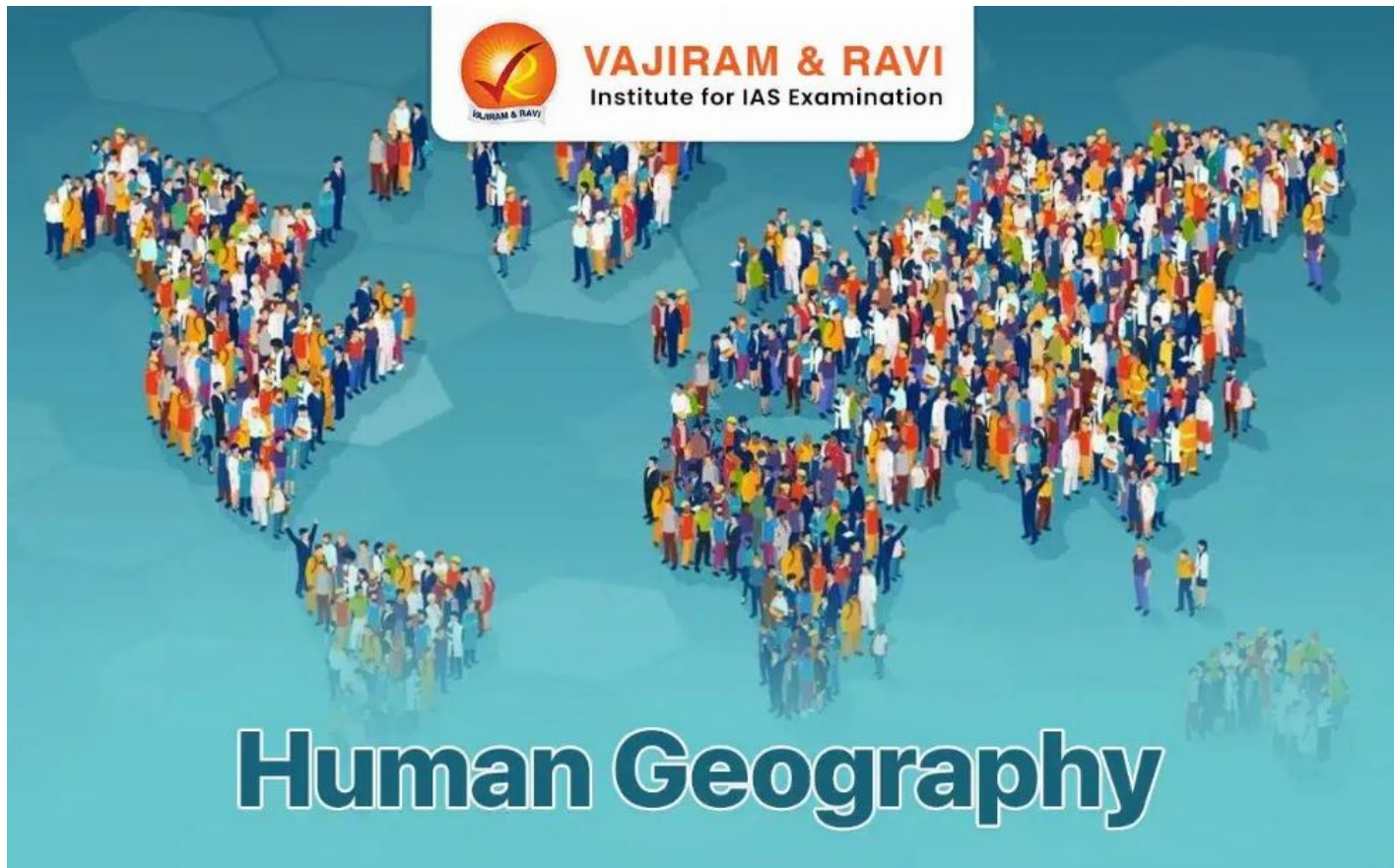


# Human Geography, Definition, Nature and Scope

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Human geography is the branch of geography that studies humans, their communities, cultures, economy, and interactions with the environment. The main characteristics of human geography are population density and distribution, migration, human settlements, and human development. It often investigates how these subjects vary geographically and temporally across the world.

