

Pre-lesson task

1. Figure 8.1 shows some photos of urban and rural areas. Which photos belong to urban life? Which photos belong to rural life?

Figure 8.1 Examples of urban life and rural life



2. Gather more information about rural and urban life in our country. Imagine that you are living in a rural area. Do you intend to migrate to a city? Discuss the differences in life between these two areas and consider where you would prefer to live.

In-class learning and teaching

Learning objectives:

- To know how to calculate the rate of urbanisation
- To identify the challenges and opportunities arising from urbanisation
- To understand the distribution of city clusters in our country

Development 1: Rural-urban migration and urbanisation in our country

1. In recent decades, our country has experienced urbanisation, i.e. the increase in the percentage of urban population. In this part, we will study urbanisation in our country. Read Knowledge Box 8.1 and Table 8.1 and discuss the following questions.

Knowledge Box 8.1

Rural-urban migration is one of the primary driver of urbanisation. As people move from rural areas to urban centers to search for better opportunities and improved living conditions, the percentage of the urban population increases, leading to urbanisation.

In the mid-1990s, percentage of our country's urban permanent resident population exceeded 30%, entering a phase of rapid development. By 2020, the percentage of our country's urban permanent resident population had surpassed 50%, reaching 63.89% with an average annual growth rate of 1.39%. In recent years, the growth rate of new rural migrant workers has been gradually declining, indicating a slowdown in urbanisation. Our country is currently in the middle to later stages of rapid urbanisation, characterised by the following two main trends:

- On one hand, the driving force behind urbanisation remains strong in our country. The non-agricultural labour productivity is more than four times that of agriculture, and the disposable income per capita for urban residents is 2.5 times higher than that of rural residents. Moreover, there is still a significant gap in infrastructure and public services between urban and rural areas. These realities continue to attract rural migrants to urban areas, making rural-to-urban migration a prevalent trend.
- On the other hand, the pace of urbanisation in our country will gradually slow down. Following international patterns, urbanisation experiences a peak followed by a decline in the middle to later stages of urbanisation. Despite a rapid increase in the percentage of urban permanent resident population since 2011, the number of new rural migrant workers has decreased from over 10.55 million

to below 4 million. In 2018 and 2019, this number was around 2 million each year, with a significant negative growth in 2020 due to the pandemic, followed by a rebound in 2021. The scale of rural migrant workers and their accompanying family members entering cities - directly related to the urbanisation - has been decreasing steadily since 2018. Although there was a slight increase in numbers in 2021 compared to the previous year, the total number has decreased by about 6.14 million compared to 2019, representing a reduction of 3.5%, to around 169 million people. Future trends suggest a further reduction in rural migrant workers and their accompanying family members entering cities, leading to a gradual slowdown in the percentage of urban permanent resident population.

Reference: National Development and Reform commission,
https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xwdt/ztzl/xxczhjs/ghzc/202207/t20220728_1332060.html

Table 8.1: Urban and Rural Population in our country

Census years	Urban population (10,000 people)	Rural population (10,000 people)	Total Population (10,000 people)	Rate of Urbanisation (%)
1953	7726	50534	58260	
1964	12710	56748	69458	
1982	21082	79736	100818	
1990	29971	83397	113368	
2000	45844	80739	126583	
2010	66557	67415	133972	
2020	90199	50979	141178	

