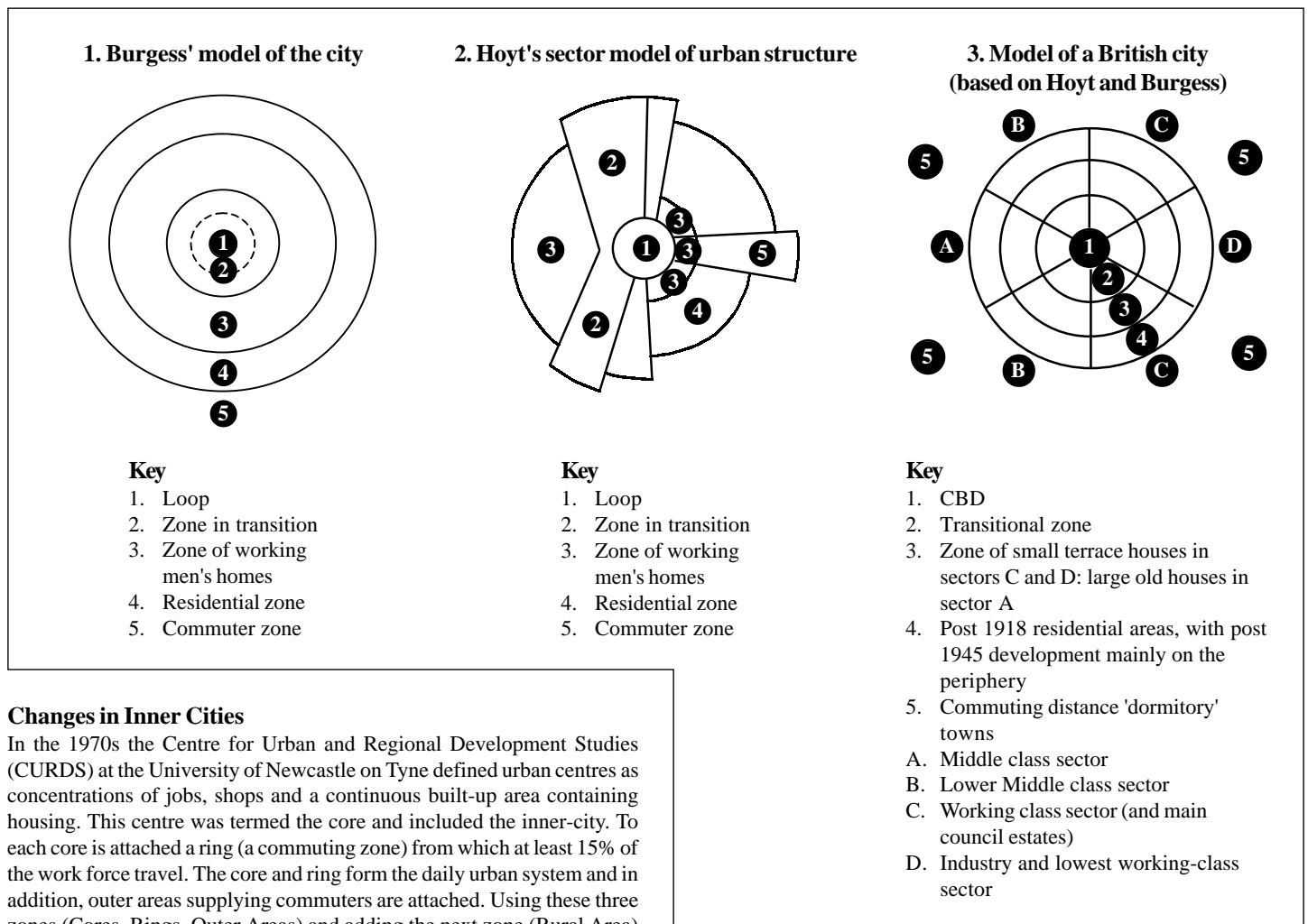# Geo Factsheet

Inner Cities

One of the most dynamic locations in Britain is the "inner-city". Most people have heard of the East End of London, the Toxteth area of Liverpool, Gorbals in Glasgow or Cardiff Bay in South Wales. These are simply famous examples of regions found in every large old British city. The Inner-City is an area surrounding the Central Business District, containing a variety of land-uses such as industry, housing or transport. Urban Models always include such a zone (Fig 1). Since the last century the inner-city has been undergoing change. However, interest in this zone has sharpened in the last 20 years. This Factsheet examines the changes that have taken place, the problems that have arisen and the policies adopted to deal with those problems. The article is best understood if frequent mental reference is made to the nearest large city known to the reader.

