Urbanization, Migration, and The Family Dimension

Bahira Sherif Trask, Ph.D.

Professor & Chair/ Human Development & Family Sciences
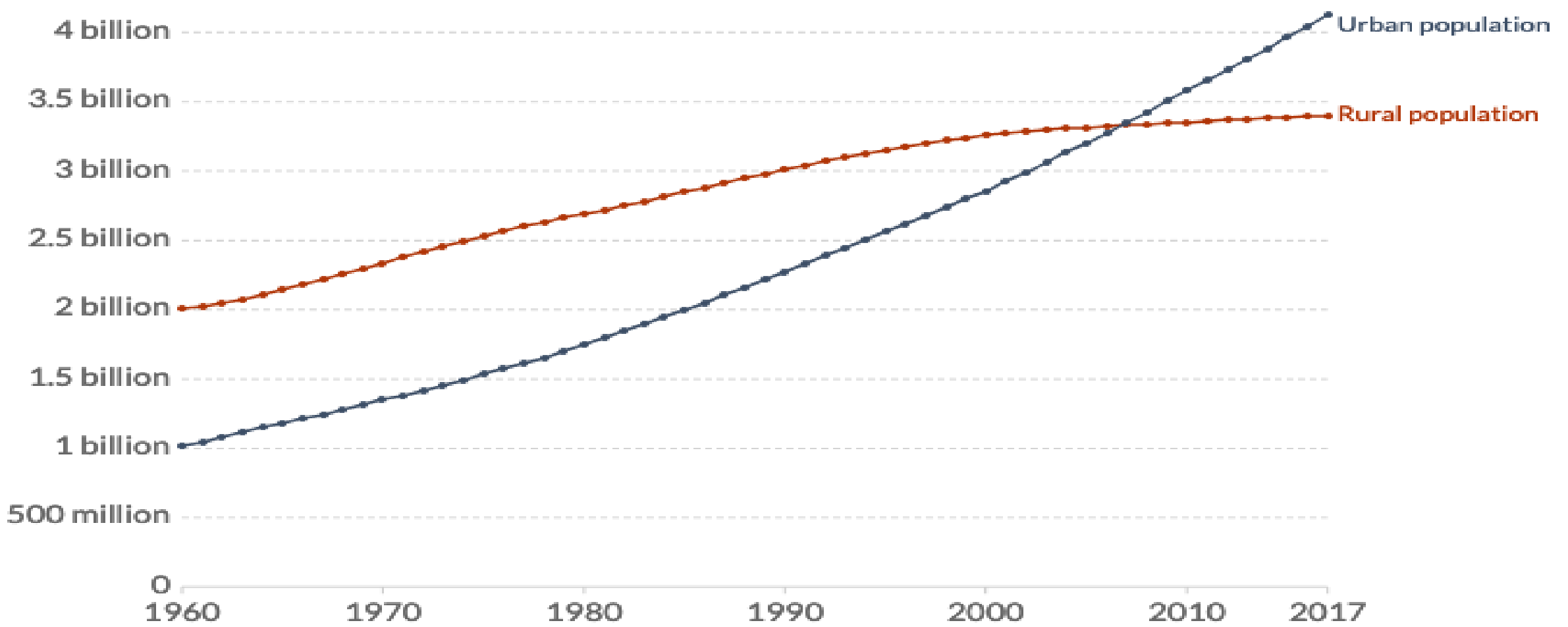
University of Delaware

bstrask@udel.edu

Presented at the 2022 International Day of Families, UNDESA, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Focal Point on the Family. May 13, 2022

Number of people living in urban and rural areas, World, 1960 to 2017

⇄ **Change country**

Source: UN World Urbanization Prospects (2018)
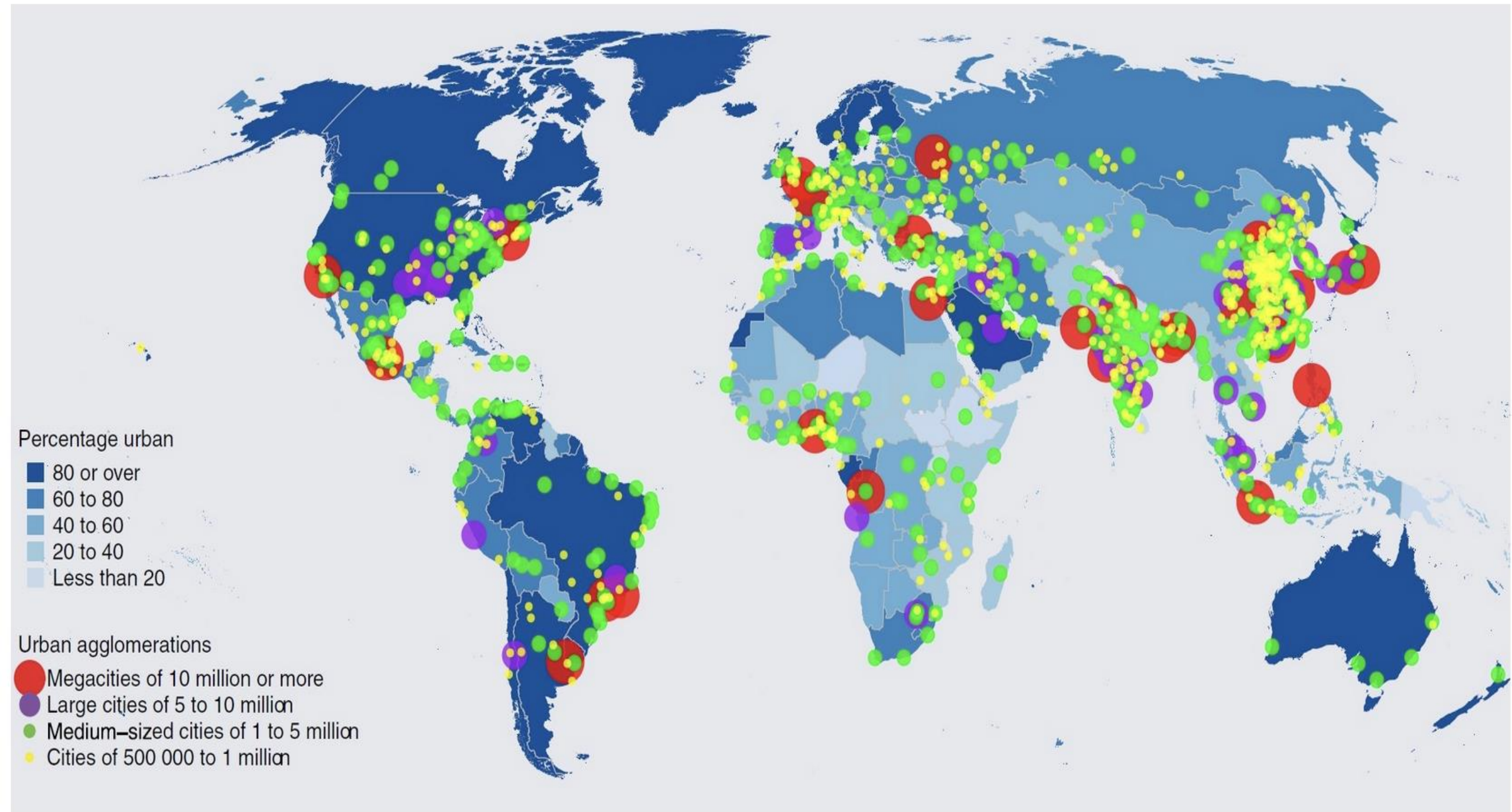
OurWorldInData.org/urbanization • CC BY