Human geography consists of several sub-disciplinary fields that focus on different elements of human activity and organisation, for example - social geography, cultural geography, **economic geography**, political geography, population geography, etc.

## Population

The **population** of the world is unevenly distributed with some places having low concentrations of population and some having high. This is known as the **distribution of population**.

- **Density of Population:** Each unit of land has a limited capacity to support people living on it. The ratio between the number of people to the size of the land is the density of the population.

- **Distribution of Population:** It depends on various factors such as geographical factors (climate, soil, etc), economic factors (availability of mineral resources, industrialisation, urbanisation, etc), and socio-cultural factors.
- **Population Growth:** Population growth depends on birth rate, death rate and migration. The difference between fertility and mortality is called the **natural growth rate**.
  - According to the United Nations, the worldwide human population grew to **8.0 billion in mid-November 2022**, up from an estimated 2.5 billion in 1950. The world's population is predicted to grow by roughly **2 billion** during the **next 30 years**.
  - This remarkable development has been fueled mostly by an increase in the number of individuals living to **reproductive age**, a gradual increase in human lifespan, increased **urbanisation**, and accelerated **migration**.
- **Migration:** The rate of migration affects the growth of the population of a region by increasing or decreasing the number of people living there.
  - Migration might be classified as permanent, transient, or daily.
  - Migration can be both internal (within national borders) and international.
  - In India, migrants are divided into **four categories**: rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to urban, and urban to rural.
  - The three important sources of information on internal migration are the **national census, population registers, and sample surveys**.
- **Malthusian Theory of Population:** **Thomas Robert Malthus** was the first economist to propose a **systematic theory of population in 1798**. He believed that the population could be controlled to balance the food supply through **positive checks** and **preventative checks**.

## Demography

**Demography** studies the structure and composition of the **population**, various trends, and processes associated with a population including – changes in **population size**; patterns of **birth, death**, and **migration** across varying age groups.

- Demographic studies also focus on the process of counting or enumeration; which includes **census** or survey and the systematic collection of data on the people residing within a specified region.

## Human Geography Characteristics

- **Population pyramid:** Age and sex structure can be graphically represented by depicting the distribution of **distinct age groups by sex**, often known as population pyramids.
  - Population pyramids are classified into **three types**: progressive, regressive, and stagnant.
- **Sex Ratio:** It can be defined as a simple count of males and females in a population.
  - According to **NFHS 5**, the sex ratio in India (females per 1,000 males) is **1,020**.
- **Population of India:** India has overtaken **China** as the world's most populous country, according to **UN population estimates, 2023**.
  - **Uttar Pradesh** is the most populous state in the country and **Sikkim** is the least populous state.

- **Demographic Dividend:** It refers to the process through which a changing age structure can stimulate economic growth.
  - A country is said to have a demographic dividend if the majority of its population is in the productive age (15-64 years).
  - India is predicted to remain in the **demographic dividend window for 37 years**, from 2018 to 2055. This window, however, is available at different periods in different states due to the varied behaviour of the population characteristics.
  - According to the **Economic Survey 2018-19**, India's demographic dividend will peak around 2041, when the working-age population is predicted to reach 59 per cent.
- **Sources:** Population data can be found from various sources.
  - **Census:** The census is the single largest source of data for population studies conducted at an **interval of 10 years**. It offers primary population data such as age, gender, marital status, economic activity, occupations, migration, literacy, and so on.
  - **National Family Health Survey (NFHS):** It is a large-scale, multi-round survey that collects data on fertility, infant and child mortality, family planning practices, maternal and child health, reproductive health, nutrition, anaemia, and the use and quality of health and family planning services in India.

## Human Development

The concept of human development was introduced by **Dr Mahbub-ul-Haq**. He defines human growth as anything that expands people's options and improves their lives.

