**Urbanization**

More and more people will migrate to urban areas, resulting in both the growth of existing urban areas and the urbanization of suburban areas or the greater integration of suburban areas into larger metro areas.

**How It’s Developing**

Globally, more people live in urban areas than in rural areas – a trend that has continued to increase since 1950, when 30% of the world’s population was urban, to 2014, when 54% are in urban areas, and possibly to 2050 when 66% of the world’s population is projected to live in urban areas. [[1](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)] While this trend will be a significant change for Asia and Africa, which remain mostly rural, increased urbanization will still affect even those regions whose populations have consistently tended towards urban living.

The United States is well-represented among the McKinsey Global Institute’s City 600, the six hundred urban centers that account for a fifth of the world’s population and 60% of the world’s gross domestic product, with almost one in seven of the designated 600 cities located in the United States. [[2](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)]

Urbanization can lead to more concentrated economic and government activity; new transportation demands (both within the urban environment and between other urban centers or rural areas); increased need for job development; and demographic changes, including lowered fertility and increased aging.

Urbanization also focuses attention on environmental needs, especially as increased urbanization would stand to increase consumption and pollution. Cities will need to meet increasing demands for water, energy, waste disposal, and public services like education and healthcare. [[3](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)] This may lead cities to invest in more sustainable planning, including environmentally friendly buildings, cleaner transportation, recycling initiatives, food security, and energy efficiency measures. New proponents of urbanization also argue that more efficient cities allow greater populations of people to be concentrated on smaller parcels of land, leaving more space open for nature. [[4](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)]

**Why It Matters**

The growth of cities may provide more opportunities for employment and pathways to higher personal success. It could also lead to the further concentration of wealth and increasing disparities. Larger cities may also face significant economic challenges, including increased demand on city services and government funding or the impact of sudden or sustained unemployment. [[5](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)] Libraries in larger cities may be expected to play larger roles in economic and skill development even as they compete for resources in strained economies.

Suburban and “edge cities” may move to become more urban in nature, luring new residents with increased vertical development, investing in mass transit, and encouraging walking and cycling. [[6](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)] For libraries, this may result in increased community usage, new locations and outposts, or adaptation to new usage patterns of urban dwellers.

High density development could result in changes to family composition, as most major metropolitan areas in the developed world have fertility rates lower than those in outer areas. [[7](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)] Lower fertility rates result in smaller families, of course, but could also lead to a more aged population and shortages or increased competition in the workforce.

Urban libraries will work with their cities to responsibly leverage available resources in response to increasing needs. They may develop sustainable programs, services, and facilities with other organizations within the city or through cooperation or partnership with organizations in other urban centers that face similar issues. [[8](http://www.ala.org/transforminglibraries/future/trends/urbanization#Notes and Resources)]

**Notes and Resources**

[1] "World Urbanization Prospects 2014." United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2014. Available from<http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Highlights/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf>

[2] "Urban America: US Cities in the Global Economy." James Manyika, Jaana Remes, Richard Dobbs, Javier Orellana and Fabian Schaer for The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI). April 2012. Available from[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/us\_cities\_in\_the\_global\_ec...](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/us_cities_in_the_global_economy).

[3] “Report: World Not Prepared to Deal with Rapid Urbanization.” Lisa Schlein. *Voice of America*. July 2, 2013. Available from[http://www.voanews.com/content/world-not-prepared-to-deal-with-rapide-ur...](http://www.voanews.com/content/world-not-prepared-to-deal-with-rapide-urbanization/1693651.html) [References World Economic and Social Survey 2013: Sustainable Development Challenges. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. 2013. Available from[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wess/wess\_current/wess2013/...](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wess/wess_current/wess2013/WESS2013.pdf%5D)

[4] “The City Solution: Why Cities are the Best Cure for Our Planet’s Growing Pains.” Robert Kunzig. *National Geographic*. December 2011. Available from <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/12/city-solutions/kunzig-text/1>

[5] "Urban America: US Cities in the Global Economy." James Manyika, Jaana Remes, Richard Dobbs, Javier Orellana and Fabian Schaer for The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI). April 2012. Available from[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/us\_cities\_in\_the\_global\_ec...](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/us_cities_in_the_global_economy).

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[7] “Urbanist Goals will Mean Fewer Children, More Seniors Needing Government Help.” Joel Kotkin. *NewGeography*. August 29, 2014. Available from [http://www.newgeography.com/content/004496-urbanist-goals-will-mean-fewe...](http://www.newgeography.com/content/004496-urbanist-goals-will-mean-fewer-children-more-seniors-needing-government-help)

[8] "Urban World: Cities and the Rise of the Consuming Class." Richard Dobbs, Jaana Remes, James Manyika, Charles Roxburgh, Sven Smit and Fabian Schaer for The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI). June 2012. Available from[http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/urban\_world\_cities\_and\_the...](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/urbanization/urban_world_cities_and_the_rise_of_the_consuming_class)