

Study Guide for the Australian Collaboration Fact and Issue Sheet

THE POPULATION OF AUSTRALIA

FOR REVIEW

1. Population statistics

1a. What was Australia's estimated resident population in June 2005?

1b. By what percentage had the population increased between June 2004 and June 2005?

1c. Based on these figures, what would Australia's population have been in June 2004?

2. Population growth

2a. What is 'natural increase'?

2b. What is 'net overseas migration'?

2c. What proportion of Australia's population growth in 2005-06 was accounted for by

- i) natural increase
- ii) net overseas migration

2d. Which of the two rates has fluctuated the most in the last 20 years, and what factors have influenced this fluctuation?

3. Population projections

3a. Based on current long-term projections, what will Australia's population be in 42 years?

3b. What would be the effect on this figure if net overseas migration was

- i) reduced to zero
- ii) kept at more or less the current rate—i.e. 100,000
- iii) increased to 200,000

4. The percentage of older people in the population

4a. What percentage of Australia's population in 2006 was made up of by people aged 60 years and over and is that percentage likely to change over the next two decades?

4b. How does this compare internationally and what are some of the reasons for this high rate?

4c. What are the potential problems associated with an ageing or aged population? Are there ways of dealing with these problems?

5. The brain drain

5a. What is the so-called 'brain drain' and why could it be a concern?

5b. What could be the possible causes of a 'brain drain' and, assuming that Australia was experiencing a 'brain drain', what measures could be taken to address it?

6. Views about population growth

6a. What has been the dominant approach to population growth in the last century and why?

6b. On what basis has this been challenged in recent years?

7. Population policy

7a. What is an integrated population policy, as opposed to an ad hoc one, and why might it be needed?

7b. What are the various ways in which population levels, and consequently population policies, impact on society? Can the various dimensions of population policy be separated from each other?

FOR DISCUSSION

For each of the statements below, work in pairs to decide whether you agree or disagree and explain why. Alternatively, use each of the statements below as a starting point for a class debate.

1. 'Given that it has such a low population per hectare in comparison with other parts of the world, Australia does not need to worry as much as other countries about the potential environmental problems of overpopulation.'
2. 'A nation's well-being, prosperity and ability to compete internationally is not dependent on its having a continually increasing population.'
3. 'Targeted immigration is an easy and effective method for dealing with problems in the Australian labour market, such as skills shortages.'
4. 'When dealing with the issue of population, economic growth should be the main consideration.'
5. 'To tackle the problems associated with overpopulation we should simply stop all immigration, including the intake of refugees and asylum seekers.'

FOR RESEARCH

1. Use the internet to find out what the policies of the major political parties in Australia are on population growth.
2. Use any of the sources on the list provided under Useful Sources at the end of the Fact and Issue Sheet to investigate further the relationship between environmental degradation and population growth. What are the possible risks associated with population growth and how have these been measured and analysed?
3. *Question for advanced students.* Use the internet to research the major long-term developments in Australia's immigration policy. What have been the most recent developments, in the last decade or so? How are other countries (select one in Europe, North America, and our own region) dealing with the issue of population growth? Are these relevant comparisons or not? Why or why not? What can history tell us and what can't it tell us about the best way to proceed?