



Migration, Urbanization, and Social Inequality: A Global Review of Drivers, Patterns, and Socioeconomic Impacts

Rina Sari Putri¹, Ahmad Fauzi²

¹Faculty of Engineering, Universitas Palangka Raya, Palangka Raya, Indonesia

²Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Brawijaya, Malang, Indonesia

*Correspondence: rinasariputri227@proton.me

SUBMITTED: 12 March 2026; REVISED: 9 April 2026; ACCEPTED: 12 April 2026

ABSTRACT: Migration and urbanization are among the most significant demographic processes shaping modern cities. Rapid population movements from rural areas to urban centers have contributed to economic growth, labor market expansion, and urban development across many regions of the world. However, these processes also present major challenges, particularly in relation to social inequality and uneven access to urban resources. This review examines the complex relationship between migration, urbanization, and social inequality in urban environments. The study synthesizes existing literature to explore the main drivers of migration, including economic opportunities, social and demographic factors, environmental changes, and political conditions. It further analyzes how migration contributes to urban transformation through labor market participation, entrepreneurial activities, and cultural diversification. At the same time, the review highlights key challenges associated with migration-driven urbanization, such as income disparities, spatial segregation, limited access to housing and public services, and the vulnerability of migrant populations. Particular attention is given to the experiences of women, youth, and undocumented migrants who often face heightened social and economic disadvantages in cities. The findings emphasize that while migration can support urban economic dynamism, it may also deepen urban inequality when governance and planning systems fail to ensure inclusive development. Effective policy responses must therefore integrate migration management, urban planning, and social protection strategies to promote equitable and sustainable urban development.

KEYWORDS: Migration; urbanization; social inequality; urban development; labor market; spatial inequality; social inclusion

1. Introduction

Migration and urbanization have become defining features of contemporary global development. Over the past few decades, the world has experienced an unprecedented shift in population distribution as increasing numbers of people move from rural areas and smaller towns to large urban centers. This transformation is driven by economic, social, environmental, and demographic factors that encourage individuals and families to seek better opportunities in cities. As a result, urbanization has accelerated across both developed and developing

regions, reshaping economic systems, social structures, and spatial patterns of settlement [1, 2]. Globally, more than half of the world's population now resides in urban areas, and this proportion is projected to continue increasing in the coming decades. Rapid urban growth is particularly evident in developing regions such as Asia and Africa, where expanding cities are absorbing large numbers of migrants seeking employment and improved living standards. At the same time, developed countries also continue to experience urban population growth, largely driven by international migration and the concentration of economic activities in metropolitan regions. Major cities have become centers of innovation, economic productivity, and cultural diversity, attracting both domestic and international migrants [3, 4].

Despite the economic dynamism associated with urbanization, rapid population growth in cities has raised significant concerns about social inequality. Urban areas often display stark contrasts between wealth and poverty, with affluent neighborhoods located alongside informal settlements or low-income communities. Limited housing availability, unequal access to infrastructure, and disparities in employment opportunities can intensify existing social inequalities. Consequently, understanding the relationship between migration, urbanization, and inequality has become an important area of research for policymakers and scholars seeking to promote inclusive and sustainable urban development [5, 6]. Migration plays a central role in shaping urban development patterns worldwide. Rural-to-urban migration, in particular, has been a major driver of urban expansion, contributing to the rapid growth of cities and metropolitan regions. Individuals migrate to urban areas in search of better economic prospects, including employment opportunities, higher wages, and improved access to education and public services. In many cases, migrants provide essential labor for key economic sectors such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and service industries. As a result, migration contributes significantly to economic growth and urban productivity [1, 2, 7].

Economic opportunities remain one of the most powerful factors attracting migrants to cities. Urban centers tend to offer a greater diversity of employment options and higher levels of economic activity compared to rural areas. Industrial development, expanding service sectors, and the presence of large markets create favorable conditions for job creation. Additionally, migrants often benefit from social networks that facilitate their integration into urban labor markets. These networks can help newcomers secure employment, find housing, and adapt to new social environments [8, 9]. Globalization has further intensified migration flows toward cities by reshaping labor markets and increasing economic interconnectedness. International trade, foreign investment, and technological advancements have concentrated economic activities in urban regions, particularly in global cities that function as hubs of finance, technology, and commerce. As global supply chains expand, cities increasingly rely on migrant labor to sustain economic growth and maintain competitiveness in international markets [10, 11].

Although urbanization is often associated with economic development and improved living standards, urban growth does not automatically lead to equitable outcomes. In many cities, rapid population expansion has outpaced the capacity of governments and urban institutions to provide adequate infrastructure, housing, and social services. This mismatch between population growth and resource availability can exacerbate social inequalities and create new forms of urban vulnerability [12, 13]. Migrants frequently encounter multiple barriers that limit their access to economic and social opportunities. In the labor market, many migrants are employed in informal or low-paying jobs with limited job security and minimal social

protection. Housing challenges are also common, as migrants often face difficulties accessing affordable and adequate accommodation. Consequently, many are forced to live in overcrowded conditions or informal settlements lacking essential services such as clean water, sanitation, and reliable transportation [11, 14].

