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The United Nations estimates that by 2050, **66%** of human beings will **live in cities**. Such a high percentage may suggest that it is **usual** for humans to live in this way. However, ⁽¹⁾the growth of cities is a comparatively **recent development** in human history. Modern humans (that is, humans we would recognize as anatomically similar to us) have been around for about 200,000 years. **For the vast majority of that time, they have had a **hunter-gatherer** existence.**

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The **development of cities** only began following the agricultural revolution, which took place in different parts of the world from about **12,000 years ago**. The **fundamental change** involved in this was that rather than wandering from place to place in search of food (following animal migrations and the fertility patterns of plants), humans started to **grow crops and breed animals in a particular location**. Gradually, humans began living in **separate families**, rather than together in large tribal groups.

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12,000 years is **not a long time** for humans to adapt to a new way of life. (2) Our feelings and instincts are suited to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, rather than a more settled agricultural-industrial one. There are **many material advantages** to **living in a city**, such as a ready supply of food and water, safety from wild animals, access to a large range of medical services, and convenient transport systems. **But** urban conditions produce **emotional problems** that our hunter-gatherer ancestors were less likely to have, problems such as **depression, loneliness, and the stress** that comes from living in an overcrowded environment. Humans are **social animals**, so when we don't have **regular contact with close friends or family** — because of working long hours, for instance — we become dejected. Most of us may live in cities, but **are we really happy there?**

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To judge **this**, in his 2014 book *Sapiens*, the Israeli author Yuval Noah Harari compares the life of a hunter-gatherer in the past with the life of a city-dweller today. Harari describes how hunter-gatherers were **free** to move around. They **decided** when to work (to find food), and who to work with (their friends and family). They had **no** household chores to do, like washing dishes or ironing clothes; **nor** did they have to pay bills, go to the bank, or listen to a boss scolding them. There were **no** problems like pollution, traffic accidents or mugging to worry about. The hunter-gatherer ate a varied diet, and infectious disease was **less** common, since people were **not** living in crowded conditions.

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Hunter-gatherers were **skilled** in many different ways, since they had to make, rather than buy, everything they needed, and they were very **physically fit**, given that they had no transport other than their legs. They also knew their environment extremely **well**. Imagine if you were stranded 100 kilometers from home today, with no phone, money, transport, food or water: would you panic? Could you survive? (3) A situation that we might consider an **emergency** today was (a) our hunter-gatherer ancestors.

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Most present-day humans work to gain money they can exchange for food, rather than finding or producing food themselves. In *Sapiens*, Harari relates how a worker in a city today might leave home early in the morning — walking the same route every day to take a subway train, on which nobody talks — and then sit in one place in a factory at a machine, performing the same process hour after hour. The worker is told when he or she can eat and drink, and when work is finished. Arriving home in the evening, perhaps twelve hours after leaving in the morning, the worker then has to cook (maybe eating the same kind of food for the third time that day), and then clean, wash clothes, and try to sleep peacefully in a noisy and bright apartment.

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(4)(b) there were **disadvantages** to the hunter-gatherer lifestyle:
there would be periods when food was in short supply; infant mortality was high; and medical care was not highly developed. **But** hunter-gatherers experienced **good** mental health, **high** 'job' satisfaction, and very **little** jealousy, since no one had more than anyone else. Members of a hunter-gatherer tribe knew each other very closely, because their life and death depended on other members of the group. **That's** a difficult feeling to achieve for a present-day human working in an office with strangers. Our hunter-gatherer ancestors may have been materially poorer than us, (5)**but** in other ways, they may have been richer than we can ever be.