Fig1. Models of land-uses in cities

1. Burgess' model of the city

Key
1. Loop
2. Zone in transition
3. Zone of working men's homes
4. Residential zone
5. Commuter zone

2. Hoyt's sector model of urban structure

Key
1. Loop
2. Zone in transition
3. Zone of working men's homes
4. Residential zone
5. Commuter zone

3. Model of a British city (based on Hoyt and Burgess)

Key
1. CBD
2. Transitional zone
3. Zone of small terrace houses in sectors C and D: large old houses in sector A
4. Post 1918 residential areas, with post 1945 development mainly on the periphery
5. Commuting distance 'dormitory' towns
A. Middle class sector
B. Lower Middle class sector
C. Working class sector (and main council estates)
D. Industry and lowest working-class sector

Changes in Inner Cities

In the 1970s the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at the University of Newcastle on Tyne defined urban centres as concentrations of jobs, shops and a continuous built-up area containing housing. This centre was termed the core and included the inner-city. To each core is attached a ring (a commuting zone) from which at least 15% of the work force travel. The core and ring form the daily urban system and in addition, outer areas supplying commuters are attached. Using these three zones (Cores, Rings, Outer Areas) and adding the next zone (Rural Area) the CURDS team estimated the following British population distribution in 1981:

CORES : 61.6%
RINGS : 26.6%
OUTER AREAS : 6.6%
RURAL AREAS : 5.2%

The striking fact emerged that between 1971 and 1981, the following massive redistribution of population had taken place :

CORES : Decline of 4.2%; a loss of 1,446,000 people
RINGS : Gain of 9.1%; a gain of 1,208,000 people
OUTER RINGS : Gain of 10.1%; a gain of 327,000 people
RURAL AREAS : Gain of 8.8%; a gain of 228,000 people

Clearly there were many areas of the country with signs of growth and building, such as suburban areas, rural towns and villages. But what about the impacts of these changes on the inner-cities - the zones experiencing a massive out-migration of skills, wealth, earning potential and energy, mostly concentrated in particular age-bands? And why did people move?

Since 1980 the gains and losses have been less marked and in the 1990s a number of schemes have had an effect on inner-city life so that the problems are now less acute than in the 1970s. Nevertheless, many of the problems remain.

Problems in the Inner Cities

(a) Deindustrialisation
New technologies in manufacturing led to a major reorganisation of the British economy after 1971 - a period or process described as deindustrialisation during which many traditional manufacturing industries closed down or reduced their manning levels. Between 1971 and 1983 manufacturing jobs were cut by one third. Add to this the decline in coal mining (another traditionally labour intensive industry) and we have one of the fundamental causes of inner-city problems - namely a marked rise in **unemployment**.

Traditional industries in textiles, steel, shipbuilding and engineering - often located in the inner-city since the late 19th Century - were forced to close down as foreign competition took away markets, and as Multi-National Companies decided to relocate. Associated transport industries, notably in shipping, also declined ; hence the decline of inner - city dock areas in the East End of London, Liverpool, Glasgow and Cardiff (the latter being particularly hit by the steady decline in coal movements which began in 1912). Cramped sites, inadequate accommodation and poor transport infrastructure all added to the problems of attracting new industry to replace the ones which were closing down. New technologies usually required a smaller work-force. Newer industries preferred to locate on suburban industrial estates or in rural areas - most of the newer industries being **service industries** which needed different types of skills, more flexible working patterns and clean, accessible environments.

Many school leavers and many of the newly-unemployed lacked the skills which these new industries required. With limited income and a continuing decrease in the amount of low income housing stock, many were then forced to take accommodation in those areas of the city with least jobs, facilities and transport links. These factors have tended to interact with the result that the least employable have been spatially and socially segregated. Between 1951 and 1981 unemployment in Inner Cities rose from 33% above the national average to 51% above the national average. The loss of manufacturing jobs continued throughout the 1980s in most British Cities (Table 1).

