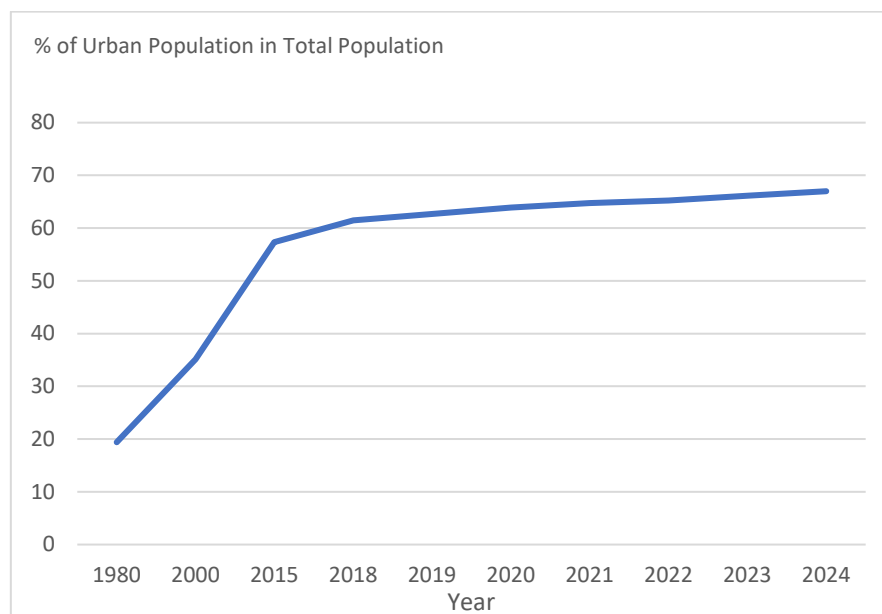


Urbanisation and Mega-Cities in Our Country

I. Urbanization and Urban Growth in Our Country

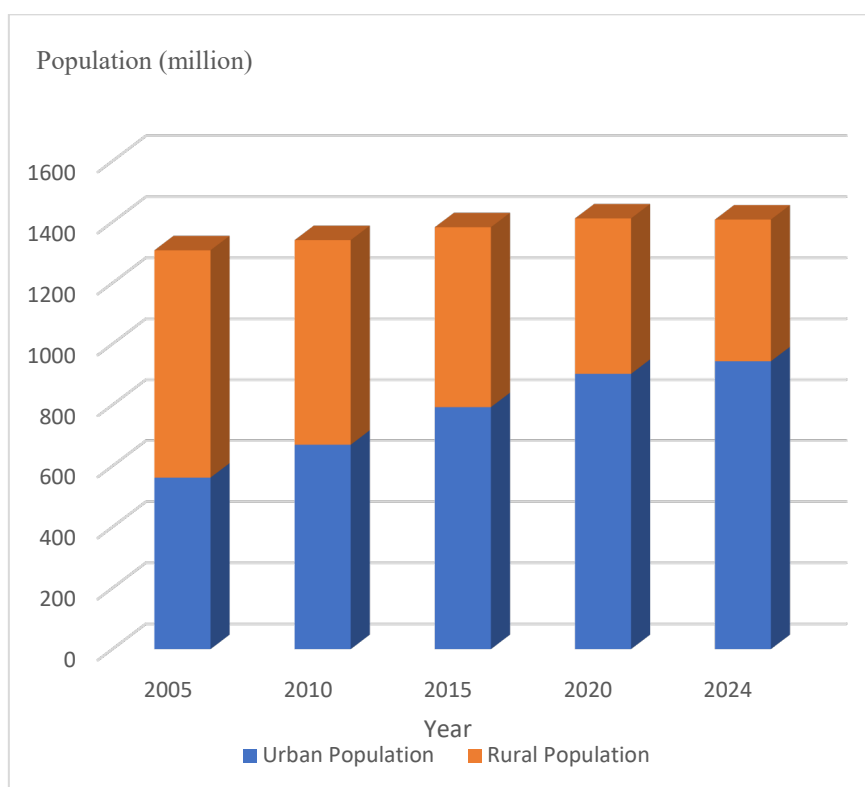
- Since the introduction of the reform and opening-up policy, our country has reached an advanced level of industrial development. With the influx of labour into the urban areas to support the economic growth, the rates of urbanisation and urban growth have also rocketed up from 1980 to 2018.
- The rate of urbanisation is rapid, with the rise of percentage of urban population in total population from 19.4% in 1980 to 67 % in 2024. (Figure 1).
- It has also experienced fast urban growth. Urban population increased from 5621M in 2005 to 9435M in 2024. (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Urbanisation in Our Country (1980 – 2024)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2024)

Figure 2: Urban Growth in Our Country (2005-2024)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2024)

- Cities are categorised into five types according to the permanent resident population in urban areas – small cities, medium-size cities, large cities, super large cities and mega cities. (Table 3)

Table 3: Classification of Cities in our Country

Types	Permanent urban population ¹	
Small	below 500,000 ²	Type I: 200,000–500,000
		Type II: below ² 200,000
Medium-size	500,000–1,000,000	
Large	1,000,000–5,000,000	Type I: 3,000,000–5,000,000
		Type II: 1,000,000–3,000,000
Super-large	5,000,000–10,000,000	
Mega	Above ² 10,000,000	

Note:

- The term “permanent urban population” includes:
 - ❖ People who live in the town, township, or subdistrict where their household registration is located or whose household registration is pending;
 - ❖ People who live in the town, township, or subdistrict and have been away from the location of their household registration for more than six months;
 - ❖ People whose household registration is in the town, township, or subdistrict but who have been away for less than six months or are studying or working abroad.
- “above” includes the original number, “below” does not include the original number

II. Sustainable Development of Cities

Under speedy expansion of urban population size, urban problems such as congested living environment, urban decay and traffic congestion get worse. Various policies and town planning strategies are launched for sustainable development of cities.