Note: Urban populations are defined based on the definition of urban areas by national statistical offices.

▶ 1960 ○━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━○ 2017

What Is Urbanization?

- Number of inhabitants combined with:
  - Population density
  - Built up areas
  - Commuting density
  - Travel distance
  - Number of individuals not engaged in agricultural economic activities

- Most common definition: associated with both the increase in the percentage of population living in a specific geographic area and the total area occupied by urban (defined by density) settlements

Percentage urban

- 80 or over
- 60 to 80
- 40 to 60
- 20 to 40
- Less than 20

Urban agglomerations

- Megacities of 10 million or more
- Large cities of 5 to 10 million
- Medium−sized cities of 1 to 5 million
- Cities of 500 000 to 1 million

Many social scientists consider the urbanization of the global population as the *single most important contemporary demographic trend as* it represents a crucial shift in *how humans use the environment*

4.2 billion people, today live in urban areas vs. approx. 3.1 billion in rural areas
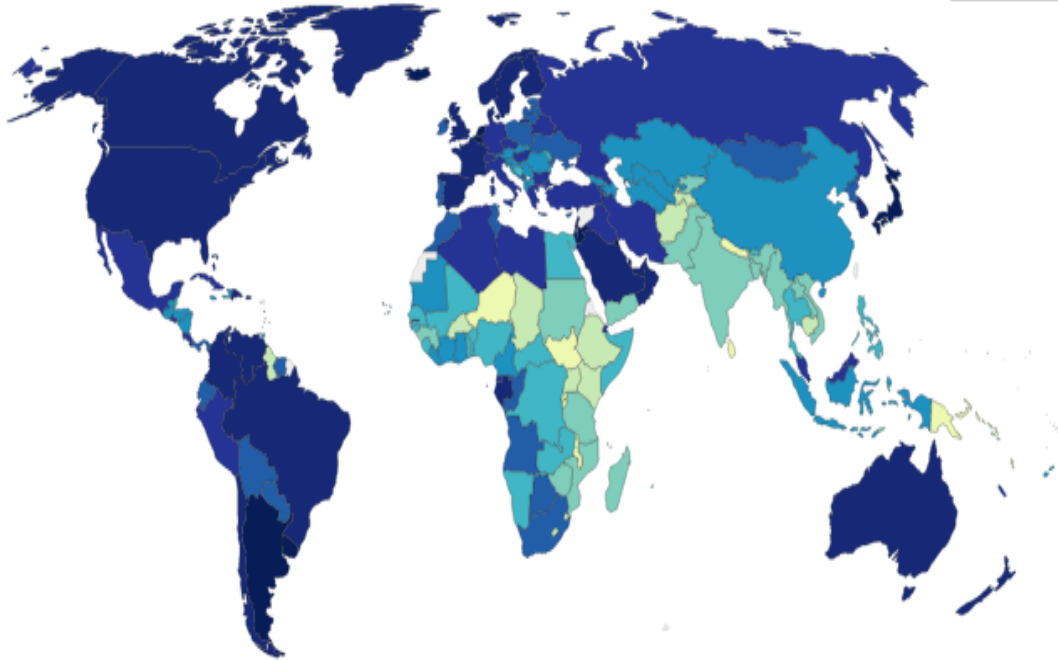
95% of urban expansion: low & middle-income countries

In 1950 about 2/3 of population worldwide lived in rural settlements and 1/3 in urban settlements

By 2050, we will observe roughly the reverse distribution, with more than 6 billion people

Share of people living in urban areas, 2017

Urbanization Differs By Global Location

- In high-income countries – ***more than 80%*** of population lives in urban areas

- In low to lower-middle income countries ***the majority*** lives in rural areas – but this is changing rapidly

