

E c o n o m i c &

S o c i a l  
A f f a i r s

# World Urbanization Prospects The 2007 Revision

Highlights



United Nations  
New York, 26 February 2008

# DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

## Note

The designations employed in this report and the material presented in it 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, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures.

This publication has been issued without formal editing.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

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

Two dots (..) indicate that the item is not applicable.

Three dots (...) indicate that data are not available or are not separately reported.

An em dash (—) indicates that the value is zero (magnitude zero).

0 or 0.0 indicates that the magnitude is not zero, but less than half of the unit employed.

A minus sign (-) before a figure indicates a decrease.

A full stop (.) is used to indicate decimals.

Years given start on 1 July.

Use of a hyphen (-) between years, for example, 1995-2000, signifies the full period involved, from 1 July of the beginning year to 30 June of the end year.

Details and percentages in tables do not necessarily add to totals because of rounding.

### References to countries, territories, areas and urban locations

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 of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The designations “more developed” and “less developed” regions are intended for statistical convenience and do not necessarily express a judgment about the stage reached by a particular country or area in the development process. The term “country”, as used in this publication, also refers, as appropriate, to territories or areas.

More developed regions comprise all regions of Europe plus Northern America, Australia/New Zealand and Japan.

Less developed regions comprise all regions of Africa, Asia (excluding Japan) and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

The group of least developed countries, as defined by the United Nations General Assembly in 2003, comprises 50 countries, of which 34 are in Africa, 10 in Asia, 1 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 5 in Oceania.

Country names and the composition of geographical areas follow those of “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>.

Names of cities or urban agglomerations are presented in their original language, following the names used by National Statistical Offices or the United Nations Demographic Yearbook. For cities with names in more than one language, different names are separated by a hyphen. If the country uses script with non-Latin characters, a transliteration of the original spelling into Latin script is used. If cities have established alternative names or English names, these names are added in brackets. The administrative subdivision to which a city belongs is appended to the city name to identify the city unambiguously.

For convenience, the term “growth rate” is used in this report instead of the more precise term “rate of change” which reflects that populations can grow or decline.

The following abbreviations have been used:

DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
SAR Special Administrative Region  
HDI Human Development Index

**For analytical purposes, the following country groupings have been used:**

CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES BY MAJOR AREA AND REGION OF THE WORLD

**Africa**

<i>Eastern Africa</i>	<i>Middle Africa</i>	<i>Northern Africa</i>	<i>Western Africa</i>
Burundi	Angola	Algeria	Benin
Comoros <sup>1</sup>	Cameroon	Egypt	Burkina Faso
Djibouti	Central African Republic	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Cape Verde
Eritrea	Chad	Morocco	Côte d'Ivoire
Ethiopia	Congo	Sudan	Gambia
Kenya	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Tunisia	Ghana
Madagascar	Equatorial Guinea	Western Sahara	Guinea
Malawi	Gabon		Guinea-Bissau
Mauritius <sup>2</sup>	São Tomé and Príncipe	<i>Southern Africa</i>	Liberia
Mozambique		Botswana	Mali
Réunion		Lesotho	Mauritania
Rwanda		Namibia	Niger
Seychelles		South Africa	Nigeria
Somalia		Swaziland	Saint Helena <sup>3</sup>
Uganda			Senegal
United Republic of Tanzania			Sierra Leone
Zambia			Togo
Zimbabwe			

**Asia**

<i>Eastern Asia</i>	<i>South-central Asia</i> <sup>4</sup>	<i>South-eastern Asia</i>	<i>Western Asia</i>
China	Afghanistan	Brunei Darussalam	Armenia
China, Hong Kong SAR	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Azerbaijan
China, Macao SAR	Bhutan	Indonesia	Bahrain
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	India	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Cyprus
Japan	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Malaysia	Georgia
Mongolia	Kazakhstan	Myanmar	Iraq
Republic of Korea	Kyrgyzstan	Philippines	Israel
	Maldives	Singapore	Jordan
	Nepal	Thailand	Kuwait
	Pakistan	Timor-Leste	Lebanon
	Sri Lanka	Viet Nam	Occupied Palestinian Territory
	Tajikistan		Oman
	Turkmenistan		Qatar
	Uzbekistan		Saudi Arabia
			Syrian Arab Republic
			Turkey
			United Arab Emirates
			Yemen

<sup>1</sup> Including the island of Mayotte.

<sup>2</sup> Including the islands of Agalega, Rodrigues, and Saint Brandon.

<sup>3</sup> Including the islands of Ascension and Tristan da Cunha.

<sup>4</sup> The regions Southern Asia and Central Asia are combined into South-Central Asia.

CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES (*continued*)

**Europe**

<i>Eastern Europe</i>	<i>Northern Europe</i>	<i>Southern Europe</i>	<i>Western Europe</i>
Belarus	Channel Islands <sup>5</sup>	Albania	Austria
Bulgaria	Denmark	Andorra	Belgium
Czech Republic	Estonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	France
Hungary	Faeroe Islands	Croatia	Germany
Moldova	Finland <sup>6</sup>	Gibraltar	Liechtenstein
Poland	Iceland	Greece	Luxembourg
Romania	Ireland	Holy See	Monaco
Russian Federation	Isle of Man	Italy	Netherlands
Slovakia	Latvia	Malta	Switzerland
Ukraine	Lithuania	Montenegro	
	Norway <sup>7</sup>	Portugal	
	Sweden	San Marino	
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland <sup>8</sup>	Serbia	
		Slovenia	
		Spain	
		The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <sup>9</sup>	

**Latin America and the Caribbean**

<i>Caribbean</i>	<i>Central America</i>	<i>South America</i>
Anguilla	Belize	Argentina
Antigua and Barbuda	Costa Rica	Bolivia
Aruba	El Salvador	Brazil
Bahamas	Guatemala	Chile
Barbados	Honduras	Colombia
British Virgin Islands	Mexico	Ecuador
Cayman Islands	Nicaragua	Falkland Islands (Malvinas)
Cuba	Panama	French Guiana
Dominica		Guyana
Dominican Republic		Paraguay
Grenada		Peru
Guadeloupe		Suriname
Haiti		Uruguay
Jamaica		Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Martinique		
Montserrat		
Netherlands Antilles		
Puerto Rico		
Saint Kitts and Nevis		
Saint Lucia		
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		
Trinidad and Tobago		
Turks and Caicos Islands		
United States Virgin Islands		

<sup>5</sup> Including the islands of Guernsey and Jersey.

