

Paper name: Population and Settlement Geography

Paper code: GGY-HC-4026

Topic: Rural-Urban Composition: Global Context

The division between rural and urban areas is significant in terms of geographical distribution of population. The division of population into rural and urban is based on the residence. This division is necessary because rural and urban life styles differ from each other in terms of livelihood and social conditions. The age-sex-occupational structure, density of population and level of development vary between rural and urban population is also dependent on the state of development of a country.

The percentage of rural population is higher in farm-based agricultural countries, while industrially, developed regions have higher share of urban population. The more progressed a country is with respect to its development, more number of people are engaged in non-primary activities, thus leading to shift from rural areas to urban areas. Moreover, industrialization also makes headway into the rural countryside, constructing new towns in hitherto traditionally agrarian areas, and therefore the population that was originally rural, becomes urban now. The criterion for classifying settlement as rural or urban varies from country to country. In general terms in rural areas more people are engaged in primary activities whereas in urban areas majority of population is associated with secondary or tertiary sectors.

For a long time now, there has been a nearly universal flow of population from rural into urban areas. The most highly urbanised societies in the world are these of western and northern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, temperate South America, and North America: in all of these, the proportion of urban population exceeds 75 per cent.

In many of the developing countries of Asia and Africa, the urbanisation process has only recently begun; less than one-third of the population lives in urban areas. But the rate of growth of urban areas has shown a great increase. The general rule for developing countries is that the rate of growth of urban areas is twice that of the population as a whole.

A prominent feature of population redistribution, especially in developing countries, is the growth of major cities. Almost half of the world's population lives in cities. It is projected that

there would be about eight billion city dwellers in the world by 2030, and 80 per cent of them would be living in developing countries.

The sex composition of rural and urban settlements varies between developed and developing countries. The rural and urban differences in sex ratio in Canada and West European countries like Finland are just the opposite of those in African and Asian countries like Zimbabwe and Nepal respectively. In Western countries, males outnumber females in rural areas and females outnumber the males in urban areas. In countries like Nepal, Pakistan and India the case is reverse. The excess of females in urban areas of U.S.A., Canada and Europe is the result of influx of females from rural areas to avail of the vast job opportunities. Farming in these developed countries is also highly mechanized and remains largely a male occupation. By contrast the sex ratio in Asian urban areas remains male dominated due to the predominance of male migration. It is also worth noting that in countries like India, female participation in farming activity in rural area is fairly high. Shortage of housing, high cost of living, paucity of job opportunities and lack of security in cities, discourage women to migrate from rural to urban areas.

In the developed countries like the Western European nation due to security and availability of jobs women move out to urban areas. Farming is mostly mechanized there hence men tend to stay in rural areas and look after farming activities. Whereas a completely contrary picture can be seen in developing countries like India where due to lack of security, housing, job opportunities females tend to stay back in rural areas and look after farming whereas male members move out to urban areas in search of working opportunities.