Access to healthcare and education can also be uneven, particularly for migrants who lack legal documentation or stable employment. Language barriers, discrimination, and limited institutional support may further hinder migrants' ability to fully participate in urban life. These challenges highlight the complex relationship between migration and inequality, demonstrating that while migration contributes to urban growth, it can also intensify social disparities if appropriate policies and governance structures are not in place [15, 16]. Given these challenges, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interconnections between migration, urbanization, and social inequality. First, the study examines the relationship between migration and urbanization, focusing on how migration patterns influence urban population growth and spatial development. Second, it assesses the ways in which migration contributes to social inequality in urban areas, particularly in terms of employment, housing, and access to essential services. Finally, the review seeks to identify policy strategies and governance approaches that can help mitigate inequality and promote more inclusive urban development. By synthesizing existing research and highlighting key trends and challenges, this review aims to contribute to the development of policies that support equitable and sustainable urban futures. Figure 1 illustrates the complex interactions among migration drivers, urbanization outcomes, and social inequality in urban area

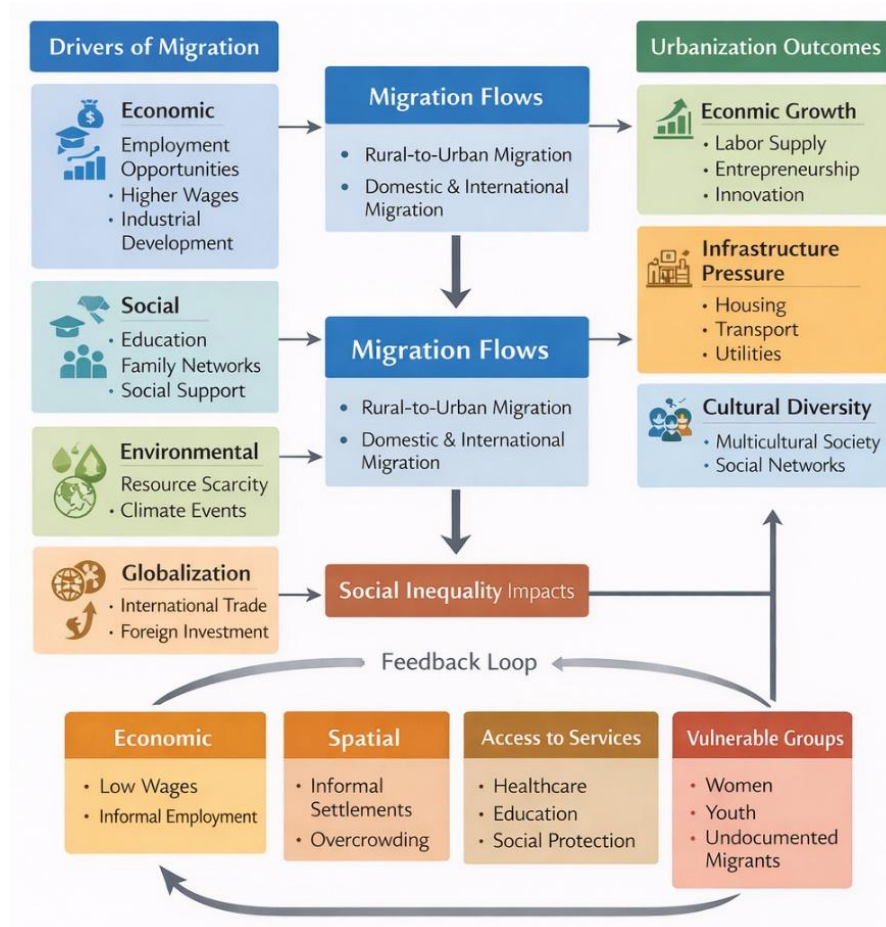


Figure 1. Conceptual model illustrating the relationship between migration, urbanization, and social inequality

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theories of Migration

Migration has been widely examined through several theoretical perspectives that explain why individuals and groups move from one place to another. One of the most widely used frameworks is push–pull theory, which suggests that migration decisions are influenced by factors that push individuals away from their place of origin and factors that pull them toward a destination. Push factors often include unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and limited access to education or healthcare in rural or underdeveloped regions. Conversely, pull factors typically include better employment opportunities, higher wages, improved living standards, and access to services available in urban areas. Together, these forces shape the patterns and intensity of migration flows [17, 18].

Another influential perspective is neoclassical migration theory, which focuses on economic motivations behind migration. According to this theory, migration occurs because of differences in labor supply and demand between regions. Individuals move from areas with lower wages and limited employment opportunities to regions where wages are higher and labor demand is greater. At the macro level, migration is seen as a mechanism that balances labor markets and promotes economic efficiency. At the micro level, individuals are assumed to make rational decisions by comparing the potential costs and benefits of migrating. This framework has been widely used to explain rural–urban migration and international labor migration in both developed and developing countries [17, 19].

A third important perspective is network migration theory, which emphasizes the role of social connections in shaping migration decisions. Migrant networks consist of family members, friends, and community ties that link migrants in destination areas with individuals in their places of origin. These networks reduce the costs and risks associated with migration by providing information, financial support, and assistance in securing housing or employment. As migration networks expand, they can facilitate continuous migration flows, creating self-sustaining migration systems between specific regions or communities [19, 20].

2.2 Urbanization Theories

Urbanization theories provide insight into how cities grow and evolve in response to economic, social, and technological changes. One prominent framework is modernization theory, which views urbanization as a natural outcome of economic development and industrialization. As societies transition from agrarian to industrial economies, economic activities increasingly concentrate in urban areas, leading to population shifts from rural regions to cities. In this context, urbanization is often associated with improvements in productivity, infrastructure development, and technological advancement [13, 21].