Figure I.1. Estimated and projected urban populations of the world, the more developed regions and the less developed regions, 1950-2050
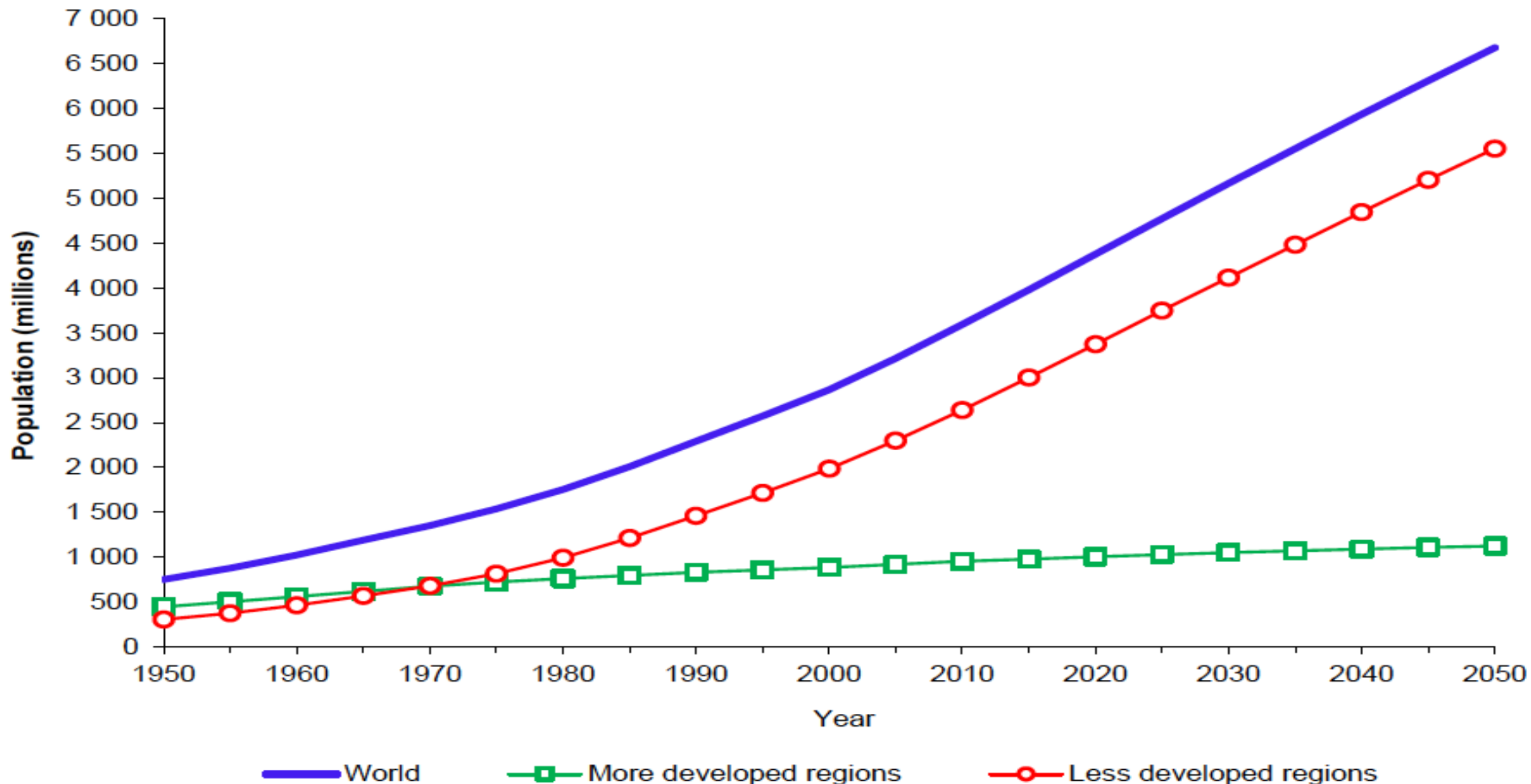
Unequal Urbanization

- 23.5 percent of individuals in urban areas live in slums
  - In absolute numbers this equates to **over 1 billion** people
  - 80 percent living in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (370 million), sub-Saharan Africa (238 million), and Central and Southern Asia (227 million) (UN, 2019)
  - Growth of slums in areas vulnerable to natural disasters

urban population living in slums, 2018

old is defined as a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or more of the following condition ved water, access to improved sanitation, sufficient living area, and durability of housing.

No data   0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%   90

TAT (via World Bank)

OurWorldInD
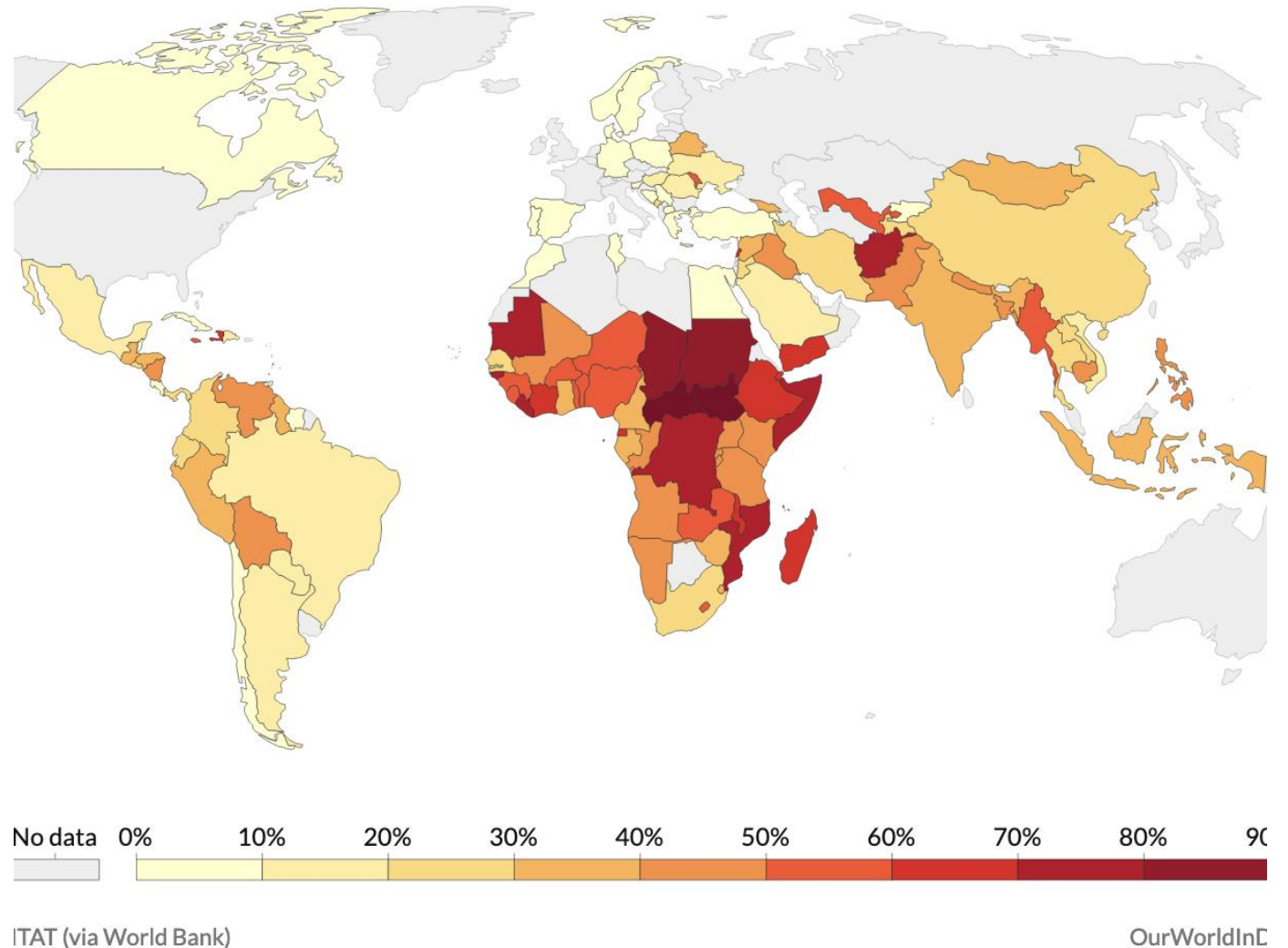
Effects On Health & Resources

