

## **Social and economic issues in Mumbai**

### **Social and economic issues associated with urbanisation 3.2.3.3**

#### **Mumbai, India**

Mumbai (formerly, Bombay) originated as a fishing village and rapid urbanisation has occurred since the 1950s. In the 1950s the population was approximately 2.9 million. This has increased exponentially and in 2016 was approximately 26.1 million. Rapid urbanisation such as this has resulted in many social and economic issues.

Many of the issues facing Mumbai's population have impacts on people and their quality of life, as well as having economic implications. Many issues would therefore be classed as socio-economic impacts.

#### **Housing**

Rapid numbers of migrants entering the city has put pressure on authorities to provide adequate housing. The economic cost of building properties is high but also urban sprawl causes long-term economic impacts as valuable agricultural land is lost in order to provide adequate housing. Many of the migrants are from poor rural areas and as a result they can't afford the formal housing provided by the city government. As a result, squatter settlements have formed in the city. Mumbai (and India's) biggest squatter settlement is Dharavi. There are over 1 million people crammed into a square mile in Dharavi. This brings challenging issues, mainly around the lack of basic social amenities and infrastructure in the area. As a result of increasing pressures from population there are not nearly enough adequate sewers, sewage runs through the streets, causing over 4000 cases of diphtheria and typhoid each day. There are few settlements which have piped water, toilets or handwashing facilities and people are known to go to the toilet in the street. The housing itself is very small, with many properties having a land coverage of no greater than 4m x 4m. The minimal space is increasingly problematic as many extended family members live together.

Water is a problem for the residents of Dharavi. Residents rely on standpipes and they only come on for 2 hours per day. The amount of water per person is therefore limited to allow everybody the chance to collect water. There is also an issue with waste, which collects, accumulates and attracts rat infestation.

#### **Transport**

Rapid urban growth has led to congestion across large areas of the city. The extent of the urban sprawl means that many of the population, even those who live within the central area of the city have to cross through the city to shop or get to work. There are numerous separate commercial areas so large vans and trucks intensify the transport issue. Many of the industrial and commercial activities are located in the CBD and these areas can be congested 24 hours a day. Even the provision of public transport has had limited impact on the issue. Outside the CBD area there are still traffic problems as many factories and offices are now developing in the suburbs due to lower land prices there. Equally problematic are the suburban shopping centres and sporting facilities which periodically experience bottlenecks.

Urban morphology makes the situation worse, with many of the CBDs streets being too narrow to cope with the increasing vehicle numbers; the CBD was built well before motorized transport. Equally

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problematic is the number of stray cattle and domestic animals that wander onto the streets and add further to street congestion.

### **Sanitation**

Approximately 30% of Mumbai's population has access to a sanitation system, meaning that the remaining people have to leave sewage to flow straight into water courses. Mumbai deposits large volumes of sewage straight into the sea. International pressure to manage ocean water quality is likely to put cities like Mumbai under pressure to improve human waste collection and processing systems and reduce the sewage being disposed of in this way.

### **Waste disposal**

Rapid urbanization has led to a huge rise in rubbish. The city authorities have limited arrangements for waste disposal and the existing landfill sites are rapidly filling, with chemicals leaking and contaminating the soil. Many squatter settlement inhabitants work on the landfill sites sourcing recyclable materials to sell for money. The risk of disease from these sites is high as there are few laws regulating the disposal of the different types of wastes. Large areas of the city have waste on the streets and disease in some areas is rife. This is a major social problem, due to the lack of healthcare available for the least affluent people.

### **Urban crime**

31.8% of inhabitants have been victims of crime with 3.5% being victims of serious sexual assault. The large population, the growth in westernized culture, and desire for commercial goods has led to a growth in crime. Women, in particular, who may be moving away from their traditional culture are sometimes the subject of attack. Large commercial centres such as Mumbai have also become international foci for terrorism acts and the 2008 attack in Mumbai shows that politically, the city is vulnerable.

