

POPULATION DYNAMICS

glossary

arable: land that can be cultivated for the production of crops.

asylum seeker: a person who has left his/her country of origin and applied for refugee status to receive protection and support from a foreign nation.

birth rate: the number of babies born annually per 1,000 women of reproductive age in any given set of people.

brain drain: the emigration of highly trained or educated people from one country to another, usually in search of better living conditions, higher salaries or more stable political conditions.

carrying capacity: the maximum number of people a given area can support without degrading the natural, social, cultural, and economic environment for present and future generations.

cohort: a group of persons sharing a demographic characteristic, often age.

contraception: also called birth control, methods used by sexually active people to prevent pregnancy.

death rates: the number of individuals who die annually per 1,000 individuals in any given set of people.

demographers: scientists studying the characteristics of human populations, such as size, growth rate, and other vital statistics.

demographic transition: population change over time, in the three-part pattern: high birth and death rates, to high birth and low death rates, to low birth and low death rates.

developing countries: countries at a relatively early stage in the process of economic development classified using a range of economic and social criteria such as per capita income and life expectancy.

doubling time: the period of time required for a quantity or population to double in size assuming a constant growth rate.

ecological footprint: a resource management tool that measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resources it consumes and to absorb its waste under prevailing technology.

emigrating: leaving one's country to live in another.

exponential growth: also called geometric growth, growth with an increasing rate of change, resulting in faster and faster growth over time.

family planning program: a program which enables women and men to plan the timing and spacing of childbearing through reproductive health information and the use of contraceptives.

fertility rate: the average number of live births per woman during her reproductive years, among a given set of people.

forced migration: involuntarily leaving one's country because of political or environmental drivers.

immigrating: arriving in a country after leaving another.

Industrial Revolution: a period in the 18th and 19th centuries during which human society transitioned from an agrarian and handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacturing. This process began in Britain and from there spread to other parts of the world. The Industrial Revolution marks a major historical turning point, influencing many aspects of daily life for people around the world and contributing to unprecedented and sustained human population growth.

intervening obstacle: an environmental or cultural feature that hinders migration.

J-curve: also called a geometric curve, a J-shaped curve modeling population growth that is exponential, growing rapidly with no limit.

least developed countries: nations that have primarily agricultural economies and lower standards of living relative to most other countries, and face serious structural challenges to their sustainable development.

less developed countries: nations that generally have a less industrialized, more agricultural economy with lower standards of living relative to more developed countries.

life expectancy: the average number of years someone is expected to live based on current health trends.

limiting factor: an environmental or societal condition that limits the growth, size or distribution of a population.

migration: movement to a new location.

more developed countries: nations that generally have a more industrialized economy that is strong and diverse, and higher standards of living relative to less developed countries.

population growth rate: the average annual percent change in a population over time, resulting from the difference in births and deaths as well as the balance of migration into and out of a country.

population pyramid: distribution (by age and sex) of a given population, usually forming the shape of a pyramid.

pro-natalist: an individual or sentiment supportive of childbearing.

pull factor: a factor that motivates people to move to a new location.

push factor: a factor that motivates people to leave their current location.

rate of natural increase: the difference between the birth rate and the death rate of a given population.

refugee: person forced to leave their community or country in search of safety, often because of conflict or persecution.

remittance: cash or goods sent from migrants to support their family or friends back home.

S-curve: also called a logistic curve, an S-shaped curve modeling population growth that is initially exponential, and then levels off as population approaches a maximum size constrained by limited resources available.

urbanization: the process in which an increasing proportion of a population inhabits cities and their suburbs.

voluntary migration: choosing to relocate in order to take advantage of an opportunity such as better living conditions or better employment prospects.

zero population growth: a demographic balance where a population neither grows nor declines.