- Especially in low-income countries:
  - Decreasing access to fresh water supplies
  - Growing sewage and sanitation issues
  - Lack of access to green spaces
  - Quality of housing
  - Decrease in public health – higher child mortality
- World's cities take up only about three percent of the earth's landmass but they account for:
  - 60 – 80 percent of energy consumption
  - 75 percent of carbon emissions / air pollution (UNDP, 2018)

Urbanization Is Closely Linked To *Migration*:

United Nations estimates, approximately 763 million individuals migrated internally within their own societies

- 281 million individuals, or 3.6 percent of the world population were living outside of their native countries as of 2020 (IOM, 2022)

- 79 million individuals currently forcibly displaced within or across international borders as result of conflict or natural disasters
  - Displacement is primarily an urban phenomenon

- 96.5% of people are living in their own societies

Migration is the voluntary movement or the involuntary movement (of individuals within a country, or across borders internationally, with the goal of creating a better life (UNDP, 2016)

Migration Trends

For many moving away from their hometown or village can be the best – sometimes the only – option open to improve their life chances

Migration can:
- Improve income
- Health
- Educational prospects

But its value is more than that: ***being able to decide where to live is a key element of human freedom*** (UNDP 2009, p. 1)

3. Top 20 destinations (left) and origins (right) of international migrants in 2019 (millions)
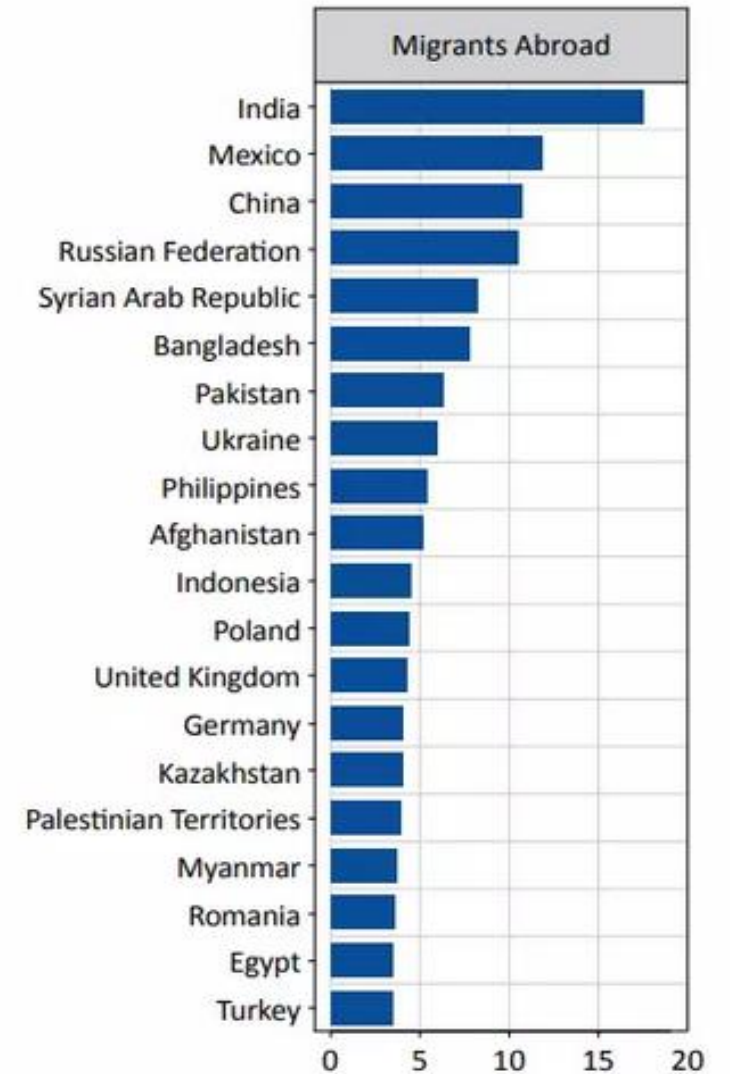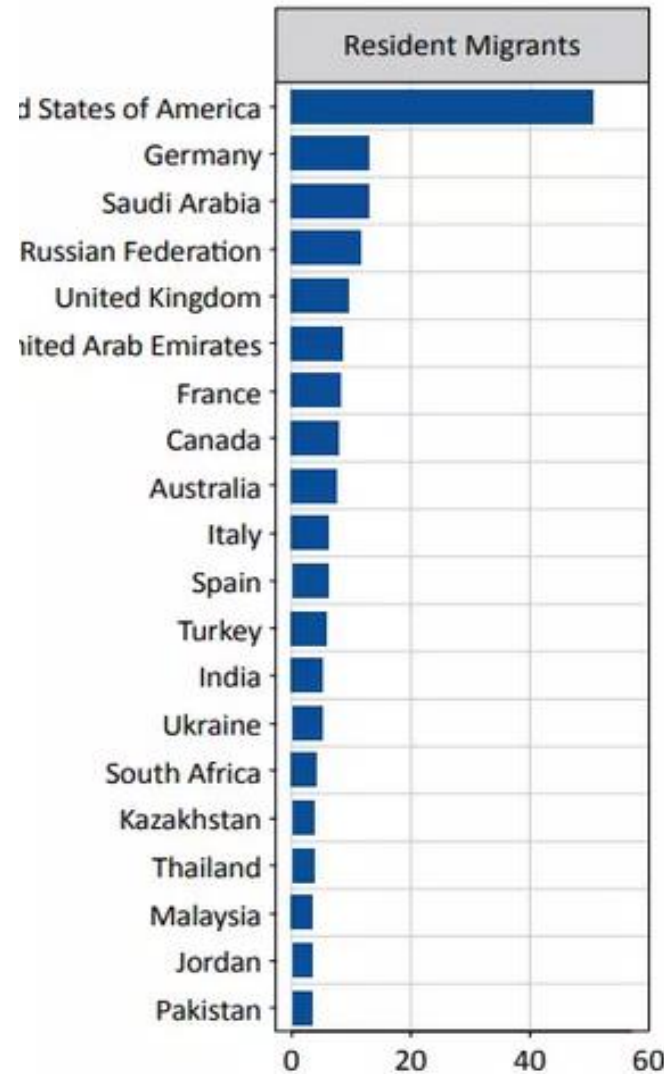
UN DESA, 2019a (accessed 18 September 2019).

