of Urbanization classifications.

The sensitivity of the Degree of Urbanization classifications to the spatial resolution of the underlying administrative population data has been noted, particularly when comparing results based on global datasets (which may use coarser units for some countries) versus those using finer, national-level data. Furthermore, the methods used to create population grids like GHS-POP, while improving spatial allocation, might risk over-concentrating population estimates in built-up areas, particularly in sparsely settled rural regions (Balk and others, 2021). Furthermore, the accuracy of satellite imagery has improved significantly over time, meaning that estimates based on lower-resolution imagery, especially data from before the 1990s, may have lower detection accuracy and thus greater uncertainty compared to more recent analyses. Additionally, the accuracy of the underlying built-up layer (GHS-BUILT) itself can influence results, with studies noting potential challenges in accurately detecting structures in low-density rural areas (Balk and others, 2021). Finally, due to the lack of widespread remote sensing imagery before 1975, estimates for the period between 1950 and 1975 have been produced using back-projections and were often informed by urban population and city population based on country-specific definitions of urban areas (see Annex 1).

I.B Variation in the Degree of Urbanization across regions

The timing and pace of urbanization has varied across regions. In 1950, cities were the least common living arrangement in each of the six regions[12] shown in figure 1.3. At that time, rural areas were the predominant setting in both sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia; towns outranked both cities and rural areas in the region encompassing Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania; and in the remaining regions, towns and rural areas were roughly equivalent in terms of population size.

Figure 1.3
Population living in cities, towns and rural areas by region, estimates, 1950–2025, and projections, 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Between 1950 and 1970, the population of cities grew faster than that of towns and rural areas in all regions except sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia. By 1970, cities in Latin America and the Caribbean had grown to become more populous than both rural areas and towns. By 1975, cities likewise became the predominant living arrangement in Northern Africa and Western Asia. Since then, more than two thirds of the total population growth in the latter two regions has occurred in cities. In 2025, city dwellers accounted for 54 per cent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean and 59 per cent of the population of Northern Africa and Western Asia.

In the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania region, the population of towns grew almost as fast as the population of cities between 1950 and 1990, after which the number of people living in towns levelled off while the number living in cities continued to grow. By 1999, cities had surpassed towns to become the most common living

[12] For purposes of illustration throughout this report, Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) has been grouped with the Eastern and South-Eastern Asia region, and Australia and New Zealand have been grouped with Europe and Northern America.

setting, and by 2025, there were 1.1 billion city dwellers in the region (47 per cent of the total population), compared to 860 million living in towns (36 per cent). Between 1950 and 2025, the rural population of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania grew slowly, from 286 million to 391 million, and the rural share of the total population fell by half, from 34 to 17 per cent.

Towns were the most common living setting in the region encompassing Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand until 2002, when population growth in towns slowed just as city population growth accelerated. In 2025, 459 million of the region's 1.16 billion total population lived in cities (40 per cent), while 400 million (34 per cent) lived in towns. The number of rural dwellers in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand has been declining since 2015. In 2025, rural areas comprised 26 per cent of the population overall in the region, having fallen from 36 per cent in 1950.

In contrast to the global trend, sub-Saharan Africa is the only region that has experienced substantial growth in its rural population over the past 75 years. Rural settings remained the predominant living arrangement in the region until 2012, when cities grew to become more populous. In 2025, the 1.27 billion inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa were roughly evenly distributed across the three classes of the Degree of Urbanization: 38 per cent lived in cities, 32 per cent in towns and 30 per cent in rural areas.

Central and Southern Asia is the only region among the six in figure 1.3 where cities have not yet become the most common living setting. Since 1950, the pace of growth of the city and town populations in the region have been similar, but that dynamic is shifting, as the growth of towns decelerates while the growth of cities continues. Projections indicate that the population of cities could surpass the population of towns to become the most common living setting in Central and Southern Asia around 2027.

Looking to the future, the number of city dwellers is expected to grow through 2050 in all regions except Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where the city population could begin to shrink in the 2040s, following a trend of declining total population. The towns of sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia are expected to continue to experience robust population growth, but in other regions, the number of people living in towns has levelled off or begun to decline. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region anticipated to have significant rural population growth over the coming decades.

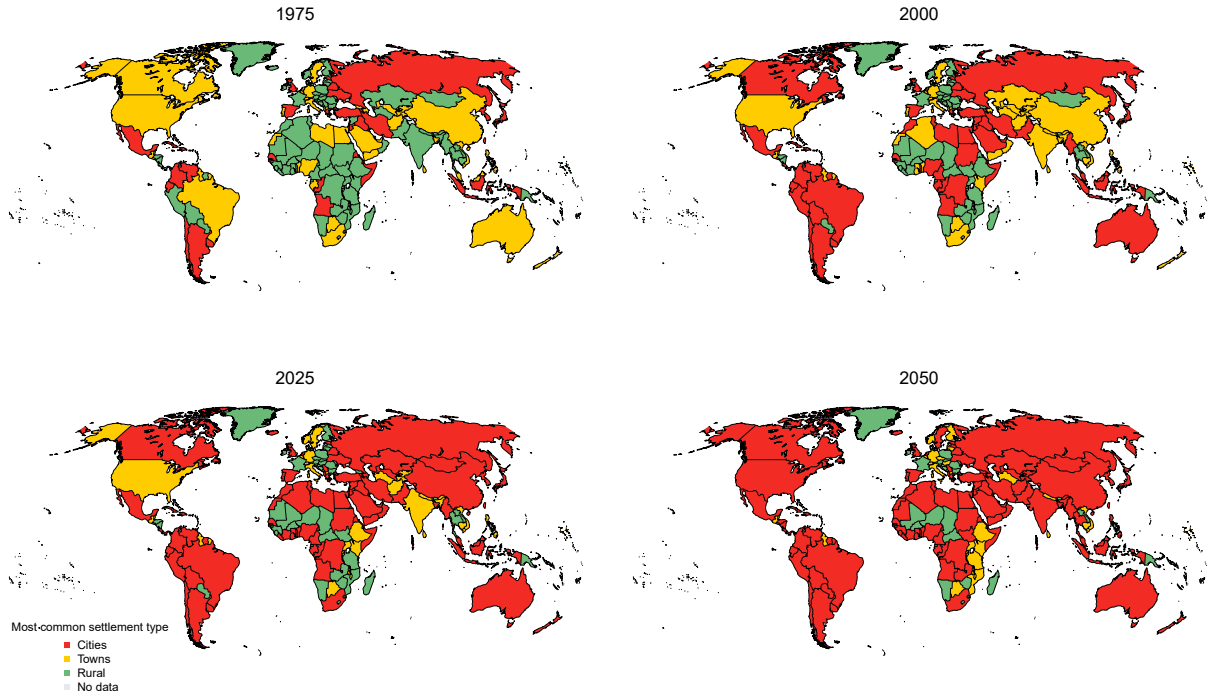
I.C Variation in the Degree of Urbanization across countries

Globally, cities have become the predominant form of settlement in an increasingly growing number of countries. Between 1975 and 2000, the number of countries and areas with the largest share of the population living in cities rose from 47 to 78. During this period, it was common for the greatest share of the population to live in rural areas in many countries in Europe and most countries in Africa. Meanwhile, towns were the most common places of residence in China, India and the United States of America. By 2025, cities had become the most prevalent settlement type in 104 countries. This number is projected to grow to 127 by 2050, including an increasing number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa (map 1.1).

In several major high-income countries, including Germany, Italy and the United States of America, towns remain the predominant settlement type as of 2025. Approximately 40 per cent of the total population of these three countries resides in towns, compared to about one third living in cities. While cities are projected to account for the largest share of the population in the United States of America by 2050, towns are expected to remain the dominant settlement type in both Germany and Italy.

Map 1.1

Most common settlement type by the Degree of Urbanization, cities, towns or rural areas, estimates for 1975, 2000, 2025 and projections to 2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

Table 1.1

Number of countries by settlement type with the largest share of total population according to the Degree of Urbanization, estimates for 1975, 2000, 2025 and projections to 2050

Degree of Urbanization class	1975	2000	2025	2050
Rural areas	116	79	62	44
Towns	74	80	71	66
Cities	47	78	104	127

Notably, rural areas have been the most common place of residence in France over the past half-century, a trend that is projected to continue through 2050. A similar pattern is observed in several countries across Central and Eastern Europe, including Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland and Romania, where rural living remains prevalent.

Many countries and areas in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Northern Africa and Western Asia have reached very high levels of urbanization, with the majority of the population now residing in cities. Aside from some city-states, several populous countries and areas in these regions have more than two thirds of their populations living in cities. Notable examples include the Taiwan Province of China (78 per cent), Republic of Korea (76 per cent) and Japan (68 per cent) in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, as well as the United Arab Emirates (75 per cent), Jordan (73 per cent), Egypt and Israel (both at 70 per cent) in Northern Africa and Western Asia. For the latter four countries, an additional one fifth or more of their populations live in towns.

The share of the city population varies significantly across countries within some regions, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. While many countries have their populations concentrated in cities, such as Equatorial Guinea (83 per cent), Djibouti (80 per cent) and Congo (73 per cent), others still have most of their populations living in rural areas, such as Eswatini (76 per cent) and Zimbabwe (65 per cent). In highly urbanized Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, Bhutan and Lao People's Democratic Republic have over two thirds of their populations living in rural areas. In contrast, many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Northern Africa and Western Asia have their populations concentrated in cities, without significant variations in the share of the city population.

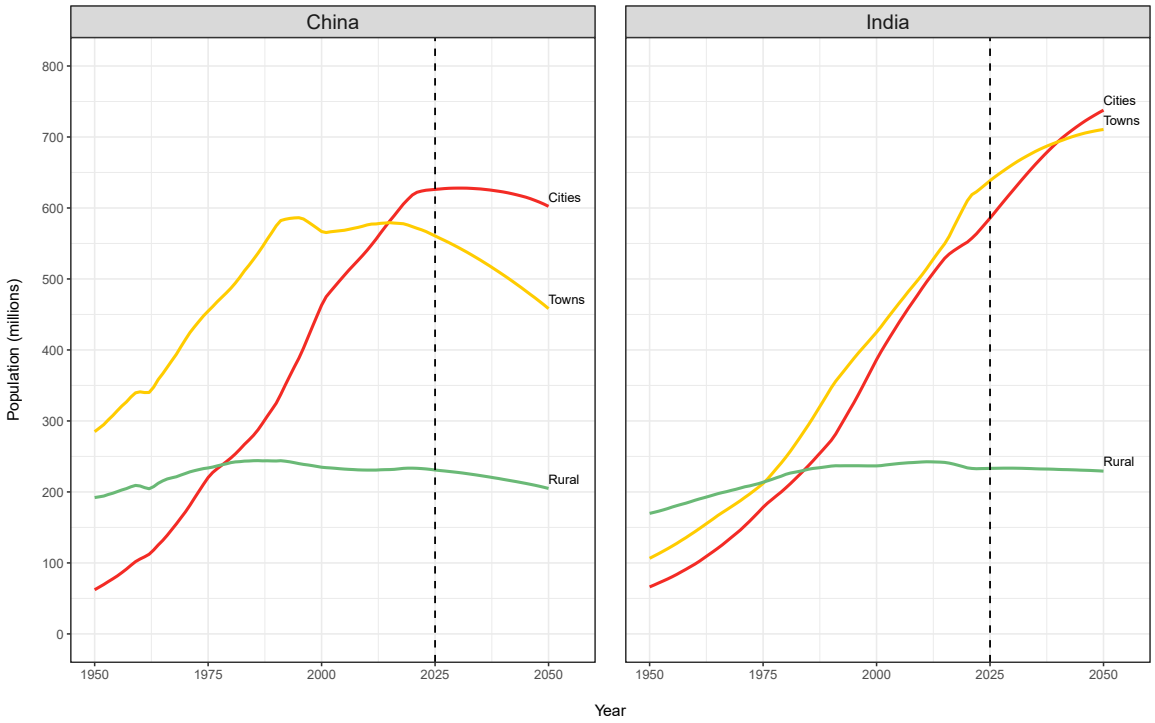
Towns are still the predominant settlement type in many African countries. Among these countries, some have a very high share of population living in towns in 2025, such as Rwanda (80 per cent), Burundi (73 per cent), Uganda (60 per cent), Malawi (59 per cent) and Kenya (53 per cent). Two countries in Central and Southern Asia, namely Nepal and Tajikistan, also have just over half of their populations living in towns.

The two most populous countries, India and China, will also have the largest populations residing in towns between now and 2050. As of 2025, the proportion of people living in towns has reached 44 per cent in India and 40 per cent in China. Together, India and China account for more than 1.2 billion town population, representing over 40 per cent of the population living in towns globally. However, both countries also have substantial city populations, with a combined population of nearly 1.2 billion (627 million in China and 589 million in India in 2025). Between 1950 and 1975, both countries experienced rapid growth in their city populations, but this pace slowed between 1975 and 2000 and in subsequent years, largely due to declining fertility rates and slower overall population growth. Despite this deceleration, city population growth has outpaced town population growth, resulting in a decrease in the share of people living in towns. Each country still has more than 200 million people residing in rural areas, a figure that is expected to remain relatively stable through 2050.

From 2000 to 2025, the global population living in cities increased by 1.25 billion, but over half of this growth came from only a few countries. India, China, Nigeria, Pakistan and the United States of America have collectively contributed over 500 million people to the global city population. Additionally, five other countries – Indonesia, Egypt, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Brazil – added another 187 million city dwellers. In contrast, several countries in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, Romania, Poland, the Republic of Moldova and Hungary, along with Japan in Eastern Asia, experienced a significant decline in their city populations.

Seven countries, including India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Bangladesh and Ethiopia, will shape the future growth of the city population. These seven countries, which host nearly one third (30 per cent) of the global population in 2025, are projected to contribute over half of the global growth of city dwellers by 2050, adding over 500 million residents to cities (figure 1.5).

Figure 1.4
Population living in cities, towns and rural areas for China and India, estimates, 1950–2025, and projections, 2025–2050

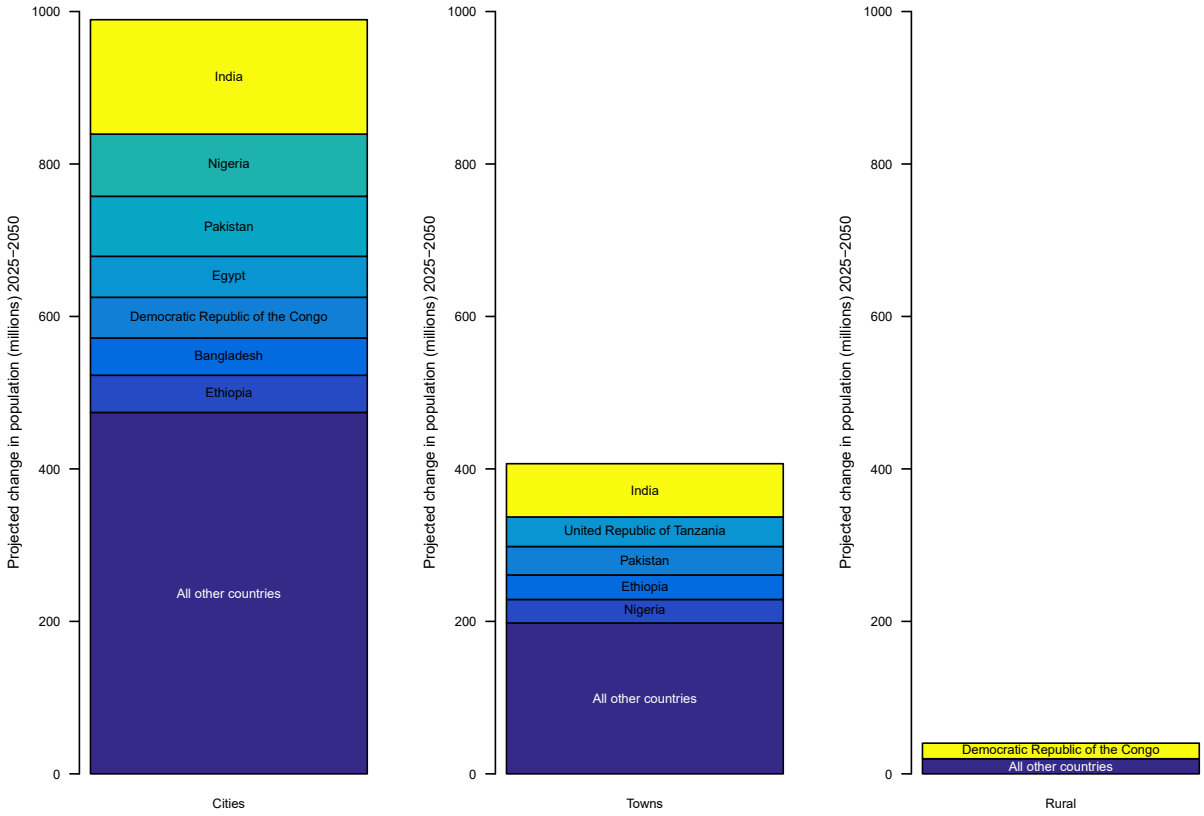


Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Many highly urbanized countries are expected to see a slight or no change in the share of the city population in the coming decades. Most of these countries are located in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru, and in Northern Africa and Western Asia, such as Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Türkiye. A few high-income countries, including Australia, Canada, Spain and the United Kingdom, also belong to this group. Several countries and areas in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, including Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China, are expected to experience a slower transformation of the population living in cities.

Fewer than 30 countries and areas experienced a decline in the share of the city population over the past 25 years. Most of these countries are located in Europe and Northern America, such as Czechia, Hungary, Romania and Poland, and a few in Latin America and the Caribbean, such as Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico and Uruguay. Nonetheless, in only a few of these countries is the decline expected to continue in the coming decades, such as in Hungary and Mexico. Notably, Hungary has been experiencing a decline in both the total population and city population share since 1975, trends that are expected to continue through 2050. It is projected that several high-income countries, including Ireland, Italy, Japan and New Zealand, will see a slight decline in the city population share between now and 2050.

Figure 1.5
Projected change in population living in cities, towns and rural areas by countries during 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Between 2000 and 2025, several countries experienced notable declines in their urban populations. Japan, Romania and Ukraine each lost over 1 million city residents during this period, with Japan and Ukraine also recording reductions of a similar scale in their town populations. In the coming decades, an increasing number of countries and areas, including China, Germany, Hong Kong SAR of China, Italy, Japan, Poland, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China, are projected to experience substantial urban population losses exceeding 1 million by 2050. Among these, China and Japan are expected to lose approximately 26 million and 12 million city residents, respectively, primarily due to persistently low fertility rates and overall population decline.

Box 1.3

Australia: National urban policy for a sustainable urban future

Australia is a highly urbanized, high-income country. In 2025, half of its population lives in cities, while nearly one third resides in towns. This contrasts with the distribution half a century ago, when more than one third of the population lived in cities and over 40 per cent in towns. Like many high-income nations, Australia faces many challenges in sustainable urban development, including housing affordability, urban congestion, underinvestment in transport infrastructure, social inclusion and cohesion, and climate-related crises.

In 2011, the Australian Government introduced its first national urban policy to enhance the productivity, sustainability and livability of major urban centres. This policy improved coordination among federal, state, territorial and local governments, ensuring alignment in urban planning, policymaking, investments and city management (Australian Government, 2011). It fostered a collaborative approach to urban governance, with the federal government overseeing national policies and programs in areas such as urban development, housing, infrastructure, transport, climate, migration and labour. State and territorial governments manage urban policy and planning, including updates to building regulations, while local governments handle the operational aspects of urban management. Additionally, contributions from the private sector and local communities are crucial in shaping urban governance.

Recognizing emerging challenges and opportunities, particularly advancements in technology, shifts in the global economy, risks of a COVID-19-like pandemic outbreak and climate-related crises, the Australian Government introduced a new national urban policy in 2024. Designed to align with new international development frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this policy established a shared vision among government bodies for sustainable urban growth through three overarching goals: (1) livable and equitable cities, (2) productive and innovative development and (3) sustainable and resilient urban planning. Broad-based consultations were conducted during the policy's formulation, incorporating insights from all levels of government, academia, the private sector, civil society organizations and First Nations representatives (Australian Government, 2024).

Under the national urban policy framework, the Australian Government has supported a range of state and territory priorities through Federal Funding Agreements on infrastructure, education and skills, health, affordable housing and community services. Leveraging emerging technologies, the policy actively promotes programs and initiatives focused on skill development and innovation, and supports smart city development, particularly through digital connectivity and data-driven planning, and emerging transport technologies.

Australia's population has grown at an average annual rate of 1.4 per cent between 2000 and 2025, driven mainly by international migration, with most growth concentrated in six major coastal capital cities. Housing affordability remains a top priority, with all levels of government collaborating under the National Housing Accord to build 1.2 million well-located homes over five years starting in 2024. Australia's urban policy prioritizes inclusion and social cohesion, supporting the integration of international migrants while ensuring opportunities for First Nations communities to connect with their lands.

Australia regularly confronts climate-related hazards, such as droughts, severe thunderstorms and flooding, heatwaves and bushfires. A key urban policy objective is to safeguard nature and biodiversity, reduce emissions and enhance climate resilience through targeted investments, programs and projects. Additionally, Australia actively contributes to managing regional and global urbanization by sharing its expertise in urban water management with Asian countries, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (Australian Government, 2018).

Box 1.4

Ghana: Rising through cities

Ghana, a lower-middle-income country in sub-Saharan Africa, has undergone a remarkable urban transformation over the past half-century. In 1975, only 18 per cent of Ghana's population lived in cities, but by 2025, nearly half were city dwellers. Between 1975 and 2025, the total population grew 3.5 times, from about 10 million to 35 million, while the city population expanded 13.5 times, from just under 2 million to 27 million. Meanwhile, the share of the population residing in towns has declined slightly, from 40 per cent to 30 per cent. Over the next 25 years, urbanization is expected to slow down as 80 per cent of the population already lives in cities or towns. Unlike many African countries, Ghana is among the few experiencing complementary rapid urbanization and economic growth, which have contributed to poverty reduction and human capital development (World Bank Group, 2015).

Along with economic growth, rapid urbanization has also brought many challenges, including unplanned urban sprawl, traffic congestion, unaffordable housing, expansion of slums, inadequate basic services and high rates of unemployment and crime. To harness the benefits of urbanization and "promote a sustainable, spatially integrated, and orderly development of urban settlements", the Government of Ghana introduced its national urban policy in 2012 with 12 key objectives covering all aspects of urbanization, accompanied by a detailed action plan with clear responsibilities assigned to relevant agencies and ministries (Government of Ghana, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012). In addition, the policy was complementary with the national population policy and national housing policy released in the early 2010s.

One key feature to ensure the successful implementation of Ghana's national urban policy is that the decentralization process has created a multilevel governance system with the national level for policy consultation, the middle level (province or region) for monitoring, coordination and evaluation, and the district level for implementation (Adzornu, 2018). An evaluation study found that, within just five years of implementing the national urban policy, several flagship projects had already yielded positive impacts, including the Ghana Urban Transport Project and the Participatory Slum Upgrading Project (Inkoom and others, 2019). The Government's review of progress in implementing the New Urban Agenda in 2022 further confirmed significant advancements. For instance, access to safely managed sanitation services improved from 46 per cent in 2010 to nearly 60 per cent in 2020, and by 2021, 92 per cent of households had access to improved drinking water sources (Government of Ghana, 2022).

Despite these achievements, substantial challenges remain, particularly in poverty reduction and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all. The percentage of the population living below the international poverty line in the country declined from about 14 per cent in 2013 to 12 per cent in 2017 while the significant urban-rural gap remained with less than 2 per cent of urban residents living under the poverty line compared to 22 per cent in rural areas. Rapid urbanization has not been accompanied by increased employment in manufacturing and most urban jobs are concentrated in low-value-added informal services. Ghana has developed a housing policy to integrate housing regulations into urban development plans, yet the housing deficit continues to be a major concern. Between 2013 and 2017, both urban and rural areas observed a one-percentage-point increase in the number of people living in unaffordable housing (Government of Ghana, 2022).

Over the past 75 years, countries have exhibited diverse urbanization patterns, reflected in the shifting proportions of populations residing in cities and towns as well as in the varying pace and direction of these changes (figure 1.6). These patterns reveal four distinct pathways of urban transformation that countries have followed since 1950, each reflecting different demographic, economic and policy contexts.

The first pattern pertains to countries in which the shares of the population in both cities and towns have expanded simultaneously. Countries such as Haiti, India, Kenya and Timor-Leste exemplify this trajectory, in which urbanization has occurred across the entire urban spectrum. In these cases, population growth has shifted from rural areas to both intermediate-density towns and high-density cities, often reflecting gradual rural-to-urban migration that initially concentrates in smaller urban centres before progressing to larger cities.

The second common pattern comprises countries with increasing shares of the population living in cities and decreasing shares living in towns. Countries including Canada, China, the Dominican Republic and Egypt have experienced this trajectory, where urban population growth has concentrated predominantly in cities, while towns have lost their relative population share. This pattern suggests a more direct rural-to-city migration flow, often bypassing intermediate urban settlements, and may reflect economic opportunities and infrastructure investments that favor large urban centres over smaller ones.

In countries exhibiting the third pattern, the share of the population living in cities has grown substantially, while the share living in towns has remained relatively stable. Countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Kazakhstan, Norway and Oman illustrate this pathway, where urbanization has been channeled primarily toward cities without significantly affecting the share of the population living in towns. This suggests a bifurcated urban system in which cities attract migration while towns maintain their demographic position, often serving as regional service centers.

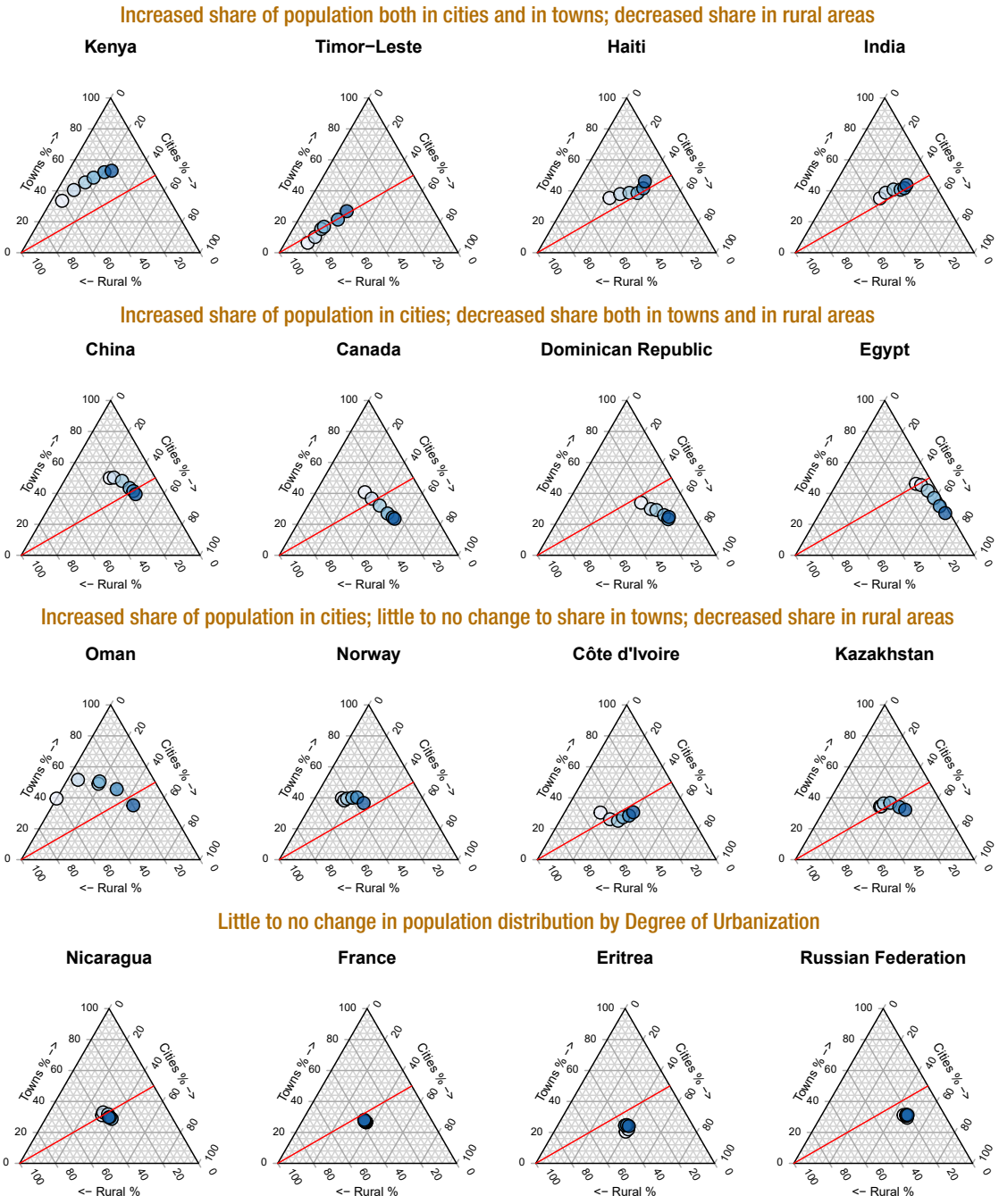
Finally, the fourth pattern encompasses countries that have experienced minimal changes in their urban-rural distribution over the observation period. Countries such as Eritrea, France, Nicaragua and the Russian Federation have maintained relatively stable proportions across all three settlement types reflecting either limited population growth, or specific policy interventions that have maintained balanced regional development.

These diverse trajectories underscore that urbanization is not a uniform global process but rather a complex phenomenon shaped by country-specific factors, including economic development patterns, geographic constraints, policy frameworks and demographic transitions. Understanding these different pathways provides crucial insights for policymakers seeking to manage urban growth and ensure balanced territorial development.

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have experienced rapid urban growth driven by youthful, fast-growing populations alongside significant rural decline in terms of population percentage, creating persistent challenges for both rapidly expanding cities and declining rural areas. The LDCs are 44 nations with over 1.2 billion people characterized by the lowest levels of socioeconomic development, combining low income, weak human assets, high economic and environmental vulnerability, widespread poverty and inadequate infrastructure – conditions that heighten exposure to shocks and slow progress toward sustainable development. Many LDCs, especially in Africa, have high fertility rates and very young age structures that fuel rapid population growth, straining their capacity to provide essential services such as healthcare and education while creating a strong demand for urban jobs and services through a large and growing working-age population (United Nations, 2023).

Figure 1.6

Percentage of population living in cities, towns and rural areas, 1975 to 2025, for selected countries representing different patterns of urbanization. Darker colour corresponds to later date.



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Notes: Each triangle depicts the trend in population distribution across cities (right side), towns (left side), and rural areas (bottom side) for a specific country from 1975 to 2025. The red diagonal line marks points at which the share living in towns is equal to the share living in cities. Points above the red line represent population distribution with a larger share living in towns than in cities, whereas points below the red line represent distributions with a larger share in cities than in towns. To understand how to interpret these plots, consider the pattern for India in the top-right row. Each point on India's trajectory represents a selected year between 1975 and 2025. In 1975, shown by the white marker, India's population was roughly evenly distributed across rural areas (35 per cent), towns (35 per cent) and cities (30 per cent). Following the line forward in time, India's trajectory moves upward and to the right, largely following the slope of the red line. This path corresponds to increasing share of population in both cities and towns, and decreasing share in rural areas. Countries crossing the red line, such as Canada and Kazakhstan, have transitioned from having more people living in towns than in cities (above the red line) to more people living in cities than in towns (below the red line).

These demographic trends drive distinctive settlement patterns, characterized by rapid urban growth and slower rural growth; the share of people living in cities has surged from just 7 per cent in 1950 to 36 per cent today and is projected to reach 42 per cent by 2050. In absolute terms, the population living in cities has grown dramatically – from fewer than 15 million in 1950 to over 441 million in 2025 – driven by both natural population increase and rural-to-urban migration as people seek education, jobs and services that rural areas often lack. While towns remain important with shares staying relatively stable around the mid-30s (declining only slightly from 38 per cent to 36 per cent), their absolute numbers have increased significantly from 76 million in 1950 to reach 437 million in 2025, reflecting continued demographic relevance even amid urbanization. Meanwhile, the absolute number of people living in rural areas has continued to grow from 108 million in 1950 to 337 million today, and is expected to reach 423 million by 2050 reflecting ongoing population growth in many rural LDC regions, even as their relative weight within the national population diminished from 55 per cent to 32 per cent today and is projected to fall further to 24 per cent by 2050.

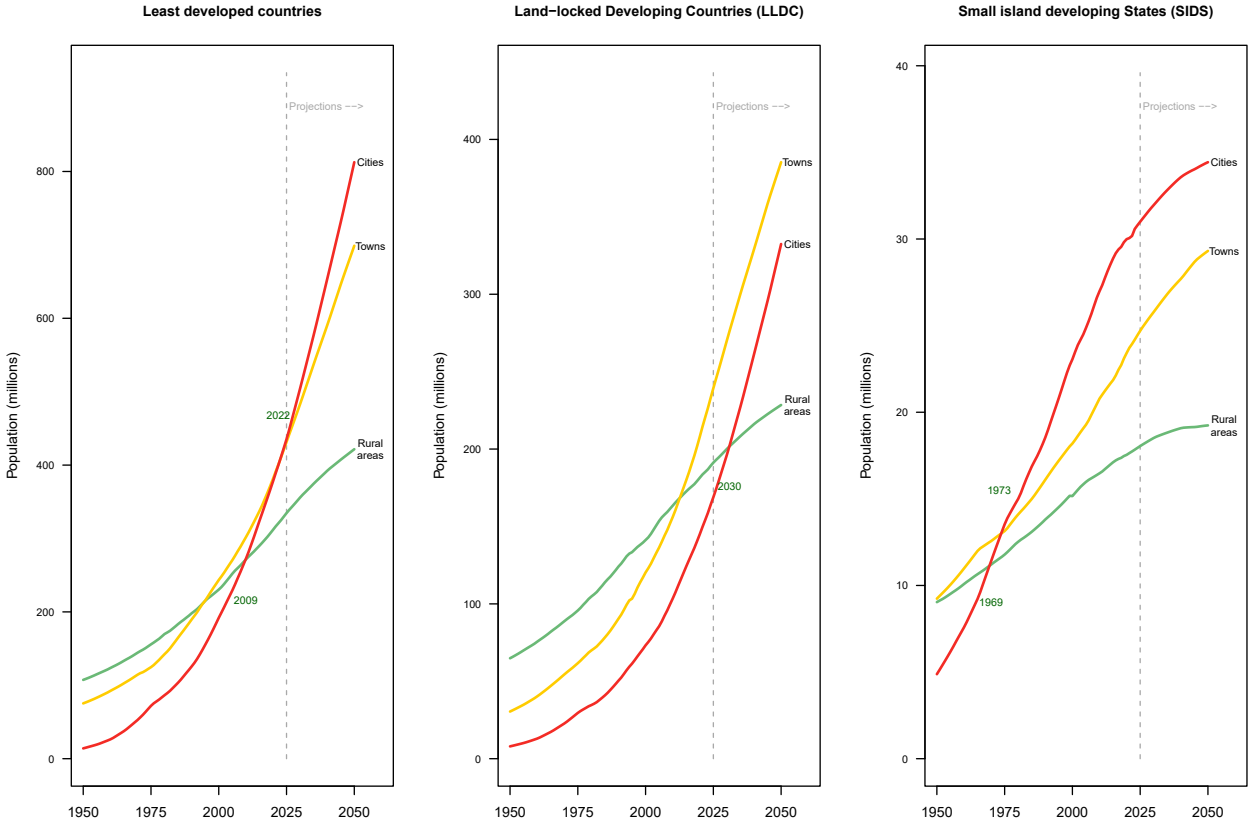
These dynamics create dual pressures: cities face mounting challenges such as informal settlements and infrastructure deficits due to rapid inflows, while rural areas contend with underinvestment and outmigration despite their growing populations. For LDCs, managing this transition is a key challenge, meaning balancing the demands of rapid urban growth with the need to support towns and rural communities that remain vital for food security, social cohesion and livelihoods.

