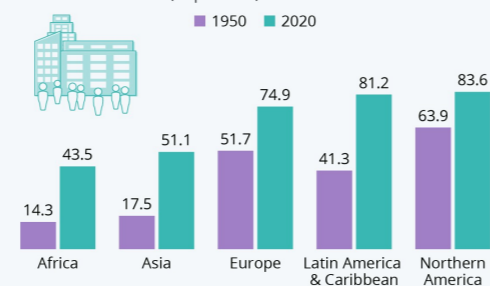


How urban is our world today?

- Today 56% of the world's population, 4.4 bn inhabitants, live in cities and this trend is increasing
- The most urbanised regions are North America (82%), Latin America and the Caribbean (81%) and Europe (74%)
- Africa is the most rural with just 43% living in urban areas
- Around 1% of global land is defined as urban
- Already urbanised regions such as North America and Europe are facing very slow rates of urbanisation; whereas Africa and Asia are facing rapid increases in urbanisation

Then & Now Urban Population Worldwide

Share of the urban population by continent in 1950 and 2020 (in percent)



Source: U.N. Population Division



statista

How can our cities be sustainable?

Some Geographers believe cities hold the key to solving some of the world's major problems around climate change and sustainability. As these issues become more prominent in our lives and due to the ever increasing number of us living in urban areas, designing sustainable cities is arguably paramount to our survival as a species.

Features of a sustainable city include:

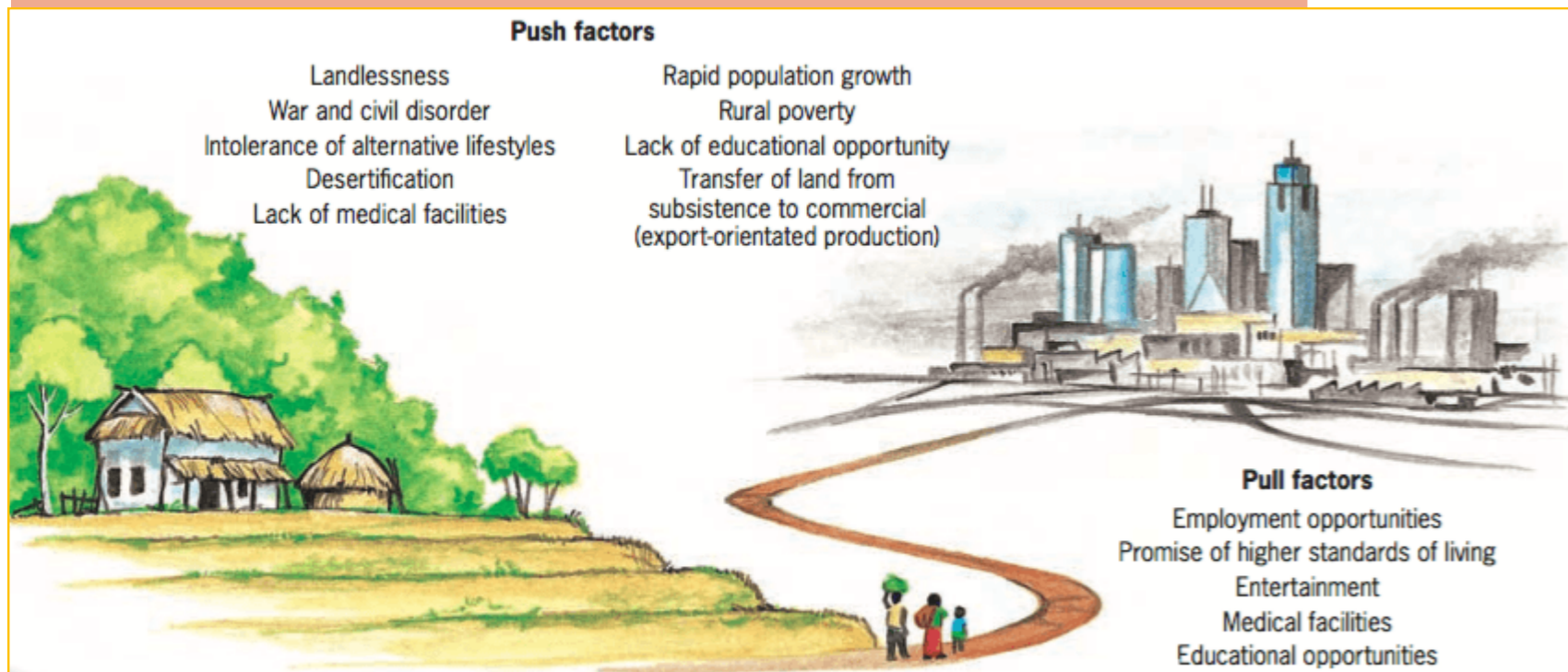
- Transport—Integrated public transport, walkable design.
- Energy—Renewable resources e.g. solar
- Waste management—recycling, composting, paperless, circular economy.
- Green spaces—publicly accessible, thriving biodiversity, community gardens, urban farms.

Key Terms

Urbanisation	The increasing proportion of people living in an urban area compared to a rural area.
Squatter settlements	Informal housing which is illegal and not government controlled.
Smart cities	A technologically modern urban area that uses collects data and uses it to improve operations across the city.
Sustainable cities	A city designed with consideration for social, economic and environmental benefit, without compromising future generations.
Integrated public transport	A network of public transport where it is easy and efficient in terms of time, cost, comfort and safety to switch between different modes.
Circular economy	A system where the production and consumption of something is shared, reused and recycled for as long as possible. Reducing the need for new materials.
Megacity	A city with over 10 million inhabitants. There are currently 44 in the world.
Migration	The movement of people from one area to another. Rural to urban migration is where people migrate from the countryside to cities and it causes urbanisation.

Why do people live in cities?

People migrate to cities for a better quality of life. They choose to leave rural areas because of push factors and they are attracted to urban areas because of pull factors. Examples include:



The Line (shown) is a design for a smart, sustainable 170km long city in Saudi Arabia, with no cars or carbon emissions!



What challenges exist for the urban poor?

When people migrate to cities, life can be challenging for the urban poor. Over 10% of the world's population live in squatter settlements. These are informal settlements which have been set up due to a lack of affordable housing and employment in cities but they often provide poor living conditions.

Most large squatter settlements are located on the edge of megacities in Asia, Africa and South America. They all share similar characteristics that the inhabitants don't legally own the land they live on, buildings are often self built made of scrap material, they are built on poor quality land, they don't have organised waste collection, conditions are cramped and have a lack of infrastructure. However, they are also home to some of the world's most innovative and creative people, they have their own small economy and a strong sense of community.

