

**WHAT IS URBAN SOCIOLOGY?**

- The word urban has been defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "pertaining to town or city life".
- It is derived from the Latin 'Urals' a term used by the Roman a city. Urban sociology is the sociology of urban living; of people in groups and social relationship in urban social circumstances & situation
- **Urban sociology** is the [sociological](#) study of life and human interaction in [metropolitan areas](#).
- It is a [normative](#) discipline of sociology seeking to study the structures, environmental processes, changes and problems of an [urban area](#) and by doing so provide inputs for [urban planning](#) and policy making.
- In other words, it is the sociological study of cities and their role in the development of society .

- Notably, **Georg Simmel** is widely considered to be the father of urban sociology for his contributions to the field in in works **such** as *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, published in 1903.

# Nature and Scope of Urban Sociology

- Urban sociology is an important branch of Sociology, In urban Sociology, as in general sociology, we study social relation though to a limited extent & in a shorter context.
- The kind of social relation studied in Urban Sociology, as is evident from the name, are the relations which occur in an Urban Society.
- Thus Urban sociology is a study of urban society. The urban society is studied & investigated according to sociological methods & techniques, which are of course scientific. The study of urban society can be general as well as specific.

- Like most areas of sociology, urban sociologists use statistical analysis, observation, social theory, interviews, and other methods to study a range of topics, including migration and demographic trends, economics, poverty, race relations, economic trends, and etc.
- After the industrial revolution, sociologists such as Max Weber, and particularly George Simmel in works such as *The Metropolis and Mental life* (1903), focused on the increasing process of urbanization and the effects it had on feelings of Social alienation and anonymity.
- The Chicago School is a major influence in the study of urban sociology. Many of their findings have been refined or rejected, but the lasting impact of the Chicago School can still be found in today's teachings.

- Two major currents came to characterize urban sociology in the early period.
- The first came from the sociologists at the University of Chicago, emphasizing the demographic and ecological structure of the city, the social disorganization and pathology of the urban normative order and the social psychology of urban existence.
- The second current has come to be called 'community studies.' It consists of broad-gauged ethnographic studies of the social structure of individual communities and the ways of life of the inhabitants.

- These two orientations are divided into the **culturalists' approach and the structuralists' approach in the urban sociology.**
- The culturalists emphasize on how urban life feels, how people react to living in urban areas; and how the city life is organized. This approach tries to study and explore the culture, organizational and social psychological consequences of urban life.
- **Louis Wirth- the structuralists' approach investigates the interplay between the political and the economic forces, the growth, decline and changing spatial organization of urban space.**

- They consider city as the physical embodiment of political and economic relationship.
- They argue that the city itself is an effect of more fundamental forces and cities are shaped by social powers that affect all aspects of human existence.
- The sociologists like Park, Burgess and McKenzie of the Chicago School belong to this approach.
- Thus, any study of urban sociology must include both the approaches. Therefore, urban sociology is not a subject with distinct individuality but the combination of both the above approaches.



# Scope Of Urban Sociology

- The scope of urban sociology is very vast and multidimensional. Urban sociology relies on the related sciences and borrows from history, economics, social psychology, public administration and social work.
- **The subject-matter of sociology is cities and their growth, and it deals with such problems like planning and development of cities, traffic regulations, public waterworks, social hygiene, sewerage works, housing, beggary, juvenile delinquency, crime and so on. Thus as urbanism is many-sided so is urban sociology.**
- The scope of urban sociology becomes wider as it not only tries to study the urban setup and facts but also tries to give suggestions to solve problems arising out of dynamic nature of the society.

- ***Introductory scope of urban sociology:***
- The main aim of urban sociology is to study the basic principles of the city life. Under introductory scope, the study covers the following areas:
  - **a. Urban ecology:**
  - Urban ecology studies the facts of the urban environment. It also emphasizes on the study of population in the cities.
  - **b. Urban morphology:**
  - Under urban morphology, the study of social life of urban areas and that of urban organization is taken up.