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) experience gradual urbanization shaped by their geographic constraints, with steady growth occurring in both cities and towns as the proportion of people residing in urban areas has gradually increased over time. The 32 LLDCs face unique challenges due to their lack of territorial access to the sea, resulting in geographic remoteness, high transit costs and difficulty integrating into global markets – constraints that raise the cost of goods, limit economic diversification and slow urban development. Many LLDCs are also classified as LDCs and have youthful populations due to historically high fertility, sustaining continued population growth and demographic momentum, while more than half of their populations live in drylands, making them particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change (United Nations, 2023).

These geographic and economic constraints have contributed to a pattern of gradual and more distributed urbanization, marked by steady growth across all settlement types. Since 1950, the populations of cities, towns and rural areas have all increased significantly in absolute terms, though their relative shares have shifted. The number of people living in cities has grown more than twentyfold, from just 8 million in 1950 to 171 million today, and is projected to reach over 336 million by 2050. This represents a rise in the share of people living in cities from 8 per cent to 28 per cent today, with a further increase to 35 per cent expected by mid-century. Towns play an even more prominent role than in LDCs, and have experienced even more substantial growth, increasing from around 31 million in 1950 to roughly 242 million today. Their share of the population has risen from 30 per cent to 40 per cent, and is projected to remain stable, reflecting their importance as economic and logistical hubs. Rural populations, while declining in relative terms – from 63 per cent in 1950 to 32 per cent today and projected to fall to 24 per cent by 2050 – have continued to grow in absolute numbers. From about 65 million in 1950, the rural population has nearly tripled to 192 million today and is expected to remain substantial and reach 229 million by 2050.

Without access to seaports, development in LLDCs tends to concentrate along domestic transport corridors and border hubs, reinforcing a hub-and-spoke settlement pattern. In this system, secondary towns act as vital connectors between rural producers and national or cross-border markets, helping to bridge geographic and economic divides. However, vast rural hinterlands remain sparsely connected, limiting access to services and opportunities. This pattern makes improving transport corridors and cross-border infrastructure essential for LLDCs to leverage urbanization for development and better integrate with global markets.

Figure 1.7
Population living in cities, towns and rural areas by special grouping, estimates, 1950–2025, and projections, 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

In contrast to other categories of countries in special situations, small island developing States (SIDS) are uniquely characterized by high and stable urbanization, where the majority of the population has been living in cities for decades, creating a city-dominant settlement pattern with coastal concentration shaped by their distinct geographic constraints. The 57 SIDS are recognized for their unique vulnerabilities, including small populations and land areas, remoteness and high exposure to environmental shocks such as climate change, sea-level rise and storms, creating significant economic and geographic constraints through limited economic diversification, reliance on imports for food and energy, and dependence on tourism and remittances. These distinct pressures have resulted in a unique and stabilized urban settlement pattern, where SIDS have long been highly urbanized compared with other developing regions.

In absolute terms, urban populations in cities have grown steadily – from around 5 million in 1950 to approximately 31 million today – and are projected to remain stable at about 35 million by 2050. This growth occurred early; cities accounted for 21 per cent of the population as far back as 1950, overtook rural areas before 1975, and now represent 42 per cent of the total, with a slight decline to 41 per cent projected by mid-century. Town populations have also continued to grow and now total around 25 million. Their share has stabilized at roughly 35 per cent, indicating renewed demographic and economic relevance, particularly as secondary urban centres in coastal and island settings. Rural populations have also continued to grow to reach 18 million today, even though their share has continued to decline gradually from 39 per cent in 1950 to 24 per cent today and is projected to reach 23 per cent by 2050, reflecting the geographic realities of small hinterlands that limit large rural populations.

This pattern of stable, city-dominant settlements with coastal concentrations increases vulnerability to climate change and extreme weather events. Many SIDS also face outmigration (particularly of youth), ageing populations and financial and business challenges that make it difficult to support a growing population, often leading to slower population growth or even decline (United Nations, 2023). This requires integrated planning to make cities resilient while safeguarding fragile ecosystems and ensuring that smaller towns remain viable despite the geographic constraints of island nations with limited space for expansion.

The Degree of Urbanization evolves differently across these groups because their geographies and vulnerabilities differ. LDCs are urbanizing rapidly from a young, growing base; LLDCs see parallel growth in cities and especially towns as inland connectors; and SIDS are city-dominant and relatively stable, with settlements tightly constrained by coasts and climate risk. Recognizing these distinct pathways should help tailor policies, strengthen towns as connectors in LLDCs, expand basic services and jobs in rapidly urbanizing LDCs and advance resilient, compact coastal cities and safe mobility options in SIDS.

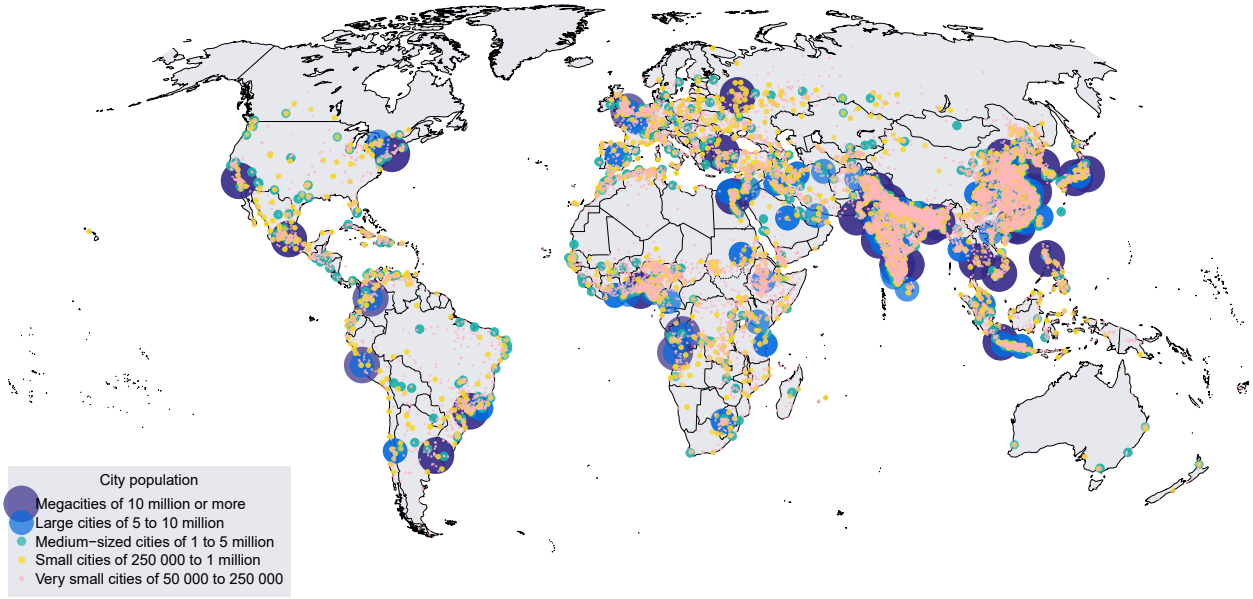
Chapter II. The world's cities

What is a city? Most people would agree that cities are places where large numbers of people live and work. They are hubs of government, commerce and transportation. However, identifying the precise geographic area that delineates a city is no easy task. In fact, alternative definitions may be needed depending on the question at hand. For example, the area under municipal jurisdiction may best represent a city's extent for issues related to administration and governance, whereas a wider metropolitan region may better describe the city's reach for matters related to the economy, labour and housing market. The choice of definition is consequential for assessing the size and growth of a city and for drawing comparisons across cities, both within a country and around the world.

To facilitate international comparisons in the *World Urbanization Prospects*, the 2025 revision adopts the definitions described by the Degree of Urbanization, wherein the term "city" refers to *any agglomeration of contiguous geographic area with a density of at least 1,500 inhabitants per km² and a total population of at least 50,000*.

In 2025, there were more than 12,000 unique cities globally (map 2.1). These include 33 megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants each, 49 large cities with between 5 and 10 million inhabitants, 429 medium-sized cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants, 1,822 small cities with 250,000 to 1 million inhabitants, and 9,807 very small cities with fewer than 250,000 inhabitants.

Map 2.1
The world's cities in 2025



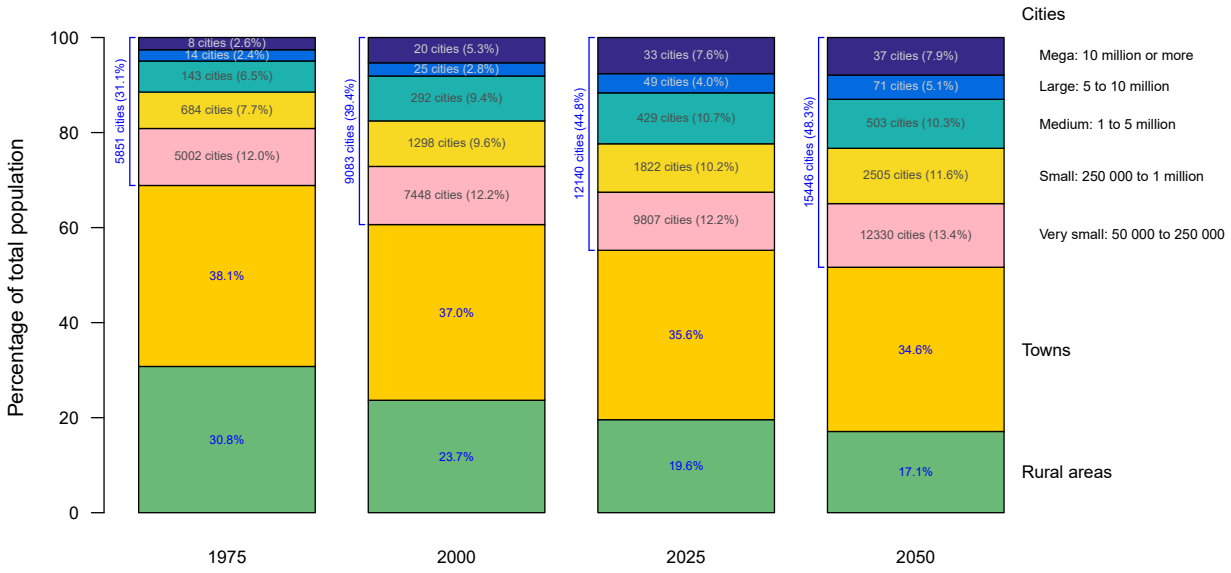
Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas).

The number of cities in the world more than doubled from 5,851 in 1975 to 12,140 by 2025. Their share of the global population grew from 31 to 45 per cent over the same period (figure 2.1). Projections indicate that by 2050, there could be more than 15,000 cities worldwide, most of which (over 12,000) will still be relatively small with fewer than 250,000 inhabitants.

Among each of the city size classes, both the number of cities and their share of the world's population have increased. In 1975, there were only eight megacities with 10 million inhabitants or more, but by 2025, the number of megacities had quadrupled to 33. The share of the world's population residing in megacities increased from under 3 per cent to nearly 8 per cent over that period. Large cities with between 5 and 10 million inhabitants tripled in number between 1975 and 2025, but their share of the global population grew more slowly, from 2 per cent to 4 per cent. Medium-sized cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants have also tripled in number over the past 50 years. Close to 11 per cent of the world's population lived in a medium-sized city in 2025, up from 8 per cent in 1975. Altogether, one in every five people worldwide lived in a city with 1 million inhabitants or more in 2025.

Figure 2.1

World population distribution by Degree of Urbanization and city size class, estimates for 1975, 2000 and 2025 and projections to 2050

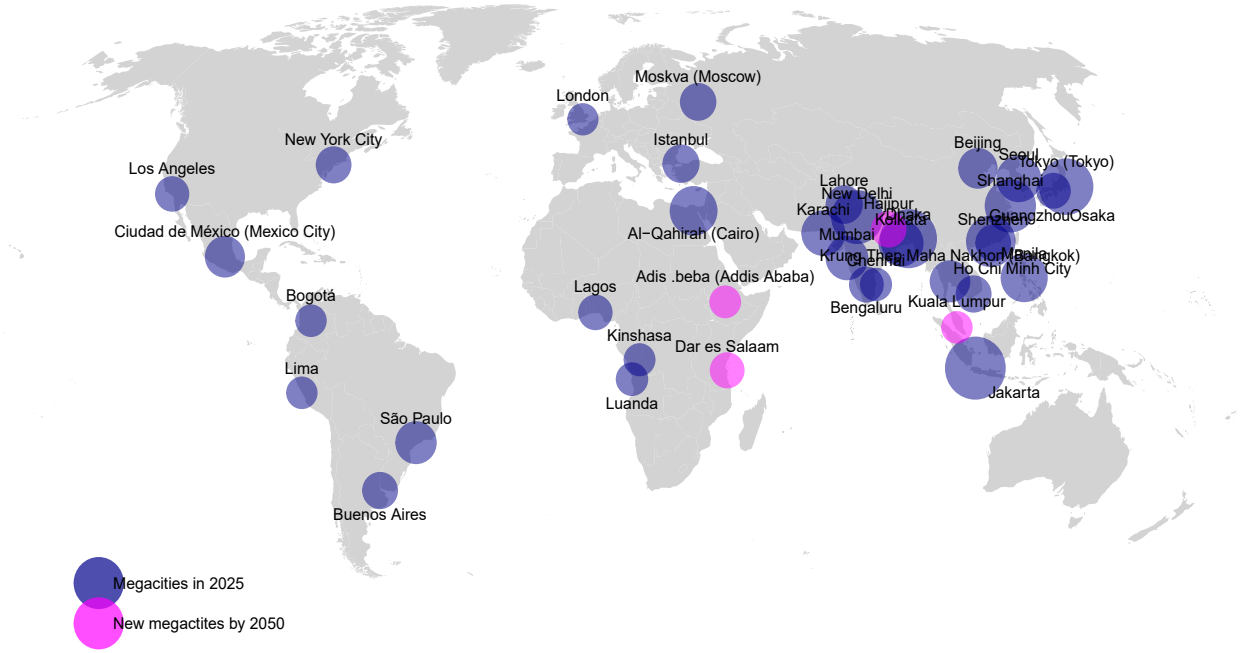


Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Ninety-six per cent of the world's cities in 2025 had fewer than 1 million inhabitants. These smaller cities have grown in number, as well as in their share of world population, though the increase in population share has occurred more slowly than for the larger city size classes. The 1,822 small cities with 250,000 to 1 million inhabitants in 2025 were more than double the 684 cities in this size class in 1975. Their share of the global population has increased moderately from 8 to 10 per cent over the last 50 years. The number of very small cities with between 50,000 and 250,000 inhabitants nearly doubled from 5,002 in 1975 to 9,807 in 2025 as their share of the world's population increased only slightly from 12.0 to 12.2 per cent.

Most megacities are located in the global South. Among the 33 megacities with 10 million inhabitants or more in 2025, 19 are in Asia (map 2.2). India alone has five megacities, and China has four. Five of the world's megacities in 2025 were in Latin America, four in Africa, three in Europe, and two in Northern America. The number of megacities is expected to rise to 37 by 2050, by which time Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Hajipur (India), and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) will have surpassed the 10 million population threshold.

Map 2.2
The world's megacities with 10 million inhabitants or more, 2025 and 2050 (projected)



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

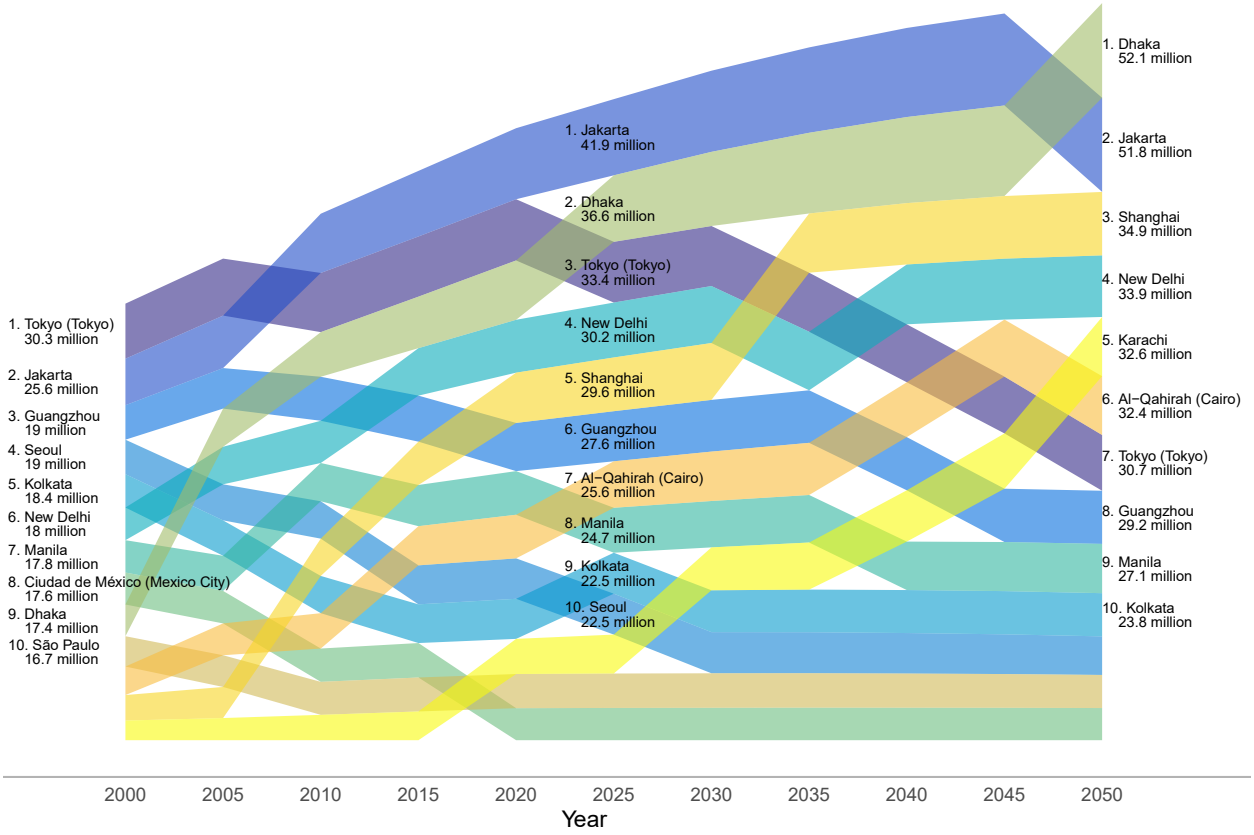
Nine of the ten most populous cities in 2025 are in Asia. Jakarta (Indonesia) is the world's most populous city in 2025, with close to 42 million inhabitants. Jakarta is followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh) with nearly 37 million inhabitants, and Tokyo (Japan) with 33.4 million. Cairo (Egypt) is the only city among the top ten in 2025 that is not located in Asia (figure 2.2). Two Latin American cities, Mexico City (Mexico) and São Paulo (Brazil), were among the ten largest in 2000, but by 2010, they had been displaced in rank by fast-growing Cairo and Shanghai (China).

Over the past quarter century, the population of Tokyo has grown more slowly than the populations of Jakarta and Dhaka, and consequently, Tokyo's rank among the world's largest cities fell from first in 2000 to third by 2025. Looking to the future, Tokyo's population is expected to shrink from 33.4 million in 2025 to 30.7 million in 2050, when it will have descended to seventh in rank among the world's most populous cities. Tokyo and Seoul (Republic of Korea) are the only cities among the ten largest in 2025 that are expected to experience a population decline by the mid-century.

Dhaka and Shanghai are expected to grow the fastest among 2025's ten most populous cities, with projected growth rates close to 5 per cent per year between 2025 and 2050. By mid-century, Dhaka is expected to overtake Jakarta as the world's largest city, while Shanghai is expected to ascend in rank from fifth to third.

Karachi (Pakistan) has also experienced rapid population growth, which is anticipated to continue through mid-century. Karachi is expected to join the ten largest cities between 2025 and 2030, and with a projected population of almost 33 million in 2050, it could rise to fifth place, overtaking Cairo (32 million), Tokyo (31 million), Guangzhou, China (29 million), Manila, Philippines (27 million), and Kolkata, India (24 million).

Figure 2.2
The world's 10 most populous cities, estimates for 2000 to 2025 and projections to 2050



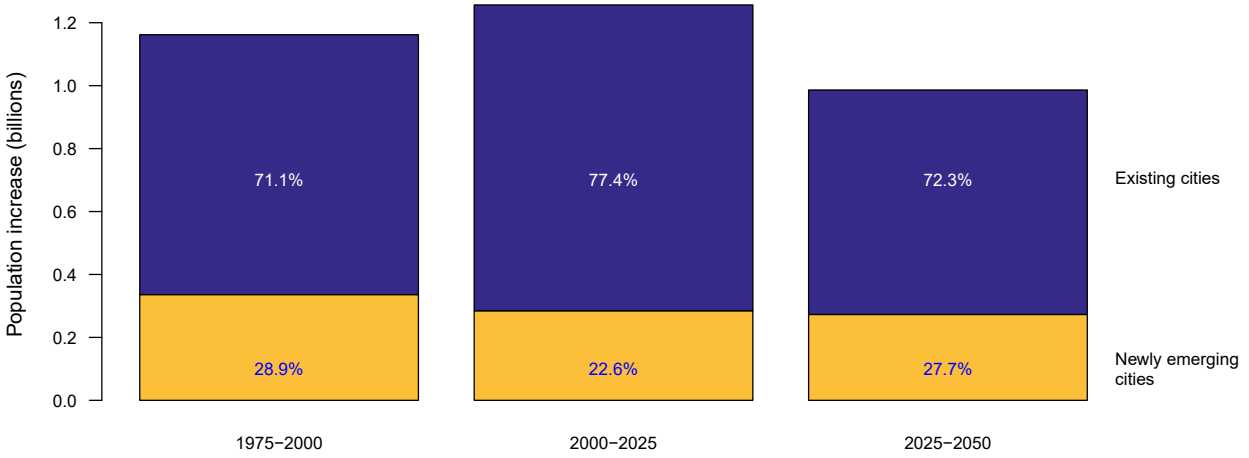
Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Most city population growth occurs within existing cities. An estimated 1.2 billion people were added to cities globally between 1975 and 2000, and 71 per cent of that growth took place in localities that were already classified as cities in 1975 or were added to existing cities (figure 2.3). The remaining 336 million new city dwellers lived in towns or other small settlements that grew to become cities at some point during the period 1975–2000. Between 2000 and 2025, an even larger share of the world's city population growth was concentrated in existing cities: more than three quarters of the 1.3 billion new city residents added during that period lived in localities already classified as cities in 2000. Over the coming decades, global population growth is expected to be increasingly concentrated in less urbanized regions. Newly emerging cities (i.e. towns that grow to satisfy the minimum criteria to be considered a city) are expected to account for a slightly larger share of total city population growth than in the recent past – 28 per cent during 2025–2050 compared to 23 per cent during 2000–2025.

Most of the world's fastest-growing cities are small cities in Africa and Asia. Of the roughly 400 cities that grew faster than 4 per cent per year between 2015 and 2025, one third are in sub-Saharan Africa and another one quarter are in Central and Southern Asia (map 2.3).[13] Only three of these fast-growing cities have populations larger than 5 million in 2025: Luanda (Angola), Dar es Salaam (United Republic of Tanzania), and Kozhikode (India). More than 70 per cent of the fast-growing cities have fewer than 250,000 inhabitants in 2025.

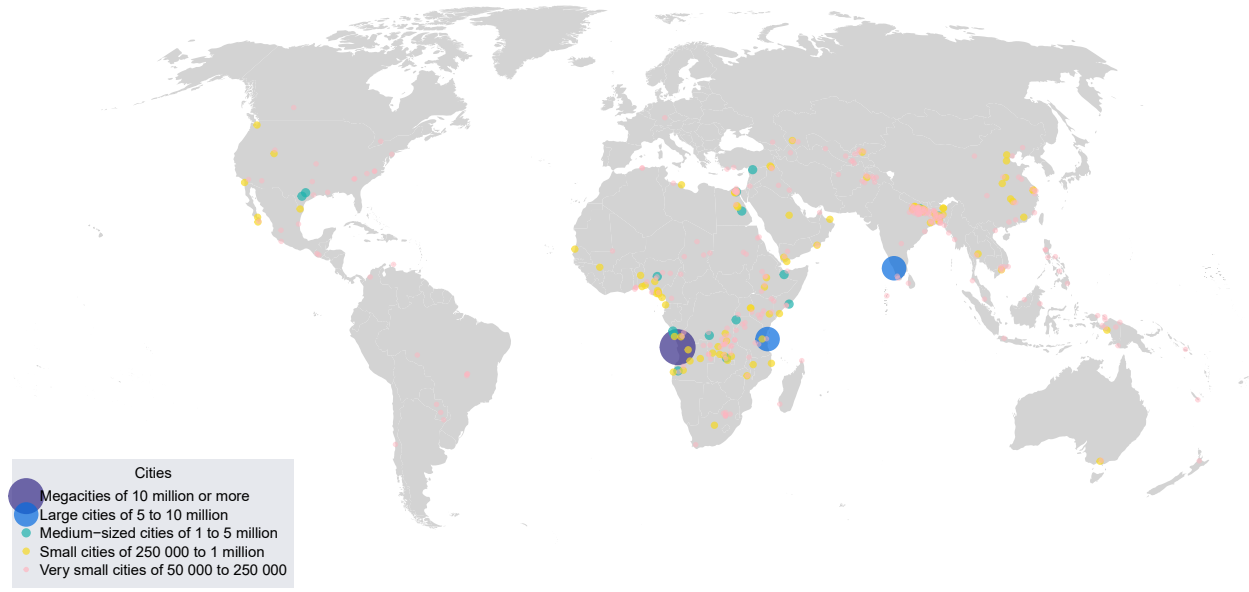
[13] For the Degree of Urbanization, the populations of individual cities are estimated by combining spatially disaggregated population counts from censuses with assessments of built-up surfaces obtained from satellite imagery (see boxes 1.1 and 3.1). Heterogeneity across countries and over time in the quality, resolution and recency of the input data introduce differing levels of uncertainty in the estimated population size for many cities. For the remainder of this chapter, the discussion of individual cities is restricted to the 11,743 cities for which the plausibility of the population estimated for 2025 is considered moderate, high or very high.

Figure 2.3
World city population growth in existing and newly emerging cities, estimates for 1975–2000 and 2000–2025 and projections for 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Map 2.3
Cities with average annual growth of 4 per cent or more, estimates for 2015-2025



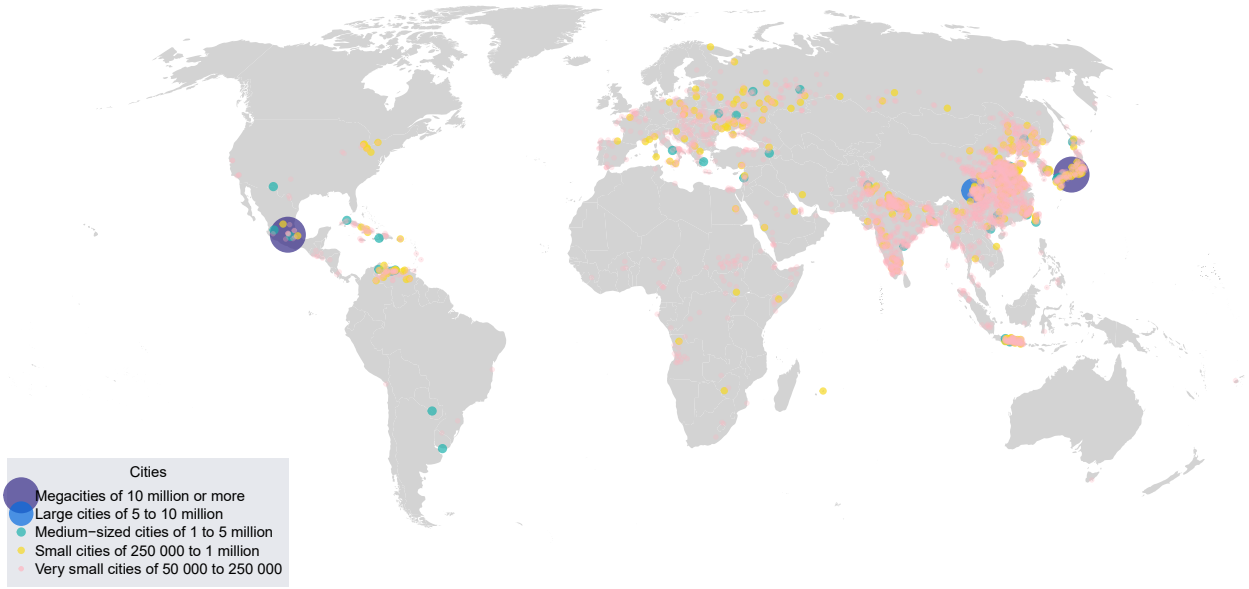
Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

More than 3,000 cities experienced population decline between 2015 and 2025. Most of the world's cities with shrinking populations are small – four fifths have fewer than 250,000 inhabitants in 2025 (map 2.4). Notable exceptions include the megacity Mexico City, where the population fell from 19.0 million in 2015 to 17.7 million in 2025, and the large Chinese city of Chengdu, where the population declined from 6.7 million in 2015 to 6.1 million

in 2025. More than one third of the world's cities with shrinking population are in China, and an additional 17 per cent are in India.[14]

When a settlement's population falls below 50,000, it is no longer classified as a city according to the Degree of Urbanization. Rather, it is classified as a town. Globally, 421 cities identified in 2015 experienced a decline in population such that they are no longer classified as cities in 2025 (data not shown). All were very small cities, none of which had a population larger than 130,000 in 2015.

Map 2.4
Cities where population shrank between 2015 and 2025



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

The populations of most cities are growing faster than their countries' overall populations. Among the world's fastest growing cities, city population growth far outpaced the rate of growth of the total population in their respective countries or areas (figure 2.4). For example, the population of Cabinda (Angola) grew at an average rate close to 6 per cent per year between 2015 and 2025, which was nearly double the 3.3 per cent annual growth rate of the country overall. Likewise, the population of Cần Thơ (Viet Nam) grew at a pace four times as fast as the total population of that country.

Among the 33 megacities with 10 million inhabitants or more in 2025, 20 experienced city population growth that was faster than the rate of change in the country's population during 2015–2025. China's four megacities – Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Shenzhen – all added population at a pace above 0.8 per cent per year, which was much faster than the 0.1 per cent average annual growth rate of China's population overall. Thailand's capital, Bangkok, saw its population grow by nearly 2 per cent per year during 2015–2025, compared to the much slower growth of the total population of the country of 0.2 per cent annually.

While less common, some cities experienced population decline even as the country's population continued to grow. In Angola, the world's fifth fastest growing country during 2015–2025, 16 cities lost population over that period, including the city of Uíge, where the population declined by an average of 1.8 per cent annually. More than one quarter of India's cities lost population between 2015 and 2025, even as the country's total population grew by an average of 1 per cent per year. Small and medium-sized cities in India are particularly vulnerable to population

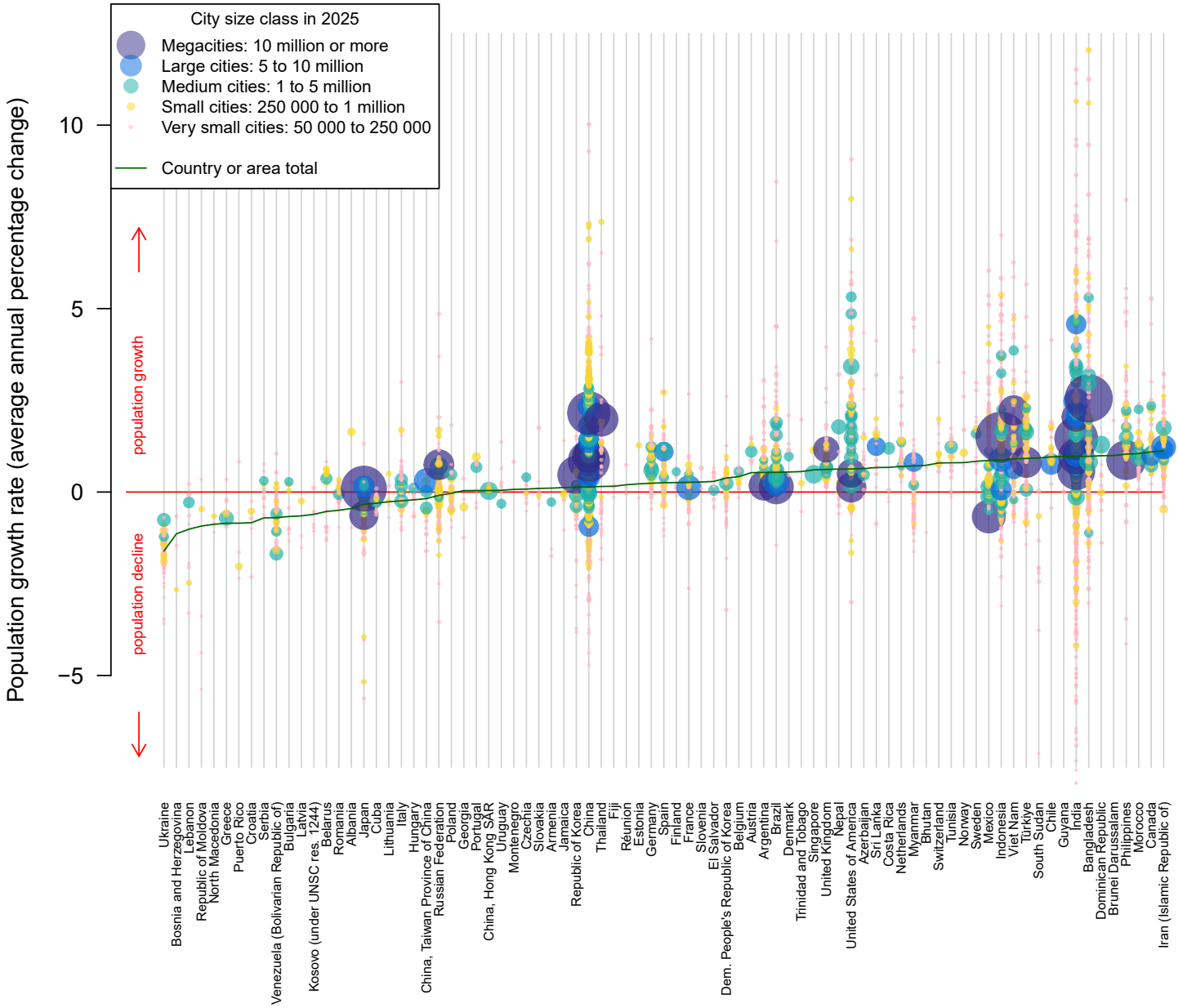
[14] Among the 3,125 cities with 50,000 inhabitants or more in 2025 that experienced a reduction in population size of at least 1 per cent between 2015 and 2025.

decline since they are losing residents due to both natural demographic decline (a combination of low fertility and population ageing, which produces an excess of deaths over births) and out-migration toward larger economic centres (Ganapati, 2014; Nawaj Sarif, 2024; Sarif and Roy, 2024).