<sup>6</sup> Including Åland Islands.

<sup>7</sup> Including Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands.

<sup>8</sup> Also referred to as United Kingdom.

<sup>9</sup> Also referred to as TFYR Macedonia.

CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES (*continued*)

**Northern America**

Bermuda  
Canada  
Greenland  
Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon  
United States of America

**Oceania**

*Australia/New Zealand*

Australia<sup>10</sup>  
New Zealand

*Melanesia*

Fiji  
New Caledonia  
Papua New Guinea  
Solomon Islands  
Vanuatu

*Micronesia*

Guam  
Kiribati  
Marshall Islands  
Micronesia  
(Federated States of)  
Nauru  
Northern Mariana Islands  
Palau

*Polynesia*

American Samoa  
Cook Islands  
French Polynesia  
Niue  
Pitcairn  
Samoa  
Tokelau  
Tonga  
Tuvalu  
Wallis and Futuna Islands

**Sub-Saharan Africa**

Angola  
Benin  
Botswana  
Burkina Faso  
Burundi  
Cameroon  
Cape Verde  
Central African  
Chad  
Comoros  
Congo

Côte d'Ivoire  
Democratic Republic  
of the Congo  
Djibouti  
Equatorial Guinea  
Eritrea  
Ethiopia  
Gabon  
Gambia  
Ghana  
Guinea  
Guinea-Bissau

Kenya  
Lesotho  
Liberia  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mali  
Mauritania  
Mauritius  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Niger

Nigeria  
Réunion  
Rwanda  
Saint Helena  
São Tomé and Príncipe  
Senegal  
Seychelles  
Sierra Leone  
Somalia  
South Africa  
Sudan

Swaziland  
Togo  
Uganda  
United Republic  
of Tanzania  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

---

<sup>10</sup> Including Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and Norfolk Island.

CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES (*continued*)

**Least developed countries**

Afghanistan	Gambia	Rwanda
Angola	Guinea	Samoa
Bangladesh	Guinea-Bissau	São Tomé and Príncipe
Benin	Haiti	Senegal
Bhutan	Kiribati	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Solomon Islands
Burundi	Lesotho	Somalia
Cambodia	Liberia	Sudan
Cape Verde	Madagascar	Timor-Leste
Central African Republic	Malawi	Togo
Chad	Maldives	Tuvalu
Comoros	Mali	Uganda
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Mauritania	United Republic of Tanzania
Djibouti	Mozambique	Vanuatu
Equatorial Guinea	Myanmar	Yemen
Eritrea	Nepal	Zambia
Ethiopia	Niger	





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 1988 the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations has been issuing every two years revised and updated estimates and projections of the urban and rural populations of all countries in the world and of their major urban agglomerations. This note presents the main findings of the *2007 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects* which are consistent with the size of the total population of each country as estimated or projected in the *2006 Revision of World Population Prospects* (United Nations, 2008).

The *2007 Revision* presents estimates and projections of the total, urban and rural populations of the world for the period 1950-2050. The results are shown for development groups, six major areas (i.e., Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania) and 21 regions. Data are further disaggregated for the 229 countries or areas of the world. The *2007 Revision* also provides estimates and projections of the population of urban agglomerations with 750,000 inhabitants or more in 2007 for the period 1950-2025. Estimates of the proportion of the population living in urban areas and the population of cities are derived on the basis of national statistics. The most common source of data on the proportion urban and the population of cities and urban agglomerations is the population census. For some countries, the basic data are obtained from population registers or administrative statistics.

The *2007 Revision* corroborates that the world population will reach a landmark in 2008: for the first time in history the urban population will equal the rural population of the world and, from then on, the world population will be urban in its majority. This event is a consequence of rapid urbanization in the last decades, especially in the less developed regions. Nevertheless, major parts of the world remain largely rural. In Africa and Asia, still six out of every ten persons live in rural areas.

Between 2007 and 2050, the world population is expected to increase by 2.5 billion, passing from 6.7 billion to 9.2 billion (United Nations, 2008). At the same time, the population living in urban areas is projected to gain 3.1 billion, passing from 3.3 billion in 2007 to 6.4 billion 2050. Thus, the urban areas of the world are expected to absorb all the population growth expected over the next four decades while at the same time drawing in some of the rural population. As a result, the world rural population is projected to start decreasing in about a decade and 0.6 billion fewer rural inhabitants are expected in 2050 than today. Furthermore, most of the population growth expected in urban areas will be concentrated in the cities and towns of the less developed regions. Asia, in particular, is projected to see its urban population increase by 1.8 billion, Africa by 0.9 billion, and Latin America and the Caribbean by 0.2 billion. Population growth is therefore becoming largely an urban phenomenon concentrated in the developing world.

Realization of these projections is contingent on the continuation of fertility reductions in the developing world. If fertility were to remain constant at current levels and the pace of urbanization remained that projected in the *2007 Revision*, the world urban population would increase to 8.1 billion by 2050 instead of the 6.4 billion expected when fertility is assumed to continue declining in all developing regions. In many countries, natural increase (the difference of births minus deaths) accounts for 60 per cent or more of urban population growth. Consequently, policies that facilitate the reduction of fertility by allowing couples to have the number of children they desire can contribute to moderate increases in the number of urban dwellers, thereby making it easier for developing countries to adjust to the transformations associated with growing urbanization.