Another relevant framework is urban transition theory, which describes the long-term process through which countries move from predominantly rural societies to predominantly urban ones. This theory suggests that urbanization occurs in stages, beginning with slow urban growth in early development phases and accelerating as industrialization and economic diversification expand. Eventually, urban growth stabilizes as economies mature and demographic transitions occur. The urban transition model helps explain variations in urbanization patterns across different regions and levels of economic development [22].

A more contemporary perspective is global city theory, which highlights the growing importance of major metropolitan areas in the global economy. Global cities serve as key hubs for finance, trade, technology, and international business activities. These cities attract highly skilled professionals as well as large numbers of migrant workers who support diverse sectors such as construction, services, and logistics. While global cities generate economic growth and innovation, they can also experience significant socioeconomic disparities due to uneven access to resources and opportunities [23, 24].

2.3 Social Inequality Framework

Understanding the relationship between migration and urbanization requires a clear framework for analyzing social inequality. One dimension of inequality is economic inequality, which refers to disparities in income, employment opportunities, and wealth distribution among different social groups. Migrants often occupy lower-paying jobs or informal employment sectors, which can contribute to income inequality within urban populations [1, 4]

Another important dimension is spatial inequality, which refers to uneven access to infrastructure, housing, and public services across different urban areas. In many cities, migrants are concentrated in peripheral neighborhoods or informal settlements where living conditions and access to services are limited. Such spatial segregation can reinforce economic disadvantages and reduce opportunities for social mobility [25, 26].

Social exclusion represents a broader dimension of inequality that encompasses barriers preventing certain groups from fully participating in social, economic, and political life. Migrants may experience social exclusion due to discrimination, legal restrictions, or limited access to social protection systems. These barriers can restrict migrants' ability to benefit from urban development and contribute to persistent inequalities [27, 28].

2.4 Integrating Migration, Urbanization, and Inequality

To better understand the complex relationship among these processes, it is necessary to integrate migration, urbanization, and inequality into a comprehensive conceptual framework. Migration contributes to urban population growth and labor market expansion, which in turn drives urban development and economic transformation. However, without inclusive governance and equitable resource distribution, rapid urban growth can generate spatial segregation, economic disparities, and social exclusion [1, 12].

A conceptual model linking these three dimensions illustrates how migration acts as a catalyst for urbanization, while urban development shapes the distribution of economic opportunities and social services. In this interconnected system, policies related to urban planning, labor markets, housing, and social protection play a crucial role in determining whether migration leads to inclusive growth or deepens existing inequalities. Understanding these interactions provides a foundation for developing strategies that promote equitable and sustainable urban development [1, 13]. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual framework linking migration, urbanization, and social inequality, showing how migration acts as a catalyst for urban growth and how policy interventions can influence outcomes.

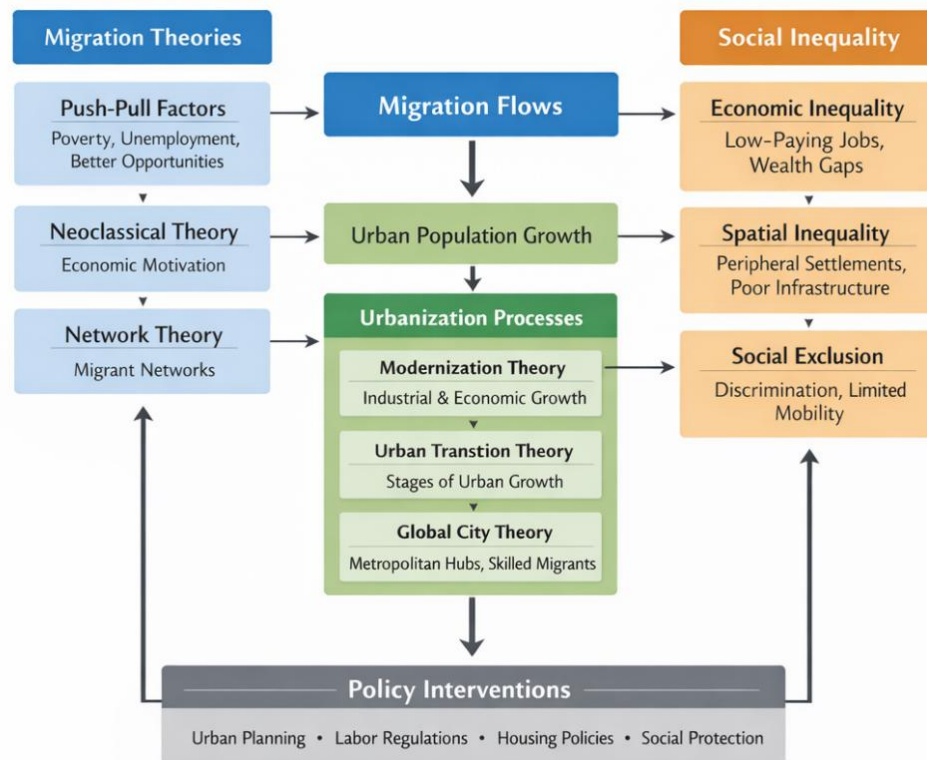


Figure 2. Conceptual framework linking migration, urbanization, and social inequality.

3. Drivers of Migration and Urbanization

Migration and urbanization are influenced by a complex set of economic, social, environmental, and political factors. These drivers interact to shape population movements and determine the speed and pattern of urban growth across different regions of the world. Understanding these underlying drivers is essential for explaining why individuals and communities relocate to urban areas and how these movements contribute to broader demographic and socioeconomic transformations [29, 30].