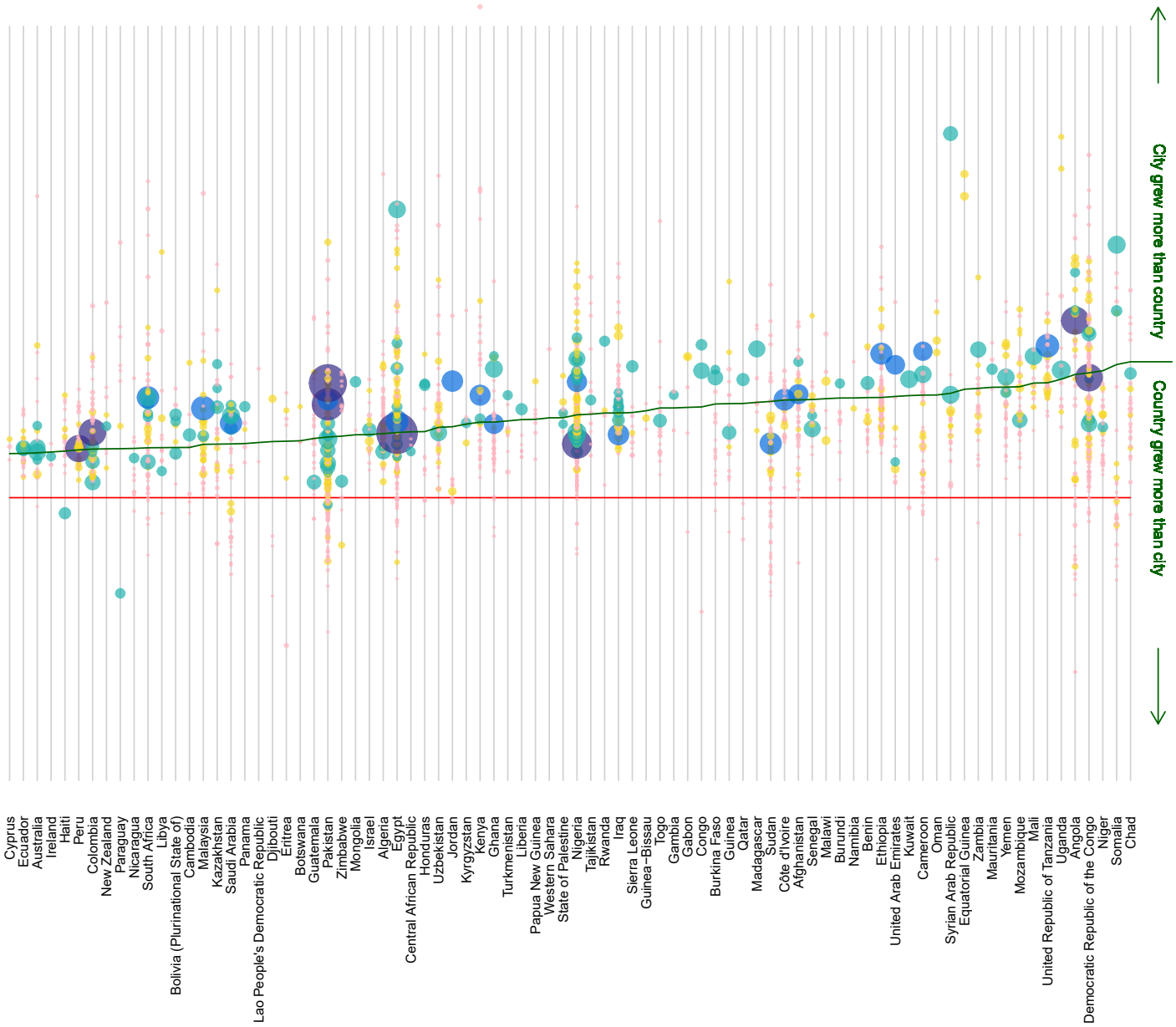
Many cities continued to grow, even in the context of a shrinking national population. Forty-six countries or areas experienced a reduction in total population between 2015 and 2025 while in one quarter of their cities, the population grew. Japan's total population shrank by around 4 million between 2015 and 2025, but Tokyo added over 300,000 people during that period, Nagoya added 108,000 and Sendai added 19,000. Both Italy and the Russian Federation also saw many cities continue to grow even as the national population shrank in size. However, in Ukraine and Venezuela, where humanitarian crises contributed to decreases in the total population, virtually all cities saw their populations decrease over the past decade.

Figure 2.4

Average annual population growth for cities, 2015–2025, by city size class, for countries or areas with two or more cities in 2025



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).


City grew more than country
Country grew more than city
Cyprus
Ecuador
Australia
Ireland
Haiti
Peru
Colombia
New Zealand
Paraguay
Nicaragua
South Africa
Libya
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Cambodia
Malaysia
Kazakhstan
Saudi Arabia
Panama
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Djibouti
Eritrea
Botswana
Guatemala
Pakistan
Zimbabwe
Mongolia
Israel
Algeria
Egypt
Central African Republic
Honduras
Uzbekistan
Jordan
Kyrgyzstan
Kenya
Ghana
Turkmenistan
Liberia
Papua New Guinea
Western Sahara
State of Palestine
Nigeria
Tajikistan
Rwanda
Iraq
Sierra Leone
Guinea-Bissau
Togo
Gambia
Gabon
Congo
Burkina Faso
Guinea
Qatar
Madagascar
Sudan
Côte d'Ivoire
Afghanistan
Senegal
Malawi
Burundi
Namibia
Benin
Ethiopia
United Arab Emirates
Kuwait
Cameroon
Oman
Syrian Arab Republic
Equatorial Guinea
Zambia
Mauritania
Yemen
Mozambique
Mali
United Republic of Tanzania
Uganda
Angola
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Niger
Somalia
Chad

Box 2.1

Contrasting urbanization trends in Japan and Mexico

Japan and Mexico are similarly sized in terms of their total populations and built-up areas (i.e. land areas covered by buildings and other permanent human infrastructure) in 2025, but they have had contrasting experiences of urbanization over recent decades. In both countries, the share of the population living in cities has remained stable since 2000 (table 2.1 and figure 2.5). City living is more common in Japan, where two thirds of the population resided in cities in 2025, compared to Mexico, where city dwellers made up just over half of the population.

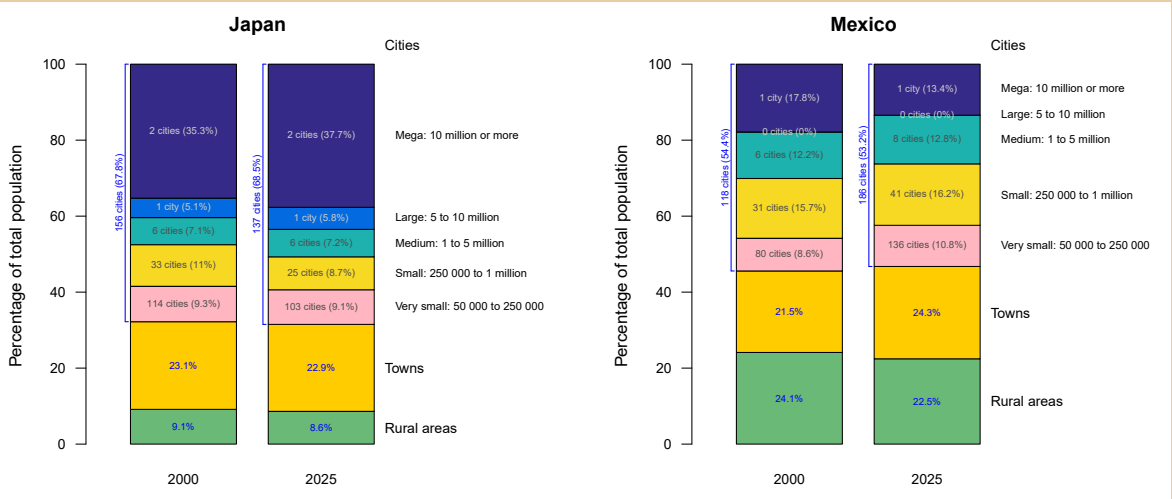
Table 2.1
Population and built-up area in Japan and Mexico, 2000 and 2025

		2000	2025
Japan	Total population (millions)	127.0	123.1
	Built-up area (km²)	10,630	13,401
Mexico	Total population (millions)	98.6	131.9
	Built-up area (km²)	6,427	10,755

Between 2000 and 2025, Japan's population became increasingly concentrated in large cities as smaller agglomerations declined both in terms of the number of cities and in their share of the population overall. Japan has three cities with 5 million inhabitants or more: Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya. Together, their share of the total population grew from 40 per cent in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2025. Over the same period, the absolute number of cities in Japan fell from 156 to 137, driven entirely by shrinking population in smaller cities, 19 of which were no longer classified as cities in 2025.

By contrast, Mexico's population became increasingly dispersed across a growing number of medium and smaller cities during 2000–2025. Mexico City is the country's only city with more than 5 million inhabitants, and its share of the total population declined from 18 per cent in 2000 to 13 per cent in 2025. The number of smaller cities with fewer than 1 million inhabitants surged over that period from 111 cities to 177 cities, and their share of the total population grew from 24 per cent to 27 per cent.

Figure 2.5
Japan and Mexico population distribution by Degree of Urbanization and city size class, estimates for 2000 and 2025



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Box 2.2

How the Degree of Urbanization changes our assessment of the world's largest cities

The choice of definition used to delineate boundaries of a city and population within it is consequential for assessments that compare the populations of different cities, both within a country and around the world.

In the 2018 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* (United Nations, 2019), cities were defined mostly according to country-specific definitions utilized by Governments in reporting their official national statistics for urban agglomerations. Some countries defined their cities according to administrative boundaries, while others used definitions that encompassed broader metropolitan areas. The harmonized Degree of Urbanization methodology adopted for the 2025 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* provides a more comparable assessment of the size and growth of cities across different countries or regions. The impact of shifting to the Degree of Urbanization definitions is evident in the ranking of the world's cities by population size.

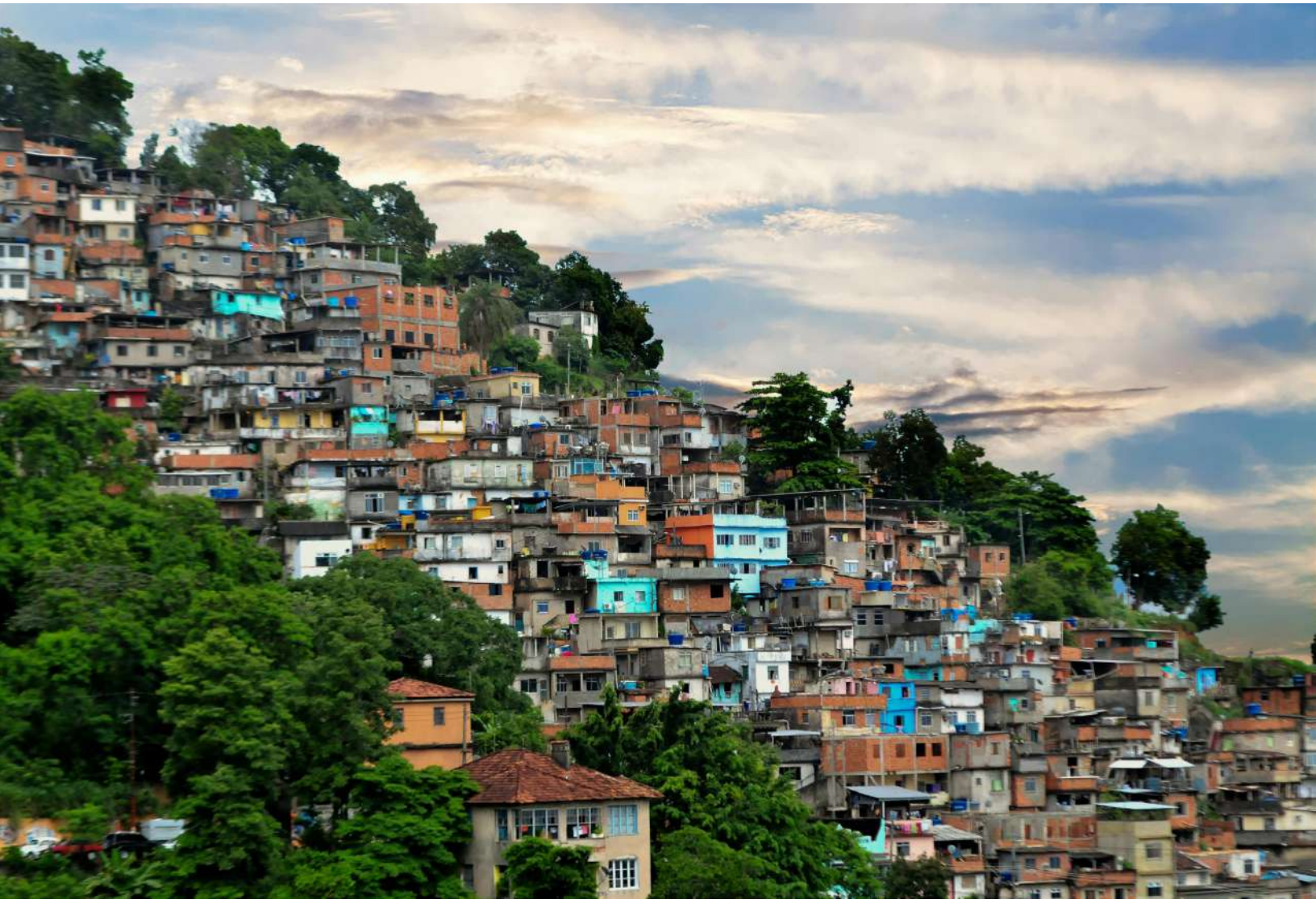
In 2025, according to the Degree of Urbanization definitions, Jakarta (Indonesia) was the world's most populous city (42 million inhabitants). Yet, when country-specific city definitions were used in the 2018 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects*, the population of Jakarta was projected to be just 12 million in 2025, with the rank of 30th among the world's most populous cities. This is because the official national statistics for the Jakarta metropolitan area excluded many of the densely populated communities that are contiguous to the Jakarta city centre and thus captured by the Degree of Urbanization definition.

Similarly, the populations of Guangzhou (China) and Seoul (Republic of Korea) were estimated to be roughly twice as large by the Degree of Urbanization as by the country-specific definitions, substantially increasing their rank in the assessment of the world's largest cities.

Table 2.2
City size rank and population in 2025 according to the Degree of Urbanization and country-specific definitions

City size rank in 2025			*Population in 2025 (millions)*	
Degree of Urbanization definition	*Country-specific definitions (WUP 2018)*	*City*	*Degree of Urbanization definition*	*Country-specific definitions (WUP 2018)*
1	30	Jakarta, Indonesia	42	12
2	4	Dhaka, Bangladesh	37	25
3	1	Tōkyō (Tokyo), Japan	33	37
4	2	New Delhi, India	30	35
5	3	Shanghai, China	30	30
6	20	Guangzhou, China	28	15
7	5	Al-Qahirah (Cairo), Egypt	26	23
8	19	Manila, Philippines	25	15
9	17	Kolkata, India	23	16
10	37	Seoul, Republic of Korea	22	10

Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2018 and 2025 (United Nations, 2019, 2025).



Favelas Brazil, Pexels/Frans van Heerden

Chapter III. Built-up area per capita and population density

Chapters I and II of this report presented the levels and trends of the size of populations by Degree of Urbanization and city size class, respectively. In addition to population, the sizes of cities, towns[15] and rural areas can be measured according to the land area they occupy. When considered together with population size, the land area that defines the extent of a settlement helps to describe the efficiency of humans' land use and how closely people live to one another.

There are multiple ways to describe the area of a settlement. To produce the global population grids used to estimate the Degree of Urbanization for the *World Urbanization Prospects*, the Global Human Settlement Layer relies on remote sensing using satellite imagery to identify the areas that have been "built-up" by humans (see box 3.1).

Box 3.1

People and habitat: how built-up surface is key for measuring urbanization

Understanding urbanization hinges on analyzing the interplay between people and their habitat. Built-up areas are a physical manifestation of human settlements and serve as a key input to the methods applied in the Degree of Urbanization to measure the spatial distribution of population and changes over time. Specifically, the estimates of built-up surface in the Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL) are used together with population data to create the population grids required to classify areas along the urban-rural continuum based on population density, size, and contiguity.

The GHSL project utilizes satellite imagery to map built-up areas globally, providing datasets that describe the extent of built-up surface, as well as the height and volume of buildings, consistently over time (GHS-BUILT). It leverages open and free earth observation data from the Copernicus satellite programme, including Sentinel-2 at 10-meter resolution, as well as archives from the Landsat satellite programme. GHSL employs a unique approach called Symbolic Machine Learning, which processes imagery to identify patterns and extract semantic rules that distinguish built-up surfaces from other land cover types. The resulting estimates of built-up surface were validated against globally representative reference datasets, including more than 40 million individual building polygons across 277 areas of interest worldwide, representing the footprint of every single building in those sites and crowdsourced visual inspections.

GHSL combines spatial grids describing the built-up surface (GHS-BUILT) with population data from the CIESIN's Gridded Population of the World (GPW), to form the dataset that describes the spatial distribution of the world's population in one km^2 grid cells (GHS-POP). Applying the same approach to all countries and over time ensures a globally consistent time-series of spatially-disaggregated population estimates. However, certain limitations of the input data contribute to uncertainty around those estimates and, accordingly, around the classifications of settlements by Degree of Urbanization. Heterogeneity in the size of the spatial units used by different countries to report their population census results means that the one-square-kilometre population grids are more heavily modelled for countries with larger units (like states or provinces) than for countries with smaller units (like census blocks). Furthermore, because the accuracy of satellite imagery has improved significantly over time, estimates based on lower-resolution imagery, especially before the 1990s, may have lower detection accuracy and thus greater uncertainty compared to estimates for more recent periods.

[15] Throughout this report, "towns" refers to the Degree of Urban classification termed "towns and semi-dense areas" (see box 1.1).

Built-up area may contain residential structures, such as houses and apartment buildings, but it also includes land occupied by other types of buildings, such as shopping centres, airports, parking structures, and warehouses, to name several. Dividing the total amount of built-up area by the total population gives the average built-up area per capita, which is a useful indicator of the efficiency of land use. For the built-up area to grow faster than the population – that is, for the built-up area per capita to increase over time – raises concerns about the efficiency and long-term sustainability of human land use patterns (UN-Habitat, 2016a). The degree to which cities add built-up area faster than their populations grow is a key indicator used to monitor progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-11-03-01.pdf).

An alternative approach to describing the area of a settlement considers not only the built-up area, but also the total land area, including any open spaces or uninhabited areas that exist within its limits. The total area is the concept used to compute the density measures needed to classify settlements according to the Degree of Urbanization (see box 1.1 in chapter I). This indicator also highlights sustainability opportunities and challenges. Looking at the world's cities in particular, levels and trends in the density of the population – the number of people per unit of area – can help to identify conditions of crowding or urban sprawl.

The 2025 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* presents both the built-up and total area indicators for countries and regions, by Degree of Urbanization, and for individual cities, with estimates for the period from 1975 to 2025 and projections to 2050. This chapter describes the levels and trends in the built-up area per capita overall and in cities for the world and regions. In addition, this chapter presents the population density of the world's cities and the estimated changes in density over time.

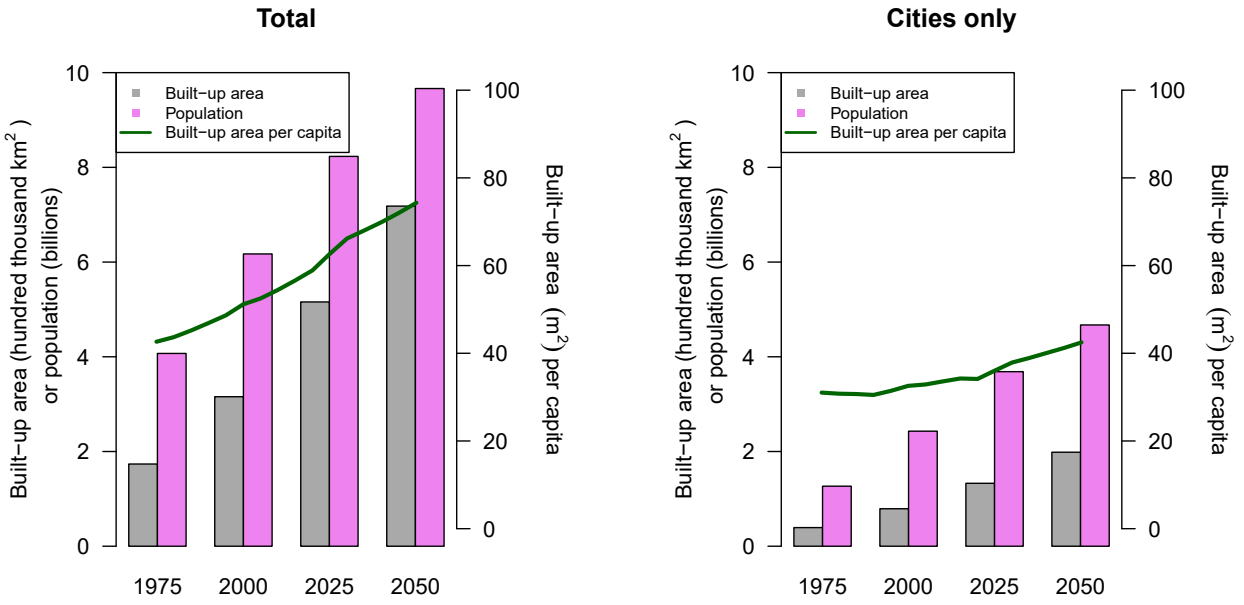
III.A Built-up area per capita

For many decades, the expansion of built-up areas has outpaced world population growth, such that the average built-up area per capita has increased over time. In 1975, the world's 4.1 billion people inhabited less than 200,000 km^2 of built-up area, equating to an average of 43 m^2 per capita (figure 3.1). Over the following 50 years, the extent of the built-up area worldwide grew almost twice as fast as the population. By 2025, the global population reached 8.2 billion and the built-up area expanded to half a million km^2, bringing the average built-up area per capita to nearly 63 m^2. If recent trends continue, global built-up area per capita could rise to 74 m^2 by 2050.

Cities use land more efficiently than towns or rural areas because they concentrate the population geographically, enabling them to provide public goods and services at a lower cost. In 2025, the world's cities occupied an average of 36 m^2 of built-up area per city dweller, which is 43 per cent less than the global average of 63 m^2 of built-up area per capita overall across the three categories by Degree of Urbanization (figure 3.1). The collective built-up area of cities has grown faster than the global city population, resulting in an increase in the built-up area per capita from 31 m^2 in 1975. Projections indicate that ratio could rise to 42 m^2 of built-up area per city dweller by 2050. The increase in built-up per capita across the world's cities has occurred more slowly than for the total across all areas since much of the area that is newly built-up continues to be classified as towns or rural areas.

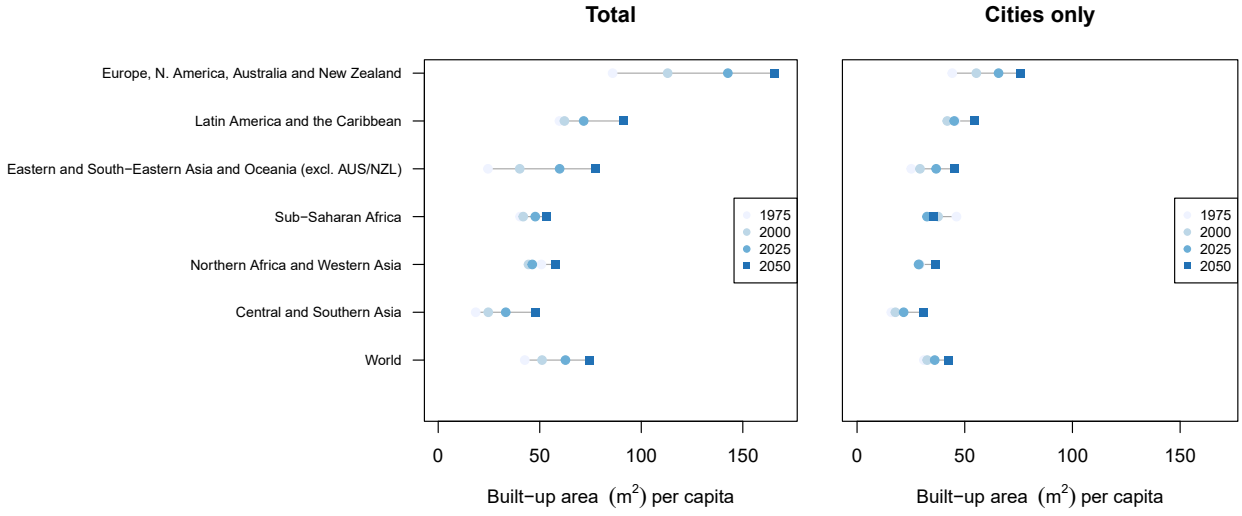
Populations in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand tend to have the most built-up area per capita, on average. In 2025, the built-up area per capita in the region encompassing Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand was twice the global average (figure 3.2). Overall, populations in this region occupied an average of 143 m^2 of built-up area per capita. Latin America and the Caribbean had the second highest built-up area per capita in 2025 at 72 m^2, followed by the region encompassing Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) at 60 m^2 per capita. Among the six regional aggregates shown in figure 3.2, Central and Southern Asia used the least built-up area per capita, at 33 m^2 in 2025.

Figure 3.1
World built-up area, population and built-up area per capita overall and in cities only, estimates for 1975, 2000 and 2025 and projections to 2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Figure 3.2
Built-up area per capita overall and in cities only, by region, estimates for 1975, 2000 and 2025 and projections to 2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

In most regions between 2000 and 2025, the built-up area in cities expanded faster than the number of city dwellers grew. Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand) saw the fastest increase in the built-up city area per capita over that period, from 29 built-up m^2 in 2000 to 37 in 2025. It was followed by Central and Southern Asia, where city built-up area per capita rose from 18 to 22 m^2 between 2000 and 2025. The built-up area of cities can increase as the consequence of new building within cities' extents, or the spatial expansion of cities to incorporate built-up areas that were previously classified as town or rural.

Contrary to trends in other regions, the built-up area of cities in sub-Saharan Africa has expanded more slowly than the city population has grown. Over the last half-century, the number of people living in cities of sub-Saharan Africa grew by a factor of eight, from 60 million in 1975 to 480 million in 2025. During the same period, the built-up area of the region's cities expanded by a factor of five, from 3,000 to 16,000 km^2. Consequently, the ratio of cities' built-up area to population decreased over time (figure 3.2). In 1975, cities in sub-Saharan Africa used 46 m^2 per capita, on average, and by 2025, that ratio had fallen to 32 m^2 per capita. Declining built-up area per capita in cities can indicate increasing efficiency of urban settlements, but it can also point to crowding or slum conditions if city infrastructure fails to keep up with the pace of population growth (see box 3.2). Assessments of land use efficiency should incorporate qualitative assessments of local conditions to help distinguish between compact, well-functioning urban environments and overcrowded, underserved settlements.

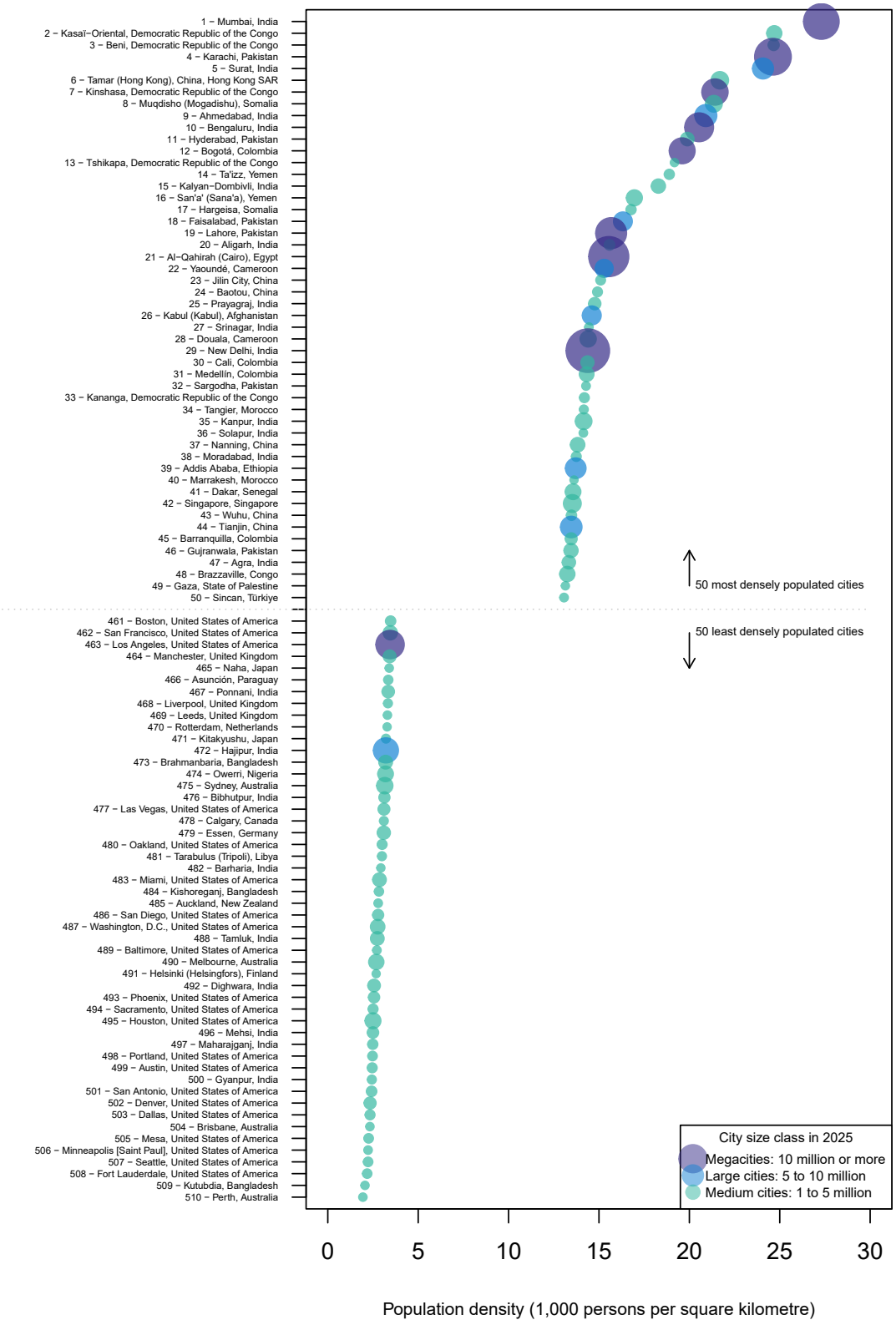
III.B Population density in cities

Well-managed cities can consume less energy, manage waste better and leverage the development benefits associated with the economics of agglomeration (UN-Habitat, 2018). However, when urban planning and management fall short of the needs of the population, city growth can lead to sprawl, inadequate living conditions and environmental damage. Population density – the number of people per km^2 of land area – is an indicator that describes the compactness of cities. The trend over time in a city's population density indicates whether changes in population size are accompanied by increased compactness or urban sprawl.

In 2025, the world's most densely populated cities had more than 20,000 inhabitants per km^2. Many of these densely populated cities were also among the world's most populous. Examples include Mumbai (India) with 27,000 people per km^2, Karachi (Pakistan) with 25,000 people per km^2, and Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) with 21,000 people per km^2 (figure 3.3). Among the 50 most densely populated cities with 1 million inhabitants or more in 2025, 31 were in Asia and 15 were in Africa. The 50 least densely populated cities with populations over 1 million each had fewer than 3,500 inhabitants per km^2 in 2025. Twenty-one of the 50 least densely populated cities were in the United States of America, including Boston, Denver, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, D.C., to name several. Perth (Australia) was the world's least densely populated city of 1 million or more in 2025, with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants per km^2.

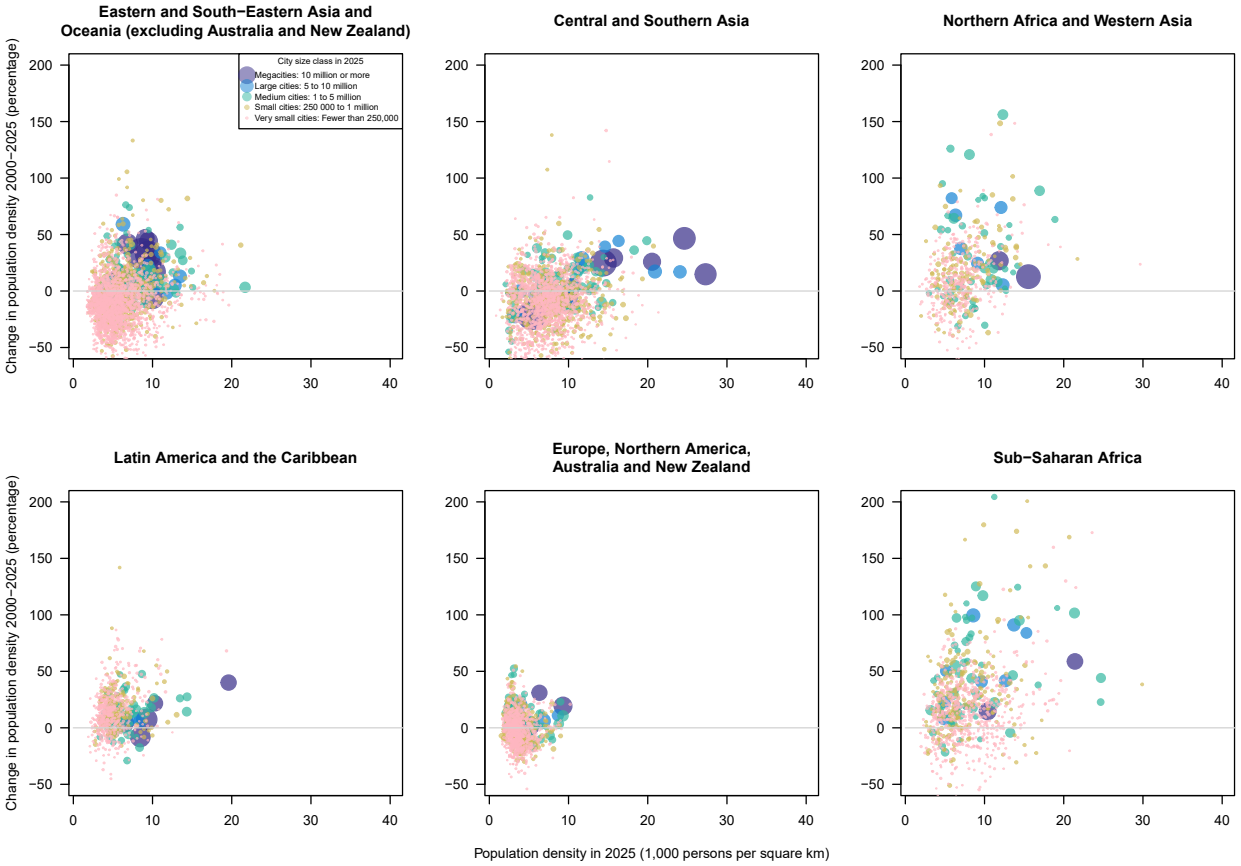
Figure 3.3

The 50 most densely populated cities and the 50 least densely populated cities, among cities with 1 million inhabitants or more in 2025*



* Includes the 510 cities for which the plausibility of the 2025 population estimate was assessed as moderate, high or very high.
Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Figure 3.4
City population density in 2025 and percentage change in population density for 2000–2025, by region*



* Includes the 11,743 cities for which the plausibility of the 2025 population estimate was assessed as moderate, high or very high.
Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Notes: Each panel plots cities' current density (x-axis, in thousands of persons per km²) against their change in density from 2000 to 2025 (y-axis, as a percentage). The size of each symbol is proportional to the city's population. Cities above the zero line experienced an increase in population density, while those below the line experienced a decrease in population density.

