United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Press Release

Report and dataset under embargo until 18 November 2025, 12:45 pm EST

Cities are home to 45 per cent of the global population, with megacities continuing to grow, UN report finds

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New York, 18 November 2025 – The world is becoming increasingly urban, with cities now home to 45 per cent of the global population of 8.2 billion, according to the *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results*, released today by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). The number of people living in cities has more than doubled since 1950, when only 20 per cent of the world's 2.5 billion people lived in cities. Looking ahead through 2050, two-thirds of global population growth is projected to occur in cities, and most of the remaining one-third in towns.

The number of megacities**,** urban areas with 10 million or more inhabitants, has quadrupled from 8 in 1975 to 33 in 2025. Over half of these (19) are in Asia.

Jakarta (Indonesia) is now the world's most populous city, with nearly 42 million residents, followed by Dhaka (Bangladesh) with almost 40 million, and Tokyo (Japan) with 33 million. Cairo (Egypt) is the only non-Asian city among the top ten. By 2050, the number of megacities is expected to rise to 37, with cities such as Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dar es Salaam (United Republic of Tanzania), Hajipur (India), and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) projected to surpass the 10 million mark.

Despite the prominence of megacities, the report finds that small and medium-sized cities are home to more people than megacities and are growing at a faster pace, particularly in Africa and Asia. Of the 12,000 cities analyzed, 96 per cent have fewer than one million inhabitants, and 81 per cent have fewer than 250,000. The new data show that the total number of cities worldwide more than doubled between 1975 and 2025, and projections indicate that by 2050, the number of cities worldwide could exceed 15,000, with most having populations below 250,000.

The report also highlights the divergent growth patterns of cities. While many cities continue to expand, others are experiencing population decline. Notably, some city populations are shrinking even as their countries' populations grow, while others are growing despite the decline of the national population. Most shrinking cities had fewer than 250,000 inhabitants in 2025, with over one-third located in China and 17 per cent in India. However, some very large cities, including Mexico City (Mexico) and Chengdu (China), have also seen population decreases.

Towns, defined as population clusters of at least 5,000 inhabitants and a density of at least 300 people per square kilometer, are the most common settlement type in 71 countries as diverse as Germany,

India, Uganda, and the United States. They play a vital role in connecting rural areas and cities, offering essential services and supporting local economies.

Rural areas remain the most common settlement type in 62 countries today, down from 116 in 1975. By 2050, this number is projected to decline further to 44 countries. Rural settlements still dominate in some countries in Europe including Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, and Romania, as well as in numerous countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as the Central African Republic, Chad, Eswatini, Mozambique and Zambia, among others. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where rural populations have continued to grow significantly, and the region is expected to account for nearly all future rural population growth.

“As governments convene at COP30 to advance global climate commitments, the United Nations underscores the pivotal role of urbanization in driving sustainable development and climate resilience across all settlement types,” said Li Junhua, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs. “Urbanization is a defining force of our time. When managed inclusively and strategically, it can unlock transformative pathways for climate action, economic growth, and social equity. To achieve balanced territorial development, countries must adopt integrated national policies that align housing, land use, mobility, and public services across urban and rural areas.”

The *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results* provides a critical evidence base for policymakers, planners, and researchers working to shape sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban futures. This edition also introduces major methodological innovations. For the first time, it integrates the Degree of Urbanization, a harmonized geospatial approach that provides projections for three categories of settlements: cities, towns, and rural areas. This new approach enhances international comparability and offers a more nuanced understanding of urbanization trends.

The 2025 revision also significantly expands geographic coverage. The minimum population threshold for cities has been lowered from 300,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, resulting in an increase in the number of cities analyzed to over 12,000. In addition to population estimates, this new grid-based approach provides land area and built-up area data for each settlement type, offering a more comprehensive view of urban development.

All materials related to the World Urbanization Prospects 2025, including the summary report and the complete dataset, are available at population.un.org.

Hashtag: #WorldUrbanizationReport, #UNpopulation

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