Chapter 2: The World Population

Exercises — Exercises

Q1 Which one of the following continents has the highest growth of population? (a) Africa (b) South America (c) Asia (d) North America

(a) Africa. It has the highest population growth rate among the continents, since births remain high while mortality has fallen, so the gap between them adds many people each year.

Q2 Which one of the following is not an area of sparse population? (a) The Atacama (b) South-east Asia (c) Equatorial region (d) Polar regions

(b) South-east Asia. It has favourable water, fertile soils and monsoon climate, so it is densely populated. The Atacama desert, the equatorial region (heavy rainfall) and polar regions (extreme cold) are thinly populated because of harsh climates.

Q3 Which one of the following is not a push factor? (a) Water shortage (b) Medical/educational facilities (c) Unemployment (d) Epidemics

(b) Medical/educational facilities. Better medical and educational facilities attract people to a destination, so they are pull factors. Water shortage, unemployment and epidemics make the place of origin less attractive and push people out.

Q4 Which one of the following is not a fact? (a) Human population increased more than ten times during the past 500 years. (b) Population growth is high in the first stage of demographic transition.

(b). In the first stage, high fertility is offset by high mortality from epidemics and variable food supply, so population growth is slow. Statement (a) is a fact: population rose more than ten times in the past 500 years.

Q5 Name three geographical factors that influence the distribution of population.

Three geographical factors are availability of water, landforms and climate. People prefer areas with easy fresh water, flat plains and gentle slopes, and comfortable climates. Soils are also a geographical factor: fertile loamy soils support intensive agriculture and more people.

Q6 There are a number of areas with high population density in the world. Why does this happen?

High density occurs where conditions favour living and earning: fresh water in river valleys, flat fertile plains, pleasant climate, mineral deposits, industries and cities offering jobs, education, health care and transport. Areas of religious significance or political stability also attract people.

Q7 What are the three components of population change?

The three components of population change are births, deaths and migration. Births and deaths together give natural growth, while migration (in-migration and out-migration) adds to or subtracts from the population of a place. Actual growth combines all three.

Q8 Distinguish between birth rate and death rate.

Crude birth rate (CBR) is the number of live births in a year per thousand of the mid-year population, calculated as (B/P) x 1000. Crude death rate (CDR) is the number of deaths in a year per thousand of the mid-year population, calculated as (D/P) x 1000. A high birth rate raises growth; a falling death rate also raises growth.

Q9 Distinguish between push factors and pull factors of migration.

Push factors make the place of origin less attractive, for example unemployment, poor living conditions, political turmoil, unpleasant climate, natural disasters, epidemics and socio-economic backwardness. Pull factors make the place of destination more attractive, for example better jobs and living conditions, peace and stability, security of life and property, and pleasant climate.

Q10 Discuss the factors influencing the distribution and density of population in the world.

Population distribution depends on three sets of factors. Geographical factors: availability of fresh water (river valleys are densely populated), landforms (flat plains and gentle slopes favour crops, roads and industries, while mountains hinder them, as in the Himalayas versus the Ganga plains), climate (extreme heat, cold or heavy rain discourage settlement, while pleasant Mediterranean climates attract people) and soils (fertile loamy soils support intensive agriculture). Economic factors: minerals attract industries and workers, as in the Katanga-Zambia copper belt; urbanisation draws migrants with jobs, education, health and transport; industrialisation creates employment, as in the Kobe-Osaka region of Japan. Social and cultural factors: religious or cultural significance attracts people, social and political unrest makes them leave, and governments may offer incentives to settle sparsely populated areas. Together these explain why about 90 per cent of people live on about 10 per cent of the land.

Q11 Discuss the three stages of demographic transition.

Demographic transition theory says a population moves from high births and deaths to low births and deaths as society changes from rural, agrarian and illiterate to urban, industrial and literate. In the first stage, fertility and mortality are both high because people have many children to offset deaths from epidemics and uncertain food supply. Growth is slow, most people farm, large families are an asset, life expectancy is low and technology is limited. In the second stage, fertility stays high at first and then declines, but mortality falls quickly because of better sanitation and health. This gap gives a large net addition to population. In the last stage, both fertility and mortality fall considerably. Population is stable or grows slowly; society is urbanised, literate and technically advanced, and deliberately controls family size. Different countries are today at different stages.