Population density has increased since 2000 in almost half of the world's cities. A large majority (79 per cent) of cities in Latin America and the Caribbean increased in density between 2000 and 2025, as did 74 per cent of cities in sub-Saharan Africa and 67 per cent of cities in Northern Africa and Western Asia (figure 3.4). In the remaining regions, reductions in population density were more common than increases. Both in Central and Southern Asia and in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and Oceania, around two thirds of cities experienced declines in density between 2000 and 2025. In general, more populous cities were more likely to have experienced an increase in density – three quarters of the world's cities with 1 million inhabitants or more saw their densities increase between 2000 and 2025. By contrast, reductions in density were more common than increases over the past quarter century among very small cities with populations below 250,000.

Box 3.2

Cities and informal settlements

Rapid, unplanned urbanization can lead to the proliferation of informal settlements, or "slums". These communities lack basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation and durable housing, resulting in poor living conditions, health risks and insecurity.

Colombia and Kenya are two countries with large numbers of city dwellers residing in slums, with 4.1 million in Colombia and 6.6 million in Kenya in 2022, according to the latest figures from UN-Habitat (2024).[16] Both countries have implemented policies to reduce the concentration of people in informal settlements, in line with target 11.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which aims to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and to upgrade slums by 2030. The implications of different policy approaches for urban expansion and density are evident in the recent population trends of major cities such as Medellín in Colombia and Nairobi in Kenya.

Through the Proyecto Urbano Integral policy programme, launched in 2004, Medellín prioritized interventions aimed at integrating informal settlements into the city's infrastructure, while promoting community participation and social cohesion (Hernandez-Garcia, 2013; Naef, 2020; Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística (DANE), 2019). Examples include expanded access to water and energy, a Metrocable system that connects hard-to-reach areas to the city centre, and improvements to public libraries and parks. These policies contributed to the expansion of the built-up area of Medellín: the city grew from 222 km^2 in 2000 to 234 km^2 by 2025. The expansion of the total land area largely kept pace with the growth of the city's population, which increased from 2.8 million in 2000 to 3.4 million in 2025. Although Medellín remains a densely populated city, with 14,000 inhabitants per km^2 in 2025, the expansion of the total land area since 2000 has alleviated some of the pressures associated with a growing city population.

The Government of Kenya has several policies aimed at upgrading informal settlements, including in Nairobi, where more than half of the population lives in slums. Examples include the 2004 Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme with UN-Habitat (Government of Kenya, Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, 2025), the 2010 Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project and Kenya Municipal Programme, as well as the 2012 Nairobi Metropolitan Services Project (Government of Kenya, Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, 2024). These policies have succeeded in constructing new housing units, relocating some households, and improving access to safe water and electricity in some areas. However, rapid population growth poses significant challenges. The number of people living in Nairobi more than doubled between 2000 and 2025, from 2.6 to 6.1 million, whereas the city's total land area grew more slowly, from 378 to 638 km2 over the same period. Consequently, the average density of the city increased from 7,000 to 10,000 inhabitants per km2 from 2000 to 2025. The densities in informal settlements can be ten times the level in formal, planned areas of the city, further complicating efforts to improve infrastructure and services for the growing city population (Ren and others, 2020).

Worldwide, more than 1 billion people live in informal settlements. The Global Action Plan on informal settlement and slum transformation, launched in 2022, aims to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals by addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations in slum conditions.[17]

[16] https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/housing-slums-and-informal-settlements

[17] https://unhabitat.org/global-action-plan-accelerating-for-transforming-informal-settlements-and-slums-by-2030

Airplane flying over the city, Adana, Türkiye, Pexels/Muhammed Yıldız

Chapter IV. National definitions and Degree of Urbanization compared

Urbanization has long been a central theme in demographic analysis and policy planning; however, its measurement has varied widely across countries and over time. At the national level, as acknowledged by the United Nations with each round of Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses since the 1960s, each country and area has historically developed its own context-specific definition to classify locations by urban status. These definitions are shaped by diverse criteria that often vary across countries and, in some cases, over time. The national criteria include one or several of the following factors: administrative status (whether a locality is recognized as a city, town, or other administrative center), population size (a minimum population threshold for a settlement to be classified as urban), population density requirements (the concentration of the population within a defined area), predominant economic activity (a focus on non-agricultural activities within the community), urban infrastructure or characteristics, and other relevant factors.

National definitions are essential for addressing country-specific planning needs, administrative functions and boundaries, resource allocation and cultural considerations. They also underpin survey design and data collection, with national statistical authorities often stratifying data by urban and rural classifications, and both national and international organizations relying on these definitions to translate survey rates into population counts.[18] However, until the recent availability of global population grid data, remote sensing imagery and the development of a harmonized Degree of Urbanization methodology, international monitoring of urbanization levels and trends primarily depended on population data from national population censuses and context-specific national definitions. This reliance poses challenges for cross-country comparability when tracking global progress on targets such as those contained in Sustainable Development Goal 11.

The following analysis explores how national definitions compare to the Degree of Urbanization globally and across SDG regions, highlighting both current levels and long-term trends in urbanization. It also provides explanations for differences between estimates and projections using national definitions and those based on the Degree of Urbanization, and discusses some of the implications.

IV.A Implications for level of urbanization and trends over time for SDG regions and sub-regions

National definitions of "urban" areas vary significantly across the world and are often much broader than just the population living in cities, influencing regional urbanization statistics. Globally, the national definition of what constitutes an urban area indicates that in 2025, 57.8 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas, while the Degree of Urbanization indicates that 44.9 per cent live in cities and 35.6 per cent live in towns,[19] or an overall total of 80.5 per cent. A comparison of urbanization levels in 2025, based on national definitions and the Degree of Urbanization across the world and SDG regions (figure 4.1), reveals substantial variation in how urban populations are classified.

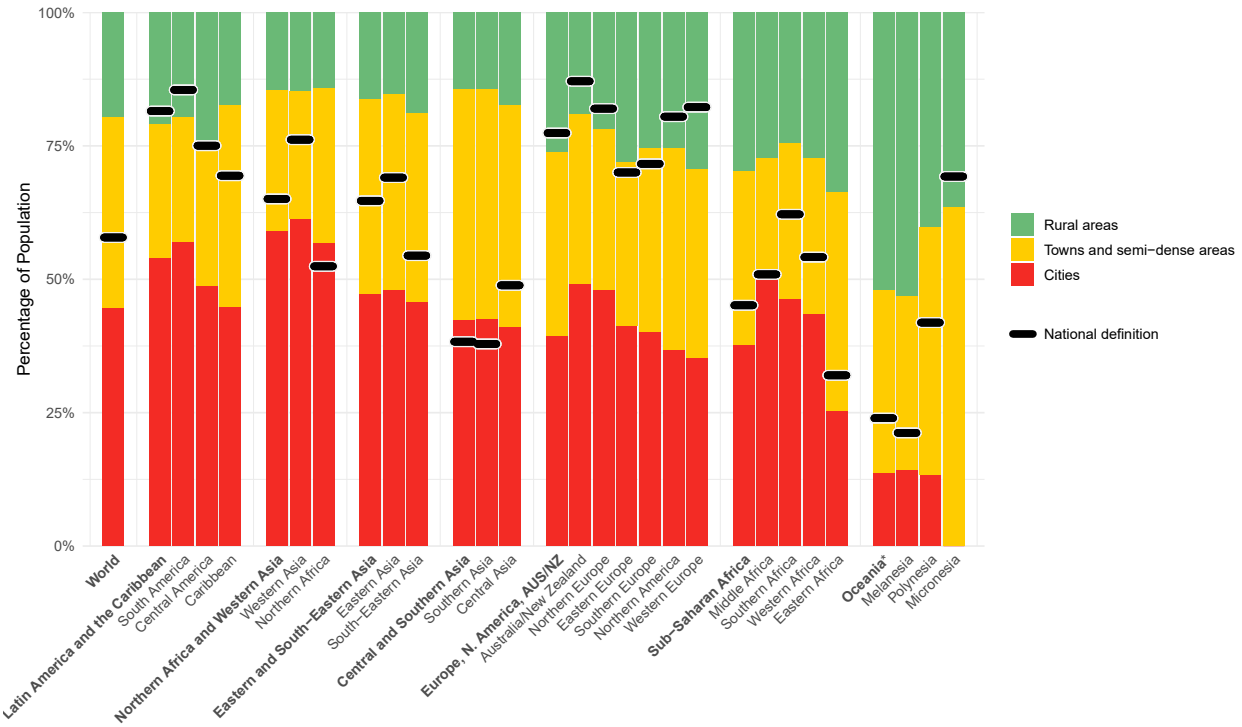
Globally, national definitions tend to align more closely with the combined population living in cities and towns rather than cities alone, indicating that most countries' urban definitions capture core urban areas and some intermediate settlements. This is particularly evident in regions such as Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, Northern

[18] Surveys often divide the population into urban and rural groups to ensure both are fairly represented, since people in urban and rural areas may have different living conditions, services or behaviors. This is called stratified sampling. Each group's responses are then given a weight based on how large that group is in the total population. For example, if 30 per cent of a country's population lives in rural areas, then rural survey responses are weighted to reflect that share when estimating national totals like the number of people with access to electricity.

[19] Throughout this report, "towns" refers to the Degree of Urban classification termed "towns and semi-dense areas" (see box 1.1).

America, and Australia and New Zealand, which show high levels of urbanization under both approaches, with national definitions closely matching the share of the population in cities, towns and semi-dense areas. In contrast, in regions such as Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, a large share of the population in towns and semi-dense areas is not classified as "urban" in national terms, and the national urban classification is more restricted to the population living in cities, as defined by the Degree of Urbanization. The chart also highlights intra-regional differences, such as between Eastern and South-Eastern Asia or among the subregions of sub-Saharan Africa or Oceania, underscoring the importance of consistent classification methods for accurate global comparisons. Research comparing the Degree of Urbanization methodology with national definitions in countries like India, Mexico and the United States of America has highlighted that disagreements are often concentrated in these intermediate settlement categories, which are frequently the focus of contemporary urban and regional policies (Balk and others, 2021).

Figure 4.1
Comparison of level of urbanization based on national definitions and Degree of Urbanization globally and by regions and sub-regions in 2025



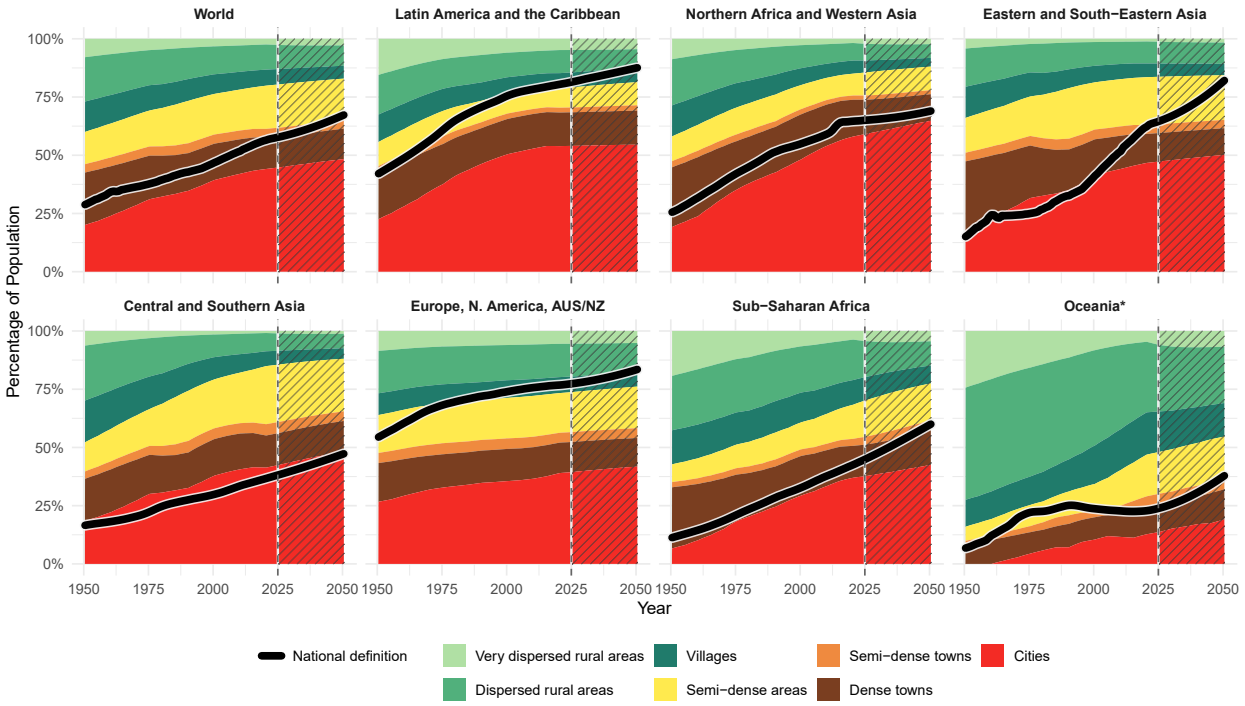
Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Note: Regions are sorted in descending order by the percentage of the population living in cities and towns. Green bars show rural, yellow bars show towns and semi-dense, and red bars show cities from the Degree of Urbanization; the national definition marker shows each country's official "urban" count. If the national point is near the red + orange total, national definitions capture towns; if it is near the red only, towns are largely outside the official "urban" count.

These contemporary similarities and differences in measuring urbanization based on national definitions or the Degree of Urbanization reflect persistent differences since the 1950s, as shown in figure 4.2, which compares a century of urban growth based on these two different statistical concepts, and shows the more detailed breakdown of the classification into seven categories instead of three. Both sets of measures tell a similar story about the overall urban transition experienced in the world and by region, the shifting relationship between these statistical concepts, and the narrowing gap over time between national definitions and the Degree of Urbanization as countries urbanize and definitions evolve to reflect this. Globally, the world went from 29 per cent in 1950 to 58 per cent of the population living in urban areas in 2025 based on national definitions, while the share of the population living in cities grew from 20 to 45 per cent, or from 43 to 58 per cent when combined with the share living in dense towns.

These figures are expected to grow by 2050 to 67 per cent based on national definitions, or to 48 per cent living in cities, or to 61 per cent when combining cities and dense towns.

Figure 4.2

A century of urban growth based on national definitions and Degree of Urbanization globally and by regions: estimates, 1950–2025, and projections, 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Note: Hatches indicate the projection period 2025–2050. The Degree of Urbanization can be examined using seven classes instead of three to see further details (see box 1.2) where rural areas shown in green shades are split into 1) very dispersed rural areas, 2) dispersed rural areas, and 3) villages; towns and semi-dense areas shown in yellow and brown shades are subdivided into 1) semi-dense areas (i.e. suburban or peri-urban areas), 2) semi-dense towns, and 3) dense towns; and cities as shown in red remain as a single class.

While all regions are experiencing a long-term shift from rural to urban living, the official national definitions of "urban" population are consistently higher than the population living in cities alone (except in Central and Southern Asia). From 1950 to 2050, these national definitions have tracked the combined growth of both cities (red areas) and towns and semi-dense areas (yellow areas), although the specific alignment varies significantly by region.

Cross-regional comparisons using national "urban" definitions are broadly consistent with the Degree of Urbanization in regions that urbanized relatively early and are highly urbanized, such as in Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Northern America, and Australia and New Zealand, indicating that official definitions are broad and inclusive, counting nearly everyone in cities, towns and semi-dense areas as urban.

Conversely, in regions with large towns and semi-dense area populations, such as Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, national estimates of the urban population tend to be significantly below the combined population of cities and towns based on the Degree of Urbanization because national definitions are more restrictive, classifying a large portion of their town and semi-dense area populations as non-urban. Semi-dense areas have an ambivalent character. In some countries, these areas are clearly suburban and are linked to a nearby city. In others, they are better described as peri-urban, semi-urban or "rurban". These areas are too dense to be fully rural, but the population is still too dispersed to have a clear town or city. This ambivalence may explain why some countries classify semi-dense areas as entirely urban and others as rural.

IV.B Implications for level of urbanization and trends over time for countries

While regional comparisons offer valuable insights into broad urbanization patterns, a closer look at country-level data reveals even greater diversity in how urban populations are classified based on national definitions and the Degree of Urbanization in 2025 (figure 4.3). This granular view highlights the extent to which the national definitions of urban areas align with or diverge from the classification by Degree of Urbanization across regions.

There is immense variation in how nations define "urban", not just between regions, but even among neighboring countries, with national definitions shaped by local criteria and settlement patterns ranging from highly restrictive (cities only) to very inclusive (cities plus towns and semi-dense areas plus villages), often reflecting geographic, developmental and cultural factors unique to each nation. While many countries' official definitions align closely with their combined population in cities and towns or semi-dense areas rather than cities alone, many others use a much more restrictive definition that is closer to the population living in cities alone, indicating that many residents of towns or semi-dense areas are not fully counted as "urban" in official terms.

A detailed look at the data reveals distinct patterns and interesting outliers in the level of urbanization across countries.

Urbanization patterns across Latin America and the Caribbean are highly diverse and shaped by differences in national definitions and demographic distributions across subregions. Highly urbanized countries in South America, such as Chile, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, have national definitions that include all of their populations in cities, towns and semi-dense areas and even a small part of rural areas. In contrast, many Central American and Caribbean nations have national definitions of "urban" that extend to around the middle of the "towns and semi-dense areas" category, yielding a less inclusive definition of urbanization.

Across regions, many small island nations and tiny landlocked countries (for example Andorra, Liechtenstein and San Marino) have a different pattern. In these places, most people live in either small towns or rural areas rather than larger cities. Because these countries are so small and geographically limited, their national urban definitions of what counts as "urban" tend to be narrower and may not follow the same criteria used by larger nations.

In Northern Africa and Western Asia, urbanization levels are generally high according to national definitions, with many countries using definitions that include both cities and towns, resulting in more inclusive urban population counts compared to countries where the urban definition includes only cities. Many Gulf States, such as Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar, have national definitions that encompass nearly the entire population, corresponding to a very high percentage of people living in cities and towns. However, some countries (e.g. Egypt, Sudan and Yemen) show noticeable gaps between national definitions and the Degree of Urbanization, with more restrictive national urban definitions encompassing only parts of the population living in cities and excluding the entire population living in towns and semi-dense areas.

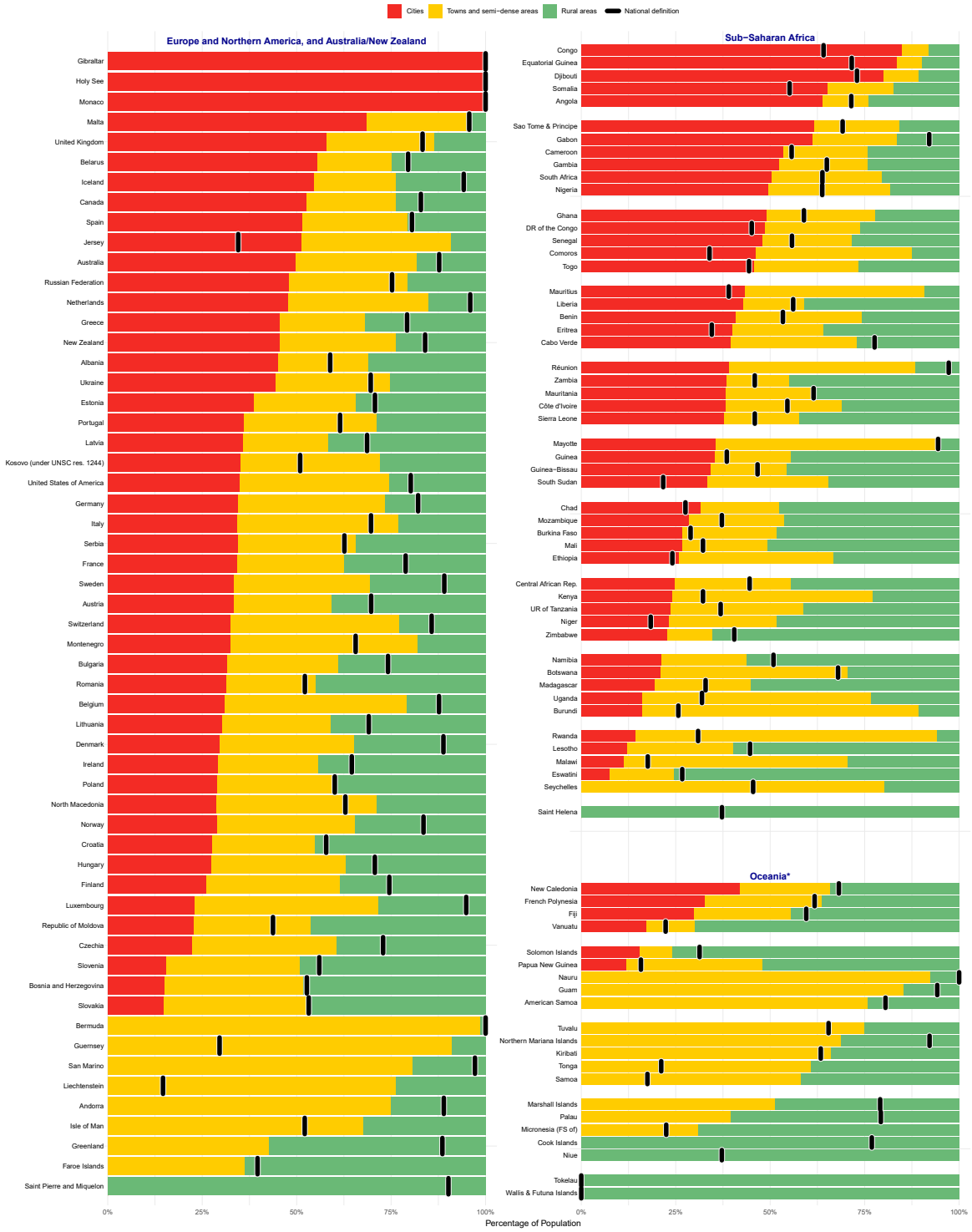
Notions of "urban" space in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia vary widely, with national definitions ranging from highly inclusive to more restrictive. In part, these differences reflect the region's diverse economic and settlement patterns. Highly developed economies such as Singapore and Hong Kong SAR of China are almost entirely urban. The level of urbanization is high in countries such as Japan, the Republic of Korea and China, where national definitions tend to include semi-dense areas (see box 4.1). For other major countries, the national definition often includes the city population and a significant portion of the town population. A few countries, such as Viet Nam and Myanmar, use more restrictive national definitions that include only the population living in cities.

Figure 4.3
Comparison of level of urbanization based on national definitions and Degree of Urbanization by countries and areas in 2025

Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Note: Countries and areas are sorted in descending order by the percentage of the population living in cities and towns. Green bars show rural, yellow bars show towns and semi-dense, and red bars show cities from the Degree of Urbanization; the national marker shows each country's official "urban" count. If the national point is near the red + orange total, national definitions capture towns; if it is near the red only, towns are largely outside the official "urban" count.

Figure 4.3 (continued)

Comparison of level of urbanization based on national definitions and Degree of Urbanization by countries and areas in 2025



Source: *World Urbanization Prospects 2025* (United Nations, 2025).

Note: Countries and areas are sorted in descending order by the percentage of the population living in cities and towns. Green bars show rural, yellow bars show towns and semi-dense, and red bars show cities from the Degree of Urbanization; the national marker shows each country's official "urban" count. If the national point is near the red + orange total, national definitions capture towns; if it is near the red only, towns are largely outside the official "urban" count.

Box 4.1

Tale of two giants: contrasting urbanization trajectories of China and India, 1950–2025

National urban definitions suggest that China and India have followed starkly different urbanization paths from 1950 to 2025. China has experienced rapid urban growth with an increasingly inclusive definition, while India's urbanization has been slower with a consistently restrictive definition. However, the Degree of Urbanization framework offers new insights that challenge these conventional narratives and reveal more nuanced patterns of urban development in both countries.

National definitions: divergent approaches to measuring urbanization

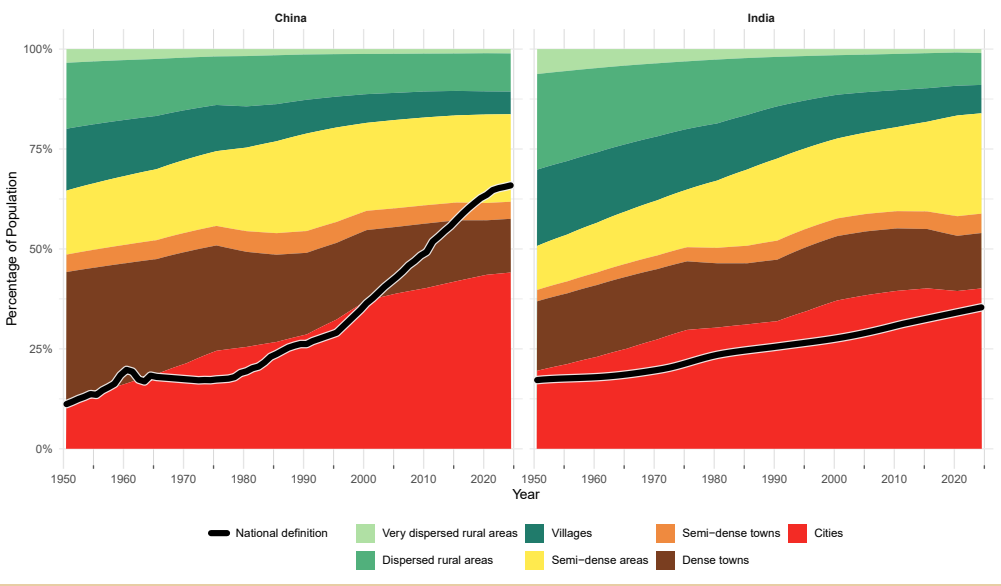
The two countries' national definitions reflect fundamentally different approaches to classifying urban populations. In China, the national definition initially aligned closely with city populations but has evolved dramatically since 2000. As the share of people living in cities grew rapidly after 1980, China's national definition expanded to track this growth, progressively incorporating towns and semi-dense areas. By 2025, the national definition encompasses not only cities but also town populations and portions of semi-dense areas, making it closer to the combined cities-and-towns population. In contrast, India's national definition – based on statutory towns plus areas with 5,000 or more inhabitants, a density of 400/km² and 75 per cent of male workers in non-agricultural occupations – has remained remarkably consistent and conservative throughout the period. This narrow focus on core urban populations tends to understate urbanization by excluding the large and growing populations in dense and semi-dense towns and semi-dense areas.

Degree of Urbanization: revealing the full spectrum of urban settlements

The Degree of Urbanization provides a harmonized, spatially consistent framework that reveals patterns obscured by national definitions. While China's evolving definition has increasingly aligned with broader urban settlement patterns, India's more restrictive urban definition creates a significant gap between the official urban population and the population actually living in urban-like conditions. This standardized methodology captures a broader spectrum of urban settings – particularly in India – and offers a more complete understanding of the diverse forms and intensities of urban development unfolding in both countries beyond what national definitions alone can capture.

Figure 4.4

Comparison of levels and trends of urbanization based on national definitions and Degree of Urbanization for China and India: estimates for 1950–2025



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Box 4.2

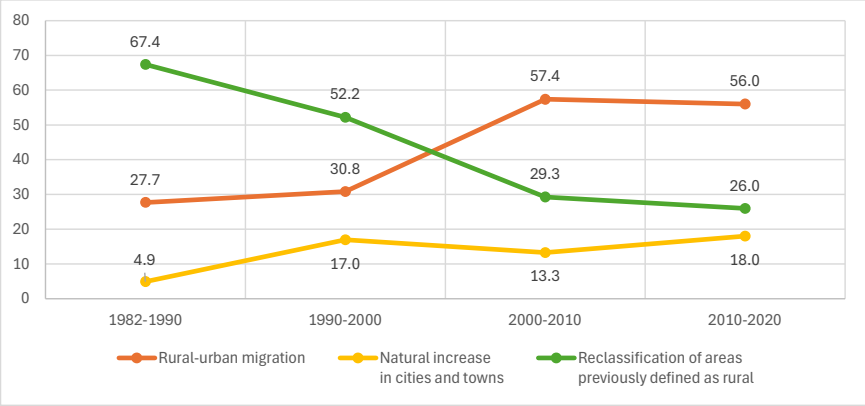
Sources of urbanization: decomposition of factors behind rapid urbanization in China based on change between population censuses

According to its national definition, China's level of urbanization grew from 20.6 per cent in 1982 to 63.8 per cent in 2020. Urban population growth can be analyzed through three main components: (1) natural increase within cities (births minus deaths), (2) net migration (internal and international immigration minus emigration) and (3) administrative reclassification of previously non-urban areas (Jiang and others, 2022). Before 2000, administrative reclassification was the dominant factor increasing the percentage urban in China's population, but internal migration has since become the primary driver. Between the 2010 and 2020 censuses, 56 per cent of urban growth came from rural-to-urban migration, 26 per cent from administrative changes, and 18 per cent from natural increase (figure 4.5).

Natural increase: Since 1982, natural increase has played a comparatively minor role in urban growth, accounting for less than 20 per cent of urban growth in every intercensal period. In the most recent intercensal period (2010–2020) demographic changes in China's urban areas have included fewer women of childbearing age, delayed marriage and childbirth, declining fertility intentions and rapid ageing (Huang and Wang, 2024).

Figure 4.5

Percentage contribution of the components of population changes by intercensal period in China between 1982 and 2020



Source: (Wang, 1993, 2004; Huang and Wang, 2024).

Migration: Assessments of the urban percentage in China's population and the role of migration must take into account China's system of residence permits, or *hukou*, and whether people are counted in their place of registration or their place of actual residence. Under the *hukou* system, the "floating population" (*liudong renkou*) includes internal migrants who reside outside their registered location without changing their *hukou* (Cheng and Duan, 2021). Censuses measure both resident-based urbanization (those living in urban areas for six months or more, regardless of *hukou*) and *hukou*-based urbanization (based on registered urban *hukou*). In 2020, the resident-based urbanization rate was 63.9 per cent, compared to 45.4 per cent according to registered urban *hukou* (Gu and others, 2022).

Inter-provincial migration has reshaped the urban-rural population mix, boosting urbanization nationally and regionally, and narrowing disparities between provinces. However, most migrants hold rural *hukou* and work as laborers, lacking access to the rights and benefits of registered urban residents (Chuankai and Yuemin, 2015).

Administrative reclassification: Urban definitions have evolved across censuses (box 4.1). In 1990, definitions were based on administrative boundaries. Since 2008, urban areas are defined at the community

Box 4.2 (continued)

level rather than county or town levels (Gan and others, 2025). Between 2011 and 2020, annual variations in urban growth due to reclassification reflected central government policies on upgrading towns, merging counties and redrawing district lines (Huang and Wang, 2024).

An important factor in China's urbanization trends is "in-situ urbanization". This term refers to rural areas gradually acquiring urban characteristics without major population outflows. Residents remain in place while benefiting from improved infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities. This process contributes to both official urbanization (via administrative and statistical reclassification) and quasi-urbanization, where people live and work in urban conditions without formal urban status under the *hukou* system (Zhu, 2017). Since the late 1970s, in-situ urbanization has significantly contributed to China's urbanization and warrants greater attention.

Central and Southern Asia are notable for their more restrictive urban definitions, which often classify only major cities as urban and exclude large populations living in towns and semi-dense areas. For many countries, including populous ones such as India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the national definition is much closer to the population living in cities than to the combined population of cities and towns and semi-dense areas and often includes only the major cities as urban (see box 4.1). This means that a large number of people living in densely populated towns are not officially counted as urban. Comparative analyses also highlight complexities such as areas designated as urban under national systems but showing low built-up density according to satellite data, or instances where the Degree of Urbanization classifications appear inconsistent with national designations, particularly in intermediate or rapidly changing zones. Interpreting such discrepancies requires careful consideration, as density measures alone may not fully capture socioeconomic functions or governance structures (Balk and others, 2021).

In Europe, Northern America, and Australia and New Zealand, urbanization levels are consistently high, and national definitions generally align well with the combined population living in both cities and towns and semi-dense areas, except for a few small islands or enclave populations with unique situations.

Sub-Saharan Africa shows the greatest variation in urban definitions across countries, with some nations using inclusive criteria that count towns and semi-dense areas as urban, while many others apply more conservative definitions, often falling far short of the total city, town and semi-dense area population, which significantly understates urbanization compared to the Degree of Urbanization. In countries such as South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana, more than half of the population living in towns and semi-dense areas are not classified as urban by national definitions.

Finally, in Oceania, urbanization levels vary considerably across Pacific Island nations, where national definitions typically reflect both city, town and semi-dense area populations, although classification is influenced by small population size, geographic dispersion and unique settlement patterns.

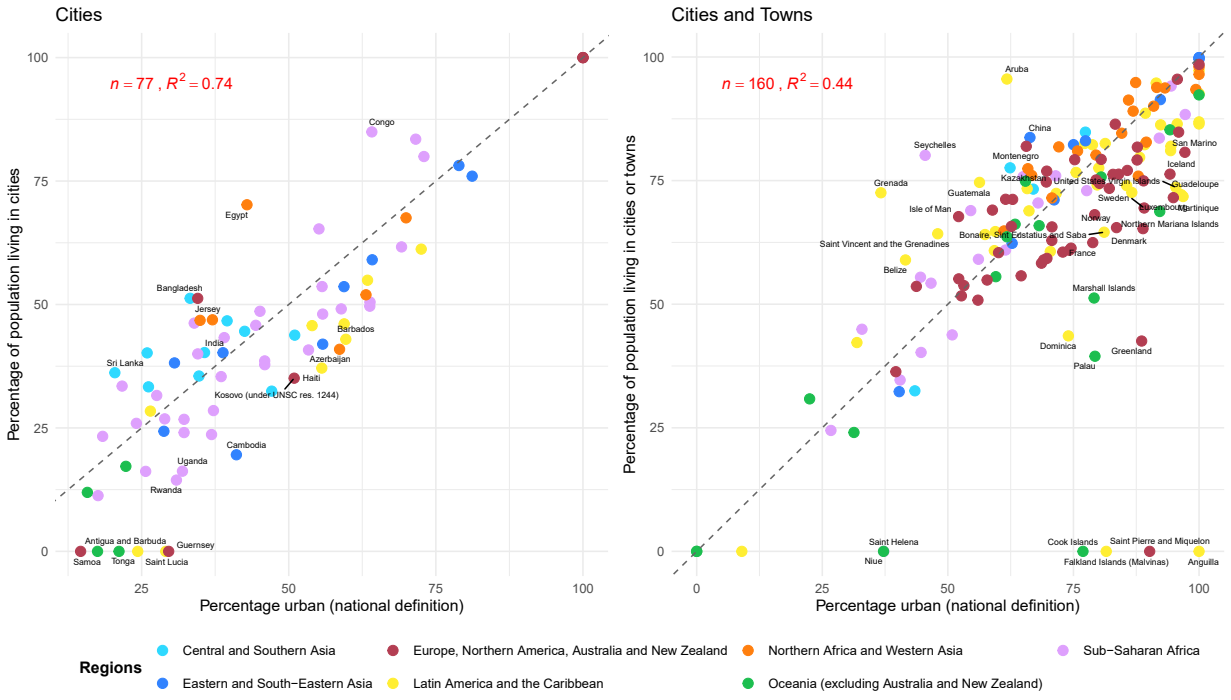
A further comparison of the national definitions of urbanization with the Degree of Urbanization in 2025 revealed varying degrees of alignment across countries and regions. Figure 4.6 presents countries in one of the two panels, depending on whether their national definitions more closely match the share of the population living in cities (left panel) or the combined share living in cities and towns (right panel).

The results show that for 160 countries, national definitions generally correspond more closely with the broader concept of urbanization that includes both cities and towns, but the overall correlation ($R^2 = 0.44$) is weaker than that for the remaining 77 countries, for which the national definitions better match the share of the population living in cities ($R^2 = 0.74$). This suggests that a majority of countries classify urban populations in a way that encompasses all or parts of towns and semi-dense areas, not just cities.