There is significant diversity in the urbanization levels reached by different regions. The transformative power of urbanization was felt earlier in today's more developed regions and they have reached high levels of urbanization. Thus, 74 per cent of the inhabitants of more developed regions lived in urban areas in 2007,

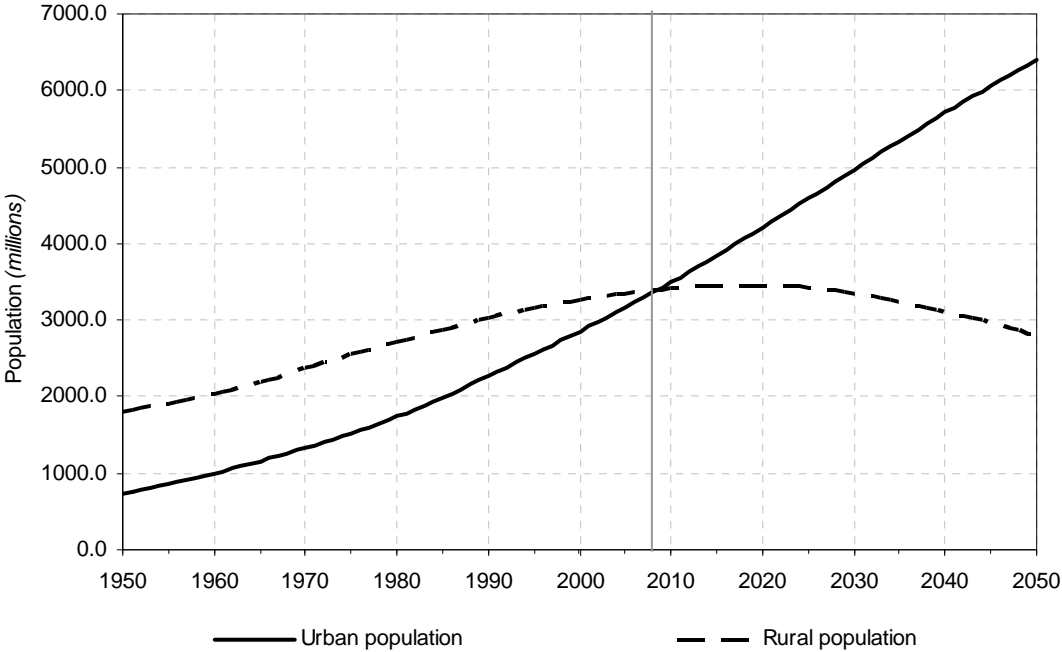
whereas just 44 per cent of those in the less developed regions did so. Urbanization is expected to continue rising in both the more developed and the less developed regions so that, by 2050, urban dwellers will likely account for 86 per cent of the population in the more developed regions and for 67 per cent of that in the less developed regions. Overall, the world population is expected to be 70 per cent urban in 2050.

Today’s 3.4 billion urban dwellers are distributed unevenly among urban settlements of different size. In discussing urbanization, the focus often is on large cities, cities whose populations are larger than those of many countries. In 2007, 19 urban agglomerations qualified as megacities because they had at least 10 million inhabitants. Despite their visibility and dynamism, megacities account for a small though increasing proportion of the world urban population: nearly 9 per cent in 2007 and nearly 10 per cent in 2025. At the same time, over half of the urban population lives and will continue to live in small urban centres with fewer than half a million inhabitants. These and other key findings of the *2007 Revision* are summarized below.

**Key Findings of the 2007 Revision**

1. During 2008, for the first time in history, the proportion of the population living in urban areas will reach 50 per cent (figure I.1). While in the more developed regions, the proportion urban was already nearly 53 per cent in 1950, in the less developed regions the 50 per cent level will likely be reached around 2019 (figure I.2).

**Figure I.1. Urban and rural populations of the world, 1950-2050**



2. The world urban population is expected nearly to double by 2050, increasing from 3.3 billion in 2007 to 6.4 billion in 2050. By mid-century the world urban population will likely be the same size as the world's total population in 2004. Virtually all of the world's population growth will be absorbed by the urban areas of the less developed regions, whose population is projected to increase from 2.4 billion in 2007 to 5.3 billion in 2050. The urban population of the more developed regions is projected to increase modestly, from 0.9 billion in 2007 to 1.1 billion in 2050 (table I.1).