3.1 Economic Drivers

Economic factors remain the most prominent drivers of migration and urbanization. One of the primary motivations for migration is the search for employment opportunities. Urban areas typically provide a wider range of jobs across various sectors, including manufacturing, construction, services, and technology. These employment opportunities attract individuals from rural regions where economic activities may be limited primarily to agriculture or small-scale enterprises. Another key economic driver is wage differentials between rural and urban areas. In many countries, wages offered in urban labor markets are significantly higher than those in rural communities. This income gap encourages individuals to relocate to cities in order to improve their financial stability and support their families. Migrants often view urban employment as a pathway to upward socioeconomic mobility. Industrialization also plays a crucial role in shaping migration patterns. As industries expand in urban centers, they create demand for labor, which in turn attracts workers from surrounding rural areas. Historically, industrial growth has been closely associated with urban population expansion, particularly during periods of rapid economic development [8, 29, 30].

3.2 Social and Demographic Drivers

In addition to economic motivations, several social and demographic factors contribute to migration and urbanization. One important factor is access to education opportunities. Cities often host better educational institutions, including universities, vocational training centers, and specialized schools. Students and young professionals frequently migrate to urban areas to pursue higher education and skill development, which can subsequently influence long-term migration patterns. Family reunification is another significant driver of migration. Migrants who have already settled in urban areas often facilitate the relocation of relatives and family members. This process strengthens migration networks and contributes to sustained migration flows between rural and urban regions. Population pressure in rural areas also encourages migration to cities. Rapid population growth in rural communities can place strain on available resources such as land, employment, and public services. As opportunities become limited, individuals may seek alternative livelihoods in urban areas, leading to increased rural-to-urban migration [1, 29].

3.3 Environmental and Climate Drivers

Environmental factors have increasingly become important drivers of migration in recent decades. Climate change, for instance, is altering environmental conditions in many regions, affecting agricultural productivity and water availability. Droughts, changing rainfall patterns, and rising temperatures can reduce the viability of traditional livelihoods, prompting people to migrate to urban areas in search of alternative economic opportunities. Similarly, natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and landslides can displace large populations and force communities to relocate. Urban areas often become destinations for displaced individuals seeking safety and stability. Another environmental factor is resource scarcity, including shortages of water, arable land, and other essential resources. As these resources become increasingly limited, migration to cities may serve as a survival strategy for affected populations [29, 31].

3.4 Political and Institutional Factors

Political and institutional conditions also influence migration patterns. Effective governance can shape migration through policies related to urban planning, labor markets, and social services. Weak governance structures, on the other hand, may contribute to unmanaged urban expansion and unequal access to opportunities. Conflict and political instability represent another important driver of migration. Armed conflicts, political persecution, and social unrest often force individuals to leave their homes and seek refuge in safer urban environments. Finally, migration policies implemented by national and local governments can either facilitate or restrict population movements. Policies regulating labor migration, housing, and social protection significantly affect how migrants integrate into urban societies and influence the overall dynamics of urbanization [32, 33]. Table 1 summarizes the major economic, social, environmental, and political drivers of migration and urbanization, highlighting how these factors interact to shape population movements.

Table 1. Key Drivers of Migration and Urbanization

Driver Category	Key Factors	Description	References
Economic	Employment opportunities	Urban areas offer diverse jobs in manufacturing, services, construction, and technology, attracting rural populations.	[8, 29, 30]
	Wage differentials	Higher wages in urban labor markets motivate migration for financial stability and upward mobility.	[8, 29, 30]
	Industrialization	Expansion of industries in cities increases labor demand, encouraging rural-to-urban migration.	[8, 29, 30]
Social & Demographic	Access to education	Cities provide better educational institutions (universities, vocational schools), attracting students and young professionals.	[1, 29]
	Family reunification	Migrants facilitate relocation of relatives, strengthening migration networks.	[1, 29]
	Population pressure	High rural population growth strains resources, pushing migration to urban areas.	[1, 29]
Environmental & Climate	Climate change	Changes in rainfall, drought, and temperature reduce agricultural viability, prompting migration.	[29, 31]
	Natural disasters	Floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and landslides displace populations toward urban centers.	[29, 31]
	Resource scarcity	Shortages of water, arable land, and essential resources drive survival-based urban migration.	[29, 31]
Political & Institutional	Governance	Effective governance supports planned urban growth; weak governance leads to unmanaged expansion.	[32, 33]
	Conflict & instability	Armed conflicts, persecution, and social unrest force people to move to safer urban areas.	[32, 33]
	Migration policies	Government policies regulating labor, housing, and social protection affect integration and migration patterns.	[32, 33]

4. Impacts of Migration on Urban Development

Migration significantly influences the economic, social, and infrastructural development of urban areas. As cities attract large numbers of migrants seeking employment and improved living conditions, migration contributes both opportunities and challenges to urban development. These impacts can be observed in economic activities, infrastructure demands, and the social and cultural composition of urban populations [29, 34].