### **Urban pollution**

Extensive industrialization and traffic congestion has led to poor air quality in Mumbai. Lack of regulations regarding emissions from new factories have increased smog build up, particularly during hot week days, when - combined with the increasing traffic - leads to poor visibility.

### **Exam style questions**

- 1. Evaluate the impact of migration on the character of an urban location you have studied and people's lived experience of that place (9 marks).**
- 2. "There are more challenges than opportunities associated with improving quality of life in urban areas". To what extent do you agree with this view? (20 marks)**

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### 1. Evaluate the impact of migration on the character of an urban location you have studied and people's lived experience of that place (9 marks).

It is important to recognise that in order to reach the higher marks on this question, that it is not enough to simply recall facts regarding the case study of choice, but to be able to show how the impacts of migration change the place being discussed. Mumbai is a useful example of how in both the short and long term, the character of Mumbai has been changed.

The order in which to answer is as follows:

1. An outline of the reasons behind the mass migration to Mumbai. Candidates should be aware of the range of push and pull factors that have led to migration and the resulting rapid growth in population of Mumbai.
2. Commentary regarding the initial function of Mumbai – traditional fishing village based predominantly around the port. Many generations have lived in this area and worked in this industry.
3. Resulting impacts of migration should refer to:
  - Divide between rich and poor (rich areas next to some of the poorest areas – Dharavi)
  - Focus on a range of impacts – advice would be to focus on the growth of squatter settlements, urban pollution and urban crime. Commentary should discuss the change from a traditional culture to a modernised city and how this impacts upon the character of the city. Reference to how people's lives have changed is important.  
EXAMPLE – As modern industries and commercial businesses have developed in Mumbai, links with the western world and foreign investment have led to many inhabitants changing their lifestyles. Religious and cultural values have become watered down for some inhabitants and women have suffered as a result of this. Attacks and sexual crimes against women have increased.
4. Finally, a conclusion is required, whereby the candidate discusses how the character of Mumbai has changed and what people's daily experiences of life there is like.

### 2. 'There are more challenges than opportunities associated with improving quality of life in urban areas.' To what extent do you agree with this view? (20 marks)

There is a need to have knowledge of specific social issues within a named urban area. Mumbai is an ideal case study as reference can be made to waste and issues with disposal, water quality and sewage as well as poor air quality and how these cause health issues and reduce life expectancy. The basis of the question is to give an overview of the issues but then to evaluate the solutions to the problems and to form a discussion around the solution – does it work? Are there too many challenges to overcome to solve the problem?

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The order in which to answer is as follows:

1. An overview of the range of social issues facing Mumbai and why this has occurred, with reference to large-scale rural-urban migration.
2. For the three issues chosen – waste, water quality and air quality, outline the reasons for the issues and the impacts they have on people.
3. For each issue discuss the potential solution and evaluate their success:
  - Waste disposal – 80% of waste is recycled in the Dharavi slum – this is a positive as it gives the residents a wage, but there's an issue in terms of the ever increasing population producing more waste than they can deal with. This can lead to disease as people are working, not only amongst sewage and waste, but also toxic chemicals. Reference should be made then to how disease etc. isn't managed well. Also, the city government is considering redeveloping the recycling zone in Dharavi so this will impact upon the level of waste and will result in people not having an income.
  - Water quality – lack of sewage systems has led to the dumping of sewage at sea. Infrastructure is being built in the wealthier areas so quality of life for the richest will increase. However, the greatest growth is in the poorer areas so this issue will worsen. Commentary regarding the impacts of open sewers in Dharavi and the resulting increase in water-borne diseases such as cholera and diphtheria, combined with the limited healthcare should be referred to
  - Air quality and health implications – This is largely unmanageable for two reasons- urban growth continues which will result in increased road transport. Equally concerning is the growth of large industries which employ the poor migrants. Lack of health and safety laws result in poor air quality. Evaluation should be made here as to whether the laws will ever be enforced as the factories' aim is to make profit.
4. Finally, a conclusion should be reached evaluating the extent to which social issues in Mumbai can be solved.