- The area of study under this covers the behaviour and the mode of living of the people in urban areas.
- **d. Analytical scope:**
- Analysing of urban sociology is another important field of study. Under the analytical scope, various concepts and important phases of urban life are developed and studied.
- ***ii. Reformative scope:***
- Under reformatory scope of urban sociology, the problems of urbanism are studied. This includes some of the important issues such as the impact of urbanization on urban society leading to urban disorganization, urban planning and development.
- Thus, the scope of urban sociology is much wider as it covers the whole spectrum of urban life and its changing environments.

# Other thrust areas:-

- **1. City** -City forms the central joint of urban socio. Like many other sociological categories, the city is an abstraction composed of concrete entitled like residences & shapes & an assortment of many functions
- **2. Urban social Actions** - Urban social actions guided by urban social relationships are secondary & specific in nature. They are segmentary in character & mainly aim at the fulfillment of a single function of an urbanite's life.
- Thus while in rural areas imitation of one's fathers work is work & education combined in one, in urban centers specialized & formal education paves the way for one's career in a technical job.

- **3. Urban social Relations** - Urban social relations are many & diverse & formal in character. Urban social institutions leased on these are again specialized agencies which serve particular functions, say education through schools, law enforcement by the city govt. etc.
- Elaborate procedure is laid down to guide the activities of these institutions & membership is through necessity & availability of the service. Thus site density heterogeneity & specialization are the typically urban characteristics. Urban sociology studies human social life in relation to these factors

- **4. Urban Problems** - On the other hand we have novel & peculiar urban problems which a necessary concomitant of urbanization such as housing, sanitation, slums, preusions & recreation, pollution of all types, fluidity of the law & order situation, increase in rise, vice & deviance, various physical & mental disorders, increasing suicides & divorces, traffic problems, zoning anomalies etc.
- The study of all these forms is an important corollary of the study of urban socio. Thus urban socio is a study of all aspects related to man's modification of environment to subserve his varied purposes with all its implications.

- Urban sociology studies all aspects of a city life such as its size, density of population social organization, problems etc.
- Urban studies is a specialized discipline which has been recently developing in urban socio which exclusively deals with an analysis of urban problems.
- Urban problems occupy the major attention of urban sociologists today because of its complexity & its craving for an immediate solution.
- They arise at an instant much as unanticipated increase in traffic at a place in a single day becomes a problem.

- Thus we see that the scope of Urban Sociology is very vast because although urban socio is a recent science, urbanism forms a major part of contemporary life patterns which is slowly encroaching upon & engulfing the existing forms of rural life.
- In short, urban socio-studies the nature & characteristics of a city, its size, density & characters of its people, its spatial pattern & changes thereon; the peculiar type of relations & social interactions formed in the urban milieu, the nature of primary social institutions such as family in an urban setting, the novel instructions of commercial reaction, education etc.
- It moreover studies all the implications & complexities & consequences of urban social problems, the various urban social groupings including deviant groups & the various aspects of urban social attitudes. In short, urban sociology is a developing science which studies all aspects of urban life



# Focus of Urban Sociology

- The development of towns, social disorganization, the problems of urban life & town planning.
- The interaction between the urban environment & the development of human personality,
- The structure of family, role of family & the permanent & changing elements of a family.
- The institution of marriage in an urban context, the fundamentals & the trends.
- Factors responsible for family disorganization.
- Class structure & class struggle in urban societies.
- Such features of social disease, pollution, slums, gambling dens, recreation centers, bars & clubs & the right life.

- The factors & causes of social & personal disorganization & the remedies thereof.
- Investigates industries & industrial relations, the causes of disharmony bet, the labour & the management & the ways & means of bringing about harmony & peaceful constructive relations.
- Not only the facts of urban life but also evaluations the facts in order to understand their causes & means of improvement.
- Social tensions in order to learn the real causes behind them. If we know exactly the cause of a disability its solution automatically presents itself to us.
- Thus urban socio is not merely a theoretical study but it has an applied aspect as well.

# Urban Sociology: Origin and Development

- Urban sociology is a branch of sociology. As sociology itself is of recent origin urban sociology is much younger than sociology.
- Urban sociology as a systematic study saw its development in the 20th century in America.
- Most of the work on urban sociology has been carried out in the USA, because by 1920 more Americans lived in cities than in rural areas.
- The rapid process of urbanization that took place from the late 19th century through the first part of the 20th century has tremendous importance (both symbolic and real) since it marks the emergence of the USA as an urban nation.

