

URBAN (AREA)

The definition of 'urban' varies from country to country, and, with periodic reclassification, can also vary within one country over time, making direct comparisons difficult. An urban area can be defined by one or more of the following: administrative criteria or political boundaries (e.g., area within the jurisdiction of a municipality or town committee), a threshold population size (where the minimum for an urban settlement is typically in the region of 2,000 people, although this varies globally between 200 and 50,000), population density, economic function (e.g., where a significant majority of the population is not primarily engaged in agriculture, or where there is surplus employment) or the presence of urban characteristics (e.g., paved streets, electric lighting, sewerage). In 2010, 3.5 billion people lived in areas classified as urban.

URBAN GROWTH

The (relative or absolute) increase in the number of people who live in towns and cities. The pace of urban population growth depends on the natural increase of the urban population and the population gained by urban areas through both net rural-urban migration and the reclassification of rural settlements into cities and towns.

URBANIZATION

The proportion of a country that is urban.

RATE OF URBANIZATION

The increase in the proportion of urban population over time, calculated as the rate of growth of the urban population minus that of the total population. Positive rates of urbanization result when the urban population grows at a faster rate than the total population.

CITY PROPER

The population living within the administrative boundaries of a city, e.g., Washington, D.C.

Because city boundaries do not regularly adapt to accommodate population increases, the concepts of **urban agglomeration** and **metropolitan area** are often used to improve the comparability of measurements of city populations across countries and over time.

URBAN AGGLOMERATION

The population of a built-up or densely populated area

containing the city proper, suburbs and continuously settled commuter areas or adjoining territory inhabited at urban levels of residential density.

Large urban agglomerations often include several administratively distinct but functionally linked cities. For example, the urban agglomeration of Tokyo includes the cities of Chiba, Kawasaki, Yokohama and others.

METROPOLITAN AREA/REGION

A formal local government area comprising the urban area as a whole and its primary commuter areas, typically formed around a city with a large concentration of people (i.e., a population of at least 100,000).

In addition to the city proper, a metropolitan area includes both the surrounding territory with urban levels of residential density and some additional lower-density areas that are adjacent to and linked to the city (e.g., through frequent transport, road linkages or commuting facilities). Examples of metropolitan areas include Greater London and Metro Manila.

URBAN SPRAWL

Also 'horizontal spreading' or 'dispersed urbanization'. The uncontrolled and disproportionate expansion of an urban area into the surrounding countryside, forming low-density, poorly planned patterns of development. Common in both high-income and low-income countries, urban sprawl is characterized by a scattered population living in separate residential areas, with long blocks and poor access, often overdependent on motorized transport and missing well-defined hubs of commercial activity.

PERI-URBAN AREA

An area between consolidated urban and rural regions.

MEGACITY

An urban agglomeration with a population of 10 million or more.

In 2009, 21 urban agglomerations qualified as megacities, accounting for 9.4 per cent of the world's urban population. In 1975, New York, Tokyo and Mexico City were the only megacities. Today, 11 megacities are found in Asia, 4 in Latin America and 2 each in Africa, Europe and North America. Eleven of these megacities are capitals of their countries.

Megacities, 2009 (population in millions)

1 Tokyo, Japan (36.5)	12 Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, United States (12.7)
2 Delhi, India (21.7)	13 Beijing, China (12.2)
3 Sao Paulo, Brazil (20.0)	14 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (11.8)
4 Mumbai, India (19.7)	15 Manila, Philippines (11.4)
5 Mexico City, Mexico (19.3)	16 Osaka-Kobe, Japan (11.3)
6 New York-Newark, United States (19.3)	17 Cairo, Egypt (10.9)
7 Shanghai, China (16.3)	18 Moscow, Russian Federation (10.5)
8 Kolkata, India (15.3)	19 Paris, France (10.4)
9 Dhaka, Bangladesh (14.3)	20 Istanbul, Turkey (10.4)
10 Buenos Aires, Argentina (13.0)	21 Lagos, Nigeria (10.2)
11 Karachi, Pakistan (12.8)	

Sources: UNDESA, Population Division; UN-Habitat.

METACITY

A major conurbation – a megacity of more than 20 million people.

As cities grow and merge, new urban configurations are formed. These include **megaregions**, **urban corridors** and **city-regions**.

MEGAREGION

A rapidly growing urban cluster surrounded by low-density hinterland, formed as a result of expansion, growth and geographical convergence of more than one metropolitan area and other agglomerations. Common in North America and Europe, megaregions are now expanding in other parts of the world and are characterized by rapidly growing cities, great concentrations of people (including skilled workers), large markets and significant economic innovation and potential.

Examples include the Hong Kong-Shenzhen-Guangzhou megaregion (120 million people) in China and the Tokyo-Nagoya-Osaka-Kyoto-Kobe megaregion (predicted to reach 60 million by 2015) in Japan.

URBAN CORRIDOR

A linear 'ribbon' system of urban organization: cities of various sizes linked through transportation and economic axes, often running between major cities. Urban corridors

spark business and change the nature and function of individual towns and cities, promoting regional economic growth but also often reinforcing urban primacy and unbalanced regional development.

Examples include the industrial corridor developing between Mumbai and Delhi in India; the manufacturing and service industry corridor running from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to the port city of Klang; and the regional economic axis forming the greater Ibadan-Lagos-Accra urban corridor in West Africa.

CITY-REGION

An urban development on a massive scale: a major city that expands beyond administrative boundaries to engulf small cities, towns and semi-urban and rural hinterlands, sometimes expanding sufficiently to merge with other cities, forming large conurbations that eventually become city-regions.

For example, the Cape Town city-region in South Africa extends up to 100 kilometres, including the distances that commuters travel every day. The extended Bangkok region in Thailand is expected to expand another 200 kilometres from its centre by 2020, growing far beyond its current population of over 17 million.