4.1. Economic contributions.

One of the most important positive impacts of migration on urban development is the expansion of the labor market. Migrants often fill critical labor shortages in sectors such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, hospitality, and domestic services. Their participation helps sustain economic growth and supports the functioning of urban economies. In many cities, migrant workers provide essential labor that enables industries and businesses to operate efficiently. Migration also contributes to entrepreneurship and innovation. Many migrants establish small businesses, restaurants, retail shops, and service enterprises that stimulate local economies and create employment opportunities. These entrepreneurial activities can enhance economic diversity and encourage innovation, particularly when migrants bring new skills, experiences, and cultural perspectives to urban environments. Another notable impact is the expansion of the informal sector. In many developing cities, migrants who are unable to secure formal employment often engage in informal economic activities such as street vending, small-scale trading, and informal services. Although the informal sector provides income opportunities and supports livelihoods, it may also present challenges related to job security, labor rights, and regulatory oversight [35, 36].

4.2. Urban infrastructure pressure.

Despite these economic contributions, rapid migration can place significant pressure on urban infrastructure and public services. One of the most visible challenges is housing shortages. As urban populations grow rapidly, the demand for affordable housing often exceeds supply, leading to overcrowded living conditions and the expansion of informal settlements. Migration also contributes to transportation congestion, particularly in rapidly growing cities where transportation systems may not expand at the same pace as population growth. Increased commuting demands can strain public transportation networks and contribute to traffic congestion and environmental pollution. Another critical challenge is the pressure on water supply and sanitation systems. Rapid urban population growth increases demand for clean water, waste management, and sanitation infrastructure. In many cities, existing systems struggle to accommodate growing populations, which can result in inadequate access to essential services, particularly in low-income neighborhoods [29, 37].

4.3. Cultural and social diversity.

Migration also transforms the cultural and social landscape of cities by creating multicultural urban environments. Migrants bring diverse languages, traditions, cuisines, and cultural practices that enrich urban societies and foster cultural exchange. This diversity can enhance creativity, innovation, and social dynamism within cities. However, increased diversity may also present social integration challenges. Differences in language, cultural norms, and socioeconomic status can sometimes create barriers to social cohesion. In some cases, migrants may experience discrimination or exclusion, which can hinder their integration into urban communities. Effective policies and inclusive urban governance are therefore essential to promote social harmony and ensure that migration contributes positively to urban development [1, 18]. Table 2 summarizes the key economic, infrastructural, and socio-cultural impacts of migration on urban development.

Table 2. Impacts of migration on urban development.

Impact Category	Key Aspects	Description	References
Economic Contributions	Labor market expansion	Migrants fill labor shortages in construction, manufacturing, transport, hospitality, and domestic services, sustaining economic growth.	[29, 34, 35]
	Entrepreneurship & innovation	Migrants establish small businesses and service enterprises, creating jobs and introducing new skills and perspectives.	[35, 36]
	Informal sector growth	Migrants often engage in street vending and informal services when formal employment is limited, supporting livelihoods but facing regulatory challenges.	[35, 36]
Urban Infrastructure Pressure	Housing shortage	Rapid population growth leads to overcrowding, informal settlements, and demand for affordable housing.	[29, 37]
	Transportation congestion	Migration increases commuting demands, straining public transport and causing traffic and environmental issues.	[29, 37]
	Water & sanitation	Urban population growth pressures water supply, waste management, and sanitation systems, affecting access in low-income areas.	[29, 37]
Cultural & Social Diversity	Multicultural environment	Migrants enrich cities with diverse languages, traditions, and cultural practices, enhancing creativity and social dynamism.	[1, 18]
	Social integration challenges	Differences in culture, language, and socioeconomic status can create barriers to cohesion; discrimination may hinder integration.	[1, 18]

5. Migration and Social Inequality in Urban Areas

While migration contributes to economic growth and urban expansion, it can also intensify social inequality in cities. Migrants often experience structural disadvantages that limit their access to economic opportunities, adequate housing, and essential social services. These inequalities manifest in several interconnected dimensions, including economic disparities, spatial segregation, limited access to services, and the vulnerability of specific social groups [1, 38].

5.1. *Economic inequality.*

Economic inequality is one of the most visible consequences of migration in urban areas. Migrants frequently encounter income disparities compared with long-term urban residents. Many migrants accept lower wages, especially when they lack formal education, specialized skills, or legal work authorization. As a result, their earning potential may remain limited despite working long hours or multiple jobs. Another contributing factor is labor market segmentation, where migrants are concentrated in specific sectors of the economy. Migrant workers are often employed in industries characterized by physically demanding or low-status jobs, such as construction, domestic services, agriculture-related urban activities, and low-end service sectors. These jobs often offer limited career advancement, job security, and workplace protections. Additionally, many migrants depend on informal employment, particularly in rapidly growing cities in developing countries. Informal jobs include street vending, small-scale trading, waste collection, and other unregulated economic activities. While the informal sector provides an important source of income for migrants, it is typically associated with unstable earnings, lack of social security, and minimal labor protections, which further contributes to urban income inequality [5, 38, 39].

5.2. *Spatial inequality.*

Migration can also contribute to spatial inequality, where economic and social differences are reflected in the physical organization of cities. One common manifestation of spatial inequality is the development of slums or informal settlements. Rapid urban population growth often exceeds the capacity of housing markets and urban planning systems, forcing many migrants to settle in overcrowded and poorly serviced areas. Another challenge is unequal access to affordable housing. Migrants often face difficulties securing formal housing due to high rental costs, lack of documentation, or discrimination in housing markets. As a result, many are forced to live in temporary or substandard housing conditions with limited access to infrastructure such as electricity, sanitation, and waste management. Urban areas may also experience segregated neighborhoods, where migrants are concentrated in specific districts or marginalized communities. Such spatial segregation can reinforce social inequality by limiting migrants' access to economic opportunities, quality education, and essential public services. Over time, this separation may create persistent cycles of poverty and social exclusion within urban environments [39, 40].