Regional differences in these patterns are particularly significant. Countries in Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa tend to have national definitions that more closely reflect the population living in cities alone. In contrast, countries in Europe, Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean show a stronger correspondence with the combined population living in cities and towns, reflecting national definitions that include smaller urban settlements and semi-dense areas, consistent with well-established urban development patterns and more clearly defined distinctions between settlement types. Eastern and South-Eastern Asia show a consistent middle-ground pattern, with countries generally falling between the two approaches rather than strongly favoring one or the other. Countries and areas in Northern Africa and Western Asia display a variety of patterns, with some definitions matching more closely with cities and others with cities and towns. Outliers such as Bangladesh, Egypt and Congo are notable for having a higher percentage of their population in cities than their national definitions suggest. In Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand), national definitions tend to align better with cities and towns, likely because of the prevalence of small island settlements classified as urban under national criteria.

The choice of statistical definition – whether a country's own national definition or the standardized Degree of Urbanization – has profound implications for measuring both the level and, crucially, the pace of urbanization, not only in the past but also for future projections. Across all the analyses in this chapter, it is evident that definitional differences shape how urbanization is understood, tracked and compared. Although national definitions are essential for local planning and reflect context-specific criteria, they often vary widely in scope, ranging from narrow administrative boundaries to broader functional or demographic criteria (see Annex 2). In contrast, the Degree of Urbanization offers a harmonized and spatially consistent framework that distinguishes between cities, towns and rural areas.

Figure 4.6
Relationship between national urban definitions and Degree of Urbanization for countries and areas in 2025



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Note: Each panel shows the country distribution by region with the same legend. The equidistant diagonal dashed line represents the relationship between two statistical concepts if they are the same.

In general, the Degree of Urbanization tends to reveal a higher starting level of urbanization and a faster pace of change than national definitions, particularly in countries with lower initial urban shares or rapidly evolving settlement patterns. This is especially evident in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, Central and Southern Asia, and Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, where national definitions may lag in recognizing emerging urban settlements. In contrast, countries in Europe, Northern America and Latin America and the Caribbean use national definitions more consistent with the Degree of Urbanization classification of cities and towns, reflecting regions where urbanization occurred earlier and where classification systems have been in place and applied consistently over extended periods.

Importantly, these implications extend beyond historical estimates to future projections. From 2025 to 2050, the Degree of Urbanization will continue to capture a more comprehensive picture of urban change, including the growth of towns that may be excluded from national classifications. Because it accounts for population shifts into both cities and towns, rather than cities alone, it often reveals a broader and faster pace of urbanization than national definitions suggest. This affects not only the perceived scale of urbanization but also its trajectory, with consequences for policy, infrastructure planning and monitoring of global development goals. These patterns suggest that relying solely on national definitions may lead to the underestimation or incomplete representation of urban transformation, particularly in regions where urban growth is occurring rapidly. Therefore, the use of a more standardized approach, such as the Degree of Urbanization, as a complement to national measures, is essential for ensuring comparability, accuracy and relevance in global urban statistics.

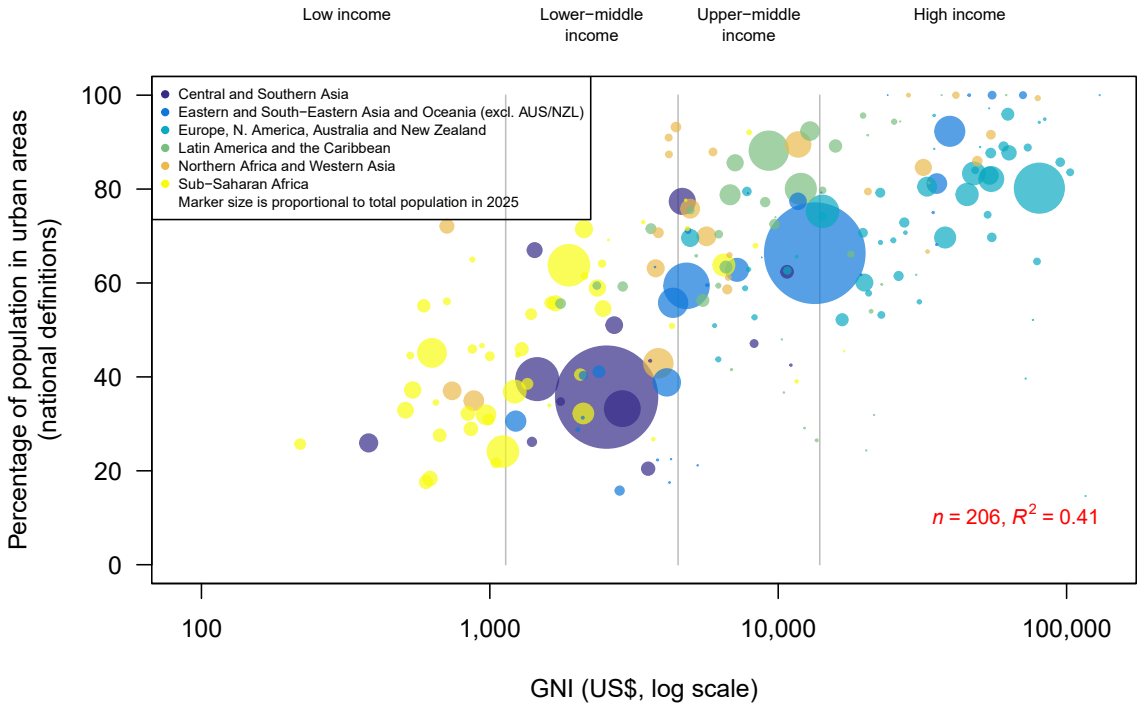
IV.C Implications of the Degree of Urbanization for assessments of the relationship between urbanization and economic development

The relationship between urbanization and economic development varies depending on whether national definitions or the Degree of Urbanization is used. The estimates published in the *World Urbanization Prospects* have long indicated a strong positive correlation with a country's level of economic development. The world's richest countries were consistently among the most urban; that is, they had the largest proportion of their populations residing in areas considered to be "urban" according to national definitions; conversely, many of the poorest countries were, according to their national definitions, among the least urbanized (Chenery and Taylor, 1968; Moomaw and Shatter, 1996; Henderson, 2003; Montgomery and National Research Council (U.S.), 2003; Bloom and others, 2008). Estimates of the urban population according to national definitions in 2025 support the notion that gross national income per person tends to be higher in countries with higher urban population shares (figure 4.7). However, recent research also documents a lack of correlation across countries between the speed of urbanization and the rate of economic growth (Bloom and others, 2008; Chen and others, 2014).

However, when similar analyses were performed using the Degree of Urbanization approach instead of national urban definitions, any association between the proportion of the population in cities and the level of economic development was far less evident (figure 4.8, top). The group of high-income countries includes those where more than two thirds of the population lives in cities and others where less than a third lives in cities. For example, the level of national income is similar in Chile and Romania, at around US$16,000 per person, yet the two countries had quite disparate proportions of the population living in cities in 2025, with 65 per cent in Chile compared to 31 per cent in Romania.

Middle-income countries are similarly diverse with respect to the relationship between national income per capita and the share of the population that live in cities. For example, China and India had similar proportions of city dwellers in 2025 (44 and 40 per cent, respectively), despite China's much higher gross national income (US$13,000 per person, compared to US$2,000 in India). Among low-income countries, the percentage of the population living in cities in 2025 ranged from 11 per cent in Malawi to 66 per cent in Somalia.

Figure 4.7
Percentage of population living in urban areas in 2025, according to national definitions, versus gross national income per person, by country or area



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

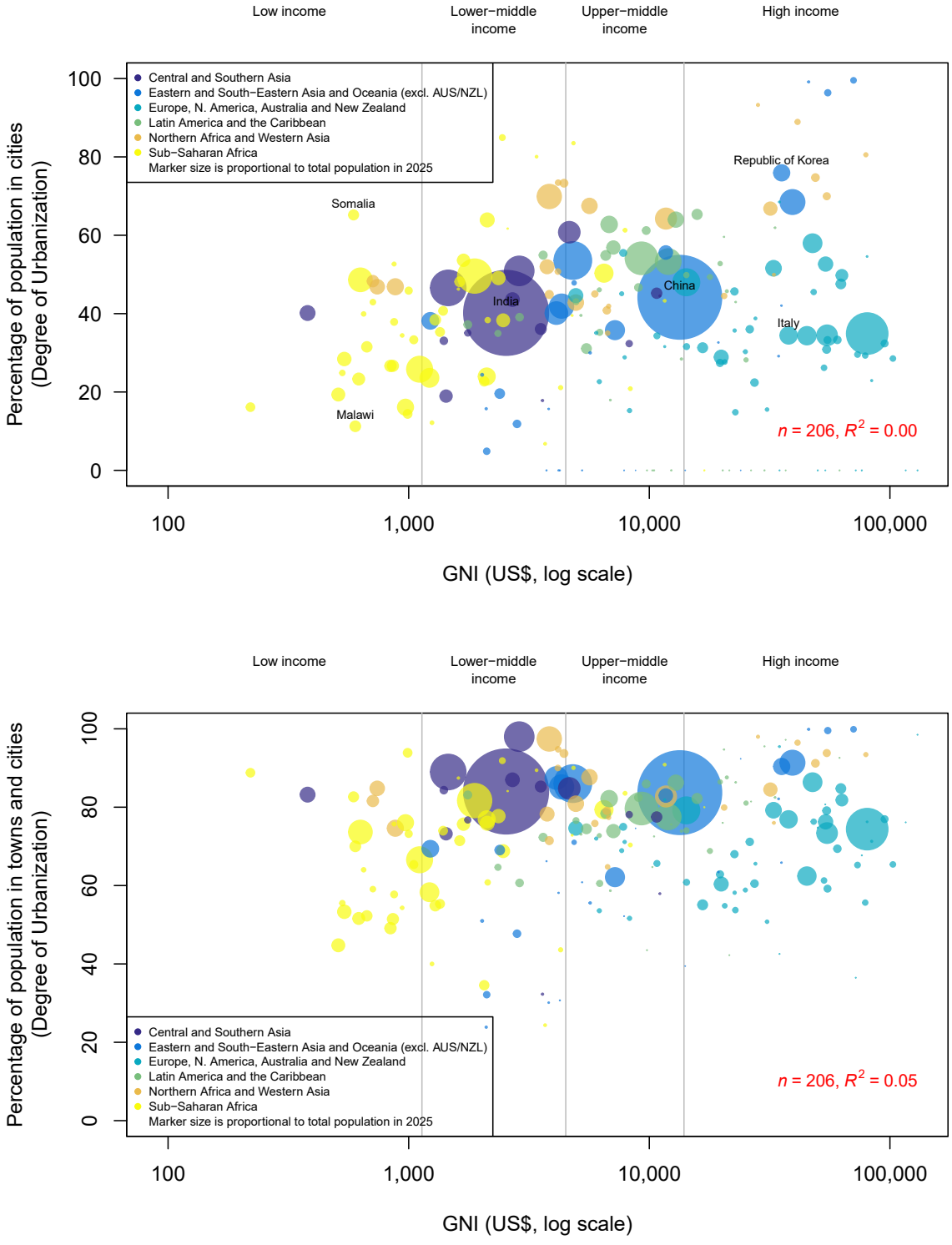
For countries in sub-Saharan Africa, most of which are low-income, there appears to be a positive correlation between national income and the percentage of the population living in cities. However, this association does not persist when the analysis is expanded to include countries in other regions and at higher levels of national income.

In the framework of the Degree of Urbanization, cities are not the only urban settlements. Although towns are less dense or less populous than cities, they are nevertheless more urban than rural areas. Adding the proportion of the population living in towns to the proportion living in cities offers an alternative indicator of the level of urbanization to compare across countries and regions and in relation to the level of national income. However, there appears to be no significant correlation between the share of the population living in cities and towns and national income per person (figure 4.8, bottom). In most countries and across all income groups in 2025, more than two thirds of the population lives in cities and towns. As noted earlier, while there appears to be a positive association between urbanization and national income per capita among countries in sub-Saharan Africa, this relationship is not observed across countries in other regions or globally.

These findings suggest that the link between a country's level of development and the share of its population living in relatively large and densely populated settlements is mediated by factors associated with the national definition of urban space. In other words, a country's choice of how to conceptualize and measure the urban-rural dichotomy may be related to its success in development, either by direct causation or by association with another factor. As noted by Dijkstra and others (2021), the Degree of Urbanization relies solely on population size and density to assess settlement hierarchy, overlooking the economic structure of these areas. This approach may weaken the connection to economic development.

Figure 4.8

Percentage of population living in cities (top panel) or cities and towns (bottom panel) in 2025, according to Degree of Urbanization, versus gross national income per person, by country or area



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

While there is considerable heterogeneity within each income group and a limited correlation between national income per capita and the percentage of people living in cities (or cities and towns combined), temporal trends reveal a more nuanced pattern in the urbanization-development relationship. These longitudinal patterns, illustrated in figure 4.9, provide additional insights that complement the cross-sectional analysis presented above.

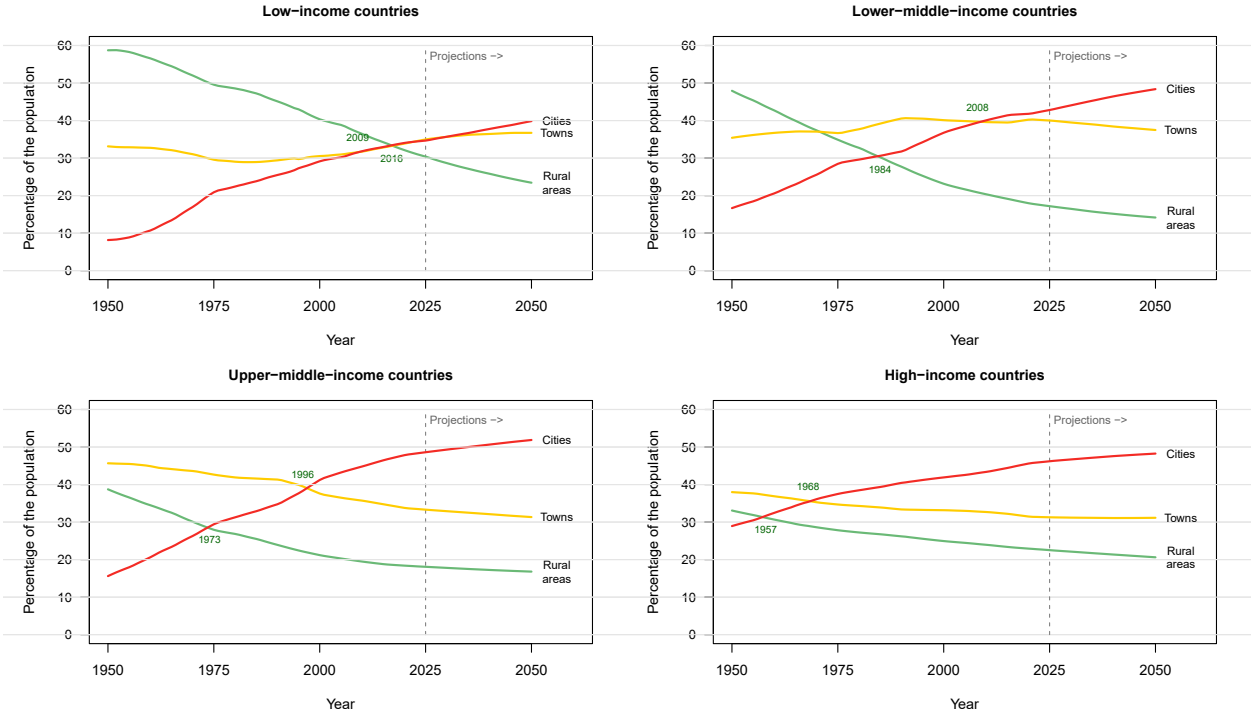
The temporal analysis demonstrates that different income groups have followed distinct urbanization trajectories over the past seven decades. High-income countries urbanized earlier and had a higher percentage of their populations living in cities in 1950. This early urbanization coincided with their economic development, and their city populations surpassed rural populations by 1957. However, having achieved this urban transition relatively early, high-income countries experienced their most significant urban growth between 1950 and 1975, with subsequent decades showing more modest increases. The proportion living in cities in these countries is projected to reach 48 per cent by 2050, reflecting continued but gradual urban growth.

In contrast, low-income countries began from a much lower baseline, with only 8 per cent of their populations living in cities in 1950. These countries have since experienced the most dramatic urban transformation, with their city populations nearly tripling as a share of the total between 1950 and 1975 (reaching 21 per cent) and continuing to grow to 29 per cent by 2000. Notably, low-income countries achieved urban-rural parity much later than other income groups – only in 2017 – but projections suggest they will converge with other income groups by 2050, when it is estimated that 40 per cent of their total population will live in cities.

This temporal perspective reveals that while cross-sectional comparisons using the Degree of Urbanization show weak correlations between urbanization levels and economic development at any given point in time, the sequencing and pace of urban transitions do align closely with changes in levels of income per capita. High-income countries urbanized earlier and more gradually, while low-income countries are experiencing later but more rapid urban transitions. These findings suggest that the relationship between urbanization and development may be closely tied to both the timing and the pace of the urban transformation in different economic contexts.

Figure 4.9

Percentage of population living in cities, towns or rural areas by income groups: estimates for 1950–2025, and projections for 2025–2050



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).

Aerial View of Astana Cityscape on a Clear Day, Astana, Kazakhstan. Pexels/Aibek Skakov

Discussion and policy implications

Since 1950, urbanization has emerged as one of the most significant global megatrends, fundamentally reshaping how and where populations live. As more people concentrate in cities and towns along the rural-urban continuum, countries have exhibited diverse patterns of urbanization, with distinct paces, directions and associated opportunities and challenges. Informal settlements, which house over 1 billion people globally, epitomize the challenges of unplanned urban growth and inadequate policy response (UN-Habitat, 2022). Managing these dynamics requires integrating land-use planning, infrastructure investment and environmental management under cohesive urban policies (UN-Habitat, 2020). This diversity underscores the critical need for country-specific urbanization policies and the localized implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda. National urban policies provide essential coordinating frameworks to address the most pressing issues of rapid urban development, from slum prevention and access to basic services to urban planning regulations, mobility systems and the creation of jobs. These comprehensive strategies must be tailored to local contexts and development stages, integrating urban development into broader national plans to ensure that sustainable urbanization contributes effectively to overall sustainable development.

The estimates and projections in the *World Urbanization Prospects* are an important resource for advancing progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. The dataset supports evidence-based policymaking, planning and monitoring. It aids Governments, international organizations and researchers in better understanding urban settlement patterns, anticipating future demands and designing targeted interventions that foster inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable urban development.

The integration of the Degree of Urbanization strengthens the analytical value of the *World Urbanization Prospects*. When the United Nations Statistical Commission endorsed the Degree of Urbanization methodology in 2020, it recognized the need to shift from the traditional urban-rural dichotomy toward a more refined classification of human settlements. The Degree of Urbanization distinguishes cities from smaller, less densely populated towns, providing a more nuanced representation of urbanization patterns. The application of the Degree of Urbanization methodology has underscored the significant role of towns as human settlements, often more important than commonly assumed. This recognition has important implications for policy and planning; it means that towns require dedicated attention and resources in national urban policies, infrastructure planning must account for towns as distinct settlement types with unique needs, and regional development strategies should strengthen linkages between towns, cities and rural areas rather than focusing exclusively on major cities.

Many countries maintain definitions of urban and rural areas that differ from the Degree of Urbanization. These national definitions are valuable because they are tailored to specific contexts and policy requirements. Accordingly, the *World Urbanization Prospects* presents estimates and projections of urban and rural populations aligned with national definitions alongside those by Degree of Urbanization. Because national definitions vary widely across countries, they should not be used for international comparisons. The estimates and projections of the population by Degree of Urbanization form an internationally comparable dataset that ensures consistency across countries and time. This consistency is particularly valuable given the diverse urbanization trajectories observed across different national contexts, enabling a more meaningful analysis of settlement patterns and their evolution over time. The adoption of the Degree of Urbanization across statistical systems clearly enhances the comparability of urban data while supporting national efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. It allows policymakers to align local realities with global monitoring frameworks, ensuring that urban and rural dynamics are more accurately reflected in planning and investment decisions. Further research and validation, particularly focusing on the intermediate settlement types and areas where national and harmonized classifications diverge, can help refine methodologies and ensure that global data products effectively support nuanced policymaking. Such research might integrate socioeconomic indicators alongside density measures to better interpret settlement characteristics.

In our increasingly interconnected world, the prosperity of cities, towns and rural areas is interdependent. Each settlement type plays a distinct and complementary role in fostering resilient, equitable and sustainable societies. In almost all regions and across settlement types, the expansion of built-up areas has outpaced population growth, with major implications for land, energy use and emissions:

Cities play a pivotal role in driving progress towards sustainable development by implementing localized solutions to address global issues.

Cities are hubs of economic and social development. They attract diverse populations and serve as incubators for new ideas and technologies. Cities offer opportunities for education, employment and collaboration and foster commerce, entrepreneurship, arts and cultural exchange. At the same time, the growth of cities can present challenges to infrastructure, social equity and environmental sustainability. Given the varying patterns of urban growth across countries and regions, city-specific approaches are essential to address these challenges effectively. For example, in parts of Europe, Northern America and Australia and New Zealand, international migration has been a major contributor to city growth, making migrant inclusion and integration central policy priorities (UN-Habitat, 2016b; United Nations, 2018). City expansion in these settings often reflects structural shifts toward service economies and increased commuting from suburban and peri-urban areas, enabling economic growth without commensurate increases in inner-city population density (OECD and European Commission, 2020). Meanwhile, some regions, particularly parts of Europe, have experienced periods of declining city populations associated with suburbanization or counter-urbanization and the statistical reclassification of settlement boundaries (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Cities experiencing rapid population growth, many of which are in resource-constrained countries, require inclusive urban planning to ensure adequate and affordable housing and transportation, as well as clean water, sanitation and healthcare (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2020; Montgomery and National Research Council (U.S.), 2003; UN-Habitat, 2020). Where unplanned city population growth leads to informal settlements, policies are needed to upgrade slums by ensuring their access to basic services, thereby reducing poverty, improving residents' well-being, and preventing displacement (Jiang and O'Neill, 2017). Across many countries undergoing rapid urban transitions, the principal drivers of city population growth are natural increase and the reclassification of towns into cities; internal migration contributes but is not the dominant factor in most regions (Alessandrini and others, 2024). Notably, internal migration makes a visible contribution to rising urbanization in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa, whereas in Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Southern Asia, and Northern Africa and Western Asia, reclassification and natural increase typically account for the bulk of growth.

The increase in built-up areas that outpaces population growth in almost all regions and settlement types has major environmental implications, as land use is one of the most significant human impacts on the planet. The expansion of urban areas to accommodate growing populations often results in the conversion of agricultural land, deforestation, habitat fragmentation, biodiversity loss and changes in regional temperatures and precipitation patterns (Lwasa and others, 2023). Furthermore, the built-up environment accounts for about one third of global energy consumption and a significant portion of electricity use (UN-Habitat, 2016b). Urban areas consume 75 per cent of global energy resources and contribute 75 per cent of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, driving climate change (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2024). The form, density and extent of the built-up environment influence urban GHG emissions from transport, building energy use and the emissions from manufacturing and constructing infrastructure (Lwasa and others, 2023).

The unrestricted growth of built-up areas in and around cities can diminish some of the efficiencies typically associated with urban density. Urban sprawl can cause increased pollution, loss of wildlife habitat and strain on infrastructure, and can exacerbate social inequalities primarily through its impacts on housing affordability and access to essential urban resources and infrastructure (Lwasa and others, 2023). These challenges arise even in cities where the population growth is slow or negative, underscoring the importance of proactive city planning across

all demographic contexts. Given the environmental consequences of rapid land consumption, compact, connected and coordinated growth patterns should be prioritized to curb sprawl, reduce emissions per person and protect ecosystems.

The higher densities of cities offer opportunities to mitigate climate change by promoting more efficient land use, lowering energy consumption per person, and enabling transportation systems that reduce reliance on automobiles. However, dense concentrations of built-up areas and a lack of vegetation can leave cities vulnerable to the impacts of heatwaves, and because many cities are located along coastlines or riverbanks, they are highly exposed to the risks of flooding and violent storms. Disasters caused by these types of natural hazards can be expected to become more frequent and severe because of climate change, if effective adaptive or mitigating measures are not taken (Dodman and others, 2023).

Given that cities house large concentrations of people and infrastructure in areas disproportionately exposed to climate risks such as coastal flooding and extreme heat, they have powerful incentives to lead the transition to renewable energy and innovate solutions to increase resilience. Examples include street redesigns to promote walking and cycling, planting urban forests and green roofs, using permeable pavements and bioswales to manage stormwater runoff, retrofitting existing buildings to lower energy consumption, requiring new buildings to use eco-friendly materials and building techniques, implementing coastal protections to safeguard against rising sea levels, and utilizing "smart city" digital technologies to collect data and operate key services. As countries in more developed regions move to advanced stages of population ageing, with an increasing share of older persons in the total population, cities must address the related social, economic and spatial implications, including the increased demand for services such as housing, care facilities and social support (UN-Habitat, 2016b). To harness the potential of active ageing, tailored policies and programmes should be formulated to promote decent employment and foster inclusive, sustainable economic growth, in line with the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. City planning and management, particularly in the development of new cities, retrofitting buildings and upgrading outdated infrastructure, should consider the specific needs of older populations to support the creation of age-friendly cities and communities.

Towns can promote balanced territorial development, reduce pressure on large cities and contribute to more sustainable and inclusive growth.

Towns, while smaller than cities in terms of size or density, often serve as connectors between rural areas and cities, providing essential services and supporting local economies. In a wide range of regional contexts – including parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia – towns have served as important intermediary settlements linking rural populations to growing cities, while in other regions, towns have long remained predominant places of residence. In the world's two most populous countries, India and China, towns currently accommodate nearly one seventh of the global population, a proportion expected to persist at least through the mid-century. As urbanization continues, some towns will grow to become cities, others will be absorbed into neighboring cities, and others still may face population decline. Towns collectively represent a "missing middle" in urban research and policy – sometimes too small to attract major investment and too large to rely solely on rural development programmes.

Therefore, it is essential to treat towns differently from cities when developing and implementing national urban policies. Recognizing and supporting towns as critical nodes of regional development will be essential for achieving equitable and sustainable urban transitions, particularly where towns are a dominant feature. Policies, programs and investments must ensure that town residents are not left behind in the pursuit of sustainable and inclusive urban development. Similar to cities, towns face challenges related to the unrestricted expansion of built-up areas.

In addition to environmental implications, urban expansion has led to the displacement of agricultural land, which has major food security implications; around 60 per cent of the land subsumed by urbanization since 1970 was previously used for agriculture (Lwasa and others, 2023). Such displacement reduces the local capacity for food

production and increases the pressure on the remaining agricultural areas. Areas with a historical legacy of food production face the challenge of preserving agricultural land amid rapid economic growth and an increasing need for built-up infrastructure. Preventing urban encroachment on highly fertile soils, such as "black soils" (which cover just 6.5 per cent of the Earth's land but are crucial for global food production), is vital for maintaining food security (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2018). In many regions, the loss of fertile land to urban expansion threatens food security, disrupts rural livelihoods and contributes to environmental degradation (European Commission. Joint Research Centre., 2018). To address these challenges, towns must adopt land-use strategies that balance development needs with the preservation of agricultural and natural ecosystems. Strengthening the role of towns in national and regional planning frameworks is essential for achieving balanced territorial development and inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth, particularly given their varied functions across different urbanization contexts.

Although rural areas comprise a shrinking share of the global population, they remain essential for sustainable development.

Rural communities are the source of much of the world's natural resources and food and contribute significantly to environmental stewardship, biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation. However, activities in rural areas also generate environmental pressures. Agricultural activities, including emissions from soil management, livestock and rice cultivation, account for 13.5 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions (World Bank, 2009). Intensive farming practices also compete for land, water and other resources, and can lead to habitat loss and ecosystem degradation. Additionally, the expansion of built-up areas in rural settings, though less extensive than urban growth, contributes to GHG emissions and the displacement of native flora and fauna.

While both agriculture and urbanization generate emissions and environmental impacts, they differ in scale and permanence. Urbanization contributes to emissions primarily through energy use in buildings and transport, construction activities and infrastructure development (UN-Habitat, 2022; Koomen and others, 2023). The conversion of land for urban purposes tends to be more permanent and extensive in its long-term environmental effects compared to agricultural land use (Seto and others, 2012). Transitioning to more sustainable farming methods could help restore natural ecosystems and reduce the environmental burden of agriculture.

Population ageing, as a global phenomenon, affects cities, towns and rural areas alike. Rural communities face particular challenges related to population ageing because their access to services, such as healthcare and transportation infrastructure, is more limited. Moreover, in many rural communities, the pace of population ageing is accelerated when young people migrate to more urban areas in pursuit of education, employment and social opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires targeted policy interventions that promote healthy ageing, improve access to essential services and support the economic and social inclusion of older persons. Investing in rural-urban linkages – through infrastructure, education, health services, digital connectivity and support for smallholder agriculture and rural enterprises – can reduce regional disparities and yield shared prosperity across the urban-rural continuum. These investments should be designed to reflect local migration patterns and settlement hierarchies so that gains in access and opportunity diffuse across the entire continuum.

Strengthening rural-urban linkages is key to reducing intraregional disparities. By investing in rural infrastructure, education, healthcare and digital connectivity, and by supporting smallholder agriculture and rural enterprises, policymakers can foster inclusive and sustainable development in rural communities. These investments must be tailored to the specific rural-urban dynamics and migration patterns characteristic of each country's unique urbanization trajectory.

Continued support for population and housing censuses and improvements in data collection and analysis of urbanization are needed to inform evidence-based policymaking and planning.

Global data products derived using remote sensing, such as the Global Human Settlement Layer[20] and WorldPop[21], among others, enable detailed geospatial analysis of trends in built-up areas and population distribution worldwide. Increasingly, population and housing censuses have been geo-referenced, allowing countries to examine spatial patterns of population density, urban expansion and access to services with greater accuracy. When integrated with satellite-derived data, these georeferenced datasets support more granular monitoring of urban dynamics, including the emergence of informal settlements and land-use changes. This integration strengthens the capacity of national statistical systems and urban planners to detect emerging trends, allocate resources effectively and assess urban policy outcomes. Where feasible, countries are encouraged to align national reporting with the Degree of Urbanization to strengthen international comparability while retaining national definitions for domestic policies. Future monitoring should incorporate indicators that track both people and land, such as built-up area per person and metrics of urban density and fragmentation, to monitor human interactions with the environment, and to evaluate whether growth is becoming more efficient, inclusive and resilient. Continued investment in population and housing censuses, including data infrastructure, technical capacity and international cooperation, is essential to ensure that all countries, regardless of income level or urbanization pattern, can fully leverage geospatial and statistical data to support sustainable and equitable urban development.

[20] https://human-settlement.emergency.copernicus.eu/

[21] https://www.worldpop.org/

City During Night, Shanghai, China. Pexels/Yuzhe Yang

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Glossary

Administrative reclassification: The process by which rural areas or towns are officially redesignated as urban areas by government authorities, often contributing to urban population growth without actual migration.

Backcasting: A method for creating historical estimates by working backward from recent data using models and known totals, used here to reconstruct populations by settlement type before 1975.

Built-up surface/area: The gross building surface (including the thickness of the walls) bounded by the building wall perimeter. It measures any roofed structure erected above ground for any human use (including houses, factories, offices, religious and leisure buildings and structures in slums, informal settlements and refugees/IDP camps) that has been developed, not just where people live. The terms "built-up surface" and "built-up area" are used interchangeably in the text.

Built-up area per person: The average amount of built-up land occupied per person, which is the ratio of built-up area to population.

Cities: According to the Degree of Urbanization methodology, contiguous geographic areas with a high population density (at least 1,500 people per km^2) and a total population of at least 50,000 inhabitants.

Copernicus: Earth Observation (EO) component of the EU's Space programme. Copernicus is managed by the European Commission, and includes the Sentinel satellite missions (e.g. Sentinel-1 and Sentinel-2), developed by the European Space Agency (ESA), which collect images on the global environment.

Degree of Urbanization (DEGURBA): A globally standardized method for classifying all areas of a country as cities, towns (or semi-dense areas), or rural areas. It uses a combination of population size, density, and contiguity thresholds based on 1 km^2 population grids and satellite data to provide a consistent measure of urbanization across countries. A finer subdivision of the three main groups is also available as: dense towns, semi-dense towns and suburban/peri-urban areas; and, for rural, villages, dispersed and very dispersed areas.

Functional Areas: Large city-centered zones used in projections to capture subnational differences (around 1,000 globally), improving how growth is distributed across space.

Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL): A suite of global, open geospatial datasets that maps human settlements (buildings and their inhabitants) using satellite imagery and population data. It produces data on built-up areas and population distribution, which are key inputs for the Degree of Urbanization methodology.

GHS-BUILT: GHSL's global grid of built-up area and volume derived from Landsat/Sentinel data with machine learning and expert validation.

GHS-POP: GHSL's gridded estimates of the resident population used to classify and analyze settlements under the Degree of Urbanization.

GHS-UCDB (Urban Centre Database): A GHSL GIS dataset providing standardized information on urban centres worldwide.

Gross National Income (GNI) per person: The total income generated by a country's residents and businesses, both at home and abroad, divided by the country's population. It is a common measure of a country's average income level and economic development.

Gridded population data: see Population Grid.

In-situ urbanization: The process by which a rural area gradually develops urban features (such as improved infrastructure, services and non-agricultural jobs) while most residents remain in the same location.

Landsat: The Landsat programme consists of a series of EO satellite missions, jointly managed by the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the US Geological Survey (USGS). Since 1972, Landsat satellites have continuously acquired images of the Earth's land surface and provided an uninterrupted data archive on natural resources and the environment.

Land area: The total geographic space within the boundaries of a settlement, city or region, including both developed land (built-up areas) and open spaces, such as parks, fields, water bodies and undeveloped land. It is often used to calculate population density and, in this report, refers to the sum of 1 km² grid cells assigned to each Degree of Urbanization category, whether or not those cells are built-up.

Land consumption: The conversion of natural or agricultural land for urban development, measured as the amount of land used per person.

Landlocked developing countries (LLDCs): Developing countries with no direct access to the sea, facing geographic isolation that creates significant economic challenges, including high transportation costs and difficulties participating in global trade.

Least developed countries (LDCs): A group of the world's poorest countries, as defined by the United Nations, which face severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are characterized by low income, limited human resources and high economic vulnerability.

Megacity: A very large city, typically defined as having a population of 10 million or more inhabitants.

National definitions of "urban": The set of criteria national authorities use to classify an area as urban for their own statistical or administrative purposes. These criteria can include factors such as administrative status, population size/density and economic and/or functional characteristics.

National urban policy: A government framework that coordinates urban development strategies, infrastructure planning, and service delivery across the country.

New Urban Agenda: A global framework adopted by the United Nations in 2016 that sets out a shared vision for sustainable urban development and provides guidelines for planning, designing and managing cities to create more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable urban areas.

Peri-urban/suburban: Zones on the outskirts of cities that mix urban and rural features. They often have intermediate population densities, are functionally connected to the city and experience rapid change and development. They are included within "towns and semi-dense areas" in terms of Degree of Urbanization.

Population density: The number of people living in a given area, usually expressed as people per km2. It shows how concentrated or spread out a population is, with a high density being a common feature of cities.

Population grid: A method of mapping population distribution using a regular grid system made of small, uniform cells of 1 km² and estimating the number of people living in each cell. This provides a more detailed view of where people live than traditional administrative boundaries and supports analyses such as the Degree of Urbanization.

Remote sensing: The use of satellite technology to collect information about the Earth's surface without direct physical contact.

Rural areas: areas with low population density, typically below 300 people per km^2, or small settlements that are not part of a city or town. These include villages and dispersed communities under the Degree of Urbanization classification.