6 of all international migrants worldwide in 2019 were born in Asia.

Image: World Migration Report 2020

Urbanization & Families

- Urbanization and family life has been a topic of scholarly interest for over a century now

- Myth: fragmentation of families
  - "While some migrants unilaterally decide to migrate, seeking individual economic benefit or escape from their family home, most will still harbour a sense of family obligation steering them towards contributions to their family's welfare further downstream" (Bryceson, 2019, p. 3045)

- New communication technologies allow for the maintenance of family relationships and the transmission of values & money

Family Trends Are Linked To Urbanization

- Urbanization = reduced population growth rates

- In urban areas there is more ideological room for individuals to live in a variety of household configurations
    - Singles – for ex. half the population of Paris is single
    - Relationships based on "love" in non-Western areas
    - Same-sex unions

- People in urban areas marry later & are more likely to cohabit
    - For instance, in the UK, 85 percent of people who married, cohabited before choosing to make their relationship legally permanent (Pew, 2019)

- In 1970, fewer than 10% of children in OECD countries were born outside of marriage. By 2014 that number had doubled to over 20% with some countries even coming in at over 50%.

Family Trends Are Linked To Urbanization

- Divorce is more common in urban areas:
  - Heterogeneity of populations
  - Potential availability of paid employment for women = higher economic independence

- Growing world-wide phenomenon: older persons are increasingly "ageing in place" in urban areas (World Cities, 2020)

- Gender Issues:
  - Opportunities to escape from patriarchal rural situations
  - Domestic workers; service sector jobs;
  - Trafficking of women; marriage brides
  - Harassment in public places
 - Transnational motherhood