1) Optimisation of spatial structure of urban areas

- City clusters have become key drivers of nationwide high-quality development. The international competitiveness of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, Chang Jiang Delta, and Zhujiang Delta city clusters has significantly enhanced.
- With the radiating effect of the growth of large cities, the structure of city sizes is optimised. While some large towns are upgraded to be cities, more small and medium size cities develop.

2) Social welfare of the rural migrants

- Facing the high demand for labour to support the industrial growth in late 20th Century, the government has lifted the household registration restriction in cities with permanent urban population of 3 million or below.
- In 2020, over 100 million rural migrants settled in urban areas.
- Rural migrants can access to compulsory education, healthcare, and skills training. Around 90% of the children of migrant workers receive compulsory education at cities reside.

3) Integrated development of cities and rural areas

- With the free flow of population between the rural and urban areas, there is an urge of alignment of community services nationwide. The basic infrastructure of rural areas should be improved to be the same level as those in the urban areas.
- In 2021, the paved roads could reach 99.61% villages. Over 98% of the villages access to fiber-optic internet and 4G networks.
- Sources of incomes of rural population have been continuously expanding and the urban-to-rural per capita income ratio has steadily dropped to 2.56.

4) Improvement of transport networks within urban clusters

- Comprehensive transport networks within urban clusters have been constructed. Standard railways and highway networks cover cities with populations of over 200,000, while high-speed railways cover cities with populations exceeding 1 million.

5) Urban renewal programmes

- The government is intensifying efforts to advance its urban renewal initiative so as to build livable, resilient and smart cities, and to bolster high-quality development.
- In 2020, 2.07 million shanty towns were renovated under rehabilitation projects

nationwide. 39,700 old towns were redeveloped, benefited more than 7 million families.

- In 2024, the government invested about 2.9 trillion RMB for urban renewal programmes in over 60,000 cities.
- In 2025, the government unveiled a set of guidelines for urban renewal projects, which range from urban rehabilitation projects in old residential areas and urban villages to urban revitalization programmes. It aims to improve the safety conditions, enhance service efficiency, elevate living environment, develop business models and preserve cultural heritage.
- Urban rehabilitation projects are launched for construction and renovation of public facilities and utilities, strengthening the public fire protection facilities and improving transportation infrastructure. The residents can enjoy pleasant living environment with more greening, public open space and community facilities.
- For urban revitalisation, old factories are renovated to be commercial zones. It helps restore the ecological system of the cities and preserve the urban culture and history.

III. **Mega Cities in Our Country**

- In 2024, there are seven megacities, namely Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing Chengdu, Tianjin and Shenzhen. Each of these cities has a population exceeding 10 million.
- Economic development of mega cities
 - These mega cities play a crucial role in our country's economy, especially Beijing and Shanghai, which are among the most important economic centers in the country (Table 4).

Table 4: GDP of seven megacities in China in 2023

Name of city	GDP (100 million RMB)
Shanghai	47218.70
Beijing	43760.70
Shenzhen	34606.00
Guangzhou	30356.00
Chongqing	30145.80
Chengdu	22075.00
Tianjin	16737.30

Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China (2024)

- Beijing, as the capital of our country, hosts numerous government institutions and large enterprises, making it a hub for politics, culture, and the economy.
- Shanghai serves as financial center, with strong capabilities in manufacturing and international trade.
- Guangzhou and Shenzhen have seen significant growth in manufacturing and high-tech industries.

- Specialisation in focus of development

To sustain the growth of the mega cities, the government has planned the special functions and focus of economic development of each city.

- In Beijing, strategies such as “relieving non-capital functions” and the “Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei coordinated development” are adopted.
- Shanghai is focusing on building the “Five Centers,” which include international hubs for economics, finance, trade, shipping, and technological innovation.
- Guangzhou and Shenzhen are promoting high-tech industries and modern urban development.

IV. **Conclusion**

Our country has tremendous potential in urbanisation. On 31 July 2024, the State Council announced a five-year action plan to strengthen the implementation of its “people-oriented new urbanisation strategy”. The plan aims to raise the nation’s percentage of permanent urban residents to around 70% in order to support high-quality economic and social development.

If the rate of urbanisation of our country further increases to 70%, it implies that hundreds of millions of people will move into the cities. It provides opportunities and challenges to the cities. On one hand, urban growth supports the supply of labor force and expansion of the consumer market, and thus, unlocks the potential of economic growth. On the other hand, the pressure on housing, job opportunities, education and social facilities becomes acute. New town planning strategies and investment in social and economic facilities are essential to support the high- quality development of smart cities.

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