- ‘Urban sociology’ emerged as an attempt to understand this process, and the consequences that it had for social life. And at the core of this field was the increasingly prominent and rapidly growing American city. ”
- The dominance of the city, especially of the great city’, wrote Louis Wirth in 1938, ‘may be regarded as a consequence of the concentration in cities of industrial, commercial, financial, and administrative facilities and activities, theaters, libraries, museums, concert halls, operas, hospitals, colleges, research and publishing centers, professional organizations, and religious and welfare institutions.’

- For years to come, the city would remain the hub of modern, social, political, economic and cultural activity; a place regarded by many as the centerpiece of ‘modern civilization.’
- Moreover, while another process, **sub-urbanization**, was well on its way as early as the 1930s throughout the first-half of this century, the city remained as the heart and soul of urban life and, as such, it remained the single most important subject of urban sociology.
- In the post-War era, in America, however, the structure of urban life changed. Political decisions, economic conditions and technological developments—the very same forces that had combined in an earlier era to produce massive utilization and city growth—brought about a reversal of fortunes to the ‘great city.’ By the 1970s, major cities across America were in crisis

- Many books were written on classification of towns, development of cities, urban environment, social disorganization in cities demographical trends, community life and its impact on personality, family, marriage, divorce and so on.
- Apart from these, work has also been done on the reforms and development of urban life such as social welfare, religious, cultural and educational institutions in cities, town planning and rehabilitation.
- All these works were carried out first in the USA. Later studies on urban centers were carried out in different parts of the world giving wider scope of study to the subject.
- Studies were conducted by Lyndssays, Sorokin and Zimmerman and thereby by 1930 urban sociology developed as a specialized field of enquiry within the formal discipline of sociology.

- The Chicago School is a major influence on the study of urban sociology.
- Despite having studied cities in the early 20th century, the Chicago School is still recognized as important.
- Many of its findings have been refined or rejected, but its lasting impact can still be found in today's teachings of urban sociology.

# URBAN SOCIETY

- Urban society is a society that is typical of modern industrial civilization and heterogeneous in cultural tradition, that emphasizes secular values, and that is individualized rather than integrated —contrasted with *folk society*
- When we speak of “urban society” we speak of a group of people characterized by a certain way of life, or an urban culture. As such, the concept would include a certain system of values, norms, social practices and relations that in their totality define a historically specific type of social organization.
- In the current way we picture urban society, this type of social organization is normally associated with industrial society, even though historically speaking the emergence of cities antedate the industrial age by thousands of years.
- To complete the concept of urban society, we attach to the concept of urban culture a specific spatial form, which is the city. The city is the physical expression of the urban culture. The culture and the spatial form are so inextricably linked and each exists to shape the other



# Features of urban society

- The urban society is heterogeneous known for its diversity and complexity.
- It is dominated by secondary relations.
- Formal means of social control such as law, legislation, police, and court are needed in addition to the informal means for regulating the behavior of the people.
- The urban society is mobile and open. It provides more chances for social mobility. The status is achieved than ascribed.
- Occupations are more specialized. There is widespread division of labor and specialization opportunities for pursuing occupations are numerous

- Family is said to be unstable. More than the family individual is given importance. Joint families are comparatively less in number.
- People are more class -conscious and progressive .They welcome changes. They are exposed to the modern developments in the fields of science and technology.
- Urban community is a complex multigroup society.
- The urban community replaced consensus by dissensus. The social organization is atomistic and illdefined.It is characterized by disorganization, mental illness and anomie.
- Mass education is widespread in the city increasing democratization of the organizations and institutions demand formal education

# Some of the Important Characteristics of Urban society:

- **1. Size:**

- As a rule, in the same country and at the same period, the size of an urban community is much larger than that of a rural community. In other words, urbanity and size of a community are positively correlated.