Multi-Dimensional Urbanization & Family Issues
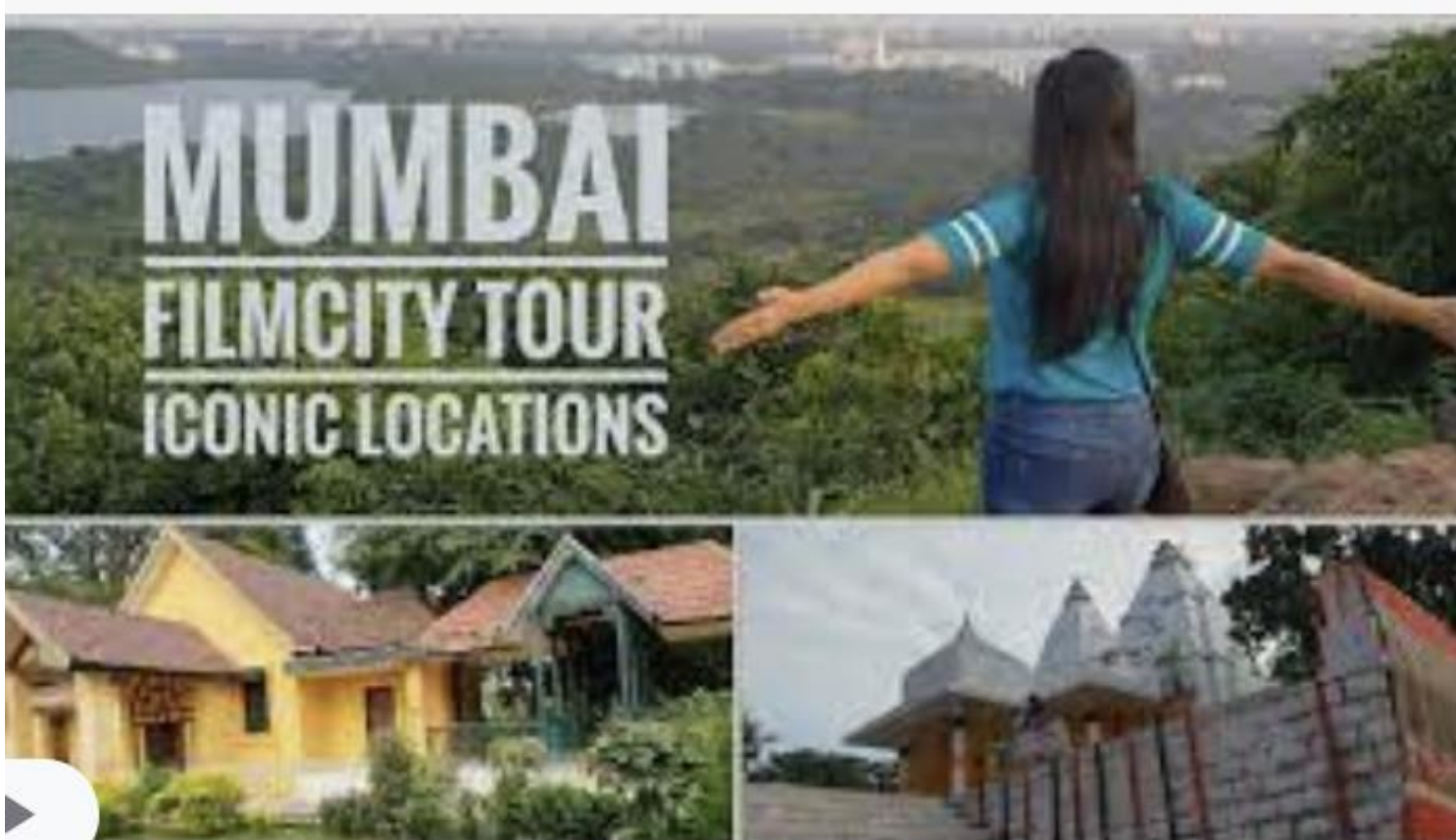
- West:
  - Unmarried
  - Couples without children / "Kiddie deserts"
  - Economic and social advantages but also tax consequences

- Non-Western:
  - Urban margins: populated by migrants from rural areas
  - Poor; children; elderly – disadvantaged to be far from locus of power & Opportunities
  - Floating populations

- Urban areas also increasingly a draw for young people not just for economic opportunities but due to the burgeoning focus on creative industries:
  - Berlin for visual art
  - Mexico City for contemporary art and television,
  - Mumbai for film
  - Austin for music and technology