Figure I.2. Urban and rural populations, by development group, 1950-2050

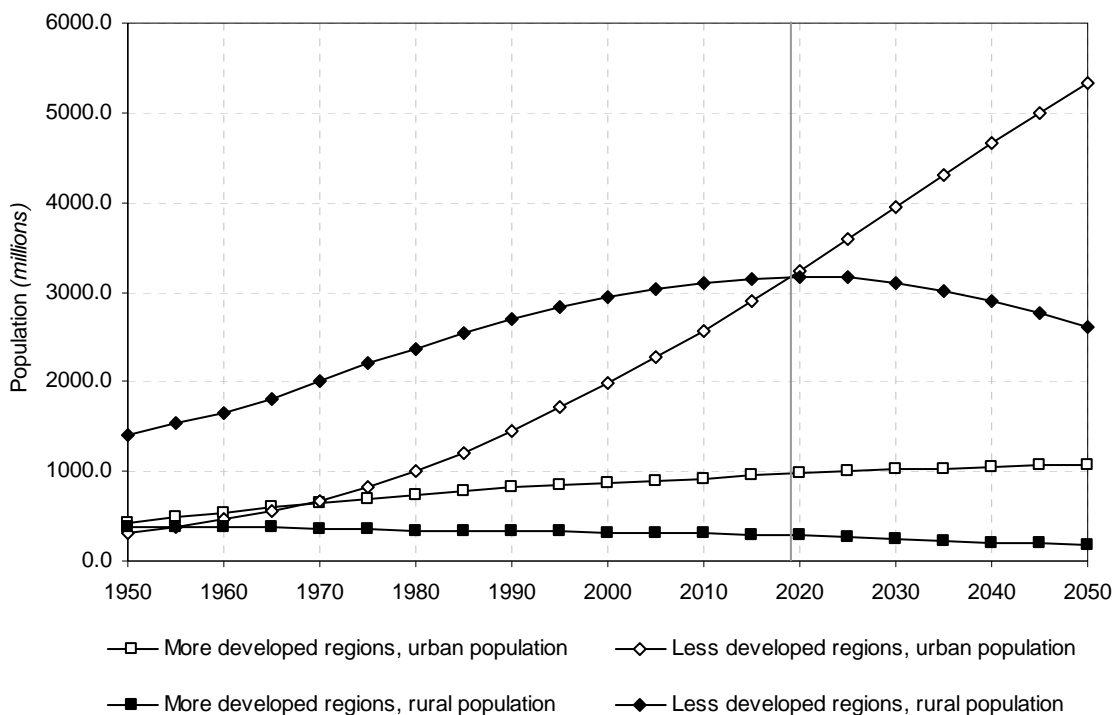


TABLE I.1. TOTAL, URBAN AND RURAL POPULATIONS BY DEVELOPMENT GROUP, SELECTED PERIODS, 1950-2050

Development group	Population (billion)					Average annual rate of change (per cent)				
	1950	1975	2007	2025	2050	1950-1975	1975-2007	2007-2025	2025-2050	
<b>Total population</b>										
World	2.54	4.08	6.67	8.01	9.19	1.90	1.54	1.02	0.55	
More developed regions	0.81	1.05	1.22	1.26	1.25	1.01	0.48	0.16	-0.04	
Less developed regions	1.72	3.03	5.45	6.75	7.95	2.26	1.84	1.19	0.65	
<b>Urban population</b>										
World	0.74	1.52	3.29	4.58	6.40	2.89	2.42	1.84	1.33	
More developed regions	0.43	0.70	0.91	0.99	1.07	1.98	0.81	0.49	0.30	
Less developed regions	0.31	0.82	2.38	3.59	5.33	3.88	3.35	2.27	1.58	
<b>Rural population</b>										
World	1.80	2.56	3.38	3.43	2.79	1.41	0.87	0.08	-0.82	
More developed regions	0.39	0.35	0.31	0.26	0.17	-0.44	-0.32	-0.94	-1.67	
Less developed regions	1.41	2.21	3.06	3.16	2.62	1.80	1.02	0.17	-0.75	

TABLE I.2. PERCENTAGE URBAN BY DEVELOPMENT GROUP, SELECTED PERIODS, 1950-2050

<i>Development group</i>	<i>Percentage urban</i>					<i>Rate of urbanization</i>			
						<i>(percentage)</i>			
	<i>1950</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>2050</i>	<i>1950-1975</i>	<i>1975-2007</i>	<i>2007-2025</i>	<i>2025-2050</i>
World	29.1	37.3	49.4	57.2	69.6	0.99	0.88	0.82	0.59
More developed regions	52.5	67.0	74.4	79.0	86.0	0.97	0.33	0.33	0.24
Less developed regions	18.0	27.0	43.8	53.2	67.0	1.62	1.51	1.08	0.78

3. The world rural population is expected to reach a maximum of 3.5 billion in 2018 or 2019 and to decline slowly thereafter, to reach 2.8 billion in 2050 (figure I.1). These global trends are driven mostly by the dynamics of rural population growth in the less developed regions, which house today 90 per cent of the world rural population. Whereas the rural population of the more developed regions has been declining steadily during the second half of the twentieth century and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future, the rural population of the less developed regions more than doubled since 1950 and will likely continue to grow until 2018 before a long-term decline sets in.

4. The rate of growth of the world urban population is slowing down (table I.1). Between 1950 and 2007, the world urban population grew at an average rate of 2.6 per cent per year and more than quadrupled over the period, passing from 0.7 billion to 3.3 billion. During 2007-2025, the world urban population is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent, which, if maintained, would lead to a doubling of the urban population in 38 years. During 2025-2050, the urban growth rate is expected to decline further to 1.3 per cent per year, implying a doubling time of 52 years.

5. The sustained increase of the urban population combined with the pronounced deceleration of rural population growth will result in continued urbanization, that is, in increasing proportions of the population living in urban areas. Globally, the level of urbanization is expected to rise from 50 per cent in 2008 to 70 per cent in 2050 (table I.2). More developed regions are expected to see their level of urbanization rise from 74 per cent to 86 per cent over the same period. In the less developed regions, the proportion urban will likely increase from 44 per cent in 2007 to 67 per cent in 2050 (table I.2).

6. Historically, the process of rapid urbanization started first in today's more developed regions. In 1920, just under 30 per cent of their population was urban and by 1950, more than half of their population was living in urban areas. In 2007, high levels of urbanization, surpassing 80 per cent, characterized Australia, New Zealand and Northern America. Europe, with 72 per cent of its population living in urban areas, was the least urbanized major area in the developed world. By 2050, Australia, New Zealand and Northern America are all expected to be over 90 per cent urban while Europe's level of urbanization is projected to be lower, at 84 per cent (table I.5).

7. Among the less developed regions, Latin America and the Caribbean has an exceptionally high level of urbanization (78 per cent), higher than that of Europe. Africa and Asia, in contrast, remain mostly rural, with 38 per cent and 41 per cent, respectively, of their populations living in urban areas. Over the coming decades, the level of urbanization is expected to increase in all major areas of the developing world, with Africa and Asia urbanizing more rapidly than the rest (table I.5). Nevertheless, by mid-century, Africa and Asia are expected still to have lower levels of urbanization than the more developed regions or Latin America and the Caribbean (figure I.3).