5.3. *Access to social services.*

Another major dimension of inequality involves unequal access to social services. Migrants may face barriers in accessing healthcare services, particularly if they lack health insurance,

legal documentation, or sufficient financial resources. As a result, many migrants rely on informal or low-quality healthcare options, which can negatively affect their overall well-being. Education gaps also contribute to inequality among migrant populations. Migrant children may face challenges enrolling in schools due to language barriers, documentation requirements, or limited school capacity in urban areas. These barriers can reduce educational attainment and limit future employment opportunities. Furthermore, migrants often experience limited access to social protection programs, including unemployment benefits, housing assistance, or welfare services. Without adequate social safety nets, migrants are more vulnerable to economic shocks and financial instability [41, 42].

5.4. Gender and vulnerable groups.

Certain migrant groups face additional vulnerabilities that exacerbate social inequality. Women migrants, for example, often encounter gender-based discrimination in labor markets and may be concentrated in low-paying sectors such as domestic work or informal services. They may also face higher risks of exploitation and limited legal protection. Youth migrants represent another vulnerable group. Young migrants moving to cities for education or employment may struggle to secure stable jobs or adequate housing, particularly when they lack work experience or social networks. Finally, undocumented migrants face some of the most severe challenges. Without legal recognition, they may be excluded from formal employment, healthcare systems, and public services. This lack of legal protection increases their vulnerability to exploitation and social exclusion, further deepening inequalities within urban societies [43, 44]. Table 3 summarizes the main dimensions of social inequality in urban areas as influenced by migration.

Table 3. Dimensions of social inequality in urban areas due to migration.

Inequality Dimension	Key Issues	Description	References
Economic Inequality	Income disparities	Migrants often earn less than long-term residents due to low-skilled or informal employment and labor market segmentation.	[1, 5, 38, 39]
	Labor market segmentation	Concentration in physically demanding, low-status, or informal sectors limits career advancement and earnings stability.	[5, 38, 39]
Spatial Inequality	Informal settlements	Overcrowded slums or poorly serviced areas emerge due to high urban population growth and limited housing capacity.	[39, 40]
	Segregated neighborhoods	Migrants often live in specific districts, restricting access to services, education, and economic opportunities.	[39, 40]
	Housing barriers	High rental costs, lack of documentation, and discrimination force many migrants into temporary or substandard housing.	[39, 40]
Access to Social Services	Healthcare access	Lack of insurance, documentation, or financial resources limits access to quality healthcare.	[41, 42]
	Education gaps	Language barriers, documentation requirements, and limited school capacity reduce educational attainment among migrant children.	[41, 42]
	Social protection	Limited access to welfare, unemployment benefits, or housing assistance increases vulnerability to financial shocks.	[41, 42]
Vulnerable Groups	Women migrants	Gender-based discrimination in labor markets and higher risk of exploitation in low-paying sectors.	[43, 44]
	Youth migrants	Struggle to secure stable employment or housing due to lack of experience or social networks.	[43, 44]
	Undocumented migrants	Excluded from formal employment, healthcare, and social services, increasing social and economic vulnerability.	[43, 44]

6. Conclusion

Migration and urbanization are deeply interconnected processes that continue to shape the structure, growth, and dynamics of modern cities. As populations increasingly move from rural areas to urban centers in search of better opportunities, cities have become hubs of economic activity, innovation, and cultural diversity. Migration plays a significant role in supporting urban economies by expanding labor markets, encouraging entrepreneurship, and contributing to the development of diverse industries. In many cases, migrant populations provide essential labor that sustains key sectors such as construction, services, manufacturing, and informal economic activities, thereby contributing to overall urban productivity and growth. However, despite these positive contributions, migration can also intensify existing social inequalities if urban governance systems are not adequately prepared to manage rapid population growth. Migrants often face barriers related to employment, housing, healthcare, and education, which can limit their ability to fully benefit from urban opportunities. In many cities, the rapid influx of migrants has led to the expansion of informal settlements, labor market segmentation, and unequal access to essential services. These challenges highlight the need for more inclusive and well-coordinated urban development strategies. To address these issues, effective policy responses must integrate migration management with broader urban planning and social protection frameworks. Governments and policymakers should prioritize inclusive housing policies, equitable access to healthcare and education, and labor market protections that ensure fair opportunities for both migrants and local populations. Strengthening governance structures and improving coordination among institutions can also help mitigate the negative impacts of rapid urbanization. Future research should focus on developing sustainable and equitable urban development strategies that address the complex relationship between migration, urbanization, and social inequality. Comparative studies across regions, interdisciplinary approaches, and long-term analyses will be essential to better understand how cities can harness the benefits of migration while minimizing its associated challenges. Ultimately, promoting inclusive urban development will be critical to ensuring that cities remain resilient, equitable, and sustainable in the face of continued global migration and urban expansion.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that there are no competing financial or non-financial interests related to this study.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the development of this manuscript. Rina Sari Putri and Ahmad Fauzi jointly contributed to the conceptualization of the study, literature review, analysis, writing of the original draft, and revision of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work..

Data Availability Statement

This study is a review article based on previously published academic literature. No primary datasets were generated or analyzed during this study. All information used in the review is available in the cited references.