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

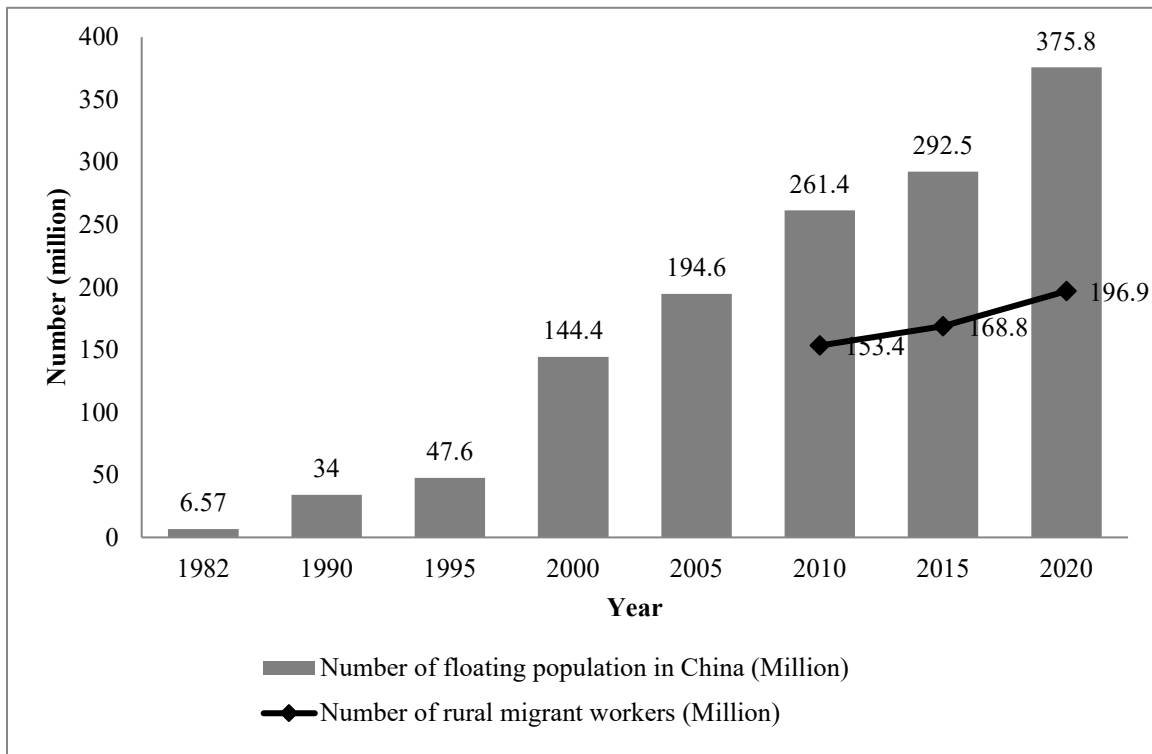
- (a) Calculate the rate of urbanisation in our country for different years using the following formula. Round off your answers to two decimal places.

$$\text{Rate of Urbanisation} = \frac{\text{Urban population}}{\text{Total population}} \times 100\%$$

- (b) Based on the information in the Knowledge Box 8.1 and Table 8.1, describe and explain the changes in the level of urbanisation in our country over the past 70 years.

2. A significant driver of urban population growth and urbanisation has been the considerable influx of rural-to-urban migrants. Refer to Figure 8.1, Knowledge Box 8.2 and Figure 8.3, and discuss the following questions.

Figure 8.1 Number of floating population and rural migrant workers in our country from 1982 to 2020



Source: 1982 Census, 1990 Census, 1995's 1% population sample survey, 2000 Census, 2005's 1% population sample survey, 2010 Census, 2015's 1% population sample survey and 2020 Census.

*Note: Floating population was defined as the people who have moved away from *hukou* location for at least one year in 1982 and 1990 Census, but the time duration has been shortened to half year since 1995.

Knowledge Box 8.2

For a long time, rural migrant workers have been an indispensable force for economic development and urban construction. They leave their rural hometowns not only because rural life is difficult to sustain but also to actively seek better development opportunities and integrate into urban life. Unlike the older generation, they are less likely to return to their rural hometowns for agricultural production; urbanisation is an inevitable fate for them.

Surveys indicate that, apart from wages, these workers are increasingly concerned about social welfare issues in cities. Among these concerns, 14.1% prioritise housing problems, and 7.5% focus on their children's education. These issues differ from traditional concerns, such as wages, labour contracts and working hours. Instead, they are closely linked to the integration of rural migrant workers and their families in the city.

Reference: https://k.sina.cn/article_5044281310_12ca99fde02000qlft.html

Figure 8.3 Interviews with rural migrant workers

Rural migrant workers	Mr Ju	Mrs Wang
Background	Mr. Ju, a farmer from Shaanxi, started out as an ordinary migrant worker in 1987. To support his parents and provide his family of three children in their rural village, he worked at a railway company in the city. With his hard work, he has since become a senior technician of a company of the China Railway Electrification Bureau.	Mrs. Wang, a migrant worker from Anhui, has been with Shanghai Enterprise for more than ten years. Prior to this, she was a farmer and had to support her family, especially since her parents were sick. Over the years, she has progressed from a sewing worker to a manager in charge of the production workshop, achieving a leap forward in career development.