Satellite imagery: Photographs or digital images of the Earth taken from satellites that are used to monitor land use, urban growth and environmental changes.

SDG regions: Geographic groupings of countries used by the United Nations to track progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

Settlement continuum: The concept that human settlements exist along a spectrum from rural to urban, rather than in distinct categories.

Settlement hierarchy: The organization of settlements by size and function, from small villages to large cities, showing their relationships and roles.

Small island developing States (SIDS): A group of developing countries comprising small islands and low-lying coastal states. They face unique challenges owing to their small size, remoteness and high vulnerability to climate change, natural hazards and economic shocks.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future by 2030. They address challenges such as poverty, inequality and climate change. Goal 11 focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Towns and semi-dense areas: Urban clusters outside cities with moderate population density (at least 300 people per km^2) and a minimum of about 5,000 inhabitants. These areas often include suburban and peri-urban zones and fall between cities and rural areas under the Degree of Urbanization classification. In the text, "towns" is used as a shorthand for "towns and semi-dense areas".

Urban agglomeration: A continuous urban area formed by a city and its surrounding developed areas, regardless of administrative boundaries.

Urban compactness: A measure of how efficiently urban areas use land, with compact cities having a higher density and less sprawl.

Urban sprawl: The uncontrolled expansion of urban areas into surrounding regions, typically characterized by low-density development and increased land consumption.

Urban-rural continuum: The concept that human settlements exist along a gradual transition from urban to rural characteristics rather than in separate categories. At one end are dense cities, and at the other are sparsely populated rural areas, with towns and semi-dense areas in between, all connected as part of a single system.

Urbanization: The process by which an increasing share of people lives in urban areas. This occurs through both migration from rural areas to cities and the gradual transformation of rural areas into urban ones.

Annex 1: What's new in WUP 2025?

The 2025 revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* (WUP) introduces significant improvements compared with previous editions. For the first time, this edition integrates a harmonized geospatial methodology to measure urbanization alongside traditional national definitions and leverages new data and modeling techniques to provide a more nuanced and internationally comparable perspective on global urbanization trends than previous editions.

The key innovations and updates in the 2025 revision include the following:

Integration of new global geospatial data: The 2025 revision builds on cutting-edge time series of remote sensing data and population gridded datasets developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Union, utilizing the Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL)[22], which leverages open and free Earth observation satellite data from the Copernicus and Landsat programmes to map globally built-up spatial grids (GHS-BUILT), Degree of Urbanization grids (GHS-SMOD), and model population distribution (GHS-POP) based on population censuses and registers. At the core of its methodology is the use of multi-sensor satellite imagery – most notably, Sentinel-2 at 10-meter resolution – alongside Landsat archives, to detect and quantify the built environment from 1975 to 2020 using machine learning.

Full integration of the Degree of Urbanization methodology: The 2025 revision fully integrates the Degree of Urbanization methodology alongside national definitions, providing greater international comparability and better accounting for geospatial aspects and changes in both population dynamics and built-up settlements. This is a significant departure from previous WUP revisions, which were largely based on varied national definitions of urban areas, leading to inconsistencies in international comparisons of urbanization.

This harmonized, spatially based approach classifies areas based on population density, size, and contiguity on 1 km² grids into three categories: *cities* (densely populated areas), *towns and semi-dense areas*, and *rural areas*, enabling more meaningful international comparisons. It also introduces a more granular Level 2 sub-classification, which further divides towns and semi-dense areas, and rural areas into seven distinct classes (e.g. dense towns, semi-dense towns, suburban/peri-urban areas, villages, dispersed rural areas and very dispersed rural areas). Cities remain as a single class.

Expanded geographical coverage and spatial resolution: The 2025 revision features a significantly expanded empirical foundation for both the Degree of Urbanization and national definition-based estimates.

The 2025 revision significantly expands its geographical coverage by lowering the minimum population threshold for cities from 300,000 inhabitants in previous editions to 50,000 inhabitants. This change increased the number of urban centres analyzed to over 12,000 for 2025, providing population estimates for each. This represents a substantial increase from previous WUP revisions, which typically focused on larger urban agglomerations; the 2014 revision covered 1,692 urban settlements, while the 2018 revision covered close to 1,900. Beyond population estimates, the new grid-based approach also provides land area and built-up area data for each settlement.

The 2025 revision incorporates a substantially enhanced database of urban population data based on national definitions, providing unprecedented empirical depth and coverage for urban population studies. Estimates of the proportion of the urban population based on national definitions for the period between 1950 and 2024 now incorporate over 3,400 observations. This includes more than 2,000 estimates from national statistical authorities and results from 1,468 censuses (262 more than in the 2018 revision) and a comprehensive compilation of national urban definitions used in over 1,200 of these censuses. This significantly updated dataset provides a much richer empirical base compared to previous revisions, which sometimes relied on outdated and sparse data. Population data from censuses or estimates referring to 2019 or later were available for 155 countries and areas, covering

[22] https://human-settlement.emergency.copernicus.eu/

65 per cent of the world's population. For 71 countries and areas, the most recent available figure was from 2009 to 2018, and for the remaining 11 countries and areas, the most recent available data were from before 2009 (more than 16 years ago).

New multi-modal estimation and projection methodologies: The methodological improvements employ a combination of data sources and models across different time periods:

For the Degree of Urbanization: The 2025 revision uses estimates and projections derived by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Union as follows:

- 1975–2020: Estimates were derived from the GHS-POP grids (Landsat/Sentinel) benchmarked to WPP national totals.
- 2020–2050: Projections were generated using the new CRISP (Cities and Rural Integrated Spatial Projections) model, which builds on the 2UP (Towards an Urban Preview) model to simulate global population changes and urban growth simultaneously. The CRISP model employs a novel approach that links population shifts to built-up area growth using universal rules while disaggregating national-level population estimates to a high-resolution spatial grid (30 arc seconds). The model allocates built-up areas at the grid-cell level, constrained by land availability and statistical suitability, and then distributes the population based on new built-up areas and local attractiveness. To ensure accuracy, projections were rescaled to match the WPP 2024 national trajectories, with subnational heterogeneity handled through approximately 1,000 Functional Areas around large cities. This approach produced a continuous, spatially explicit settlement-continuum series across seven degrees of urbanization classes and two time horizons while maintaining consistency with UN projections and established urbanization patterns.
- 1950–1975: Historical estimates were generated using a backcasting approach with a statistical model that operated in two stages. First, the model estimates population changes by Degree of Urbanization by blending data based on national definitions with the Degree of Urbanization framework, using national urban shares and growth rates, with the results adjusted to match United Nations totals. Second, individual city populations were backcast using urban agglomeration data or proportional estimates, with final adjustments ensuring consistency with national figures and established historical trends.

For national urban definitions: A new, more robust projection method has been implemented to forecast the percentage of urban population according to national definitions through 2050 after a review of existing approaches and benchmarking over ten statistical models using cross-validation over the 1945–-2010 estimation period. The model uses a segmented framework with weighted logistic regression to better capture structural breaks, ensure that projections are grounded in past empirical trends, and address concerns with country-specific trends (Bocquier, 2005; Zhao, 2010). Additional provisions have been included to address exceptional cases in which the initial long-term projections appeared unrealistic. Earlier projection methods relied on observed urban-rural growth differences and assumed convergence towards a global norm.

Updated Data Dissemination Platform: All components of the data information and dissemination system have been updated to improve accessibility and usability for a wide range of users. This includes: (a) an inventory of available data (DataCatalog), (b) a repository (DataArchive) of national input data sources, (c) a database (DemoData) to store and update information on urban population based on national definitions, (d) a structured set of metadata used to document and codify national definitions by urban criteria, and (e) a dissemination platform (DataPortal) to provide access to all output and input data at the country or area level in tabular form and to tools for creating interactive visualizations.

Supplementary online resources:

- Statistical tables for Degree of Urbanization results and national urban definitions
- Interactive data portal for data queries and visualization
- Detailed regional and country profiles
- Metadata and methodological documentation
- GIS datasets and maps, including the GHS Urban Centre Database (GHS-UCDB)

Annex 2: The anatomy of "urban": how national criteria shape urbanization statistics

Further insight is gained by examining how the alignment between national definitions and the Degree of Urbanization varies depending on the criteria used to define urban areas. This comparison for 2025 reveals important differences in alignment across countries. Figure A.1 presents four rows, each corresponding to a major criterion – administrative status, economic activity, population size and urban characteristics – and compares the national urban shares with the population living in cities (left panels) and cities plus towns (right panels).

The relationship between a country's national urban definition and standardized urbanization measures changes dramatically depending on the criteria used.

- **Population size/density criteria**: National definitions using population size or density thresholds show the strongest correlation with the population living in cities ($R^2 = 0.71$). This suggests that when countries define "urban" based on a minimum number of inhabitants, they effectively identify their densest city areas. Although 117 countries used this criterion, the population threshold varied considerably among them.
- **Economic criteria**: Definitions that include economic characteristics, such as the share of non-agricultural employment, have the strongest correlation with the combined population living in cities and towns ($R^2 = 0.82$). This indicates that economic criteria are the most effective at capturing the fully functional urban landscape, including both core cities and the surrounding economically integrated towns. Forty-two countries incorporated economic characteristics into their definitions of urban.
- **Administrative criteria**: Administrative criteria were the most common method, used by 161 countries. Although they have a reasonably strong correlation with the "cities" metric ($R^2 = 0.65$), they show a very weak and scattered relationship with the "cities and towns" metric ($R^2 = 0.31$). This implies a significant mismatch between official administrative boundaries and the actual settlement patterns of towns and semi-dense areas, and that many semi-dense and town populations remain outside official "urban areas".
- **Urban characteristic criteria**: Definitions based on urban characteristics, such as infrastructure (e.g. paved streets, water systems) and services, show a moderate correlation with both "cities" ($R^2 = 0.55$) and "cities and towns" ($R^2 = 0.53$). This criterion, used in 84 cases, does not favor one concept over the other as strongly as the population or economic criteria do.

The background data from box A.1 further contextualize these findings: while 161 countries use administrative criteria, only 78 rely exclusively on them. Many countries combine multiple criteria, with 117 incorporating population size or density and 84 considering urban infrastructure. This diversity in national approaches explains the variation in alignment with standardized measures.

Overall, the choice of criteria fundamentally shapes the urbanization statistics. Countries using economic criteria recognize a much broader "functional urban" population, including towns, while those relying on administrative boundaries significantly undercount their urban populations. National definitions incorporating functional and demographic criteria rather than administrative status alone are more likely to reflect the actual distribution of urban populations as captured by the Degree of Urbanization. This reinforces the importance of harmonized frameworks for international comparisons and highlights the need to consider the underlying criteria when interpreting national urban statistics.

Box A.1

Criteria for measuring urbanization at the country level

The urban estimates presented in this report are based on the definitions used for statistical purposes by the countries and areas themselves, except for cases lacking clear definitions or historical changes that prevent the reconstruction of consistent time series (for example, the Netherlands, Nepal). Most countries (113) use only one criterion to define urban areas. The use of two or more criteria is less common (60 use two, 33 use three), and very few countries (18) have employed a complex definition involving four distinct criteria.

One hundred and sixty-one of the 237 countries or areas considered used administrative criteria to distinguish between urban and rural areas. Among these, 78 countries used administrative designations as the sole criterion (Table A.1). In 117 cases, the criteria used to characterize urban areas included population size or population density; in 29 cases, such demographic characteristics were the sole criterion. However, the lower limit above which a settlement is considered to be urban varies considerably, ranging between 200 inhabitants in Denmark and 50,000 inhabitants in Japan. Economic characteristics were part of the criteria used to identify urban areas in 42 countries or areas. Criteria related to functional characteristics of urban areas, such as the existence of paved streets, water-supply systems, sewerage systems or electric lighting, were part of the definition of urban areas in 84 cases, but only in five cases were such criteria used alone. Finally, in two cases, there was no definition or an unclear definition of what constitutes the urban environment, and in 14 cases, the entire population of a country or area was considered to be urban.

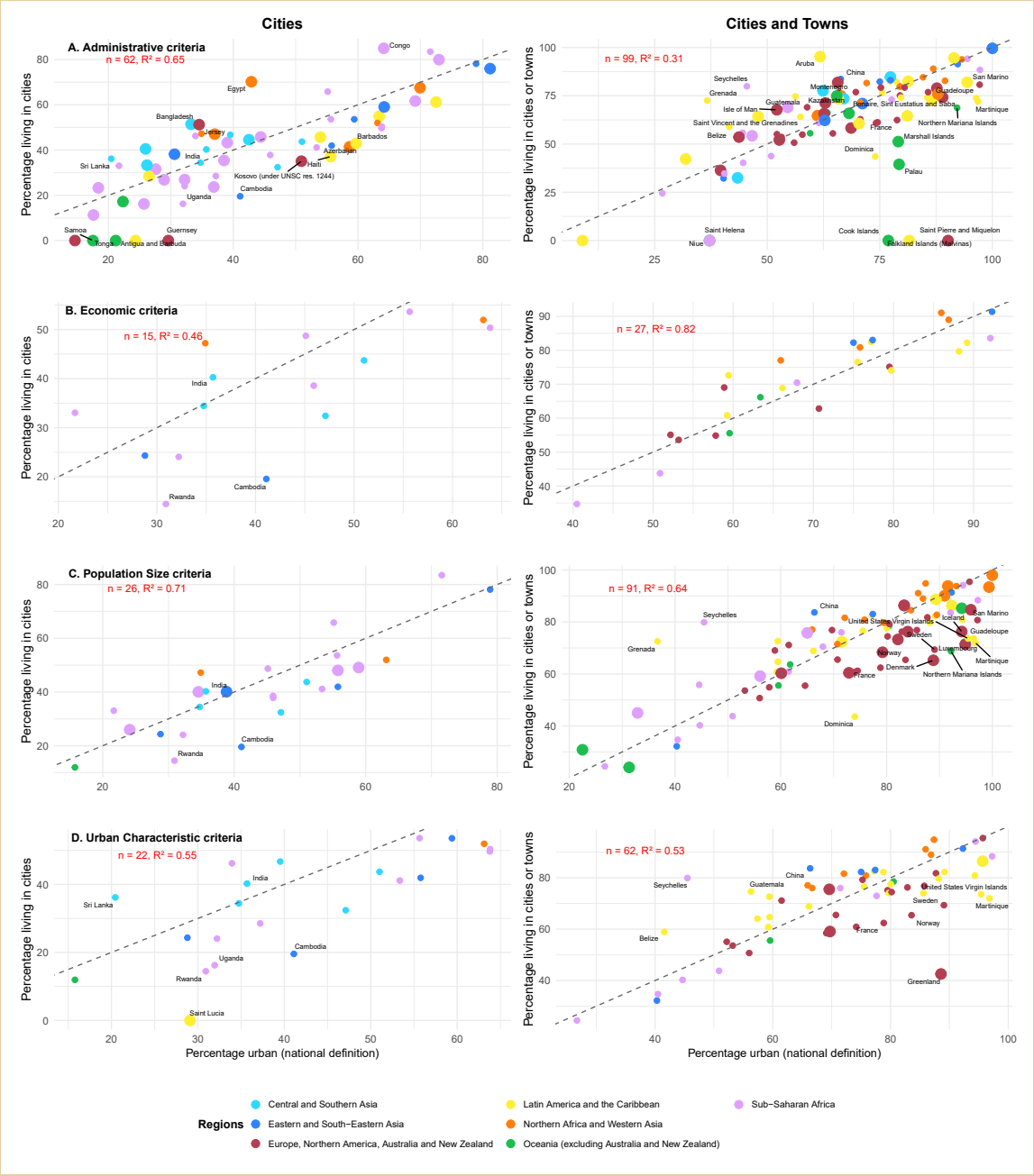
Despite the variety of criteria used to distinguish urban from rural areas and the resulting heterogeneity, no independent adjustment of national statistics was undertaken, unless it was clear that the definitions used by a given country had changed over time in ways that would have led to inconsistencies. When applied, such adjustments typically eliminate erratic peaks and troughs in urban growth that result from changes in the definition. Despite efforts to avoid inconsistencies within countries, it was not always possible to adjust the available data to ensure consistency. In some cases, inconsistencies remained because the data needed to make the necessary adjustments were lacking. In cases where adjustment was possible, every effort was made to adjust the earlier data so that they conformed to the most recent definition.

Table A.1
Number of countries according to the criteria used in defining urban areas, 2025 revision

Criteria combination	*Number of countries or areas*	*Criteria combination*	*Number of countries or areas*
Administrative	78	Economic + Population size/ density + Urban characteristics	9
Population size/density	29	Urban characteristics	5
Administrative + Population size/density	22	Administrative + Economic + Urban characteristics	5
Administrative + Economic + Population size/density + Urban characteristics	18	Economic + Population size/ density	4
Administrative + Urban characteristics	16	Administrative + Economic + Population size/density	4
Population size/density + Urban characteristics	16	Administrative + Economic	2
Administrative + Population size/density + Urban characteristics	15	No definition or unclear definition	2
Entire population is urban	14		

Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2018 and 2025 (United Nations, 2019, 2025).

Figure A.1.
Relationship between national urban definition criteria and Degree of Urbanization by countries and areas in 2025



Source: World Urbanization Prospects 2025 (United Nations, 2025).
Note: Each of the four rows plots the countries according to the criteria used for the national urban definition. Countries defined by only one criterion appear once and are highlighted with larger dots. The remaining countries defined by two or more criteria are displayed using smaller symbols in each panel. Each panel shows the country distribution by SDG region with the same legend. The equidistant diagonal dashed line represents the relationship between two statistical concepts if they are identical. If a country's national point sits near the diagonal line in the left panel, it is "cities-leaning"; if it sits near the diagonal line in the right panel, it is "cities + towns-leaning."

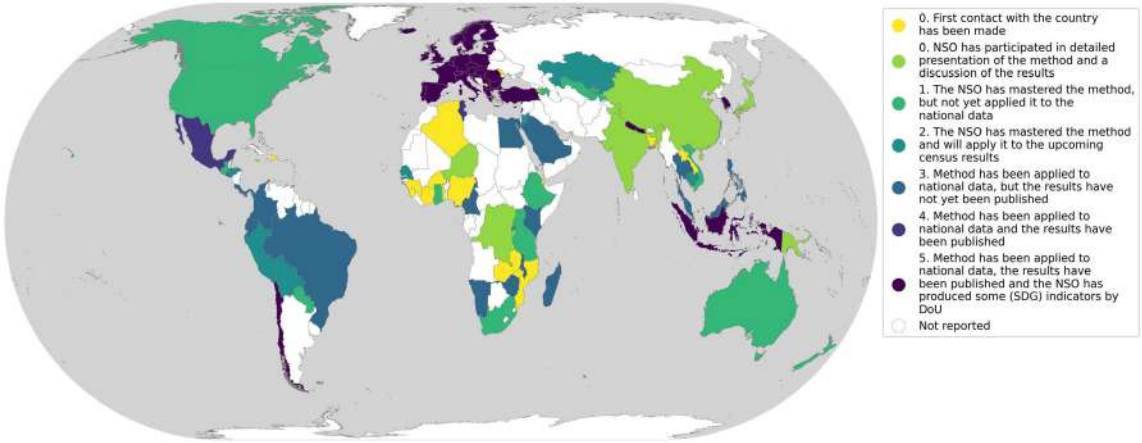
Annex 3: National application of the Degree of Urbanization: tools, data, capacity and implementation status

To support the implementation of the Degree of Urbanization, a detailed technical manual was published (European Commission, Statistical Office of the European Union, 2021), accompanied by free software tools, data, and an online training course, in 2021.

Tools: The free online tools can be downloaded individually or as a package. These include: 1) the Population-to-grid tool (GHS-POP2G), which produces a geospatial raster grid with population counts; 2) the Population Warp tool (GHS-POPWARP), which converts grids to different map projections while preserving population volumes; 3) the Degree of Urbanization Grid (GHS-DUG) Tool, which classifies each grid cell; and 4) the Degree of Urbanization Territorial Units Classifier (GHS-DU-TUC), which classifies each small spatial unit. These four tools are to be used in cascade.

Data: The best population grid is based on a geo-coded census or population register. In the absence of such data, a population grid can be estimated using recent population data for small spatial units, ideally for census enumeration areas, the boundaries of these units and high-resolution data on (residential) built-up area or volume. The tools listed above allow a national statistical office to estimate such a grid without having to share its population data or the boundaries of the spatial units. If a country lacks recent geospatial data on built-up areas, it can use GHS-BUILT, which provides a global map of built-up areas and volumes. GHS-BUILT is based on satellite imagery from the Landsat 8 and Sentinel-2 missions and uses a combination of machine learning algorithms and expert validation to identify built-up areas.

Capacity building and implementation status: The European Commission has supported the implementation of the Degree of Urbanization through in-person and online interactions with ten countries. The OECD has organized one event on the use of the Degree of Urbanization (DoU) around the world (2023) and one on how this method can be used to improve access to services (2024). With the support of the European Commission, UNFPA has organized six short online webinars introducing the methodology to 65 national statistical offices (NSO) and will support its implementation in 12 countries through multi-day in-person workshops. UN-Habitat has organized 13 individual country, multi-day, in-person workshops and will organize 11 more in the next two years. The UN Statistics Division organized four multi-country workshops with participants from a total of 33 countries with support from Eurostat. WorldPop and the University of Milan supported the implementation of this method in Namibia and Cameroon and raised awareness in multiple low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). As of April 2025, more than 100 countries have interacted with the Degree of Urbanization, and 17 have made the results and maps publicly available, in addition to the 30 countries in the European Statistical System.



Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Annex 4: Selected indicators

Table A1
Key population indicators by Degree of Urbanization for countries and areas

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
World[a]	8,231,613	19.6	35.6	44.8	17.1	34.6	48.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,273,565	29.7	32.6	37.7	22.5	35.0	42.5
Northern Africa and Western Asia	590,599	14.4	26.4	59.1	11.9	23.3	64.8
Central and Southern Asia	2,168,806	14.4	43.1	42.5	11.9	40.2	47.9
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	2,352,217	16.3	36.4	47.3	15.6	34.2	50.2
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	2,366,601	16.5	36.4	47.1	15.9	34.2	49.9
Latin America and the Caribbean	667,889	20.8	25.2	54.0	18.6	26.9	54.5
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	14,384	51.9	34.4	13.7	45.3	35.6	19.1
Australia/New Zealand	32,226	19.1	31.7	49.1	18.6	28.7	52.6
Europe and Northern America	1,131,927	26.4	34.4	39.2	24.0	34.6	41.4
Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand[c]	1,164,153	26.2	34.3	39.4	23.9	34.4	41.8
More developed regions[e]	1,287,257	24.5	33.2	42.2	22.5	33.5	44.0
Less developed regions[f]	6,944,356	18.7	36.1	45.3	16.3	34.7	49.0
Least developed countries[g]	1,215,297	27.7	35.9	36.3	21.7	36.1	42.1
Less developed regions, excluding least developed countries	5,729,059	16.7	36.1	47.1	14.6	34.3	51.1
Less developed regions, excluding China[h]	5,497,029	19.4	35.3	45.3	16.3	34.6	49.1
Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDC)	605,977	31.7	40.0	28.3	24.0	40.7	35.3
LLDC: Africa	398,976	36.2	39.9	23.9	26.5	42.4	31.1
LLDC: Asia	182,597	21.6	42.6	35.8	17.1	38.0	44.9
LLDC: Europe	4,810	39.8	35.2	25.0	36.0	39.8	24.2
LLDC: Latin America[i]	19,595	31.8	20.3	47.9	26.2	22.8	51.0
Small island developing States (SIDS)	74,008	24.4	33.5	42.0	23.2	35.3	41.5
SIDS Caribbean	46,518	17.7	37.9	44.3	15.7	40.0	44.3
SIDS Pacific	15,788	51.6	33.7	14.7	45.0	35.7	19.4

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
SIDS Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS)	11,701	14.5	15.8	69.8	15.4	18.4	66.1
High-and-upper-middle-income countries	4,265,990	19.5	32.6	47.9	18.0	31.2	50.7
Low-and-Lower-middle-income countries[j]	3,936,417	19.7	39.0	41.3	16.4	37.3	46.4
High-income countries	1,418,968	22.5	31.3	46.3	20.6	31.1	48.3
Low-and-middle-income countries[j]	6,783,439	19.0	36.6	44.4	16.5	35.2	48.3
Middle-income countries[j]	6,006,227	17.6	36.8	45.6	15.2	34.9	49.9
Upper-middle-income countries[j]	2,847,022	18.1	33.3	48.7	16.8	31.3	51.9
Lower-middle-income countries[j]	3,159,205	17.1	40.0	42.9	14.1	37.4	48.5
Low-income countries	777,212	30.2	35.1	34.7	23.3	36.7	40.0
No income group available[k]	29,206	11.6	26.8	61.7	10.2	27.2	62.6
Africa	1,549,868	26.9	32.0	41.1	20.9	33.3	45.7
Eastern Africa	513,486	33.7	40.9	25.4	22.2	45.1	32.7
Burundi	14,390	10.8	73.0	16.2	4.7	64.8	30.5
Comoros	883	12.4	41.3	46.2	5.0	45.8	49.3
Djibouti	1,184	10.6	9.4	80.0	9.2	8.1	82.7
Eritrea	3,607	35.9	24.1	40.0	29.7	28.5	41.8
Ethiopia	135,472	33.2	40.9	25.9	23.7	38.9	37.4
Kenya	57,532	22.9	53.0	24.1	15.5	53.9	30.5
Madagascar	32,741	55.1	25.5	19.4	43.1	34.8	22.1
Malawi	22,216	29.4	59.3	11.3	12.4	73.1	14.5
Mauritius[1]	1,268	9.1	47.6	43.3	10.6	44.9	44.5
Mayotte[2]	337	5.9	58.4	35.7	3.5	34.4	62.2
Mozambique	35,632	46.4	25.1	28.5	31.6	38.3	30.0
Réunion[2]	882	11.6	49.1	39.3	9.8	48.5	41.7
Rwanda	14,569	5.9	79.6	14.4	2.3	68.9	28.8
Seychelles	133	19.9	80.1	0.0	15.2	84.8	0.0
Somalia	19,655	17.4	17.3	65.3	14.2	20.7	65.0
South Sudan	12,189	34.6	31.9	33.5	25.9	33.4	40.7
Uganda	51,385	23.3	60.4	16.2	9.6	66.8	23.6
United Republic of Tanzania[3]	70,546	41.2	35.1	23.7	20.7	49.3	30.0
Zambia	21,914	45.0	16.5	38.6	34.5	22.4	43.1
Zimbabwe	16,951	65.3	11.8	22.8	53.5	19.0	27.5
Middle Africa	219,525	27.3	21.4	51.4	23.8	22.8	53.4
Angola	39,040	24.0	12.0	64.0	21.3	10.3	68.4

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Cameroon	29,879	24.2	22.2	53.6	17.9	24.0	58.1
Central African Republic	5,513	44.5	30.6	24.8	39.4	32.7	27.9
Chad	21,004	47.7	20.8	31.6	44.1	22.8	33.1
Congo	6,484	8.1	6.9	85.0	7.0	8.3	84.7
Democratic Republic of the Congo	112,832	26.3	25.1	48.6	23.0	27.1	49.9
Equatorial Guinea	1,938	9.9	6.6	83.5	7.8	7.5	84.8
Gabon	2,593	16.4	22.4	61.2	13.2	23.7	63.1
Sao Tome and Principe	240	15.8	22.5	61.7	9.4	25.1	65.5
Northern Africa	276,302	14.1	29.2	56.7	12.1	24.1	63.9
Algeria	47,435	19.0	38.2	42.8	14.5	40.8	44.7
Egypt	118,366	2.5	27.3	70.2	1.5	13.9	84.6
Libya	7,459	24.1	30.9	45.0	20.7	33.6	45.7
Morocco	38,431	21.8	26.3	52.0	20.8	26.9	52.3
Sudan	51,662	25.4	27.8	46.8	22.6	28.6	48.8
Tunisia	12,349	28.5	26.6	44.9	27.9	26.7	45.4
Western Sahara	601	10.9	34.4	54.7	9.0	38.4	52.6
Southern Africa	74,022	24.5	29.2	46.3	20.5	29.0	50.4
Botswana	2,562	29.5	49.5	21.0	25.3	44.6	30.1
Eswatini	1,256	75.5	17.0	7.5	68.8	19.0	12.3
Lesotho	2,363	59.8	28.1	12.1	48.7	40.3	11.0
Namibia	3,093	56.2	22.6	21.2	48.7	24.8	26.5
South Africa	64,747	20.5	29.0	50.5	16.7	28.4	54.9
Western Africa	466,533	27.3	29.2	43.4	22.4	30.8	46.8
Benin	14,814	25.9	33.4	40.8	18.6	36.2	45.1
Burkina Faso	24,075	48.3	24.8	26.8	37.3	35.4	27.4
Cabo Verde	527	27.0	33.4	39.5	21.8	38.4	39.8
Côte d'Ivoire	32,712	31.1	30.6	38.3	25.3	35.5	39.2
Gambia	2,822	24.2	23.3	52.5	19.2	28.7	52.2
Ghana	35,064	22.2	28.7	49.1	17.4	29.3	53.3
Guinea	15,100	44.5	20.1	35.4	36.0	26.8	37.1
Guinea-Bissau	2,250	45.7	20.0	34.3	43.6	25.1	31.3
Liberia	5,731	40.9	16.3	42.8	38.7	20.0	41.3
Mali	25,199	50.7	22.6	26.7	40.7	29.4	29.9
Mauritania	5,315	39.0	22.6	38.4	33.0	25.5	41.5
Niger	27,918	48.2	28.5	23.3	39.3	36.6	24.1
Nigeria	237,528	18.2	32.1	49.7	14.4	29.9	55.7
Saint Helena[4]	5	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Senegal	18,932	28.4	23.6	48.1	22.2	28.5	49.3
Sierra Leone	8,820	42.3	19.9	37.8	38.1	23.4	38.6
Togo	9,722	26.6	27.6	45.8	19.1	30.3	50.6

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Asia	4,835,320	15.4	38.6	46.1	13.5	36.2	50.3
Central Asia	83,598	17.3	41.6	41.1	12.8	36.9	50.3
Kazakhstan	20,844	22.4	32.2	45.3	18.7	30.3	51.0
Kyrgyzstan	7,295	23.1	41.4	35.5	18.0	38.6	43.4
Tajikistan	10,787	15.5	51.2	33.3	10.3	42.9	46.8
Turkmenistan	7,619	21.7	45.8	32.5	17.9	44.4	37.8
Uzbekistan	37,053	12.8	43.4	43.8	8.7	36.8	54.6
Eastern Asia	1,652,186	15.3	36.7	48.0	15.1	34.0	51.0
China[5]	1,416,096	16.3	39.5	44.2	16.2	36.1	47.7
China, Hong Kong SAR[6]	7,396	0.4	3.2	96.4	0.4	2.8	96.8
China, Macao SAR[7]	722	0.1	0.7	99.2	0.1	0.6	99.2
China, Taiwan Province of China[8]	23,113	5.4	16.5	78.1	4.9	16.5	78.5
Dem. People's Republic of Korea	26,571	13.5	27.4	59.1	13.1	26.5	60.4
Japan	123,103	8.6	22.9	68.5	7.7	23.8	68.5
Mongolia	3,517	28.9	23.2	47.9	26.7	21.5	51.7
Republic of Korea	51,667	9.6	14.4	76.0	7.7	14.3	78.0
Southern Asia	2,085,208	14.3	43.2	42.5	11.9	40.3	47.8
Afghanistan	43,844	16.9	42.9	40.2	14.0	35.2	50.7
Bangladesh	175,687	2.0	46.8	51.3	1.7	33.3	64.9
Bhutan	797	67.5	14.6	17.9	62.0	19.1	18.9
India	1,463,866	15.9	43.8	40.3	13.6	42.3	44.0
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	92,418	15.2	24.0	60.8	14.5	23.6	61.9
Maldives	530	41.9	13.5	44.6	39.5	13.6	46.9
Nepal	29,618	26.7	54.3	19.0	22.1	52.3	25.6
Pakistan	255,220	10.9	42.4	46.7	7.5	39.2	53.3
Sri Lanka	23,229	14.7	49.2	36.2	12.9	49.2	37.9
South-Eastern Asia	700,032	18.8	35.5	45.7	16.7	34.7	48.6
Brunei Darussalam	466	17.7	53.1	29.2	15.7	54.0	30.3
Cambodia	17,848	30.8	49.6	19.6	26.3	50.6	23.1
Indonesia	285,721	14.0	32.4	53.6	13.5	30.9	55.6
Lao People's Democratic Republic	7,873	67.7	27.4	4.9	61.4	32.8	5.9
Malaysia[9]	35,978	16.9	27.4	55.7	14.1	25.8	60.0
Myanmar	54,851	30.6	31.2	38.2	28.7	31.8	39.5
Philippines	116,787	14.8	43.3	42.0	13.2	42.9	43.9
Singapore	5,871	0.1	0.4	99.5	0.1	0.6	99.3
Thailand	71,620	37.7	26.4	36.0	31.1	25.9	43.0
Timor-Leste	1,419	48.9	26.8	24.3	41.4	36.4	22.1
Viet Nam	101,599	12.5	47.3	40.2	10.6	44.8	44.7

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Western Asia	314,297	14.8	24.0	61.3	11.8	22.6	65.6
Armenia	2,952	22.6	35.5	41.9	21.1	35.4	43.5
Azerbaijan[10]	10,398	20.9	38.2	40.9	20.3	36.9	42.8
Bahrain	1,643	2.0	4.4	93.6	1.3	2.9	95.9
Cyprus[11]	1,371	24.0	26.1	49.9	21.9	28.7	49.5
Georgia[12]	3,807	35.2	29.6	35.2	33.1	28.7	38.2
Iraq	47,021	12.3	20.1	67.5	10.7	17.8	71.5
Israel	9,517	6.2	23.6	70.2	4.0	17.9	78.1
Jordan	11,521	6.3	20.4	73.3	4.9	17.5	77.5
Kuwait	5,026	3.5	7.5	89.0	2.9	6.8	90.3
Lebanon	5,849	9.9	39.3	50.8	7.5	40.2	52.4
Oman	5,495	19.8	35.1	45.1	15.4	31.8	52.8
Qatar	3,116	6.6	12.7	80.7	5.0	11.4	83.7
Saudi Arabia	34,566	15.4	17.6	67.0	12.2	16.9	70.9
State of Palestine[13]	5,590	5.2	21.2	73.7	3.1	18.6	78.3
Syrian Arab Republic	25,620	18.2	33.4	48.5	13.8	31.7	54.5
Türkiye	87,685	17.2	18.5	64.3	15.3	18.8	65.9
United Arab Emirates	11,346	8.7	16.4	74.8	6.9	15.2	77.9
Yemen	41,774	15.3	37.8	46.9	10.8	32.3	56.9
Europe	744,399	27.0	32.6	40.4	24.7	33.2	42.1
Eastern Europe	284,452	28.1	30.7	41.2	25.1	31.3	43.5
Belarus	8,998	24.9	19.6	55.6	18.4	20.4	61.3
Bulgaria	6,715	39.1	29.3	31.7	34.0	32.9	33.1
Czechia	10,609	39.5	38.1	22.4	37.9	38.6	23.5
Hungary	9,632	37.1	35.5	27.4	36.0	36.9	27.2
Poland	38,141	39.6	31.5	28.9	37.2	33.7	29.1
Republic of Moldova[14]	2,996	46.4	30.9	22.7	43.7	35.1	21.3
Romania	18,909	44.9	23.8	31.3	42.1	23.6	34.3
Russian Federation	143,997	20.8	31.2	48.1	18.8	30.7	50.5
Slovakia	5,475	46.2	38.9	14.9	45.3	39.0	15.7
Ukraine[15]	38,980	25.3	30.1	44.6	20.0	32.8	47.2
Northern Europe	109,500	21.8	30.1	48.1	19.6	30.0	50.4
Denmark[16]	6,003	34.7	35.7	29.6	33.5	35.6	30.9
Estonia	1,344	34.4	26.8	38.8	29.6	28.9	41.5
Faroe Islands[17]	56	63.7	36.3	0.0	55.8	44.2	0.0
Finland[18]	5,623	38.7	35.1	26.2	36.1	36.4	27.4
Guernsey[19]	64	9.0	91.0	0.0	8.5	91.5	0.0
Iceland	398	23.7	21.7	54.6	20.3	23.9	55.8
Ireland	5,308	44.3	26.5	29.3	42.1	27.9	30.0
Isle of Man[19]	84	32.3	67.7	0.0	29.9	70.1	0.0