References

- [1] Immordino, P.; Sà Machado, R.; Hargreaves, S.; Honsell, F.; Lau, K.; Pascut, S.; Torres, I.; Xiao, Y.; Ziersch, A.; Zimmerman, C. Migration, Urbanism and Health: Moving Toward Systems-Informed Policy and Practice. *F1000Research*, 13, 1344. <http://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research>.
- [2] Adger, W.N.; Fransen, S.; Safra de Campos, R.; Clark, W.C. Migration and sustainable development. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 121, e2206193121. <http://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2206193121>.
- [3] Boakye, K.; Bovbjerg, M.; Schuna, J. Jr; Branscum, A.; Varma, R.P.; Ismail, R.; Barbarash, O.; Dominguez, J.; Altuntas, Y.; Anjana, R.M.; Yusuf, R.; Kelishadi, R.; Lopez-Jaramillo, P.; Iqbal, R.; Serón, P.; Rosengren, A.; Poirier, P.; Lakshmi, P.V.M.; Khatib, R.; Zatonska, K.; Hu, B.; Yin, L.; Wang, C.; Yeates, K.; Chifamba, J.; Alhabib, K.F.; Avezum, Á.; Dans, A.; Lear, S.A.; Yusuf, S.; Hystad, P. Urbanization and physical activity in the global Prospective Urban and Rural Epidemiology study. *Scientific Reports*, 13, 290. <http://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-26406-5>.
- [4] Kadakia, K.T.; Galea, S. Urbanization and the Future of Population Health. *Milbank Quarterly*, 101, 153–175. <http://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0009.12624>.
- [5] Cheng, J.; Lin, F. The Dynamic Effects of Urban–Rural Income Inequality on Sustainable Economic Growth under Urbanization and Monetary Policy in China. *Sustainability*, 14, 6896. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su14116896>.
- [6] Zeng, C.; Deng, X.; Dong, J.; Hu, P. Urbanization and Sustainability: Comparison of the Processes in “BIC” Countries. *Sustainability*, 8, 400. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su8040400>.
- [7] Qiao, R.; Gao, S.; Liu, X.; Xia, L.; Zhang, G.; Meng, X.; Liu, Z.; Wang, M.; Zhou, S.; Wu, Z. Understanding the global subnational migration patterns driven by hydrological intrusion exposure. *Nature Communications*, 15, 6285. <http://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-49609-y>.
- [8] Wang, J.; Zhang, S.; Deng, W.; Zhou, Q. Metropolitan Expansion and Migrant Population: Correlation Patterns and Influencing Factors in Chengdu, China. *Land*, 13, 101. <http://doi.org/10.3390/land13010101>.
- [9] Martín Martín, J.M.; Jiménez Aguilera, J.D.D. Socioeconomic Factors of Immigrants’ Location Choices. Evidence for the South of Europe. *Social Sciences*, 6, 53. <http://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6020053>.
- [10] Ha, J.T.; Dewaard, J.; Abel, G.; Tsuchiya, K.; Pinchoff, J.; Levesque, C.; Price, K. The Globalization of International Migration? A Conceptual and Data-Driven Synthesis. *Population and Development Review*, 51, 421–448. <http://doi.org/10.1111/padr.12686>.
- [11] Bhattacharya, S. Globalization: Embracing global citizenship and the right to migrate. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 13, 1160–1164. http://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpe.jfmpe_1992_23.
- [12] Zhang, S.; Zhu, D.; Li, L. Urbanization, Human Inequality, and Material Consumption. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20, 4582. <http://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20054582>.
- [13] Li, S.; Ma, Y. Urbanization, Economic Development and Environmental Change. *Sustainability*, 6, 5143–5161. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su6085143>.
- [14] Sbaa, M.Y.; Donati, S.; Zappalà, S. Not All Migrants Are the Same: Decent Work and Pre- and Post-Migration Experiences of Economic Migrants. *Social Sciences*, 14, 189. <http://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14030189>.
- [15] Oyarte, M.; Cabieses, B.; Rada, I.; Blukacz, A.; Espinoza, M.; Mezones-Holguin, E. Unequal Access and Use of Health Care Services among Settled Immigrants, Recent Immigrants, and Locals: A Comparative Analysis of a Nationally Representative Survey in Chile. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20, 741. <http://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20010741>.