Table 1. Change in manufacturing employment

	change in manufacturing employment			
	1971-81		1981-87	
	(000s)	%	(000s)	%
London	-389	-33	-212	-28
Birmingham	-95	-30	-54	-24
Glasgow	-78	-38	-32	-25
Manchester	-77	-35	-26	-18
Liverpool	-63	-38	-37	-36
Sheffield	-48	-35	-32	-36
Newcastle	-33	-25	-24	-24

The consequences are easy to understand but almost impossible to solve. Loss of earnings means less disposable income for buying or renting property, less money spent on upkeep of housing, less investment in new local enterprises, lower income for local government spending and a steady decline in services. Local shops close because their markets are lost. Houses are left empty as there is a shortage of buyers. The environment may suffer and appear depressing. Much has been written about the damaging impacts of unemployment on morale. The more fortunate skilled employees who could find work were usually forced to move away from Inner-City areas, leaving a population composition of inner city areas which, in comparison to smaller towns or the suburbs, tends to have:
- fewer income earners in the 30-50 age band
- more old people
- more unemployed young people

By 1993, commuters accounted for 43% of the employment of the inner cities compared to just 20% in 1963.

(b) Housing Policy
The moves towards owner-occupancy (encouraged by Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government) meant that private housing investment tended to be concentrated away from problem areas, in suburban or green-field housing developments or in expanded villages. Within urban areas, those agencies supplying loans for house purchase (such as Banks, Building Societies or Loan Companies) were reluctant to lend money for houses in Inner-City areas, perhaps because of lack of income security or perhaps because of the quality and age of the housing. Certain inner-city areas were "red-lined"- i.e. within certain areas loans for houses were not available. Thus, housing areas in need of investment have been starved of private investment. Thus, those that cannot afford to buy property are forced to rely on a smaller and declining socially rented sector (e.g. council houses) or the private rented sector which has less housing than any other european country. Homelessness has been the inevitable result of insufficient accommodation, rising rents, increasing negative equity, repossessions and rising unemployment (Table 2). In 1993, London Boroughs spent £136 million on purchase of b+b accommodation for people officially classified as homeless.

(c) Ethnic Minority Groups
Ethnic minorities have often become concentrated in inner-cities. The East End of London had well-established Jewish communities in the mid-19th century; many Irish communities were already established in British cities by 1900. In particular, **ports** attracted ethnic minorities e.g. in Bute Town (Cardiff) in 1940, of the 15,000 people present, some 6,000 were foreign born. However during the 1950s and 1960s immigrants from the New Commonwealth countries of the West Indies, India and Pakistan moved into the inner-city areas of cities such as London, Birmingham, Leicester, Bradford and Manchester - attracted by the low-cost housing and the local work available at the time. Common language and a common culture drew ethnic groups together into particular areas (perhaps the most famous being the W. Indian population of Notting Hill). Discrimination against ethnic minorities in both employment and housing opportunities often left these people "trapped" in the inner city.

The 1991 UK census was the first one to include a question on ethnic group membership. It revealed that 5.5% (3m) of the British population were from ethnic minorities, and that the huge majority lived in urban areas.

Table 2. Homelessness in London 1993

	Temporary accommodation	Squats	Hostel	Sleepout	Tolls	Total
East London	12900	6800	448	111	210	20000
Inner London	60000	13100	3100	1100	900	77000

The ethnic population is both spatially and socially segregated. Broadly, the ethnic minority are concentrated along two axes.
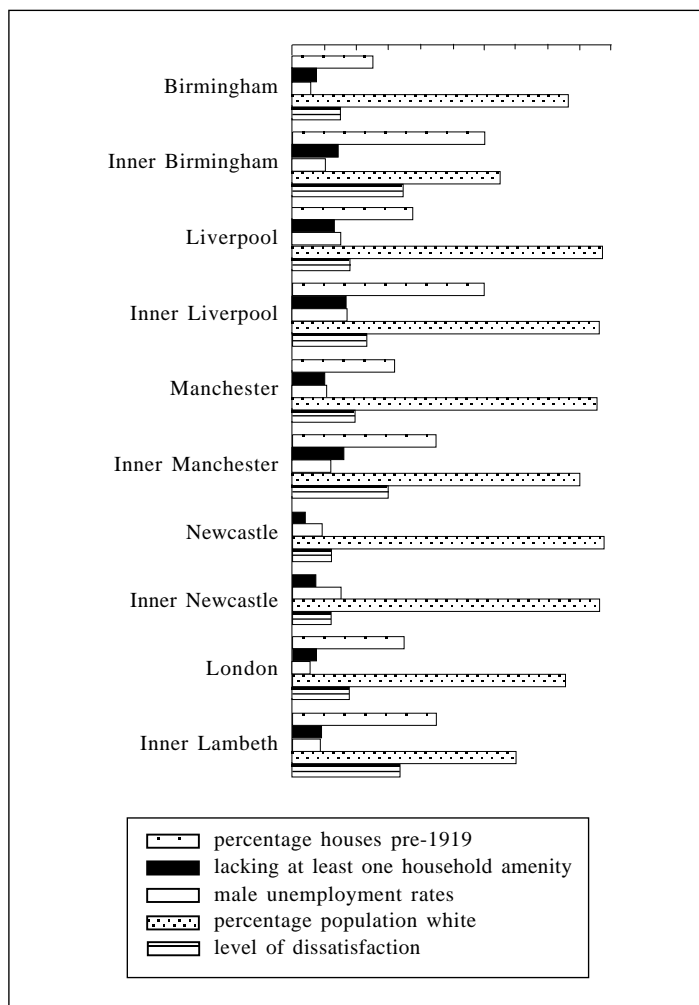
1. London - Midlands axis bounded by Birmingham and Leicester