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- **2. Density of population:**

- Density of population in urban areas is greater than in rural communities. Urbanity and density are positively correlated

- So far as urban community is concerned, greater importance is attached to the individual than to the family. Nuclear families are more popular in urban areas.
- **4. Marriage:**
- In case of urban community there is a preponderance of love marriages and inter-caste marriages. One also comes across a greater number of divorces. Sons and daughters enjoy considerable freedom in choosing their life partners.

- **5. Occupation:**

- In the urban areas, the major occupations are industrial, administrative and professional in nature. Divisions of labour and occupational specialization are very much common in towns/cities/metropolises.

- **6. Class extremes:**

- In the words of Bogardus, “Class extremes characterize the city.” A town and a city house the richest as well as the poorest of people. In a city, the slums of the poor exist alongside the palatial bungalows of the rich, amidst the apartments of the middle class members. The most civilized modes of behaviour as well as the worst racketeering are found in the cities.

- **7. Social heterogeneity:**

- If villages are the symbol of cultural homogeneity, the cities symbolize cultural heterogeneity. The cities are characterized by diverse peoples, races and cultures. There is great variety in regard to the food habits, dress habits, living conditions, religious beliefs, cultural outlook, customs and traditions of the urbanites.

- **8. Social distance:**

- Social distance is the result of anonymity and heterogeneity. Most of one's routine social contacts in a town or city are impersonal and segmentary in character. In the urban community social responses are incomplete and halfhearted. There is utter lack of personal involvement in the affairs of others.

- **9. System of interaction:**

- Georg Simmel held that the social structure of urban communities is based on interest groups. The circles of social contact are wider in the city than in the country. There is a wider area of interaction system per man and per aggregate. This makes city life more complex and varied.

- The city life is characterized by the predominance of secondary contacts, impersonal, casual and short-lived relations. Man, at any rate, the man in the street, virtually loses his identity being treated as a “number” having a certain “address”.

- **10. Mobility:**

- The most important feature of urban community is its social mobility. In urban areas the social status of an individual is determined not by heredity or birth but by his merit, intelligence and perseverance. Urbanity and mobility are positively correlated.

- **11. Materialism:**

- In the urban community the social existence of man revolves round wealth and material possessions. The worth of an urbanite today is being judged not by what he is but by what he has. Status symbols in the form of financial assets, salaries, costly home appliances count a lot for the urbanites.

- **12. Individualism:**

- The urbanites attach supreme importance to their own welfare and happiness. They hesitate to think or act for the good of others.



- **13. Rationality:**

- In urban community there is emphasis on rationality. People are inclined to reason and argue. Their relationship with others is governed, for the most part, by the consideration of gain or loss. Relationship takes place on a contractual basis. Once the contract is over, human relationship automatically comes to a close.

- **14. Anonymity:**

- As Bogardus observes, the “Urban groups have a reputation for namelessness.” By virtue of its size and population, the urban community cannot be a primary group. Here nobody knows anybody and nobody cares for anybody. The urbanites do not care for their neighbours and have nothing to do with their miseries or pleasures.

- **15. Norm and social role conflict:**
- The urban community is characterized by norm and social role conflict. Factors such as the size, density and heterogeneity of the population, extreme occupational specialisation and the class structure prevalent in the urban context lead to such a state of affairs.
- In the absence of uniform and fixed social norms, individuals or groups often seek divergent ends. This has a considerable share in causing social disorganization

- **16. Rapid social and cultural change:**
- Rapid social and cultural change characterize urban life. The importance attached to traditional or sacred elements has been relegated to the background. The benefits of urban life have effected changes in respect of norms, ideologies and behaviour patterns.
- **17. Voluntary associations:**
- The urban community is characterized by impersonal, mechanical and formal social contacts occurring among the people. Naturally they have a strong desire for developing genuine social relationships to satisfy their hunger for emotional warmth and sense of security. They form associations, clubs, societies and other secondary groups.

- Social control in urban community is essentially formal in nature. Individual's behaviour is regulated by such agencies as police, jails, law courts etc.
- **19. Secularization of outlook:**
- In cities ritual and kinship obligations are diluted. Caste and community considerations yield to economic logic. This results in secularization of outlook.
- **20.** Urban areas provide impulses for modernization in society as a whole.
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