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ANSWERS

1. A population’s composition may be described in terms of basic demographic features – age, sex, family and household status – and by features of the population’s social and economic context – language, education, occupation, ethnicity, religion, income and wealth. The distribution of populations can be defined at multiple levels (local, regional, national, global) and with different types of boundaries (political, economic, geographic). Demography is a central component of societal contexts and social change.

What demographers do goes well beyond this broad definition and draws extensively from related disciplines – Sociology, Economics, statistics, History, Political Science, Anthropology, Psychology, Public Health and Environmental Sciences.

Demography is very useful for understanding social and economic problems and identifying potential solutions. Demographers are engaged in social planning, market research, insurance forecasting, labor market analysis, economic development and so on. They work for private firms and public agencies at local, regional, national and international levels.

## The Malthusian Theory

## Malthus's early writings were pamphlets that addressed economic and political issues of his time. In opposition to the popular 18th century European view that society was constantly improving, he wrote about the dangers of excessive population growth.

## In his 1798 work, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Malthus examined the relationship between population growth and resources. From this, he developed the **Malthusian theory of population growth** in which he wrote that population growth occurs exponentially, so it increases according to birth rate.

## For example, if every member of a family tree reproduces, the tree will continue to grow with each generation. On the other hand, food production increases arithmetically, so it only increases at given points in time. Malthus wrote that, left unchecked, populations can outgrow their resources.

## According to Malthus, there are two types of 'checks' that can reduce a population's growth rate. **Preventive checks** are voluntary actions people can take to avoid contributing to the population. Because of his religious beliefs, he supported a concept he called **moral restraint**, in which people resist the urge to marry and reproduce until they are capable of supporting a family. This often means waiting until a later age to marry. He also wrote that there are 'immoral' ways to check a population, such as vices, adultery, prostitution, and birth control. Due to his beliefs, he favored moral restraint and didn't support the latter practices.

## **Positive checks** to population growth are things that may shorten the average lifespan, such as disease, warfare, famine, and poor living and working environments. According to Malthus, eventually these positive checks would result in a **Malthusian catastrophe** (also sometimes called a Malthusian crisis), which is a forced return of a population to basic survival.

## The Irish potato famine of the 19th century has been considered a classic example of a Malthusian catastrophe. In addition to dealing with political and economic relations with England and fragmentation of their land, the rapidly growing Irish population was running out of food.

## There are often other factors involved in events that could be labeled as Malthusian catastrophes, so many scholars take caution when providing modern examples.

Reference:

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/malthusian-theory-of-population-growth-definition-lesson-quiz.html>

<https://www.suda.su.se/education/what-is-demography>