Figure 3. Share of Birth Cohorts Living in an Urban Neighborhood by Cohort and Age
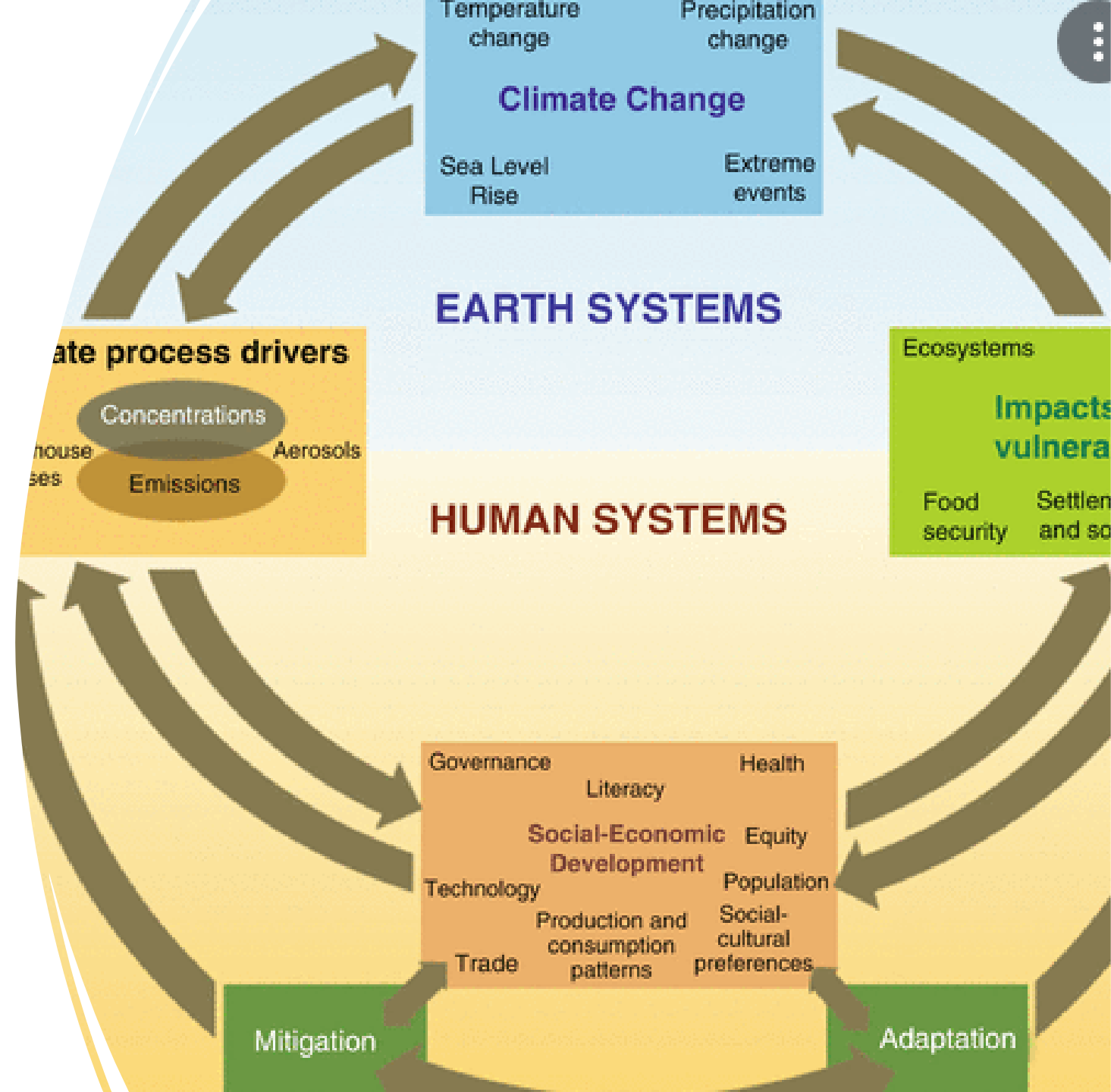
Percent in urban neighborhoods
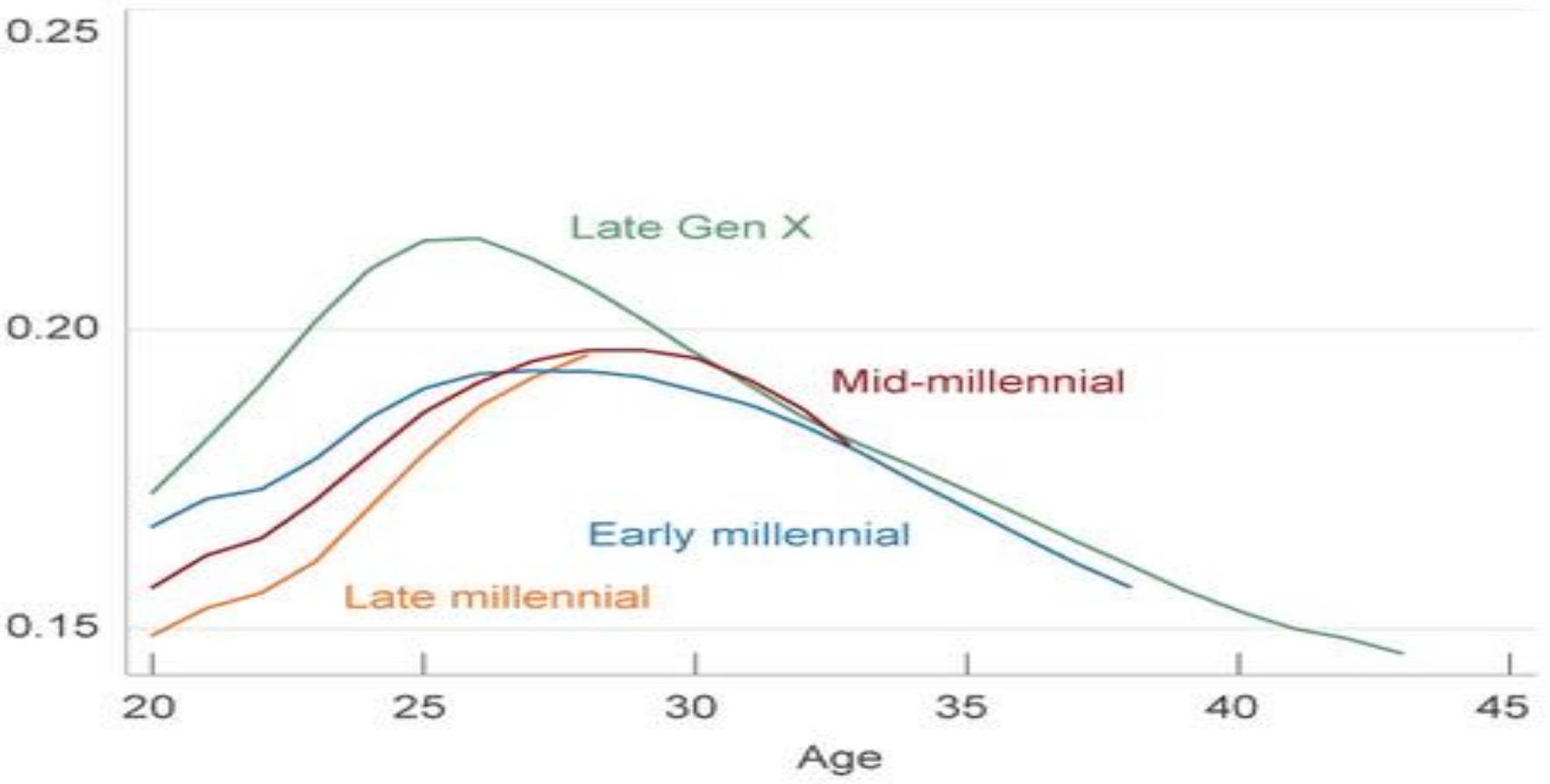
Note: Late Gen X includes those born 1975–79; early millennial, 1980–84; mid-millennial, 1985–89; late millennial, 1990–94.
Sources: Federal Reserve Bank of New York Consumer Credit Panel/Equifax, American Community Surveys, and author's calculations.

Challenges Of Urbanization In The 21st Century

- Climate change

- Securing access to basic services for all, such as drinking water, food, clean air, healthcare (including basic sanitation requirements)

- Resilience to disasters

- *Shrinking cities* in high-income countries and *growing cities* in low-income countries

- Balancing the needs of urban residents, new voluntary migrants, & forcibly displaced migrants

Temperature change Precipitation change

Climate Change

Sea Level Rise Extreme events

EARTH SYSTEMS

ate process drivers

Concentrations

nouse es Aerosols

Emissions

HUMAN SYSTEMS

Ecosystems

Impacts vulnera

Food security Settlen and so

Governance Health

Literacy

Social-Economic Equity
Development

Technology Population

Production and Social-
consumption cultural
Trade patterns preferences

Mitigation Adaptation

An overview of downtown Nairobi, Kenya. © UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu

Goal 11 in the 2030 United Nations Agenda

- Focuses on human settlements and specifically on making cities *inclusive*, *safe, resilient*, and *sustainable*

- That this is a stand-alone goal highlights the importance of urbanization.