Concern	He is very concerned about the high living costs in the city and always thinks about his family in the rural village.	It was difficult to find a suitable school for her children. the school fees were unaffordable. The medical expenses in Shanghai were also high.
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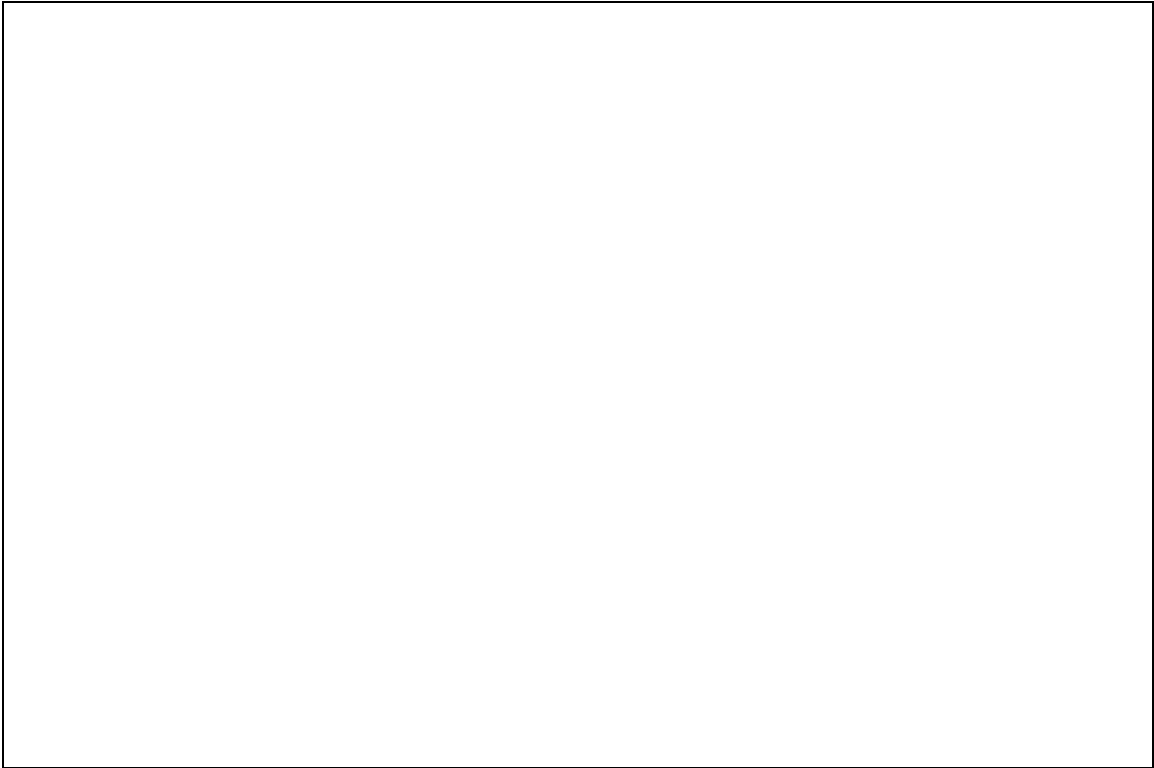
Resource: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of People's Republic of China, 2012,
http://www.moa.gov.cn/ztl/nyfzhjsn/hyfzsn/201209/t20120905_2922296.htm

- (a) Refer to Figure 8.1., describe the trend of floating population and rural migrant workers in our country. What is the implication of this trend?

- (b) What are the push factors that compel rural residents to migrate to cities?

- (c) What are the pull factors that attract rural residents to cities?

(d) What challenges do rural-urban migrants face in cities?



Development 2: City clusters in our country

Watch the audiobook titled “City” (https://emm.edcity.hk/media/1_y93sema2) to understand the concept of urbanisation and the characteristics of city clusters. Read Knowledge Box 8.3 and discuss the following questions.

Knowledge Box 8.3

City clusters in our country, such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei city cluster (京津冀城市群), the Chang Jiang Delta city cluster (長三角城市群) and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (粵港澳大灣區), are characterised by high population densities and rapid urbanisation. These regions serve as major hubs, attracting migrants from rural areas and other parts of the country. This influx of population not only drives urbanisation but also fuels economic growth and development in these areas.

The “National New Urbanisation Plan” (《國家新型城鎮化規劃》) proposes that city clusters should be the primary form to promote urbanisation, which fully aligns with the general trends of urbanisation in the context of globalisation and reflects the fundamental characteristics of our country’s resource and environmental carrying capacity. City clusters drive economic efficiency through economies of scale and innovation, as seen in Shenzhen’s tech hub and Shanghai’s financial centre. Integrated transport networks, such as the high-speed rail connecting Guangzhou and Shenzhen, enhance connectivity and reduce costs. These agglomerations also offer diverse opportunities, attracting talent to cities like Hangzhou for its tech startups and cultural vibrancy. Globally, they boost competitiveness by integrating into global supply chains, as seen in the Zhujiang Delta’s manufacturing exports. Thus, city clusters play a significant role in the process of urbanisation by driving economic growth, infrastructure development, and population migration.