2. Trans-Pennine axis including W. Yorkshire, Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

In general ethnic minorities live in wards which are much more deprived than the average. However, there are clear differences between different ethnic minorities. Bangladeshi, and to a lesser extent, Indian Groups tend to live in wards with low owner occupancy, high unemployment and overcrowding. Black-Caribbean populations are found in similar areas but are much more likely to live in more deprived inner city areas with older age structures and higher population densities. Unemployment amongst ethnic minorities are almost always higher than the rate among the white population and ethnic minorities suffer higher rates of overcrowding (see Factsheet 33 - Ethnicity in Britain).

(d) Quality of Life.
Finally, a feature of the inner cities which emerged in the late 1970s was the low quality of life which inhabitants had to endure. Quality of life criteria have been used to highlight the substandard housing, educational disadvantage, ill-health, deprivation, and poor environments (distinguished by dirt, pollution, poor services and lack of open space) (Fig 2).

Fig 2. Features to show the Quality of Life in Inner-Cities

Legend:
- percentage houses pre-1919
- lacking at least one household amenity
- male unemployment rates
- percentage population white
- level of dissatisfaction

Between 1966 and 1976 Liverpool lost 22% of its inner city population, and Glasgow's Eastern Area saw a population fall from 141,000 in 1971 to 82,000 in 1981. The residential populations typically include those least able to move such as the elderly and recent immigrants. Whilst there is plenty of evidence to suggest, that, on the whole, cities are not necessarily unhealthy places to live, it is in the poor areas of London and many other big cities that mortality rates for the under 75s are significantly higher.

Urban Policies
A number of policies have been introduced to try to reduce the problems of inner-cities.

(i) Gentrification. This is the term used to describe the improvement of old buildings usually by private investment. In practice, the external appearance of the building is restored to its original quality and the interior is thoroughly modernised, in terms of heating, plumbing, electricity and other essential services. Sometimes gentrification involves housing directly, as in the Georgian terraces of London, whilst in other cases it involves the conversion of, for example, warehouses into housing as in the Docklands Development scheme. By providing high quality accommodation in areas where the environment has also been improved, investment is drawn into the inner-city area.

(ii) The 1969 and 1974 Housing acts emphasized conservation and rehabilitation, i.e. modernisation of old buildings, in contrast to the 1960s policies which tended to favour widespread clearance of old terraced housing and replacement with high-rise blocks of flats - policies now deemed to have failed because of the disruption to community life and the difficult living conditions which high-rise blocks of flats can create. For example in Birmingham 75,000 houses in the inner city were incorporated into a ten year housing programme.

(iii) Between 1979 and 1987, £2 million was spent on inner-city partnerships, urban programmes and Development Corporations with around 12,000 individual projects involving the generation of private investment. However, most of these schemes were area-based and only benefited the inhabitants of particular areas.

(iv) Since 1978, central government policies have aimed to stimulate economic development and improve the urban environment so that new investment and new jobs will be drawn in. Initiatives include Urban development grants, urban regeneration grants, urban Development Corporations (Table 3), Enterprise Zones and City Action teams. For example, the London Docklands Development Corporation started a massive revitalization of London Docks, with the building of a light railway, a City Airport, new housing areas and new industries. Perhaps the Millennium Dome will set a successful seal on the re-emergence of this particular inner-city area!