- [16] Mengesha, Z.; Alloun, E.; Weber, D.; Smith, M.; Harris, P. “Lived the Pandemic Twice”: A Scoping Review of the Unequal Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Asylum Seekers and Undocumented Migrants. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19, 6624. <http://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19116624>.
- [17] De Haas, H. Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective. *International Migration Review*, 44, 227–264. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00804.x>.
- [18] Contini, P.; Carrera, L. Migrations and culture. Essential reflections on wandering human beings. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 7, 1040558. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2022.1040558>.
- [19] de Haas, H. A theory of migration: the aspirations-capabilities framework. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9, 8. <http://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-020-00210-4>.
- [20] Roman Etxebarria, G.; Berasategi Sancho, N.; Idoiaga-Mondragon, N.; Legorburu Fernandez, I. Migrant Perceptions of Their Social Inclusion, Social Networks, and Satisfaction with Life in Northern Spain. *Societies*, 14, 3. <http://doi.org/10.3390/soc14010003>.
- [21] Abujder Ochoa, W.A.; Iarozinski Neto, A.; Vitorio Junior, P.C.; Calabokis, O.P.; Ballesteros-Ballesteros, V. The Theory of Complexity and Sustainable Urban Development: A Systematic Literature Review. *Sustainability*, 17, 3. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su17010003>.
- [22] Marchigiani, E.; Bonfantini, B. Urban Transition and the Return of Neighbourhood Planning. Questioning the Proximity Syndrome and the 15-Minute City. *Sustainability*, 14, 5468. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su14095468>.
- [23] Bagheri, B.; Azadi, H.; Soltani, A.; Witlox, F. Global city data analysis using SciMAT: a bibliometric review. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1, 1–25. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-03255-4>.
- [24] Zhang, L.; Jiang, Y. The Urban Development Potential in Major Bay Areas: A Combined Hierarchical and Entropy-Based Evaluation. *Land*, 14, 475. <http://doi.org/10.3390/land14030475>.
- [25] Tu, Y.; Chen, B.; Liao, C.; Wu, S.; An, J.; Lin, C.; Gong, P.; Chen, B.; Wei, H.; Xu, B. Inequality in infrastructure access and its association with health disparities. *Nature Human Behaviour*, 9, 1669–1682. <http://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-025-02208-3>.
- [26] Cheng, S.; Liao, Z.; Zhu, Y. Dynamic Changes in Community Deprivation of Access to Urban Green Spaces by Multiple Transport Modes. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 615432. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.615432>.
- [27] Siersbaek, R.; O'Donnell, C.; Parker, S.; Ford, J.; Burke, S.; Ní Cheallaigh, C. Social exclusion and its impact on health over the life course: A realist review protocol. *HRB Open Research*, 6, 34. <http://doi.org/10.12688/hrbopenres>.
- [28] Cuesta, J.; López-Noval, B.; Niño-Zarazúa, M. Social exclusion concepts, measurement, and a global estimate. *PLoS One*, 19, e0298085. <http://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0298085>.
- [29] Jończy, R.; Śleszyński, P.; Dolińska, A.; Ptak, M.; Rokitowska-Malcher, J.; Rokita-Poskart, D. Environmental and Economic Factors of Migration from Urban to Rural Areas: Evidence from Poland. *Energies*, 14, 8467. <http://doi.org/10.3390/en14248467>.
- [30] Kwilinski, A.; Lyulyov, O.; Pimonenko, T.; Dzwigol, H.; Abazov, R.; Pudryk, D. International Migration Drivers: Economic, Environmental, Social, and Political Effects. *Sustainability*, 14, 6413. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su14116413>.
- [31] Parrish, R.; Colbourn, T.; Lauriola, P.; Leonardi, G.; Hajat, S.; Zeka, A. A Critical Analysis of the Drivers of Human Migration Patterns in the Presence of Climate Change: A New Conceptual Model. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 6036. <http://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17176036>.
- [32] Tsegay, S.M. International Migration: Definition, Causes and Effects. *Genealogy*, 7, 61. <http://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy7030061>.

- [33] Ernst, J.; Dräger, S.; Schmaus, S.; Weymeirsch, J.; Alsaloum, A.; Münnich, R. The Influence of Migration Patterns on Regional Demographic Development in Germany. *Social Sciences*, 12, 255. <http://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12050255>.
- [34] Le, T.H.; Nakagawa, Y.; Kobayashi, Y. Conditions under Which Rural-to-Urban Migration Enhances Social and Economic Sustainability of Home Communities: A Case Study in Vietnam. *Sustainability*, 13, 8326. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su13158326>.
- [35] Talani, L.S. The Labour Market for Immigrants: Evidence from Data. *Social Sciences*, 13, 556. <http://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13100556>.
- [36] Huynh, H.H.; Vo, D.H. The Effects of Migration on Unemployment: New Evidence from the Asian Countries. *Sustainability*, 15, 11385. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su151411385>.
- [37] Wang, M.; Xie, Z.; Huang, Z.; Hu, J.; Choi, B. Does the Inflow of Rural-to-Urban Migration Increase Firms' Productivity? *Sustainability*, 17, 9414. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su17219414>.
- [38] Liddle, B. Urbanization and Inequality/Poverty. *Urban Science*, 1, 35. <http://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci1040035>.
- [39] Nijman, J.; Wei, Y.D. Urban inequalities in the 21st century economy. *Applied Geography*, 117, 102188. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2020.102188>.
- [40] Zhang, X.; Lu, X.; Huang, C.; Liu, W.; Wang, G. The Impact of Social Capital on Migrants' Social Integration: Evidence from China. *Sustainability*, 16, 5564. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su16135564>.
- [41] Kirkbride, J.B.; Anglin, D.M.; Colman, I.; Dykxhoorn, J.; Jones, P.B.; Patalay, P.; Pitman, A.; Sonesson, E.; Steare, T.; Wright, T.; Griffiths, S.L. The social determinants of mental health and disorder: evidence, prevention and recommendations. *World Psychiatry*, 23, 58–90. <http://doi.org/10.1002/wps.21160>.
- [42] Benassi, F.; De Falco, A. Residential Segregation and Accessibility: Exploring Inequalities in Urban Resources Access Among Social Groups. *Land*, 14, 429. <http://doi.org/10.3390/land14020429>.
- [43] De Jesus, M.; Castañeda, E. Social Contexts and Immigration Policies Directly Impact Immigrant Health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 22, 586. <http://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22040586>.
- [44] Fan, J.; Huang, Z.; Cao, J.; Wu, Y. Factors Affecting Employment Stability of Labor Immigration: Implications for Sustainable Development. *Sustainability*, 15, 1465. <http://doi.org/10.3390/su15021465>.



© 2026 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).