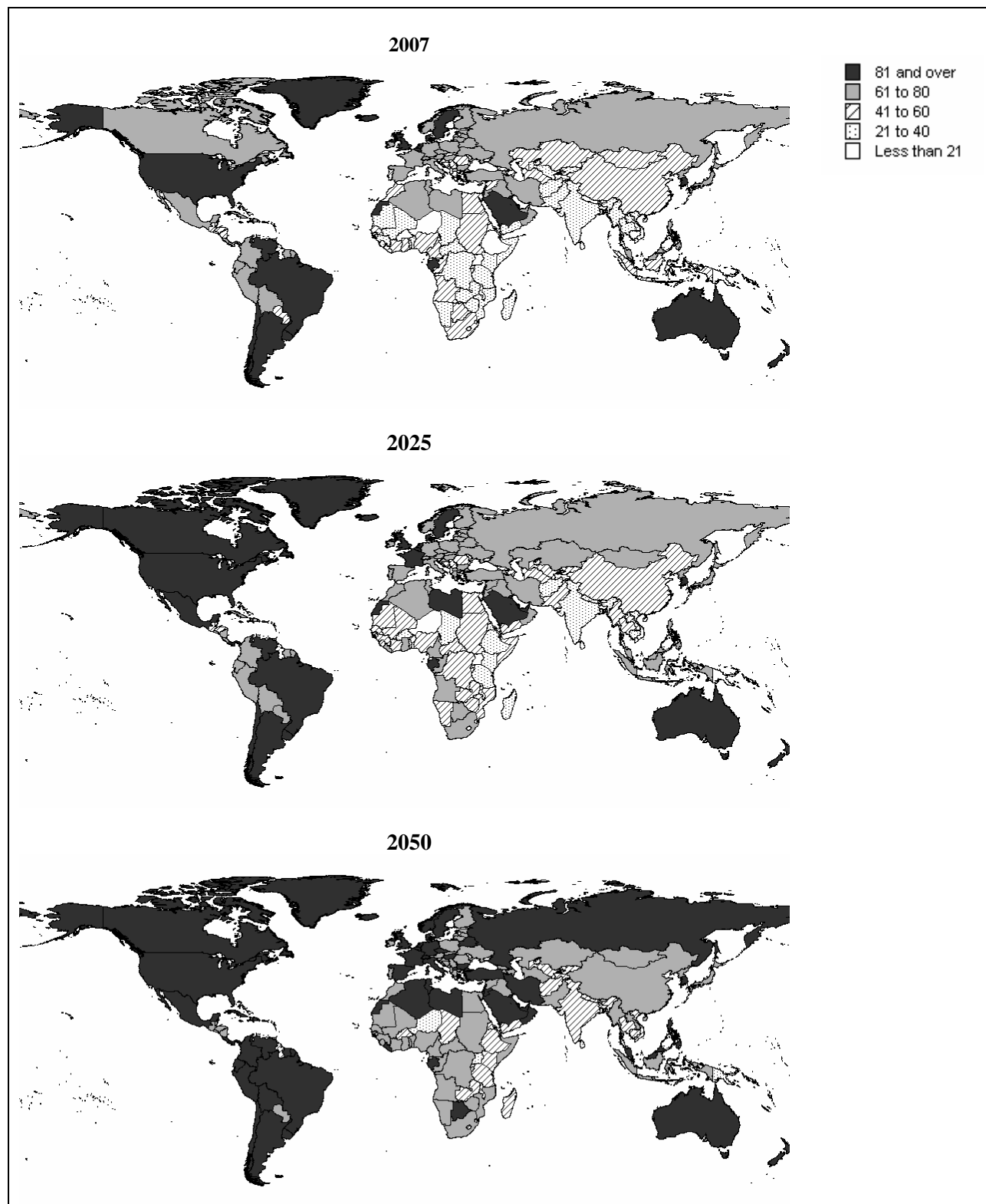
TABLE I.4. TOTAL, URBAN AND RURAL POPULATIONS BY MAJOR AREA, SELECTED PERIODS, 1950-2050

Major area	Population (millions)					Average annual rate of change (percentage)			
	1950	1975	2007	2025	2050	1950- 1975	1975- 2007	2007- 2025	2025- 2050
	<b>Total population</b>								
Africa	224	416	965	1394	1998	2.48	2.63	2.04	1.44
Asia	1411	2394	4030	4779	5266	2.12	1.63	0.95	0.39
Europe	548	676	731	715	664	0.84	0.24	-0.12	-0.30
Latin America and the Caribbean	168	325	572	688	769	2.65	1.77	1.02	0.45
Northern America	172	243	339	393	445	1.40	1.03	0.82	0.50
Oceania	13	21	34	41	49	2.03	1.49	1.05	0.65
<b>Urban population</b>									
Africa	33	107	373	658	1234	4.76	3.90	3.15	2.52
Asia	237	574	1645	2440	3486	3.54	3.29	2.19	1.43
Europe	281	444	528	545	557	1.84	0.54	0.18	0.08
Latin America and the Caribbean	69	198	448	575	683	4.21	2.55	1.38	0.69
Northern America	110	180	275	337	401	1.98	1.33	1.11	0.70
Oceania	8	15	24	30	37	2.60	1.44	1.17	0.89
<b>Rural population</b>									
Africa	192	309	592	736	764	1.92	2.03	1.21	0.15
Asia	1174	1820	2384	2339	1780	1.75	0.84	-0.11	-1.09
Europe	267	232	204	170	107	-0.57	-0.41	-1.00	-1.84
Latin America and the Caribbean	98	126	124	113	87	1.01	-0.06	-0.50	-1.08
Northern America	62	64	63	56	44	0.11	-0.02	-0.65	-1.00
Oceania	5	6	10	12	11	0.88	1.60	0.78	-0.04

TABLE I.5. PERCENTAGE URBAN BY MAJOR AREA, SELECTED PERIODS, 1950-2050

Major area	Percentage urban					Rate of urbanization (percentage)			
	1950	1975	2007	2025	2050	1950-1975	1975-2007	2007-2025	2025-2050
	Africa	14.5	25.7	38.7	47.2	61.8	2.28	1.28	1.10
Asia	16.8	24.0	40.8	51.1	66.2	1.42	1.66	1.24	1.04
Europe	51.2	65.7	72.2	76.2	83.8	1.00	0.29	0.30	0.38
Latin America and the Caribbean	41.4	61.1	78.3	83.5	88.7	1.56	0.78	0.36	0.24
Northern America	63.9	73.8	81.3	85.7	90.2	0.58	0.30	0.29	0.20
Oceania	62.0	71.5	70.5	71.9	76.4	0.57	-0.05	0.11	0.24