Salford Docks, at the end of the Manchester Ship canal have been redeveloped as Salford Quays. A new Four Star Hotel stands at number 6 dock. Docks 6, 7, 8 and 9 are the centre of a waterside development including new houses, factories, warehouses and a leisure complex. Salford Quays attracted funds from both local and National government as well as E.U funds.

A similar water-front redevelopment has taken place in Liverpool around the Albert Dock (the first enclosed, incombustible dock system in the world) with a focus on local history and local culture. Similarly, Cardiff Bay Development Corporation focused redevelopment around a waterfront, with the creation of a "lake" behind a barrage, and development of new homes and businesses around the bay.

Table 3. The Work of Urban Development Corporations; measures of work done

	Land reclaimed (ha)	Housing units	Non-housing floorspace (000 m^2)	Infrastructure roads (km)	Jobs (gross)	Private investment (£m)	Grant-in-aid (£m) Lifetime target
London Docklands	728.4	19,844	2,283.9	244.7	66,683	6,277.5	1,860.3
Merseyside	363.2	2,875	555.0	84.0	16,595	461.0	385.3
Black Country	314.7	2,914	826.4	28.3	15,517	833.0	357.7
Teesside	434.4	1,187	362.2	26.1	10,086	928.9	350.5
Trafford Park	151.7	283	572.1	37.5	21,063	1,012.8	233.7
Tyne and Wear	485.7	3,639	844.5	33.2	23,473	937.3	339.3
Bristol	69.0	676	121.0	6.6	4,825	235.0	78.9
Central Manchester	35.0	2,583	138.6	2.2	4,944	372.8	82.2
Leeds	68.0	571	374.0	11.6	9,066	357.0	55.7
Sheffield	239.8	0	358.2	12.7	12,747	577.2	101.0
Birmingham Heartlands	75.6	603	165.2	19.9	2,253	174.7	39.7
Plymouth	10.8	0	3.0	4.4	25	0.5	44.5
Total	2,976.3	35,175	6,604.1	511.2	187,277	12,167.7	3,919.0

Conclusion.

The aim of the schemes outlined has been to slow down or even reverse the movement of population from the Inner Cities. The essential idea is one of "pump-priming" whereby £1 of government money spent on improving the environment will attract £4 or £5 of private investment in the form of houses or industries. The aim is to provide an improvement in the quality of life and greater opportunities for those in the inner cities; areas which were once the locations of wealth creation in Britain. It is the rate of change that makes Inner Cities one of the most dynamic areas in Britain today.

Practice Questions

1. Using specific examples, describe and explain the changes in population and resulting problems of inner-city areas in Britain.

(15 marks)

2. Discuss the policies adopted to tackle the problems of inner-cities.

(10 marks)

Answers

1. Use specific examples either as case studies (an approach that will gain lots of marks provided that knowledge of appropriate cities is demonstrated) or to illustrate particular themes. An absence of specific examples of inner city areas would place a ceiling on the marks of around 10. The two parts of the question are clearly first, the changes in population (when? where? how many?) for say 7 marks and second the resulting problems (unemployment, lack of investment, ethnic minorities, quality of life) for 8 marks. Make sure that the answer includes both description (e.g. which cities? when? How many people? What are the problems?) and explanation (e.g. why did people move? why did areas then decline?) Try to blend the description and explanation together.

b. The discussion should outline how inner-city problems were tackled by the various authorities. Make clear that many different types of organisation have been involved. Some attempt should be made to assess whether the problems are easy and quick to solve, or whether it will take a lot of time and effort to tackle the problems. Point out that the end result will be very different from the inner-city of the 1960's. Be specific about the policies and their aims. Say whether they were area specific, or whether they involved the pump-priming approach. The best way to prepare for a question like this is to get to know your local inner-city, and find out yourself the policies that have been applied. Then compare the policies with those of the schemes for the well known cities such as London, Liverpool or Cardiff. Answers that demonstrated a knowledge of the range of policies, their effects, and likelihood of success would earn 7 to 10 marks. However answers that were generalised on the policies, with little discussion of benefits or success for specific cities would be limited to 3 or 4 marks. It would not be enough simply to know the name of a policy e.g. Urban Development Corporation. Details should be given, such as those in the Factsheet.