- **Four Pillars of Human Development:** Human development is based on the ideals of equity, sustainability, productivity, and empowerment.
  - **Equity** refers to making equal access to opportunities available to everyone irrespective of their gender, race, income, etc.
  - **Sustainability** means continuity in the availability of opportunities. All environmental, financial, and human resources must be used with a long-term perspective.
  - **Productivity** is defined as human labour productivity or productivity in terms of human work. Such productivity must be sustained by developing people's capacities.
  - **Empowerment** means having the ability to make decisions. Such power arises from increased freedom and capability. The empowerment of socially and economically disadvantaged populations is particularly important.
- **Measuring Human Development:** The Human Development Index (HDI) ranks countries based on their performance in **critical categories** such as health, education, and resource availability.
  - According to **UNDP**, India ranks 134th out of 193 countries in the global Human Development Report of 2023-24.
  - Sri Lanka is ranked 78 places ahead of China, which is ranked 75.
  - India also ranks below Bhutan (125th) and Bangladesh (129th). Switzerland has been ranked number one.

## Approaches to Human Development

There are many ways of looking at the problem of human development. Some of the important approaches are:

- **Income Approach:** The level of income reflects the level of freedom an individual enjoys. The higher the level of income, the higher the level of human development.
- **Welfare Approach:** The approach argues for higher government expenditure on education, health, social secondary, and amenities. People are not participants in development, but rather passive recipients.
- **Basic Needs Approach:** The **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** first advocated this strategy. Six basic requirements have been defined, which include **health, education, food, water supply, sanitation, and shelter**.
- **Capability Approach:** This approach is associated with Prof. Amartya Sen.
  - Building human skills in areas such as health, education, and resource availability is critical to advancing human development.

## Human Settlement

**Settlement** is a form of human habitation that ranges from a **single dwelling to a large city**. A settlement may have a specific nature and its evolution is based on various factors. Settlements may develop taking up **myriad shapes, forms, and patterns**.

### • Types of Human Settlement:

Settlements are usually classified into two types - **rural and urban**. The basic distinction between rural and urban regions is the economic activities.

## Rural Settlement

Any settlement in which most of the people are engaged in primary activities such as agriculture, forestry, mining, and fishery is known as rural settlement. Various circumstances and situations contribute to the existence of distinct types of rural settlements:

- **Physical features:** nature of terrain, altitude, climate, and availability of water.
- **Cultural and ethnic factors:** social structure, caste, and religion.
- **Security factors:** defence against thefts and robberies.

| Types and Patterns of Rural Settlements in India |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Compact settlement</b>                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- These settlements have <b>densely built-up areas</b>. As a result, in such settlements, all of the dwellings are concentrated in a single central location, and these populated regions are different from the <b>farms</b> and <b>meadows</b>.</li><li>- These settlements are generally found in highly productive <b>alluvial plains</b>.</li></ul> |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Semi- Compact Settlement</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Such settlements are characterised by small but compact nuclears around which hamlets are dispersed .</li> <li>- It covers a larger area than compact settlements. These villages can be found on <b>plains</b> or <b>plateaus</b>, depending on the local environmental conditions.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Dispersed Settlement</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- These are generally found in <b>hills, plateaus, and grasslands</b>.</li> <li>- Dwellings are spread over a large area and spaces are large.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                         |

## Urban Settlement

Urban Settlements are those where the inhabitants of the settlement depend on non-primary activities for their livelihood.

- **Activities:** These activities range from manufacturing, service and management functions, banking, regional and national headquarters office activity, etc.
- **Definitions:** According to the **census of India** urban areas are those which satisfy conditions given below.
  - All places with a municipality corporation, cantonment board, notified town area committee, etc.
  - A minimum population of 5000;
  - at least 75 percent of the male working population engaged in the non-agricultural sector; and
  - a density of population of at least 4,000 persons per square kilometre.

| <b>Types of Urban Settlement</b> |                                                 |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Town</b>                      | Less than one lakh population.                  |
| <b>City</b>                      | Population between one lakh to one million.     |
| <b>Metropolitan Cities</b>       | Population between one million to five million. |
| <b>Megacities</b>                | More than 5 million people.                     |

## Human Geography UPSC PYQs

**Question 1:** India is regarded as a country with a “Demographic Dividend”. This is due to- **(UPSC Prelims 2011)**

1. Its high population in the age group below 15 years.
2. Its high population in the age group of 15-64 years.
3. Its high population in the age group above 65 years.
4. Its high total population.

**Answer: (b)**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/upsc-exam/human-geography/>

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