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Jersey[19]	104	9.2	39.5	51.2	8.9	40.1	51.0
Latvia	1,854	41.7	22.5	35.8	34.4	26.6	39.0
Lithuania	2,830	41.0	28.6	30.3	34.0	34.3	31.7
Norway[20]	5,623	34.5	36.6	28.9	31.7	39.1	29.1
Sweden	10,657	30.5	36.0	33.4	28.1	35.7	36.2
United Kingdom[21]	69,551	13.6	28.4	58.0	12.5	27.5	60.0
Southern Europe	150,776	25.4	34.4	40.2	23.1	35.1	41.8
Albania	2,772	31.0	23.9	45.2	27.3	22.0	50.7
Andorra	83	25.1	74.9	0.0	25.0	75.0	0.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3,140	48.3	36.5	15.1	44.2	40.3	15.4
Croatia	3,848	45.1	27.2	27.7	40.1	28.9	31.0
Gibraltar[19]	40	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Greece	9,939	31.9	22.5	45.6	27.1	23.5	49.4
Holy See[22]	1	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Italy	59,146	23.1	42.5	34.5	22.4	43.3	34.3
Kosovo (under UNSC res. 1244)[23]	1,674	28.0	36.9	35.1	26.9	37.4	35.7
Malta	545	4.5	27.0	68.5	3.9	27.8	68.2
Montenegro	633	18.1	49.5	32.4	17.1	57.9	25.0
North Macedonia	1,814	28.8	42.3	28.9	24.0	47.2	28.8
Portugal	10,412	28.8	35.2	36.1	27.0	35.4	37.6
San Marino	34	19.3	80.7	0.0	19.0	81.0	0.0
Serbia[24]	6,689	34.3	31.4	34.4	30.1	33.1	36.8
Slovenia	2,117	49.2	35.3	15.5	48.0	35.8	16.2
Spain[25]	47,890	20.7	27.7	51.6	17.9	28.2	53.9
Western Europe	199,671	29.3	35.4	35.3	28.2	36.0	35.7
Austria	9,114	40.7	25.9	33.3	39.1	26.5	34.4
Belgium	11,759	20.8	48.3	30.9	20.0	49.0	30.9
France[26]	66,651	37.5	28.1	34.4	36.0	29.0	35.0
Germany	84,075	26.6	38.9	34.5	25.8	39.9	34.3
Liechtenstein	40	23.8	76.2	0.0	23.4	76.6	0.0
Luxembourg	680	28.4	48.6	22.9	26.4	42.4	31.2
Monaco	38	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
Netherlands[27]	18,347	15.2	37.1	47.7	14.3	36.9	48.8
Switzerland	8,967	22.9	44.6	32.5	21.0	45.0	34.0
Americas[28]	1,055,417	22.5	29.8	47.7	20.2	30.5	49.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	667,889	20.8	25.2	54.0	18.6	26.9	54.5
Caribbean	44,622	17.3	37.8	44.9	15.3	39.7	45.0
Anguilla[19]	15	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Antigua and Barbuda	94	23.9	76.1	0.0	22.8	77.2	0.0

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Aruba[29]	108	4.5	95.5	0.0	5.4	94.6	0.0
Bahamas	403	17.5	20.6	61.9	15.6	22.8	61.6
Barbados	283	13.7	43.4	43.0	14.1	42.5	43.4
Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba[29]	31	35.4	64.6	0.0	33.5	66.5	0.0
British Virgin Islands[19]	40	35.9	64.1	0.0	32.5	67.5	0.0
Cayman Islands[19]	76	7.4	92.6	0.0	4.6	95.4	0.0
Cuba	10,937	17.5	35.8	46.7	14.4	40.7	44.9
Curaçao[29]	185	5.3	35.1	59.6	5.2	38.2	56.6
Dominica	66	56.4	43.6	0.0	55.0	45.0	0.0
Dominican Republic	11,520	14.0	24.8	61.2	12.2	26.6	61.3
Grenada	117	27.5	72.5	0.0	27.2	72.8	0.0
Guadeloupe[2]	374	27.8	72.2	0.0	28.1	71.9	0.0
Haiti	11,906	16.8	46.1	37.1	14.4	48.0	37.6
Jamaica	2,837	27.2	26.7	46.1	26.6	25.7	47.7
Martinique[2]	340	28.2	49.9	21.8	29.8	46.8	23.4
Montserrat[19]	4	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Puerto Rico[30]	3,235	18.9	52.9	28.2	23.1	51.1	25.9
Saint Barthélemy[2]	11	13.1	86.9	0.0	6.3	93.7	0.0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	47	57.8	42.2	0.0	57.0	43.0	0.0
Saint Lucia	180	24.1	75.9	0.0	26.4	73.6	0.0
Saint Martin (French part)[2]	25	13.5	86.5	0.0	13.2	86.8	0.0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	100	35.8	64.2	0.0	33.5	66.5	0.0
Sint Maarten (Dutch part)[29]	44	2.8	97.2	0.0	1.5	98.5	0.0
Trinidad and Tobago	1,511	12.4	41.9	45.7	12.1	41.8	46.1
Turks and Caicos Islands[19]	47	18.0	82.0	0.0	14.1	85.9	0.0
United States Virgin Islands[30]	84	26.4	73.6	0.0	36.7	63.3	0.0
Central America	185,161	24.6	26.5	48.9	22.0	30.1	47.9
Belize	423	41.1	41.1	17.9	38.9	44.7	16.4
Costa Rica	5,153	25.9	24.0	50.1	24.2	26.4	49.4
El Salvador	6,366	23.3	33.6	43.1	22.0	35.7	42.3
Guatemala	18,688	25.4	43.5	31.1	19.5	44.7	35.8
Honduras	11,006	39.2	21.8	39.0	31.7	31.3	37.0
Mexico	131,947	22.5	24.3	53.2	20.5	27.8	51.7
Nicaragua	7,008	35.3	29.7	35.0	32.7	28.5	38.8
Panama	4,571	31.1	19.4	49.4	27.6	22.4	50.0
South America	438,105	19.6	23.3	57.1	17.4	24.1	58.5
Argentina	45,851	13.7	22.3	64.0	12.5	23.7	63.8

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	12,582	27.6	17.4	55.0	22.3	18.5	59.1
Brazil	212,812	20.3	25.6	54.1	18.4	26.5	55.1
Chile	19,860	17.7	16.9	65.3	16.3	17.3	66.4
Colombia	53,426	17.8	19.4	62.8	15.1	19.7	65.2
Ecuador	18,290	21.5	23.6	54.9	17.6	24.4	58.0
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)[31]	3	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
French Guiana[2]	314	27.4	48.8	23.8	15.7	34.3	50.0
Guyana	836	26.1	45.5	28.4	21.5	50.4	28.1
Paraguay	7,013	39.3	25.5	35.2	33.5	30.8	35.7
Peru	34,577	26.0	17.0	57.0	22.3	18.2	59.5
Suriname	640	26.6	33.9	39.5	21.3	38.8	39.8
Uruguay	3,385	13.5	33.7	52.8	12.3	34.4	53.3
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	28,517	11.4	26.6	62.0	10.0	26.9	63.1
Northern America	387,528	25.4	37.8	36.8	23.0	36.9	40.2
Bermuda[19]	65	1.5	98.5	0.0	9.7	90.3	0.0
Canada	40,127	23.7	23.6	52.7	22.0	24.8	53.2
Greenland[17]	56	57.5	42.5	0.0	64.9	35.1	0.0
Saint Pierre and Miquelon[2]	6	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
United States of America[32]	347,276	25.6	39.5	35.0	23.1	38.3	38.6
Oceania	46,610	29.2	32.6	38.2	27.6	31.0	41.3
Australia/New Zealand	32,226	19.1	31.7	49.1	18.6	28.7	52.6
Australia[33]	26,974	18.2	31.9	49.9	17.9	28.3	53.7
New Zealand[34]	5,252	23.7	30.8	45.5	22.7	30.8	46.5
Melanesia	13,165	53.2	32.6	14.3	46.1	34.8	19.1
Fiji	933	44.4	25.6	29.9	41.5	29.9	28.6
New Caledonia[2]	295	34.1	23.9	42.0	31.1	18.9	50.0
Papua New Guinea	10,763	52.1	35.9	11.9	44.2	37.6	18.1
Solomon Islands	839	75.9	8.4	15.6	67.5	18.3	14.2
Vanuatu	335	69.9	12.9	17.2	63.9	14.5	21.6
Micronesia	529	36.4	63.6	0.0	33.2	52.9	13.9
Guam[30]	169	14.7	85.3	0.0	12.4	87.6	0.0
Kiribati	136	33.8	66.2	0.0	30.1	24.3	45.6
Marshall Islands	36	48.8	51.2	0.0	37.9	62.1	0.0
Micronesia (Fed. States of)	114	69.2	30.8	0.0	69.6	30.4	0.0
Nauru	12	7.7	92.3	0.0	5.9	94.1	0.0
Northern Mariana Islands[30]	44	31.2	68.8	0.0	30.0	70.0	0.0
Palau	18	60.5	39.5	0.0	58.3	41.7	0.0

Major area, region, country or area	Population (thousands)	Proportion by Degree of Urbanization (per cent)					
		2025			2050		
	Total	Rural	Towns	Cities	Rural	Towns	Cities
Polynesia[35]	690	40.2	46.4	13.4	36.4	41.6	22.0
American Samoa[30]	46	24.3	75.7	0.0	36.3	63.7	0.0
Cook Islands[36]	13	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
French Polynesia[2]	282	36.4	30.9	32.7	34.2	31.4	34.4
Niue[36]	2	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Samoa	219	41.8	58.2	0.0	32.7	43.8	23.5
Tokelau[36]	3	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Tonga	104	39.1	60.9	0.0	38.1	61.9	0.0
Tuvalu	9	25.1	74.9	0.0	21.5	78.5	0.0
Wallis and Futuna Islands[2]	11	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

Table A2
Key built-up area indicators overall and for cities for countries and areas

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
World[a]	315,657.0	515,803.5	79,132.7	132,887.9	51	63	33	36
Sub-Saharan Africa	27,428.6	60,882.5	7,247.7	15,589.3	42	48	38	32
Northern Africa and Western Asia	16,118.2	27,360.5	5,049.8	9,981.1	44	46	29	29
Central and Southern Asia	37,833.9	72,148.0	10,350.2	19,924.3	25	33	18	22
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	81,322.5	141,005.5	24,470.2	40,871.0	40	60	29	37
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	81,679.8	141,516.1	24,518.1	40,947.7	40	60	29	37
Latin America and the Caribbean	32,407.3	47,848.3	11,020.4	16,275.1	62	72	42	45
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	357.2	510.6	48.0	76.7	43	36	55	39
Australia/New Zealand	4,527.8	6,474.4	1,092.5	1,676.1	197	201	123	106
Europe and Northern America	115,661.4	159,573.6	19,854.0	28,494.4	111	141	54	64
Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand[c]	120,189.2	166,048.0	20,946.4	30,170.5	113	143	55	66
More developed regions[e]	130,818.9	179,449.1	25,812.2	35,735.7	110	139	56	66
Less developed regions[f]	184,838.1	336,354.4	53,320.5	97,152.2	37	48	27	31
Least developed countries[g]	18,959.7	43,363.6	4,735.8	10,038.1	28	36	24	23
Less developed regions, excluding least developed countries	165,878.5	292,990.8	48,584.7	87,114.1	39	51	27	32
Less developed regions, excluding China[h]	137,678.9	246,172.6	40,890.2	73,376.8	37	45	28	29
Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDC)	16,022.3	32,265.2	3,105.2	6,339.5	47	53	42	37
LLDC: Africa	6,462.6	17,384.0	1,219.9	2,789.6	33	44	35	29
LLDC: Asia	7,992.8	12,766.6	1,488.3	2,955.1	66	70	47	45
LLDC: Europe	545.6	679.4	72.7	75.4	87	141	42	63
LLDC: Latin America[i]	1,021.3	1,435.2	324.3	519.3	75	73	55	55
Small island developing States (SIDS)	2,511.1	3,821.4	808.7	1,111.1	44	52	35	36
SIDS Caribbean	1,831.6	2,838.2	623.5	837.6	46	61	37	41
SIDS Pacific	392.9	567.0	55.5	86.1	43	36	56	37
SIDS Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS)	286.6	416.3	129.7	187.4	36	36	24	23
High-and-upper-middle-income countries	245,605.7	372,773.1	59,196.5	93,015.7	68	87	39	46

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Low-and-Lower-middle-income countries[j]	68,871.9	141,325.0	19,404.9	39,085.9	27	36	22	24
High-income countries	133,868.4	186,205.5	27,841.8	39,923.7	107	131	53	61
Low-and-middle-income countries[j]	180,609.3	327,892.6	50,759.5	92,177.9	37	48	27	31
Middle-income countries[j]	169,513.2	301,408.0	47,898.9	86,242.3	38	50	27	31
Upper-middle-income countries[j]	111,737.4	186,567.6	31,354.6	53,092.0	47	66	32	38
Lower-middle-income countries[j]	57,775.8	114,840.3	16,544.3	33,150.3	27	36	21	24
Low-income countries	11,096.1	26,484.6	2,860.6	5,935.6	28	34	25	22
No income group available[k]	1,179.4	1,705.4	531.4	786.3	47	58	35	44
Africa	34,018.8	72,443.0	9,299.9	19,631.1	41	47	34	31
Eastern Africa	8,471.0	24,132.4	1,605.5	3,630.0	33	47	33	28
Burundi	160.1	502.7	27.8	58.8	25	35	41	25
Comoros	23.7	30.8	4.3	6.6	44	35	18	16
Djibouti	13.2	25.3	10.4	17.0	18	21	18	18
Eritrea	40.4	127.3	13.5	26.1	18	35	16	18
Ethiopia	686.3	3,150.5	218.7	600.9	10	23	16	17
Kenya	903.3	3,468.7	168.2	386.7	29	60	36	28
Madagascar	520.1	985.7	32.1	116.3	31	30	21	18
Malawi	598.9	1,261.1	44.0	103.4	53	57	49	41
Mauritius[1]	51.5	79.5	24.8	32.4	42	63	45	59
Mayotte[2]	9.0	11.9	0.0	3.5	58	35	0	29
Mozambique	910.0	2,251.9	193.7	405.4	50	63	45	40
Réunion[2]	51.6	108.9	12.4	32.9	68	123	65	95
Rwanda	290.2	769.8	29.1	80.9	35	53	48	38
Seychelles	4.8	6.4	0.0	0.0	58	48	0	0
Somalia	115.5	306.5	73.4	164.1	13	16	14	13
South Sudan	56.3	233.2	23.9	68.5	9	19	19	17
Uganda	991.4	3,034.4	124.1	306.1	41	59	50	37
United Republic of Tanzania[3]	1,747.1	4,722.0	281.7	618.2	51	67	57	37
Zambia	805.4	1,577.9	195.0	371.5	80	72	72	44
Zimbabwe	492.1	1,477.9	128.3	230.7	41	87	46	60
Middle Africa	4,023.8	7,860.1	1,286.1	2,558.7	41	36	31	23
Angola	752.4	1,556.0	298.7	692.9	46	40	39	28
Cameroon	808.6	1,429.7	232.7	390.6	54	48	33	24
Central African Republic	155.4	242.8	26.9	45.5	41	44	35	33
Chad	293.7	684.1	83.4	150.4	34	33	31	23
Congo	162.7	284.6	73.4	146.5	52	44	34	27
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1,708.4	3,416.2	517.2	1,021.2	34	30	25	19

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Equatorial Guinea	29.3	70.2	8.6	33.4	42	36	33	21
Gabon	105.7	167.1	41.6	73.5	83	64	83	46
Sao Tome and Principe	7.5	9.3	3.5	4.7	52	39	44	32
Northern Africa	6,590.2	11,560.5	2,052.2	4,041.8	38	42	25	26
Algeria	1,627.6	2,579.7	327.0	709.9	53	54	32	35
Egypt	1,945.9	3,715.1	729.8	1,670.9	27	31	18	20
Libya	666.7	1,072.2	152.4	295.8	126	144	74	88
Morocco	584.5	1,012.2	213.8	373.0	21	26	16	19
Sudan	886.1	1,934.9	421.6	665.8	32	37	31	28
Tunisia	865.1	1,222.6	207.7	321.2	89	99	59	58
Western Sahara	14.3	23.9	0.0	5.2	53	40	0	16
Southern Africa	5,014.0	8,102.7	1,006.2	1,977.9	93	109	60	58
Botswana	338.5	505.2	5.9	48.1	202	197	92	89
Eswatini	52.2	168.5	5.9	8.1	50	134	74	86
Lesotho	123.3	228.4	19.9	30.6	62	97	94	107
Namibia	165.0	338.6	12.2	33.7	91	109	64	51
South Africa	4,335.0	6,862.0	962.2	1,857.4	92	106	59	57
Western Africa	9,919.8	20,787.3	3,349.9	7,422.7	41	45	39	37
Benin	410.9	846.7	98.7	279.5	57	57	49	46
Burkina Faso	481.5	1,432.0	118.7	290.5	40	59	65	45
Cabo Verde	17.2	26.7	2.4	3.1	38	51	15	15
Côte d'Ivoire	828.7	1,486.3	211.7	389.6	47	45	36	31
Gambia	89.4	133.0	29.4	57.2	61	47	59	39
Ghana	1,145.8	2,177.9	403.0	833.7	58	62	62	48
Guinea	426.0	757.7	108.1	194.0	51	50	48	36
Guinea-Bissau	72.8	112.8	12.5	24.2	59	50	46	31
Liberia	125.3	237.2	52.3	92.2	43	41	53	38
Mali	617.5	1,224.5	104.5	246.1	53	49	56	37
Mauritania	82.3	268.5	26.0	74.2	31	51	46	36
Niger	319.9	890.9	63.8	149.2	28	32	25	23
Nigeria	4,459.8	9,556.9	1,851.0	4,240.1	35	40	35	36
Saint Helena[4]	0.6	0.6	0.0	0.0	93	116	0	0
Senegal	436.8	826.4	142.2	261.6	44	44	32	29
Sierra Leone	148.7	269.8	38.7	95.1	34	31	31	29
Togo	256.8	539.5	87.0	192.4	50	55	46	43
Asia	128,684.5	228,953.5	37,818.0	66,734.5	34	47	25	30
Central Asia	5,965.4	8,997.7	1,077.9	2,164.4	106	108	62	63
Kazakhstan	1,679.5	2,519.8	292.6	568.7	108	121	58	60
Kyrgyzstan	445.1	741.6	67.1	128.8	89	102	46	50
Tajikistan	511.6	814.1	60.6	174.2	81	75	52	48
Turkmenistan	562.2	823.8	58.7	124.3	123	108	54	50

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Uzbekistan	2,767.0	4,098.5	598.9	1,168.4	112	111	69	72
Eastern Asia	60,520.1	108,103.4	18,288.7	30,831.2	40	65	29	39
China[5]	46,096.0	88,646.1	11,862.8	23,021.5	36	63	25	37
China, Hong Kong SAR[6]	57.8	94.9	45.6	72.9	9	13	7	10
China, Macao SAR[7]	4.3	7.8	3.6	6.1	10	11	8	8
China, Taiwan Province of China[8]	1,001.2	1,433.0	518.2	675.0	45	62	31	37
Dem. People's Republic of Korea	267.4	462.3	156.9	226.4	11	17	11	14
Japan	10,629.7	13,401.0	4,865.8	5,565.2	84	109	57	66
Mongolia	132.5	182.5	38.2	68.6	54	52	58	41
Republic of Korea	2,331.3	3,875.8	797.5	1,195.6	50	75	23	30
Southern Asia	31,868.5	63,150.4	9,272.3	17,759.8	22	30	16	20
Afghanistan	357.1	765.4	115.0	277.9	18	17	20	16
Bangladesh	1,714.2	3,239.2	547.6	1,288.3	13	18	10	14
Bhutan	15.7	35.7	0.8	1.9	26	45	6	14
India	22,245.9	44,537.3	6,166.6	11,753.2	21	30	16	20
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	2,834.0	4,824.0	1,033.8	1,700.0	43	52	28	30
Maldives	6.0	8.0	0.2	0.3	21	15	2	1
Nepal	562.5	1,242.6	75.4	140.6	23	42	24	25
Pakistan	3,560.7	7,400.5	1,125.2	2,210.4	23	29	17	19
Sri Lanka	572.4	1,097.7	207.8	387.2	30	47	37	46
South-Eastern Asia	20,802.4	32,902.1	6,181.4	10,039.8	39	47	30	31
Brunei Darussalam	40.6	58.9	0.0	11.1	125	126	0	82
Cambodia	419.3	920.1	35.3	116.9	34	52	23	33
Indonesia	8,359.5	11,892.2	3,246.2	4,611.7	39	42	30	30
Lao People's Democratic Republic	187.5	390.8	16.0	30.7	35	50	60	79
Malaysia[9]	1,468.6	2,390.5	572.9	960.7	64	66	57	48
Myanmar	953.0	1,432.9	262.6	381.1	21	26	16	18
Philippines	1,797.0	2,897.6	663.7	1,120.7	23	25	22	23
Singapore	103.0	142.8	81.9	116.2	26	24	20	20
Thailand	4,593.0	7,075.2	640.6	1,141.8	73	99	46	44
Timor-Leste	37.3	58.2	7.5	9.4	50	41	63	27
Viet Nam	2,843.4	5,643.0	654.6	1,539.3	37	56	29	38
Western Asia	9,528.0	15,800.0	2,997.6	5,939.3	51	50	33	31
Armenia	181.9	237.9	51.8	59.3	58	81	38	48
Azerbaijan[10]	590.1	914.1	113.2	211.6	72	88	41	50
Bahrain	63.1	94.5	45.9	74.4	94	57	82	48
Cyprus[11]	106.1	160.8	33.0	53.0	112	117	81	78
Georgia[12]	416.0	513.7	43.5	45.7	96	135	31	34
Iraq	1,085.0	1,871.4	389.6	857.8	44	40	29	27

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Israel	343.2	536.9	122.3	232.4	56	56	34	35
Jordan	227.5	387.9	104.2	209.6	42	34	32	25
Kuwait	176.1	257.0	114.4	161.4	90	51	70	36
Lebanon	226.0	322.2	46.1	82.8	52	55	22	28
Oman	305.2	503.4	31.0	114.2	134	92	73	46
Qatar	110.1	255.8	41.2	135.3	171	82	137	54
Saudi Arabia	1,765.7	3,169.9	583.5	1,201.4	109	92	71	52
State of Palestine[13]	164.9	256.9	71.5	140.9	52	46	37	34
Syrian Arab Republic	756.4	1,160.1	166.7	310.2	45	45	24	25
Türkiye	2,427.9	4,031.6	820.5	1,482.2	37	46	23	26
United Arab Emirates	392.0	769.8	133.3	406.5	112	68	71	48
Yemen	190.7	356.1	85.7	160.6	10	9	13	8
Europe	63,601.1	89,034.4	12,333.0	15,488.1	87	120	44	51
Eastern Europe	22,954.6	31,866.7	4,588.4	5,406.9	75	112	37	46
Belarus	995.4	1,326.1	157.8	183.6	100	147	34	37
Bulgaria	691.0	918.0	91.9	93.0	86	137	37	44
Czechia	1,070.4	1,546.3	119.5	140.1	105	146	50	59
Hungary	1,063.6	1,372.2	162.3	166.5	104	142	54	63
Poland	3,316.0	4,918.4	461.2	584.2	87	129	40	53
Republic of Moldova[14]	412.1	496.2	44.6	44.6	97	166	42	66
Romania	1,683.1	2,370.8	251.1	260.6	76	125	34	44
Russian Federation	9,700.2	13,680.3	2,433.6	3,040.5	66	95	35	44
Slovakia	528.3	734.4	45.7	49.8	98	134	49	61
Ukraine[15]	3,494.4	4,504.0	820.7	843.9	71	116	37	49
Northern Europe	8,206.0	11,375.8	2,374.9	3,165.8	87	104	58	60
Denmark[16]	647.8	928.5	79.3	110.3	121	155	63	62
Estonia	165.4	211.9	21.7	25.8	118	158	43	50
Faroe Islands[17]	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	2	3	0	0
Finland[18]	429.2	648.3	51.5	81.8	83	115	44	56
Guernsey[19]	4.6	6.3	0.0	0.0	77	97	0	0
Iceland	26.6	38.8	7.7	14.3	95	97	60	66
Ireland	567.8	806.2	70.5	94.6	149	152	61	61
Isle of Man[19]	5.3	7.4	0.0	0.0	70	88	0	0
Jersey[19]	5.7	7.8	0.0	2.8	64	75	0	52
Latvia	223.0	272.7	33.9	37.1	94	147	40	56
Lithuania	390.0	503.3	53.2	56.5	111	178	45	66
Norway[20]	300.3	489.7	39.3	86.4	67	87	46	53
Sweden	738.9	1,102.1	108.7	178.2	83	103	48	50
United Kingdom[21]	4,701.3	6,352.8	1,908.9	2,478.0	80	91	60	61
Southern Europe	12,940.7	18,167.8	1,953.3	2,542.3	89	120	36	42
Albania	168.8	244.0	29.0	41.6	53	88	33	33

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Andorra	1.7	2.6	0.0	0.0	26	32	0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	269.1	369.4	26.2	26.0	65	118	32	55
Croatia	400.8	532.7	48.7	54.8	93	138	42	51
Gibraltar[19]	1.2	1.7	1.2	1.7	43	41	43	41
Greece	953.4	1,240.0	166.9	173.8	88	125	34	38
Holy See[22]	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.2	521	360	521	360
Italy	5,587.9	7,726.3	825.0	1,028.5	98	131	43	50
Kosovo (under UNSC res. 1244)[23]	61.1	108.0	13.6	24.8	34	64	24	42
Malta	30.7	39.8	15.9	21.4	77	73	58	57
Montenegro	27.7	45.6	6.4	9.4	44	72	37	46
North Macedonia	133.5	183.2	28.1	30.8	65	101	43	59
Portugal	1,016.7	1,478.0	133.4	165.9	99	142	39	44
San Marino	3.9	5.2	0.0	0.0	145	156	0	0
Serbia[24]	629.2	833.3	92.2	106.1	82	125	39	46
Slovenia	208.3	280.4	16.1	19.0	105	132	54	58
Spain[25]	3,446.6	5,077.4	550.3	838.3	84	106	29	34
Western Europe	19,499.7	27,624.1	3,416.4	4,373.0	106	138	55	62
Austria	883.3	1,259.6	109.0	146.0	110	138	48	48
Belgium	1,171.2	1,709.1	186.5	250.0	114	145	63	69
France[26]	7,644.2	10,735.7	1,143.3	1,325.3	129	161	53	58
Germany	7,631.2	10,719.7	1,489.5	1,867.5	93	128	57	64
Liechtenstein	3.5	5.9	0.0	0.0	106	148	0	0
Luxembourg	48.8	81.2	4.4	9.3	112	119	61	60
Monaco	0.7	0.9	0.0	0.9	22	22	0	22
Netherlands[27]	1,511.0	2,229.4	396.7	625.1	94	122	58	71
Switzerland	605.8	882.6	87.0	149.0	84	98	45	51
Americas[28]	84,467.7	118,387.5	18,541.3	29,281.4	101	112	53	58
Latin America and the Caribbean	32,407.3	47,848.3	11,020.4	16,275.1	62	72	42	45
Caribbean	1,698.6	2,641.2	593.1	792.8	44	59	36	40
Anguilla[19]	3.2	4.8	0.0	0.0	286	327	0	0
Antigua and Barbuda	10.7	15.2	0.0	0.0	143	162	0	0
Aruba[29]	16.6	23.6	0.0	0.0	187	218	0	0
Bahamas	33.4	49.7	13.5	19.3	103	123	71	77
Barbados	25.7	41.5	10.6	12.5	98	147	87	103
Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba[29]	2.1	5.5	0.0	0.0	145	177	0	0
British Virgin Islands[19]	3.0	4.8	0.0	0.0	149	121	0	0
Cayman Islands[19]	8.0	11.0	0.0	0.0	201	145	0	0
Cuba	329.1	449.9	129.6	155.3	30	41	25	30
Curaçao[29]	16.4	35.5	0.0	16.3	113	192	0	147

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Dominica	3.8	5.7	0.0	0.0	55	87	0	0
Dominican Republic	282.2	568.7	148.2	231.1	33	49	31	33
Grenada	7.0	10.5	0.0	0.0	65	90	0	0
Guadeloupe[2]	50.2	68.2	2.6	0.0	120	182	49	0
Haiti	167.1	343.1	65.0	119.5	20	29	23	27
Jamaica	153.7	237.7	55.8	69.1	59	84	45	53
Martinique[2]	32.5	41.1	7.5	6.5	77	121	61	88
Montserrat[19]	0.6	0.9	0.0	0.0	123	199	0	0
Puerto Rico[30]	371.0	469.4	107.4	102.0	97	145	83	112
Saint Barthélemy[2]	1.0	1.4	0.0	0.0	138	119	0	0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	6.0	8.7	0.0	0.0	133	186	0	0
Saint Lucia	10.6	17.0	0.0	0.0	67	94	0	0
Saint Martin (French part)[2]	2.6	3.2	0.0	0.0	87	127	0	0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	7.8	10.5	0.0	0.0	69	105	0	0
Sint Maarten (Dutch part)[29]	3.6	4.7	0.0	0.0	117	108	0	0
Trinidad and Tobago	131.8	177.7	53.0	61.1	100	118	81	88
Turks and Caicos Islands[19]	0.5	6.1	0.0	0.0	28	131	0	0
United States Virgin Islands[30]	18.5	25.1	0.0	0.0	170	299	0	0
Central America	8,255.5	13,960.9	2,846.4	4,287.5	61	75	43	47
Belize	28.2	55.7	0.0	3.9	117	132	0	52
Costa Rica	262.6	404.2	96.3	136.7	67	78	54	53
El Salvador	228.9	376.1	79.8	104.6	39	59	31	38
Guatemala	606.4	1,055.4	121.8	206.4	52	56	38	36
Honduras	310.3	643.5	72.3	140.9	47	58	39	33
Mexico	6,426.9	10,754.6	2,345.8	3,492.0	65	82	44	50
Nicaragua	197.0	343.0	60.0	94.7	39	49	36	39
Panama	195.2	328.6	70.5	108.3	65	72	55	48
South America	22,453.2	31,246.1	7,580.9	11,194.8	65	71	42	45
Argentina	3,215.0	4,290.5	1,256.6	1,758.2	86	94	56	60
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	554.3	811.0	199.8	331.9	64	64	50	48
Brazil	12,381.9	17,225.3	3,925.5	5,660.9	71	81	46	49
Chile	992.4	1,474.6	292.4	523.6	64	74	32	40
Colombia	1,275.9	1,848.8	468.0	749.0	33	35	22	22
Ecuador	730.8	1,055.5	237.4	409.8	58	58	39	41
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)[31]	0.3	0.4	0.0	0.0	98	114	0	0
French Guiana[2]	17.1	26.0	0.0	6.3	106	83	0	84
Guyana	46.3	65.5	12.0	15.1	60	78	54	64

Major area, region, country or area	Built-up area in km²				Built-up area in m² per capita			
	Total		Cities		Total		Cities	
	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025	2000	2025
Paraguay	467.0	624.2	124.5	187.4	92	89	67	76
Peru	1,243.9	1,680.2	409.4	624.8	47	49	32	32
Suriname	56.7	77.4	18.5	25.7	119	121	93	102
Uruguay	316.8	401.2	105.7	121.0	97	119	60	68
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	1,154.8	1,665.6	531.1	780.9	47	58	35	44
Northern America	52,060.4	70,539.2	7,520.9	13,006.4	167	182	86	91
Bermuda[19]	7.5	8.4	0.0	0.0	122	131	0	0
Canada	3,994.3	5,619.2	1,002.0	1,565.1	129	140	75	74
Greenland[17]	2.4	2.9	0.0	0.0	43	53	0	0
Saint Pierre and Miquelon[2]	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	57	70	0	0
United States of America[32]	48,055.8	64,908.2	6,518.9	11,441.3	171	187	88	94
Oceania	4,885.0	6,985.0	1,140.4	1,752.8	156	150	116	98
Australia/New Zealand	4,527.8	6,474.4	1,092.5	1,676.1	197	201	123	106
Australia[33]	3,800.6	5,470.6	911.3	1,372.7	199	203	117	102
New Zealand[34]	727.1	1,003.8	181.2	303.3	188	191	157	127
Melanesia	279.6	420.4	43.2	70.8	39	32	54	38
Fiji	64.8	92.7	19.5	27.7	77	99	102	99
New Caledonia[2]	33.9	45.8	4.7	9.2	152	155	66	74
Papua New Guinea	145.8	233.6	14.7	24.2	26	22	30	19
Solomon Islands	23.2	32.1	4.4	6.5	53	38	84	49
Vanuatu	11.8	16.2	0.0	3.2	63	48	0	55
Micronesia	30.6	35.8	0.0	0.0	60	68	0	0
Guam[30]	15.4	18.3	0.0	0.0	97	108	0	0
Kiribati	1.3	1.8	0.0	0.0	15	13	0	0
Marshall Islands	2.2	2.5	0.0	0.0	44	68	0	0
Micronesia (Fed. States of)	5.1	6.1	0.0	0.0	46	54	0	0
Nauru	0.7	0.9	0.0	0.0	70	73	0	0
Northern Mariana Islands[30]	4.6	4.9	0.0	0.0	67	113	0	0
Palau	1.2	1.4	0.0	0.0	63	77	0	0
Polynesia[35]	47.1	54.4	4.8	5.9	75	79	61	64
American Samoa[30]	4.1	4.7	0.0	0.0	72	102	0	0
Cook Islands[36]	1.6	1.7	0.0	0.0	100	125	0	0
French Polynesia[2]	16.6	19.5	4.8	5.9	69	69	61	64
Niue[36]	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	17	24	0	0
Samoa	14.1	17.1	0.0	0.0	78	78	0	0
Tokelau[36]	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	28	25	0	0
Tonga	8.1	8.8	0.0	0.0	79	85	0	0
Tuvalu	0.8	0.8	0.0	0.0	81	85	0	0
Wallis and Futuna Islands[2]	1.6	1.7	0.0	0.0	107	151	0	0

