Why do people move to urban areas?

There are many and varied reasons for people migrating to urban locations. These reasons are usually a combination of push and pull factors. Some people are ‘pushed’ from rural to urban areas within their own country. Others will travel from other countries to urban areas, ‘pulled’ by better opportunities.

**Push factors**

Geographical inequality is mostly responsible for the migration of people from rural to urban areas. Push factors that drive people towards cities usually involve a decline in living conditions in the rural area in which the people live. There are various situations that can cause this, including a decrease in the quality of agricultural land (caused by factors such as prolonged drought, erosion or desertification); poverty; lack of medical services or educational opportunities; war; famine from lack of food and/or crop failure; and natural disasters.

*Figure 1 | Examples of push factors include lack of medical services, war, crop failure, prolonged drought and desertification, famine, poverty and lack of educational opportunities.*

**Pull factors**

Pull factors refer to the attractions of urban areas that make people want to move there. Urbanisation in any country generally begins when enough businesses are established in the cities to provide many new jobs. Pull factors include job opportunities; better housing and infrastructure; political or religious freedom; improved education and healthcare; activities and enjoyment of public facilities; and family links.

*Figure 2 | Examples of pull factors include religious tolerance, improved healthcare, job opportunities, family links, better housing and infrastructure, political freedom and better educational opportunities.*

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**migration:** the movement of people (or animals) from one location to another

**push factor:** unfavourable quality or attribute of a person’s current location that drives them to move elsewhere

**pull factor:** favourable quality or attribute that attracts people to a particular location