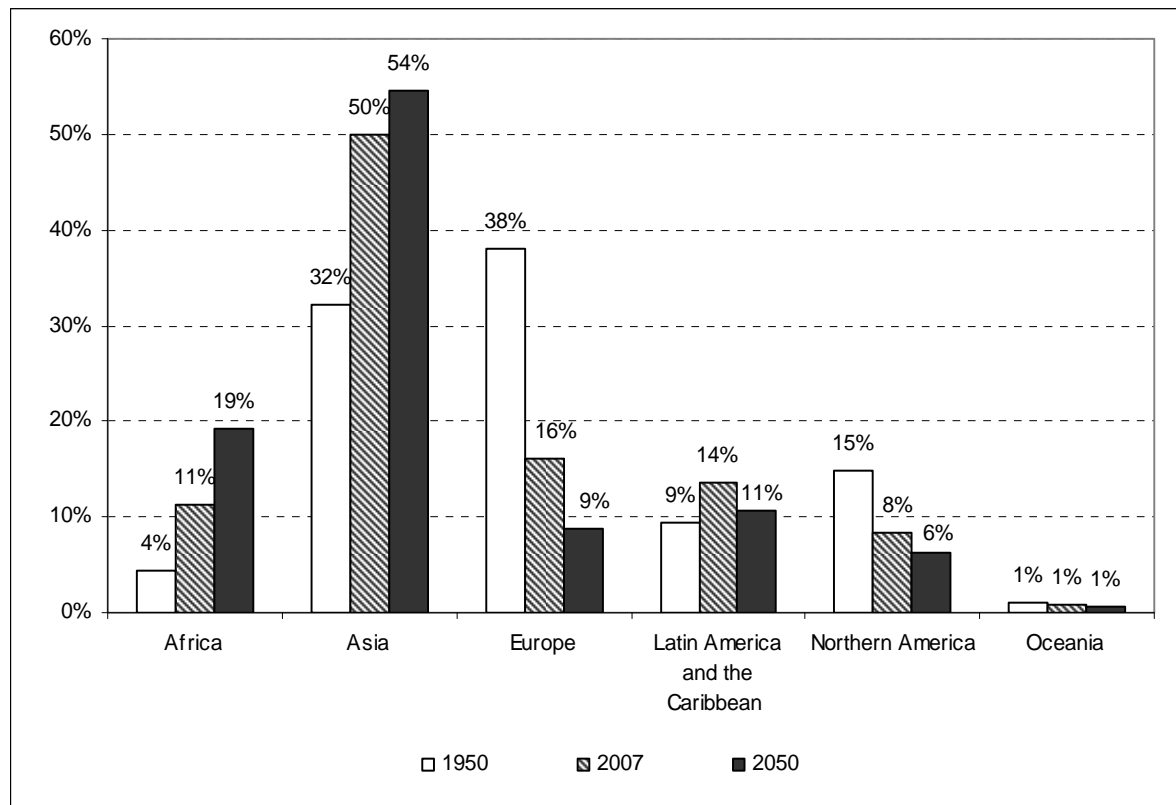
Figure I.3. Percentage of the population in urban areas, 2007, 2025 and 2050



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: World Population Prospects DEMOBASE extract, 2007.

NOTE: The boundaries shown on the present map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Figure I.4. Distribution of the world urban population by major area, 1950, 2007, 2050



8. Despite its low level of urbanization, in 2007 Asia was home to about half of the urban population in the world. Europe had the second highest share, at 16 per cent (figure I.4). Over the next four decades, Africa and Asia will experience a marked increase in their urban populations. In Africa the urban population is likely to treble and in Asia it will more than double (table I.4). By mid-century, most of the urban population of the world will be concentrated in Asia (54 per cent) and Africa (19 per cent) (figure I.4)

9. With the exception of Africa and Oceania, all major areas are expected to have smaller rural populations in 2050 than today (table I.4). Africa's rural population may start to decline before the mid-century. Today, the majority of rural dwellers live in Asia (71 per cent) and Africa (18 per cent) and the concentration of the world rural population in these two major areas combined is expected to increase so that, by 2050, 64 per cent of all rural inhabitants are projected to live in Asia and 27 per cent in Africa.

10. The world urban population is highly concentrated in a few countries. In 2007, three quarters of the 3.3 billion urban dwellers on Earth lived in 25 countries, whose urban populations ranged from 29 million in South Africa to 561 million in China. China, India and the United States of America accounted for 35 per cent of the world urban population. Most of the 25 countries with the largest urban populations are highly urbanized, but seven have levels of urbanization ranging from 27 per cent to just over 50 per cent and they include some of the most populous countries in the world: Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

11. Most countries have small urban populations. In 2007, two thirds of the 229 countries or areas considered had fewer than 5 million urban dwellers and they accounted for 5.8 per cent of the world urban population. Among them, 60 per cent had urban populations below one million and accounted for 0.6 per cent of all urban dwellers on Earth. By 2050, just half of all countries or areas are expected to have fewer than 5 million urban dwellers and to account for barely 2 per cent of the world urban population.

12. Similarly, the increases in the world urban population are concentrated in a few countries, with China and India projected to account together for about a third of the increase in the urban population in the coming decades. Between 2007 and 2025, the urban areas of the world are expected to gain 1.3 billion people, including 261 million in China and 197 million in India, which account together for 35 per cent of the total increase. Nine additional countries are projected to contribute 29 per cent of the urban increment, with increases ranging from 20 million to 62 million. The countries involved are: Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa; Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines in Asia; Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, and the United States of America. Among them, those in Africa and Asia will experience high rates of urban population growth, surpassing 2 per cent or even 3 per cent per year.

13. A further urban increment of 1.8 billion people is expected globally during 2025-2050, with India being the major contributor (377 million) and China following (205 million). Together, the two most populous countries on Earth are expected to account for 32 per cent of urban growth during 2025-2050. In 2050, China will still have the largest urban population (1 billion), followed by India (0.9 billion).

14. In a few developed countries, the urban population will decrease. Despite the projected increases in the level of urbanization, overall population decline in several countries will lead to a reduction in the number of urban dwellers. Between 2007 and 2025, the urban population of the Russian Federation and that of the Ukraine are projected to decline by 8 million and 3 million, respectively. Between 2025 and 2050, more countries will experience reductions in the urban population. Those with the largest drops include Japan (a reduction of 4 million), the Republic of Korea (4 million), the Russian Federation (7 million) and Ukraine (4 million).

15. The rural population is even more highly concentrated in a few countries than the urban population. In 2007, 18 countries accounted for 75 per cent of the rural population and all but three (Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States) are located in Africa or Asia. India has the largest rural population (828 million), followed by China (767 million). Together, they account for 47 per cent of the world rural population. Bangladesh, Indonesia and Pakistan follow, each with over 100 million rural inhabitants. In Africa, the largest rural populations are located in Nigeria (78 million), Ethiopia (69 million), Egypt (43 million), the Democratic Republic of Congo (42 million), the United Republic of Tanzania (30 million) and Kenya (30 million). During 2007-2025, the rural populations of most of those African countries are projected to increase at rates equal to or higher than 1 per cent per year, the only exception being Nigeria. Among populous countries in Asia, Pakistan will have the highest rural growth rate during 2007-2025 (0.8 per cent per year). In contrast, in eight of the 18 countries with large rural populations the rural population is declining, with China, Indonesia, Japan, the Russian Federation and the United States having the fastest rates of decline.

16. As in the case of the urban population, most countries have small rural populations. In 2007, 69 per cent of the 229 countries or areas considered had at most 5 million rural inhabitants and accounted for 4.8 per cent of the world rural population. In three quarters of them, the rural population is projected to decrease during 2007-2050.