Table A3
Key urban indicators by national definitions for countries and areas

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
World[a]	2,890,559	4,760,632	6,503,046	46.8	57.8	67.3	1.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	214,830	574,742	1,256,139	32.8	45.1	60.0	1.4
Northern Africa and Western Asia	199,377	384,244	546,738	55.0	65.1	69.0	0.7
Central and Southern Asia	458,283	830,617	1,238,320	29.9	38.3	47.3	1.0
Eastern and South-Eastern Asia	834,793	1,521,984	1,840,252	41.2	64.7	82.1	2.8
Latin America and the Caribbean	394,127	544,463	639,288	75.6	81.5	87.6	0.6
Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand)	1,980	3,448	7,354	23.7	24.0	37.9	-0.5
Australia/New Zealand	19,589	28,073	34,575	85.2	87.1	90.4	0.0
Europe and Northern America	767,580	873,062	940,381	73.8	77.1	83.2	0.3
Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand[c]	787,169	901,135	974,956	74.0	77.4	83.5	0.3
More developed regions[e]	887,029	1,014,760	1,075,872	74.5	78.8	84.5	0.3
Less developed regions[f]	2,003,530	3,745,872	5,427,174	40.2	53.9	64.7	1.7
Least developed countries[g]	170,408	445,314	1,000,053	25.3	36.6	51.3	1.6
Less developed regions, excluding least developed countries	1,833,122	3,300,558	4,427,121	42.6	57.6	68.7	1.7
Less developed regions, excluding China[h]	1,516,456	2,780,032	4,274,360	41.2	50.6	60.2	0.9
Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDC)	93,316	214,869	441,765	27.6	35.5	46.4	1.0
LLDC: Africa	35,746	112,341	283,362	18.1	28.2	42.3	1.2
LLDC: Asia	46,398	86,136	136,098	38.5	47.2	53.6	1.6
LLDC: Europe	2,915	2,451	2,224	46.3	51.0	57.5	-0.8
LLDC: Latin America[i]	8,257	13,940	20,082	60.2	71.1	81.1	0.8
Small island developing States (SIDS)	32,720	44,226	55,896	57.6	59.8	67.3	0.5
SIDS Caribbean	24,973	31,794	37,453	62.8	68.3	77.7	0.8
SIDS Pacific	2,159	3,856	8,262	23.8	24.4	38.8	-0.3
SIDS Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS)	5,587	8,576	10,180	70.0	73.3	74.9	0.3
High-and-upper-middle-income countries	2,098,863	3,133,152	3,680,293	57.8	73.4	86.0	1.4
Low-and-Lower-middle-income countries[j]	769,786	1,601,430	2,793,969	30.6	40.7	52.2	1.1
High-income countries	954,057	1,138,539	1,225,190	76.2	80.2	85.5	0.3

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Low-and-middle-income countries[j]	1,914,592	3,596,043	5,249,072	39.1	53.0	64.0	1.7
Middle-income countries[j]	1,810,722	3,321,864	4,636,436	40.2	55.3	67.4	1.8
Upper-middle-income countries[j]	1,144,807	1,994,613	2,455,103	48.1	70.1	86.3	2.4
Lower-middle-income countries[j]	665,916	1,327,251	2,181,333	31.3	42.0	54.0	1.1
Low-income countries	103,870	274,179	612,636	26.6	35.3	46.5	1.0
No income group available[k]	21,909	26,051	28,784	88.1	89.2	90.1	0.2
Africa	299,845	719,609	1,471,512	36.1	46.4	59.7	1.1
Eastern Africa	53,479	164,314	407,976	20.6	32.0	47.7	1.4
Burundi	520	3,696	10,668	8.0	25.7	44.2	2.4
Comoros	150	300	629	28.0	33.9	48.1	-0.2
Djibouti	548	864	1,133	73.3	73.0	74.0	-0.6
Eritrea	766	1,246	2,316	34.1	34.5	40.7	1.1
Ethiopia	10,057	32,662	76,169	14.9	24.1	33.8	1.4
Kenya	5,962	18,532	47,028	19.5	32.2	56.3	3.6
Madagascar	4,131	10,772	25,754	25.0	32.9	48.4	1.2
Malawi	1,661	3,909	13,064	14.7	17.6	35.0	0.8
Mauritius[1]	512	495	477	42.1	39.0	43.1	-0.4
Mayotte[2]	114	318	642	73.1	94.4	99.4	2.7
Mozambique	5,302	13,258	33,528	29.2	37.2	52.8	0.6
Réunion[2]	689	858	939	90.3	97.3	99.7	1.2
Rwanda	1,296	4,504	12,441	15.8	30.9	54.8	6.1
Seychelles	36	60	71	43.4	45.5	50.4	-0.5
Somalia	2,922	10,838	22,789	33.1	55.1	61.3	1.3
South Sudan	968	2,643	5,665	16.0	21.7	30.9	1.4
Uganda	2,794	16,412	36,894	11.6	31.9	43.2	2.1
United Republic of Tanzania[3]	7,604	26,020	80,872	22.2	36.9	62.4	1.7
Zambia	3,594	10,062	22,495	35.9	45.9	59.1	-0.4
Zimbabwe	3,853	6,864	14,402	32.4	40.5	55.7	0.4
Middle Africa	39,212	111,781	257,427	39.5	50.9	62.5	1.5
Angola	8,180	27,899	68,901	50.5	71.5	92.7	2.4
Cameroon	6,896	16,634	30,242	46.2	55.7	59.2	1.1
Central African Republic	1,445	2,456	5,986	37.7	44.6	56.4	0.1
Chad	1,843	5,790	20,352	21.7	27.6	52.4	0.1
Congo	1,856	4,158	8,665	58.9	64.1	78.7	0.9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	17,628	50,903	116,741	34.9	45.1	53.5	1.5
Equatorial Guinea	273	1,387	2,332	38.8	71.6	74.2	0.0
Gabon	1,015	2,388	3,884	79.6	92.1	95.1	1.1
Sao Tome and Principe	76	166	323	53.0	69.2	88.6	1.8

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Northern Africa	85,015	144,867	215,372	48.4	52.4	57.7	0.4
Algeria	18,497	35,965	51,314	59.9	75.8	86.1	1.3
Egypt	31,231	50,784	80,187	42.7	42.9	49.6	0.1
Libya	4,613	6,557	8,511	87.0	87.9	91.9	0.5
Morocco	15,231	24,261	33,237	53.6	63.1	76.5	0.6
Sudan	8,997	18,048	30,390	32.3	34.9	35.7	0.1
Tunisia	6,212	8,731	11,035	63.6	70.7	84.0	0.5
Western Sahara	234	522	698	85.9	86.9	89.8	0.1
Southern Africa	28,633	46,024	63,824	53.3	62.2	69.7	1.4
Botswana	892	1,741	2,509	53.2	68.0	73.0	1.5
Eswatini	238	336	512	22.8	26.7	34.0	-0.5
Lesotho	387	1,056	1,960	19.3	44.7	65.5	2.9
Namibia	584	1,573	2,689	32.1	50.9	59.6	2.3
South Africa	26,532	41,319	56,154	56.3	63.8	70.9	1.4
Western Africa	93,506	252,622	526,912	38.5	54.1	71.7	1.6
Benin	2,764	7,905	19,410	38.3	53.4	79.4	0.8
Burkina Faso	2,147	6,963	20,483	18.0	28.9	54.9	4.7
Cabo Verde	244	409	533	53.9	77.6	94.1	1.6
Côte d'Ivoire	7,625	17,844	40,500	43.1	54.5	72.6	0.9
Gambia	683	1,834	3,359	47.0	65.0	78.1	3.1
Ghana	8,628	20,662	37,101	43.9	58.9	73.4	1.6
Guinea	2,606	5,816	13,331	30.9	38.5	57.0	1.0
Guinea-Bissau	455	1,049	1,696	36.8	46.7	49.3	0.9
Liberia	1,282	3,214	6,289	43.8	56.1	70.6	0.8
Mali	2,194	8,117	21,993	19.0	32.2	47.7	1.7
Mauritania	995	3,268	7,232	38.1	61.5	76.8	-0.0
Niger	1,857	5,130	17,768	16.1	18.4	33.8	0.8
Nigeria	54,696	151,484	299,463	43.3	63.8	83.4	2.0
Saint Helena[4]	2	2	1	40.3	37.2	31.7	-0.2
Senegal	4,054	10,558	19,390	40.7	55.8	63.9	0.5
Sierra Leone	1,572	4,051	8,252	35.5	45.9	63.7	0.6
Togo	1,701	4,316	10,112	33.1	44.4	64.9	1.4
Asia	1,407,439	2,591,977	3,409,937	37.6	53.6	64.6	2.0
Central Asia	26,055	40,853	61,444	46.4	48.9	54.1	0.6
Kazakhstan	8,684	13,003	17,846	56.0	62.4	67.2	-0.4
Kyrgyzstan	1,775	2,535	3,673	35.3	34.7	38.1	-0.0
Tajikistan	1,668	2,822	3,677	26.5	26.2	23.6	-0.0
Turkmenistan	2,111	3,589	4,582	46.1	47.1	47.5	0.7
Uzbekistan	11,817	18,904	31,666	47.7	51.0	60.6	1.8
Eastern Asia	639,605	1,140,963	1,314,207	42.7	69.1	89.6	3.0
China[5]	462,534	939,481	1,130,569	36.4	66.3	89.7	4.2

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
China, Hong Kong SAR[6]	6,705	7,396	6,091	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
China, Macao SAR[7]	437	722	669	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
China, Taiwan Province of China[8]	17,397	18,241	15,486	77.9	78.9	79.7	0.0
Dem. People's Republic of Korea	14,062	17,056	19,584	59.4	64.2	75.9	0.1
Japan	99,860	113,625	100,916	78.6	92.3	96.0	0.3
Mongolia	1,393	2,502	3,300	56.7	71.1	73.3	0.5
Republic of Korea	37,217	41,940	37,593	79.6	81.2	83.3	0.3
Southern Asia	432,228	789,764	1,176,876	29.2	37.9	47.0	1.0
Afghanistan	3,736	11,373	31,663	18.6	25.9	41.2	0.9
Bangladesh	31,368	58,398	127,299	23.3	33.2	59.3	1.6
Bhutan	165	346	450	27.6	43.4	51.0	2.5
India	292,484	522,441	723,173	27.6	35.7	43.1	0.9
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	42,825	71,509	88,479	64.5	77.4	86.9	1.2
Maldives	78	225	368	27.6	42.5	62.4	2.8
Nepal	7,634	19,844	24,737	31.1	67.0	71.4	5.3
Pakistan	51,117	100,877	175,109	33.0	39.5	47.1	0.6
Sri Lanka	2,821	4,750	5,596	14.6	20.5	22.6	-0.6
South-Eastern Asia	195,188	381,021	526,045	37.0	54.4	67.9	2.1
Brunei Darussalam	232	350	457	71.2	75.0	87.9	0.6
Cambodia	2,321	7,337	9,612	18.6	41.1	43.8	0.6
Indonesia	90,723	169,698	254,539	42.0	59.4	79.4	2.3
Lao People's Democratic Republic	1,205	3,174	6,121	22.2	40.3	62.7	5.4
Malaysia[9]	14,233	27,845	40,294	62.0	77.4	91.0	1.7
Myanmar	12,471	16,775	23,132	27.5	30.6	39.5	0.6
Philippines	31,164	65,136	81,172	39.1	55.8	60.4	1.0
Singapore	4,035	5,871	6,082	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Thailand	19,824	44,977	52,541	31.5	62.8	79.1	4.1
Timor-Leste	180	408	908	24.1	28.8	48.1	1.4
Viet Nam	18,800	39,451	51,188	24.4	38.8	46.5	2.3
Western Asia	114,362	239,376	331,366	61.2	76.2	79.0	0.9
Armenia	2,030	1,946	1,718	65.0	65.9	68.9	-0.3
Azerbaijan[10]	4,180	6,097	6,664	51.1	58.6	59.4	0.1
Bahrain	588	1,643	2,139	87.8	100.0	100.0	-0.0
Cyprus[11]	652	914	1,041	68.8	66.7	69.0	0.1
Georgia[12]	2,272	2,329	2,280	52.5	61.2	62.2	-0.2
Iraq	16,519	32,886	59,326	67.6	69.9	82.5	0.2
Israel	5,578	8,716	12,642	91.3	91.6	96.6	0.1
Jordan	4,217	10,738	15,792	78.3	93.2	96.5	0.0

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Kuwait	1,935	5,026	6,368	99.0	100.0	100.0	0.2
Lebanon	3,723	5,321	6,546	86.0	91.0	93.5	0.1
Oman	1,633	4,367	7,478	71.5	79.5	95.5	-0.0
Qatar	621	3,096	4,159	96.3	99.4	99.9	0.2
Saudi Arabia	12,937	29,247	41,709	80.0	84.6	87.5	0.2
State of Palestine[13]	2,271	4,884	7,953	72.1	87.4	94.1	2.2
Syrian Arab Republic	8,631	18,468	30,571	51.9	72.1	80.9	0.8
Türkiye	38,582	78,473	83,365	59.0	89.5	91.4	1.5
United Arab Emirates	2,770	9,753	13,508	79.3	86.0	87.9	0.5
Yemen	5,221	15,470	28,109	26.6	37.0	39.6	1.9
Europe	520,596	561,200	571,055	71.5	75.4	81.2	0.3
Eastern Europe	207,315	199,166	195,788	68.1	70.0	76.6	0.1
Belarus	6,986	7,153	6,518	69.9	79.5	87.4	0.6
Bulgaria	5,461	4,980	4,349	68.3	74.2	80.5	1.1
Czechia	7,576	7,732	7,979	74.0	72.9	81.2	-0.1
Hungary	6,549	6,809	6,775	64.3	70.7	77.6	0.5
Poland	23,623	22,917	23,653	61.7	60.1	72.1	0.0
Republic of Moldova[14]	1,712	1,310	1,090	40.4	43.7	46.3	-1.1
Romania	11,654	9,865	8,858	52.9	52.2	55.3	-0.2
Russian Federation	107,334	108,359	110,318	73.2	75.3	81.0	0.2
Slovakia	3,018	2,912	2,680	56.1	53.2	54.3	-0.2
Ukraine[15]	33,403	27,129	23,569	67.4	69.6	73.7	-0.1
Northern Europe	73,541	89,771	98,223	77.8	82.0	84.8	0.2
Denmark[16]	4,544	5,333	5,694	85.1	88.8	93.0	0.0
Estonia	941	951	833	67.4	70.7	70.9	-0.0
Faroe Islands[17]	16	22	32	35.7	39.6	50.7	0.4
Finland[18]	3,474	4,191	4,219	67.1	74.5	78.8	0.6
Guernsey[19]	17	19	16	27.6	29.6	25.2	-0.0
Iceland	259	375	419	92.0	94.2	96.8	0.0
Ireland	2,248	3,428	4,395	59.1	64.6	73.6	0.4
Isle of Man[19]	39	44	38	51.8	52.1	49.1	0.0
Jersey[19]	28	36	29	32.4	34.5	28.0	0.1
Latvia	1,612	1,272	1,192	68.1	68.6	78.7	-0.1
Lithuania	2,344	1,955	1,698	67.0	69.1	75.2	-0.1
Norway[20]	3,419	4,699	5,393	76.1	83.6	91.4	0.4
Sweden	7,456	9,493	10,508	84.0	89.1	92.9	0.0
United Kingdom[21]	47,142	57,953	63,756	79.8	83.3	84.4	0.2
Southern Europe	96,678	108,012	106,543	66.4	71.6	78.8	0.3
Albania	1,318	1,632	1,414	41.6	58.9	63.1	1.7
Andorra	61	74	74	92.3	88.9	90.0	-0.3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1,770	1,655	1,735	42.6	52.7	70.6	0.8

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Croatia	2,409	2,225	2,354	55.7	57.8	72.8	0.0
Gibraltar[19]	28	40	50	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Greece	7,835	7,874	7,653	72.7	79.2	86.8	0.2
Holy See[22]	1	1	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Italy	38,483	41,214	36,888	67.2	69.7	71.1	0.1
Kosovo (under UNSC res. 1244)[23]	676	853	1,020	37.5	50.9	62.1	0.1
Malta	373	522	514	93.3	95.7	96.0	0.1
Montenegro	375	415	354	59.1	65.6	66.4	1.9
North Macedonia	1,203	1,141	1,134	58.5	62.9	75.0	-0.8
Portugal	5,595	6,403	7,542	54.4	61.5	77.2	1.2
San Marino	25	33	34	93.8	97.2	99.7	0.2
Serbia[24]	4,278	4,190	4,221	55.6	62.6	76.3	0.9
Slovenia	1,007	1,185	1,343	50.7	56.0	67.8	0.2
Spain[25]	31,243	38,559	40,212	76.2	80.5	89.5	0.2
Western Europe	143,062	164,250	170,501	78.1	82.3	86.9	0.5
Austria	5,350	6,354	6,911	66.8	69.7	79.2	0.1
Belgium	8,408	10,309	10,511	82.0	87.7	88.5	0.4
France[26]	45,514	52,551	58,854	76.5	78.8	86.3	0.5
Germany	65,515	69,058	66,360	80.1	82.1	84.8	0.0
Liechtenstein	5	6	5	15.0	14.6	11.7	-0.9
Luxembourg	368	646	755	84.4	94.9	95.3	0.5
Monaco	32	38	37	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Netherlands[27]	12,603	17,602	18,752	78.5	95.9	98.9	3.5
Switzerland	5,266	7,688	8,317	73.3	85.7	89.0	0.2
Americas[28]	641,111	856,325	1,008,614	76.9	81.1	87.2	0.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	394,127	544,463	639,288	75.6	81.5	87.6	0.6
Caribbean	24,307	30,973	36,428	63.5	69.4	79.2	0.9
Anguilla[19]	11	15	15	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Antigua and Barbuda	24	23	22	32.2	24.3	23.6	-1.5
Aruba[29]	58	67	61	65.4	61.7	61.2	-0.0
Bahamas	262	328	353	81.0	81.3	83.2	0.1
Barbados	164	169	198	62.5	59.7	74.9	-0.3
Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba[29]	11	25	26	74.9	81.1	75.5	-0.2
British Virgin Islands[19]	8	23	35	42.0	57.4	86.6	0.1
Cayman Islands[19]	40	76	104	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Cuba	8,402	8,446	7,987	75.6	77.2	85.1	0.4
Curaçao[29]	132	170	167	90.9	91.5	96.3	0.3
Dominica	45	49	55	65.2	74.0	87.4	0.2

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Dominican Republic	5,263	8,354	11,618	61.3	72.5	89.4	1.6
Grenada	39	43	47	35.9	36.7	41.5	0.3
Guadeloupe[2]	413	361	326	98.4	96.4	99.8	0.0
Haiti	3,059	6,622	9,675	36.8	55.6	65.8	4.1
Jamaica	1,349	1,686	1,890	51.7	59.4	77.0	0.4
Martinique[2]	397	330	281	94.3	96.8	99.8	0.5
Montserrat[19]	0	0	0	8.0	9.0	9.0	32.1
Puerto Rico[30]	3,597	3,052	2,487	94.4	94.3	99.3	0.0
Saint Barthélemy[2]	7	11	13	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Saint Kitts and Nevis	15	15	17	32.8	31.9	38.4	-0.5
Saint Lucia	44	52	49	27.9	29.1	28.3	-1.1
Saint Martin (French part)[2]	30	25	19	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	51	48	46	44.9	48.0	51.5	0.3
Sint Maarten (Dutch part)[29]	31	44	51	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Trinidad and Tobago	738	816	767	55.9	54.0	54.8	-0.0
Turks and Caicos Islands[19]	16	44	50	84.6	94.4	97.6	0.9
United States Virgin Islands[30]	101	80	69	92.6	95.4	96.9	0.4
Central America	92,378	138,934	179,615	68.4	75.0	83.4	0.7
Belize	115	176	222	47.7	41.6	43.0	-0.0
Costa Rica	2,325	4,108	4,566	59.0	79.7	85.3	1.8
El Salvador	3,362	4,807	5,517	56.6	75.5	82.8	1.6
Guatemala	5,058	10,521	15,444	43.2	56.3	62.6	3.6
Honduras	2,981	6,521	10,164	45.3	59.3	68.5	1.2
Mexico	73,891	105,611	133,325	74.9	80.0	89.5	0.5
Nicaragua	2,773	4,166	5,995	55.2	59.4	68.5	0.2
Panama	1,873	3,024	4,382	62.2	66.2	77.8	0.7
South America	277,442	374,555	423,244	79.7	85.5	90.3	0.5
Argentina	33,186	42,345	45,134	89.2	92.4	93.4	0.2
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	5,324	9,004	13,281	61.9	71.6	82.4	0.8
Brazil	141,213	187,652	198,530	81.1	88.2	91.3	0.6
Chile	13,375	17,711	19,278	86.3	89.2	94.9	0.3
Colombia	29,063	42,090	53,449	74.3	78.8	90.0	0.6
Ecuador	7,701	11,594	17,041	60.7	63.4	79.9	0.6
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)[31]	2	3	3	67.6	81.5	84.8	1.5
French Guiana[2]	131	272	440	81.8	86.6	93.2	-0.1
Guyana	220	221	256	28.8	26.5	27.2	-0.5
Paraguay	2,934	4,936	6,801	57.5	70.4	78.7	0.9

Major area, region, country or area	Urban Population (thousands)			Proportion urban (per cent)			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
	2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Peru	19,356	29,596	37,277	72.8	85.6	91.9	0.5
Suriname	318	421	548	66.7	65.8	74.7	0.0
Uruguay	2,981	3,238	3,176	91.3	95.7	97.6	0.1
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	21,637	25,472	28,031	88.2	89.3	90.1	0.2
Northern America	246,984	311,862	369,327	79.0	80.5	86.6	0.3
Bermuda[19]	62	65	57	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Canada	24,290	33,255	39,863	78.6	82.9	87.4	0.2
Greenland[17]	46	49	47	81.5	88.6	93.7	0.4
Saint Pierre and Miquelon[2]	6	5	4	89.1	90.2	92.8	0.1
United States of America[32]	222,581	278,488	329,356	79.1	80.2	86.5	0.3
Oceania	21,569	31,521	41,929	68.8	67.6	72.7	-0.3
Australia/New Zealand	19,589	28,073	34,575	85.2	87.1	90.4	0.0
Australia[33]	16,283	23,661	29,125	85.1	87.7	89.6	-0.0
New Zealand[34]	3,306	4,411	5,449	85.7	84.0	94.7	0.1
Melanesia	1,384	2,793	6,585	19.1	21.2	36.4	-0.3
Fiji	404	556	704	48.1	59.5	70.4	0.8
New Caledonia[2]	137	201	273	61.6	68.2	80.1	0.6
Papua New Guinea	732	1,698	4,822	13.2	15.8	32.3	-0.4
Solomon Islands	69	263	586	15.8	31.3	44.7	1.9
Vanuatu	40	75	201	21.7	22.3	37.6	1.3
Micronesia	332	366	451	65.3	69.3	75.2	0.3
Guam[30]	149	159	187	93.1	94.2	97.9	0.2
Kiribati	38	87	141	43.3	63.4	77.2	1.3
Marshall Islands	35	29	22	68.3	79.1	88.3	0.4
Micronesia (Fed. States of)	25	26	30	22.3	22.5	23.7	-0.1
Nauru	10	12	16	100.0	100.0	100.0	0.0
Northern Mariana Islands[30]	62	40	41	90.2	92.2	95.6	0.1
Palau	13	14	14	69.6	79.3	90.4	0.6
Polynesia[35]	264	289	318	42.2	41.9	43.2	0.1
American Samoa[30]	50	37	25	88.6	80.5	67.9	-0.0
Cook Islands[36]	10	10	8	65.0	76.9	84.8	3.3
French Polynesia[2]	134	174	193	56.0	61.8	67.7	-0.1
Niue[36]	1	1	1	34.5	37.2	49.7	-0.6
Samoa	40	38	55	22.0	17.5	20.2	0.1
Tokelau[36]	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tonga	24	22	27	23.0	21.2	25.7	0.1
Tuvalu	4	6	9	45.5	65.4	87.0	1.2
Wallis and Futuna Islands[2]	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Notes:

* The designations employed and the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The term "country" as used in this publication also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas. The names and composition of geographical areas follow those presented in "Standard country or area codes for statistical use" (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/49/Rev.3), available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49.htm.

[a] Countries and areas are grouped into eight Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) regions as defined by the United Nations Statistics Division and used for The Sustainable Development Goals Report (https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/regional-groups/). These regions are further divided into 21 geographic subregions.

[b] Sub-Saharan Africa refers to all of Africa except Northern Africa.

[c] The designation "more developed" and "less developed" regions are intended for statistical purposes and do not express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process.

[d] More developed regions comprise Europe, Northern America, Australia/New Zealand and Japan.

[e] Less developed regions comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (except Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

[f] The group of least developed countries includes 44 countries: 31 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2 in Northern Africa and Western Asia, 4 in Central and Southern Asia, 3 in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 1 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 3 in Oceania (as accessed on 10 February 2025). Further information is available at https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/least-developed-countries.

[g] Other less developed countries comprise the less developed regions excluding the least developed countries.

[h] The group of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) is composed of 32 countries or territories: 16 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2 in Northern Africa and Western Asia, 8 in Central and Southern Asia, 2 in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 2 in Europe and Northern America (as accessed on 10 Feb. 2025). Further information is available at https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/landlocked-developing-countries.

[i] The group of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) is composed of 57 countries or territories: 29 in the Caribbean, 20 in the Pacific and 8 in the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS) (as accessed on 10 Feb. 2025). Further information is available at https://www.un.org/ohrlls/content/small-island-developing-states.

[j] The country classification by income level is based on GNI per capita from the World Bank (as accessed on 10 Feb. 2025). Further information is available at https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519. For the current 2025 fiscal year, low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of $1,145 or less in 2023; lower middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between $1,146 and $4,515; upper middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between $4,516 and $14,005; high-income economies are those with more than a GNI per capita of $14,005.

[k] Countries and areas are grouped geographically into six major areas designated as: Africa; Asia; Europe; Latin America and the Caribbean; Northern America, and Oceania.

[1] Including Agalega, Rodrigues and Saint Brandon.

[2] For statistical purposes, the data for France do not include this area.

[3] Including Zanzibar.

[4] Including Ascension and Tristan da Cunha. For statistical purposes, the data for United Kingdom do not include this area.

[5] For statistical purposes, the data for China do not include Hong Kong and Macao, Special Administrative Regions (SAR) of China, and Taiwan Province of China.

[6] As of 1 July 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. For statistical purposes, the data for China do not include this area.

[7] As of 20 December 1999, Macao became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. For statistical purposes, the data for China do not include this area.

[8] For statistical purposes, the data for China do not include this area.

[9] Including Sabah and Sarawak.

[10] Including Nagorno-Karabakh.

[11] Refers to the whole country.

[12] Including Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

[13] Including East Jerusalem.

[14] Including Transnistria.

[15] Including Crimea.

[16] For statistical purposes, the data for Denmark do not include Faroe Islands, and Greenland.

[17] For statistical purposes, the data for Denmark do not include this area.

[18] Including Åland Islands.

[19] For statistical purposes, the data for United Kingdom do not include this area.

[20] Including Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands.

[21] Refers to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. For statistical purposes, the data for United Kingdom do not include Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), Gibraltar, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Jersey, Montserrat, Saint Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands.

[22] Refers to the Vatican City State.

[23] Refers to Kosovo (United Nations administered region under security council resolution 1244). For statistical purposes, the data for Serbia do not include this area.

[24] For statistical purposes, the data for Serbia do not include Kosovo (United Nations administered region under security council resolution 1244).

[25] Including Canary Islands, Ceuta and Melilla.

[26] For statistical purposes, the data for France do not include French Guiana, French Polynesia, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Mayotte, New Caledonia, Réunion, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Saint Barthélemy, Saint Martin (French part), Wallis and Futuna Islands.

[27] For statistical purposes, the data for Netherlands do not include Aruba, Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten (Dutch part).

[28] Americas comprises of South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and Northern America. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Americas (accessed on 8 May 2024)

[29] For statistical purposes, the data for Netherlands do not include this area.

[30] For statistical purposes, the data for United States of America do not include this area.

[31] A dispute exists between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland concerning sovereignty over the Falkland Islands (Malvinas). For statistical purposes, the data for United Kingdom do not include this area.

[32] For statistical purposes, the data for United States of America do not include American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and United States Virgin Islands.

[33] Including Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Norfolk Island.

[34] For statistical purposes, the data for New Zealand do not include Cook Islands, Niue, and Tokelau.

[35] Including Pitcairn.

[36] For statistical purposes, the data for New Zealand do not include this area.Table A4

Table A4
Population size and ranking of cities with more than 5 million inhabitants as of 1 July 2025

City	Country or area	Population (thousands)			Rank			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
		2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Jakarta	Indonesia	25 592	41 914	51 784	2	1	2	1.97
Dhaka	Bangladesh	17 435	36 585	52 123	9	2	1	2.96
Tōkyō (Tokyo)	Japan	30 303	33 413	30 658	1	3	7	0.39
New Delhi	India	17 969	30 222	33 891	6	4	4	2.08
Shanghai	China	14 035	29 559	34 912	14	5	3	2.98
Guangzhou	China	18 970	27 563	29 243	3	6	8	1.49
Al-Qahirah (Cairo)	Egypt	15 677	25 566	32 366	12	7	6	1.96
Manila	Philippines	17 799	24 735	27 120	7	8	9	1.32
Kolkata	India	18 355	22 550	23 768	5	9	10	0.82
Seoul	Republic of Korea	18 963	22 490	21 225	4	10	12	0.68
Karachi	Pakistan	10 800	21 423	32 593	19	11	5	2.74
Mumbai	India	15 953	20 203	23 059	11	12	11	0.94
São Paulo	Brazil	16 702	18 950	18 217	10	13	16	0.51
Krung Thep Maha Nakhon (Bangkok)	Thailand	8 377	18 180	20 462	24	14	13	3.10
Ciudad de México (Mexico City)	Mexico	17 598	17 734	17 679	8	15	18	0.03
Beijing	China	9 635	17 013	18 004	21	16	17	2.27
Lahore	Pakistan	7 979	15 156	20 388	26	17	14	2.57
Istanbul	Türkiye	10 634	15 015	16 303	20	18	20	1.38
Moskva (Moscow)	Russian Federation	11 195	14 525	15 522	18	19	22	1.04
Ho Chi Minh City	Viet Nam	6 006	14 053	17 201	38	20	19	3.40
Buenos Aires	Argentina	11 712	14 018	14 236	16	21	25	0.72
New York City	United States of America	13 044	13 920	13 225	15	22	28	0.26
Shenzhen	China	8 181	13 878	14 661	25	23	23	2.11
Bengaluru	India	6 052	13 187	14 258	37	24	24	3.12
Osaka	Japan	14 488	12 964	10 449	13	25	37	-0.44
Lagos	Nigeria	7 909	12 792	16 180	27	26	21	1.92
Los Angeles	United States of America	11 196	12 740	13 862	17	27	26	0.52
Luanda	Angola	715	11 370	20 286	82	28	15	11.07
Chennai	India	7 613	11 153	11 757	30	29	34	1.53
Kinshasa	Democratic Republic of the Congo	5 328	10 944	13 211	42	30	29	2.88
Bogotá	Colombia	6 341	10 624	12 478	34	31	31	2.06
Lima	Peru	6 992	10 580	12 358	32	32	32	1.66

City	Country or area	Population (thousands)			Rank			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
		2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
London	United Kingdom	7 655	10 416	11 869	29	33	33	1.23
Hajipur	India	3 364	9 942	13 695	65	34	27	4.33
Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	8 417	9 500	9 300	22	35	45	0.48
Paris	France	8 385	9 382	9 326	23	36	44	0.45
Hyderabad	India	6 341	9 191	9 546	35	37	41	1.48
Tehrān (Tehran)	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	6 999	9 175	9 499	31	38	42	1.08
Taipei	China, Taiwan Province of China	7 899	9 137	8 177	28	39	54	0.58
Bandung	Indonesia	6 333	8 909	9 747	36	40	39	1.36
Kuala Lumpur	Malaysia	4 144	8 444	10 627	53	41	36	2.85
Dar es Salaam	United Republic of Tanzania	2 072	7 795	13 160	79	42	30	5.30
Suzhou	China	3 672	7 731	7 639	61	43	59	2.98
Ahmedabad	India	5 119	7 632	8 236	45	44	53	1.60
Hangzhou	China	4 965	7 500	9 625	46	45	40	1.65
Wuhan	China	5 637	7 364	6 157	40	46	71	1.07
Tianjin	China	4 302	7 285	7 645	50	47	58	2.11
Alexandria	Egypt	4 478	7 267	9 023	48	48	47	1.94
Nagoya	Japan	6 506	7 146	6 293	33	49	69	0.38
Johannesburg	South Africa	2 768	7 077	8 916	71	50	48	3.76
Chongqing	China	5 282	7 071	6 080	44	51	72	1.17
Ar-Riyāḍ (Riyadh)	Saudi Arabia	2 557	6 916	9 153	76	52	46	3.98
Surat	India	3 293	6 909	8 049	66	53	55	2.96
Surabaya	Indonesia	5 722	6 844	6 343	39	54	67	0.72
Pune	India	4 345	6 818	7 742	49	55	57	1.80
Al-Kharṭūm (Khartoum)	Sudan	4 135	6 809	9 444	54	56	43	2.00
Nanjing	China	3 898	6 801	6 317	57	57	68	2.23
Santiago	Chile	5 305	6 726	6 931	43	58	64	0.95
Ādīs Ābeba (Addis Ababa)	Ethiopia	2 792	6 706	10 783	70	59	35	3.51
Abidjan	Côte d'Ivoire	3 442	6 622	9 775	63	60	38	2.62
Chaozhou	China	4 213	6 408	6 837	52	61	66	1.68
Ammān (Amman)	Jordan	2 640	6 404	8 393	73	62	52	3.55
Baghdād (Baghdad)	Iraq	4 272	6 391	7 465	51	63	60	1.61
Chengdu	China	5 487	6 140	5 217	41	64	79	0.45
Nairobi	Kenya	2 580	6 134	8 515	75	65	51	3.46
Kozhikode	India	2 317	6 124	7 104	78	66	63	3.89
Shenyang	China	4 586	5 703	5 052	47	67	80	0.87
Kābul (Kabul)	Afghanistan	2 715	5 636	8 003	72	68	56	2.92
Onitsha	Nigeria	2 353	5 628	8 681	77	69	49	3.49

City	Country or area	Population (thousands)			Rank			Average annual rate of change (per cent)
		2000	2025	2050	2000	2025	2050	2000-2025
Yangon	Myanmar	3 805	5 618	6 050	59	70	73	1.56
Accra	Ghana	2 612	5 593	7 231	74	71	62	3.05
Madrid	Spain	3 921	5 584	5 589	56	72	78	1.41
Faisalabad	Pakistan	2 817	5 566	7 311	69	73	61	2.72
Toronto	Canada	3 793	5 494	6 169	60	74	70	1.48
Mashhad	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3 470	5 398	5 670	62	75	77	1.77
Dubai	United Arab Emirates	1 297	5 284	6 852	81	76	65	5.62
Xi'an	China	3 982	5 231	4 745	55	77	82	1.09
Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte - Colombo	Sri Lanka	3 818	5 224	5 816	58	78	75	1.25
Yaoundé	Cameroon	1 579	5 106	8 661	80	79	50	4.70
Kochi	India	3 394	5 078	5 844	64	80	74	1.61
Hà Nội (Hanoi)	Viet Nam	3 024	5 068	4 790	68	81	81	2.07
Lucknow	India	3 200	5 052	5 690	67	82	76	1.83

Urbanization is reshaping the global landscape of human life. Since 1950, the share of the world's population living in urban areas has surged, and it is projected to continue rising through 2050. This report presents the highlights of the 2025 Revision of the *World Urbanization Prospects* and offers a concise yet powerful overview of this transformation, combining global and regional trends with country-level insights spanning the period from 1950 to 2050.

At the heart of this edition is the Degree of Urbanization, a harmonized, spatially based approach that enables meaningful international comparisons, alongside results based on national definitions.

The dataset includes the latest estimates of urban and rural populations for 237 countries or areas from 1950 to 2025, with projections until 2050. It also provides estimates of the population size of all cities with 50,000 inhabitants or more by 2025. The annex tables present data on built-up area and population distribution across rural areas, towns and cities, along with their relative shares for selected years.

With clear visuals and accessible analysis, this summary highlights the demographic shifts behind urban growth, diversity of urban patterns and importance of data for shaping sustainable urban futures. It serves as an essential reference for policymakers, researchers and all those working to implement the New Urban Agenda and achieve Sustainable Development Goal 11: to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

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