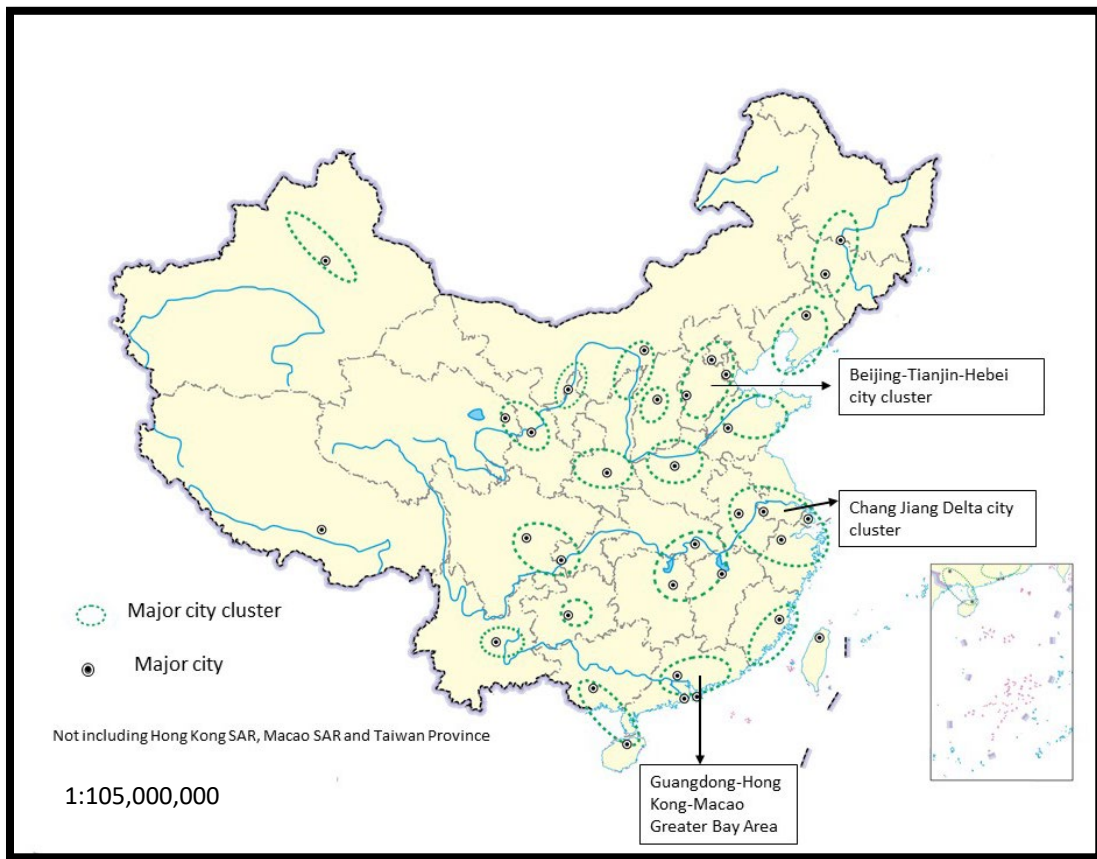
The major city clusters in our country are distributed in areas where the physical environment is more suitable for settlement. The three major climatic zones and three major terrains form the basic pattern of our country's natural geographical environment, making land and water resources the dominant factors influencing the pattern of urbanisation in our country. In terms of land area, our country's plains account for only 12%, compared to 40% for the United States and 59% for Europe. Additionally, our country's per capita water resources are only 28% of the world's average, with a highly uneven distribution of water resources. Through comprehensive analysis, it is evident that regions like the monsoon plains in the eastern and central parts of our country, river valleys, basins, and piedmont alluvial plains in the central and western regions are more suitable for urban development in terms of resource availability and environmental carrying capacity.

Currently, our country has developed a linear concentration of population and cities along river valleys and coastlines, as well as cluster-based agglomerations around transportation hubs (see Figure 8.2), which objectively lay the foundation for our country to continue using city clusters as the primary form to promote urbanisation in the future.

Reference: National Development and Reform Commission

https://www.ndrc.gov.cn/xwdt/gdzt/tjzgczh/yjil/201403/t20140319_1201729.html

Figure 8.2 Spatial distribution of city clusters in our country



Map reference: 中華人民共和國自然資源部審圖號 GS(2023)2767 號 (Date of reference: 25 March 2025)

1. How are the major city clusters distributed in our country?

2. What factors contribute to the formation and growth of city clusters in our country?

3. Based on Knowledge Box 8.3, what are the key advantages of city clusters in the context of our country's urbanisation strategy?

Post-lesson task

Write a case study report about one of the city clusters listed in Figure 8.2. You have to search and collect data about the selected city cluster and present your findings.

Your presentation should include five sections, namely an overview (e.g., geographical location, population, land area), historical background, leading cities, economic role, and future development challenges.

Prepare a 5-minute presentation or a report of 200–300 words, including maps or graphs for illustration.