17. The 3.3 billion urban dwellers in 2007 were distributed unevenly among urban settlements of different size. Over half of the world urban population (52 per cent) lived in cities or towns with fewer than half a million inhabitants. In the more developed regions, 54 per cent of the urban population lived in small urban centres and 51 per cent did so in the less developed regions. Between 2007 and 2025, small urban centres are expected to absorb nearly half of the expected increase in the urban population.

18. Cities in the next size class, whose population ranges from 500,000 to one million inhabitants, are numerous (446 in 2005 rising to 551 in 2025), but they account for just 10 per cent of the overall urban population. Medium-sized cities, with more than a million inhabitants but fewer than 5 million, are also



numerous (361 in 2005 increasing to 524 in 2025) and they account for 23 per cent of the urban population (table I.6).

19. Large cities, whose populations range from 5 million to just under 10 million, numbered 30 in 2007 and are expected to number 48 in 2025, but accounted for just 7 per cent of the urban population. Three quarters of these “megacities in waiting” are located in developing countries.

TABLE I.6. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORLD AND DEVELOPMENT GROUPS, BY AREA OF RESIDENCE AND SIZE CLASS OF URBAN SETTLEMENT, 1975, 2007 AND 2025

<i>Development group</i>	<i>Area of residence and size class of urban settlement (number of inhabitants)</i>	<i>Population (millions)</i>			<i>Percentage distribution</i>		
		<i>1975</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2025</i>
World	Urban area	1 519	3 294	4 584	100.0	100.0	100.0
	10 million or more	53	286	447	3.5	8.7	9.7
	5 million to 10 million	117	214	337	7.7	6.5	7.3
	1 million to 5 million	317	760	1 058	20.9	23.1	23.1
	500,000 to 1 million	167	322	390	11.0	9.8	8.5
	Fewer than 500,000	864	1 712	2 354	56.9	52.0	51.3
More developed regions	Urban area	702	910	995	100.0	100.0	100.0
	10 million or more	42	89	103	6.1	9.8	10.3
	5 million to 10 million	50	49	69	7.1	5.4	6.9
	1 million to 5 million	137	202	203	19.6	22.2	20.4
	500,000 to 1 million	71	83	90	10.2	9.1	9.0
	Fewer than 500,000	401	487	531	57.1	53.5	53.4
Less developed regions	Urban area	817	2 384	3 590	100.0	100.0	100.0
	10 million or more	11	197	344	1.3	8.3	9.6
	5 million to 10 million	68	165	268	8.3	6.9	7.5
	1 million to 5 million	180	558	855	22.1	23.4	23.8
	500,000 to 1 million	96	239	300	11.7	10.0	8.4
	Fewer than 500,000	463	1 225	1 822	56.6	51.4	50.8

TABLE I.7. POPULATION OF URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS WITH 10 MILLION INHABITANTS OR MORE, 1950, 1975, 2007 AND 2025 (MILLIONS)

1950			1975		
Rank	Urban agglomeration	Population	Rank	Urban agglomeration	Population
1	New York-Newark, USA	12.3	1	Tokyo, Japan	26.6
2	Tokyo, Japan	11.3	2	New York-Newark, USA	15.9
			3	Ciudad de México (Mexico City), Mexico	10.7
2007			2025		
Rank	Urban agglomeration	Population	Rank	Urban agglomeration	Population
1	Tokyo, Japan	35.7	1	Tokyo, Japan	36.4
2	New York-Newark, USA	19.0	2	Mumbai (Bombay), India	26.4
3	Ciudad de México (Mexico City), Mexico	19.0	3	Delhi, India	22.5
4	Mumbai (Bombay), India	19.0	4	Dhaka, Bangladesh	22.0
5	São Paulo, Brazil	18.8	5	São Paulo, Brazil	21.4
6	Delhi, India	15.9	6	Ciudad de México (Mexico City), Mexico	21.0
7	Shanghai, China	15.0	7	New York-Newark, USA	20.6
8	Kolkata (Calcutta), India	14.8	8	Kolkata (Calcutta), India	20.6
9	Dhaka, Bangladesh	13.5	9	Shanghai, China	19.4
10	Buenos Aires, Argentina	12.8	10	Karachi, Pakistan	19.1
11	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	12.5	11	Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo	16.8
12	Karachi, Pakistan	12.1	12	Lagos, Nigeria	15.8
13	Al-Qahirah (Cairo), Egypt	11.9	13	Al-Qahirah (Cairo), Egypt	15.6
14	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	11.7	14	Manila, Philippines	14.8
15	Osaka-Kobe, Japan	11.3	15	Beijing, China	14.5
16	Beijing, China	11.1	16	Buenos Aires, Argentina	13.8
17	Manila, Philippines	11.1	17	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	13.7
18	Moskva (Moscow), Russian Federation	10.5	18	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	13.4
19	Istanbul, Turkey	10.1	19	Jakarta, Indonesia	12.4
			20	Istanbul, Turkey	12.1
			21	Guangzhou, Guangdong, China	11.8
			22	Osaka-Kobe, Japan	11.4
			23	Moskva (Moscow), Russian Federation	10.5
			24	Lahore, Pakistan	10.5
			25	Shenzhen, China	10.2
			26	Chennai (Madras), India	10.1
			27	Paris, France	10.0

20. Megacities are urban agglomerations with at least 10 million inhabitants. There are today 19 megacities on Earth and their number is expected to increase to 27 in 2025. The proportion of people living in megacities is small. In 2007, 9 per cent of the world urban population resided in megacities and by 2025 their share is expected to raise to almost 10 per cent. In relation to the whole world population, megacities account today for 4 per cent of the population, meaning that just one in twenty-five people on Earth live in megacities.

21. Asia has eleven megacities; Latin America has four; Northern America, two; and Africa and Europe have one each. Eleven of these megacities are capitals of their countries. By 2025, when the number of megacities rises to 27, Asia would have increased its number by five; Africa by two, and Europe by one.

22. The distribution of the urban population by city size class varies among the major areas. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for instance, urban dwellers are more concentrated in the megacities than in the world as a whole: 14 per cent live in megacities. Relatively high concentrations of urban dwellers in megacities are also found in Northern America (11 per cent) and Asia (10 per cent). In contrast, 58 per cent of urban dwellers in Africa live in small urban centres with fewer than half a million inhabitants and 68 per cent of those in Europe do the same.