- Goal:
  - Resource-efficient, inclusive cities

U.N Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson:

"Cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost"

Advantages Of Urbanization (If Planned Mindfully)

- High-density economic activities

- Shared services and infrastructure

  - Electricity

  - Sanitation

  - Drinking water

  - Fuel and heating

- Access to human capital

- Cultural diversity

- Increased social cohesion and quality of life for individuals & families

  - Decreased social inequalities

Recommendations for Sustainable Equitable Urbanization

- No global one size fits all solution

- Urban areas need to be viewed holistically:
  - Economic development intersects with environmental sustainability
  - Regionality (area in the world where an urban settlement is located)
  - Economics
  - Policies
  - Individual and family life

- Urban Agenda that was adopted by most countries in 2016 that emphasizes collaboration and supportive partnerships between smaller and larger urban areas in regional areas (UNDESA, 2019.)
  - Also, coordination with international development planning
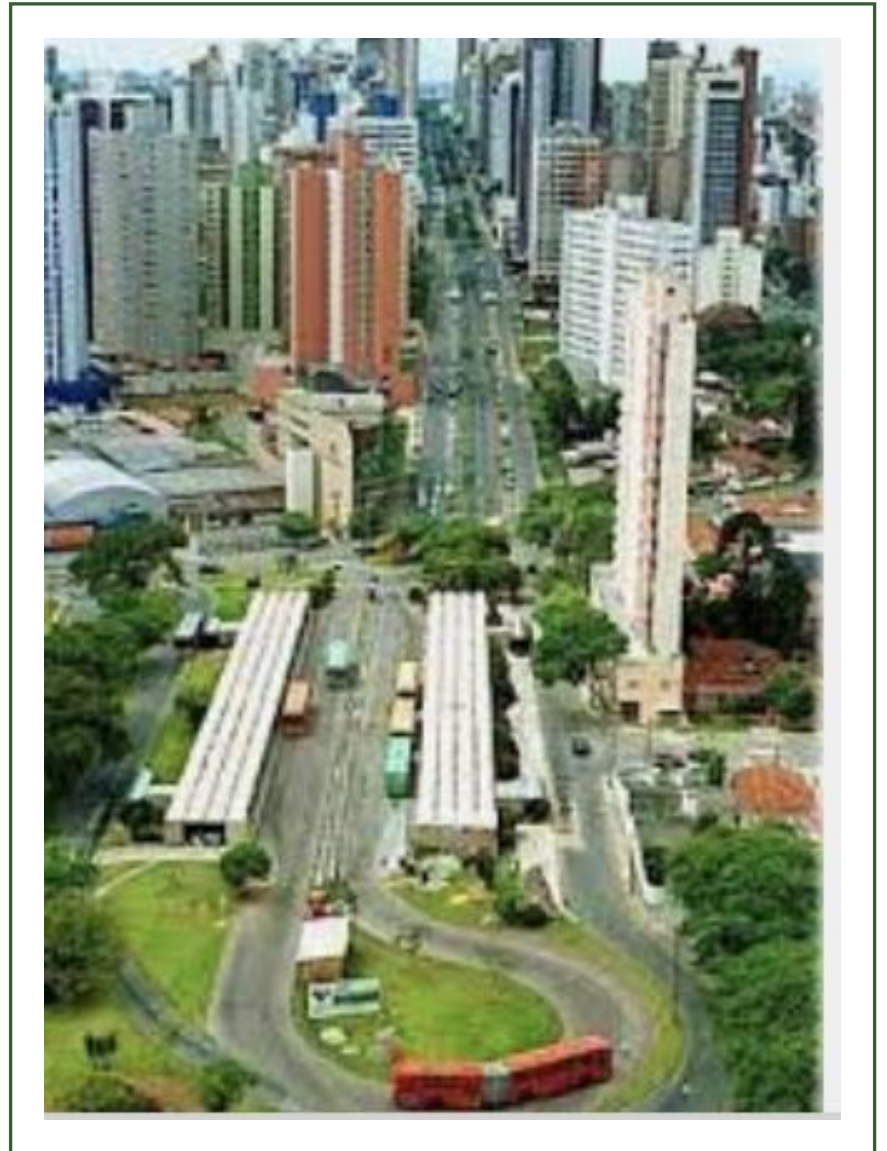
Recommendations for Sustainable Equitable Urbanization

- *All* stakeholders need to be included: Wide-spread participatory processes to facilitate poverty eradication & social cohesion

- Life span perspective in urban planning –children vs elderly for ex have specific needs

- Highlight the needs of recent migrants vs. long-established residents in urban areas and create appropriate programs and policies to facilitate integration

- Adopt a gendered lens when planning on urban areas to create safe conditions for girls and women to live and move around

Recommendations for Sustainable Equitable Urbanization

- Emphasis needs to be on structural barriers that keep individuals from accessing education, employment, health & social services

- Account for floating populations who move between rural and urban areas

- Coordinated responses in order to reach the most vulnerable and / or marginalized individuals and assist them in realizing their rights, capabilities, and full potential as individuals and communities

- Facilitate physical activity and access to nature / green spaces to combat growing levels of obesity, mental health issues, and other lifestyle related diseases through

- Create more access to public spaces – leads to social cohesion and integration of marginalized populations such as the disabled

Supporting Families In Urban Contexts

Increased policy focus on understanding the increasing complexity of family life

Families, in all their multiplicity of shapes and sizes, need to be supported through:

- Affordable mixed income housing
- Reliable, safe transportation
- Pedestrian friendly streetscapes
- Access / improvement of education & social services
- Green spaces

Mindful Urbanization

"When cities are well-planned and managed, they can lift families out of poverty, liberate women from gender-based discrimination, point to bright futures for children and youth, offer comforts and supports to older persons in their golden years and welcome migrants looking for a better life.

This wide-ranging value of urbanization is one of its most potent features. Cities are the crucible in which social outcomes will be improved for all types of marginalized and vulnerable groups" (World Cities Report, 2020, p. xxvi)

How Singapore is Pioneering the Way to Creating a Greener Urban Environment

Thank you! ☺