23. With nearly 36 million inhabitants in 2007, Tokyo is by far the most populous urban agglomeration in the world, but it encompasses all contiguous densely inhabited districts in Tokyo-to (ku-bu) plus those in 87 surrounding cities and towns, including Yokohama, Kawasaki and Chiba, important cities in their own rights. Other megacities, while named after the major city at their core, also encompass a large area and a number of urban settlements within it, constituting therefore complex urban agglomerations. Following Tokyo, the next largest urban agglomerations are New York-Newark, Ciudad de México, Mumbai and São Paulo, each with about 19 million inhabitants. In 2025, Tokyo is still expected to be the world's most populous urban agglomeration with 36 million inhabitants, followed by Mumbai (with 26 million), Delhi (23 million), Dhaka (22 million) and São Paulo (21 million) (table I.7).

TABLE I.8. POPULATION OF URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS WITH 10 MILLION INHABITANTS OR MORE IN 2007 AND THEIR AVERAGE ANNUAL RATES OF CHANGE, SELECTED PERIODS, 1975-2025

<i>Urban agglomeration</i>	<i>Population</i> <i>(millions)</i>			<i>Average annual rate of</i> <i>change (percentage)</i>	
	<i>1975</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>1975-2007</i>	<i>2007-2025</i>
Tokyo, Japan	26.6	35.7	36.4	0.92	0.11
New York-Newark, USA	15.9	19.0	20.6	0.57	0.44
Ciudad de México (Mexico City), Mexico	10.7	19.0	21.0	1.80	0.55
Mumbai (Bombay), India	7.1	19.0	26.4	3.08	1.83
São Paulo, Brazil	9.6	18.8	21.4	2.10	0.71
Delhi, India	4.4	15.9	22.5	4.00	1.92
Shanghai, China	7.3	15.0	19.4	2.24	1.44
Kolkata (Calcutta), India	7.9	14.8	20.6	1.96	1.83
Dhaka, Bangladesh	2.2	13.5	22.0	5.64	2.72
Buenos Aires, Argentina	8.7	12.8	13.8	1.19	0.41
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	8.9	12.5	13.7	1.05	0.50
Karachi, Pakistan	4.0	12.1	19.1	3.48	2.52
Al-Qahirah (Cairo), Egypt	6.4	11.9	15.6	1.91	1.49
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	7.6	11.7	13.4	1.38	0.74
Osaka-Kobe, Japan	9.8	11.3	11.4	0.43	0.04
Beijing, China	6.0	11.1	14.5	1.91	1.50
Manila, Philippines	5.0	11.1	14.8	2.49	1.60
Moskva (Moscow), Russian Federation	7.6	10.5	10.5	0.99	0.04
Istanbul, Turkey	3.6	10.1	12.1	3.21	1.03

NOTE: Urban agglomerations are ordered according to their population size in 2007.

24. Large urban agglomerations are not necessarily experiencing fast population growth. Among the 19 megacities in 2007, one-third experienced annual population growth below 1.5 per cent between 1975 and 2007 and just five grew at rates above 3 per cent per year (table I.8): Dhaka in Bangladesh (5.6 per cent per year); Delhi (4.0 per cent) and Mumbai (3.1 per cent) in India; Karachi in Pakistan (3.5 per cent), and Istanbul in Turkey (3.2 per cent). Between 2007 and 2025, two-thirds of the megacities are projected to experience

annual population growth below 1.5 per cent and only two (Dhaka and Karachi) will maintain population growth rates above 2 per cent.

25. Faced with the numerous opportunities and challenges associated with urbanization, many Governments have consistently considered their population's spatial distribution as a concern. In 2007, 85 per cent of Governments expressed concern about their pattern of population distribution, a percentage comparable to that recorded in the 1970s. Among developing countries, 56 per cent wished to make a major change in the spatial distribution of their populations, whereas 32 per cent desired a minor change. Among developed countries, 37 per cent desired a major change and 39 per cent a minor change. Dissatisfaction regarding patterns of population distribution was highest in Africa (74 per cent of its countries desired a major change) and Asia (51 per cent desired a major change). In Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and Europe, about 40 per cent of Governments considered that major changes in spatial distribution were desirable (United Nations, 2007).

26. A common policy to modify population distribution includes various types of measures to reduce migrant flows to large cities. The percentage of developing countries having implemented such policies rose from 44 per cent to 74 per cent between 1976 and 2007. Among developed countries, the proportion with policies to reduce flows to large cities declined from 55 per cent in 1975 to 26 per cent in 1996 and then rebounded to reach 39 per cent in 2007. In Oceania, 83 per cent of countries have such policies, in Africa 78 per cent, in Asia 71 per cent and in Latin America and the Caribbean 68 per cent.

TABLE I.9. GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION, 2007

	<i>Major change desired</i>	<i>Minor change desired</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Major change desired</i>	<i>Minor change desired</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>Number of countries</i>				<i>Percentage</i>			
World	100	66	29	195	51	34	15	100
More developed regions	18	19	12	49	37	39	24	100
Less developed regions	82	47	17	146	56	32	12	100

Source: *World Population Policies 2007* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.XIII.8).

Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
POPULATION DIVISION

**World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision  
Data in Digital Form**

Copyright © United Nations 2008  
All rights reserved

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Order Form**

*Data set requested (please mark appropriate box with an "x")*

*Price in US\$*

**CD-ROM:**

- World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision.*  
CD-ROM Edition – Data in digital form (POP/DB/WUP/Rev.2007) .....\$200.-

**SHIP TO:**

Name: .....

Institution: .....

Address: .....

Telephone: ..... Fax No: .....

Email address:

**For overnight or express mail delivery, please provide a billing account number: .....**

**Notes**

1. Data contained in the above data sets are copyrighted by the United Nations. No portion of the data files contained on the CD-ROM can be reproduced, distributed or used to prepare derivative works or for any other purpose without the express permission of the United Nations, to be obtained from the Secretary of the United Nations Publications Board. For further information, please contact the Director, Population Division/DESA, United Nations (Room DC2-1950), New York, NY 10017, U.S.A. Telephone No. (1 212) 963-3179; Fax No. (1 212) 963-2147.

2. The order form should be accompanied by a cheque or an international money order in **US dollars drawn on a United States Bank** for the correct amount, payable to the UNITED NATIONS POPULATION DIVISION and mailed to: The Director, Population Division/DESA, United Nations, DC2-1950, New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.

**Credit cards are not accepted.**

