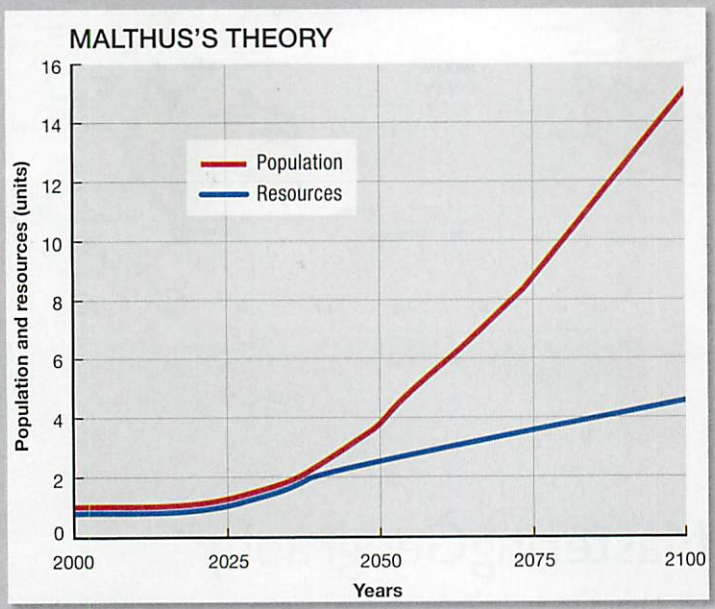
Chapter 2 Population and Health

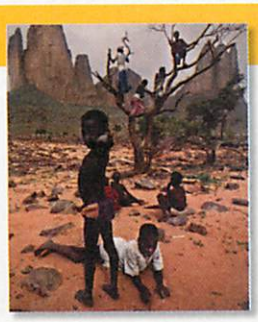


Why did Thomas Malthus think that this chart doomed humanity? Why do some people still think so? Page 60.

How did this water pump in London lead to the birth of GIS? Page 65.

KEY ISSUE 1

Where Is The World's Population Distributed?

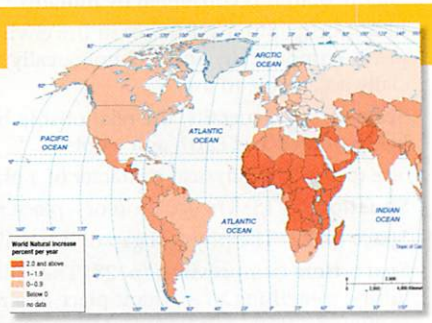


A Crowded Planet—In Places p. 45

Manhattan's teeming throngs and Montana's wide open spaces—why aren't people spread out more evenly across Earth?

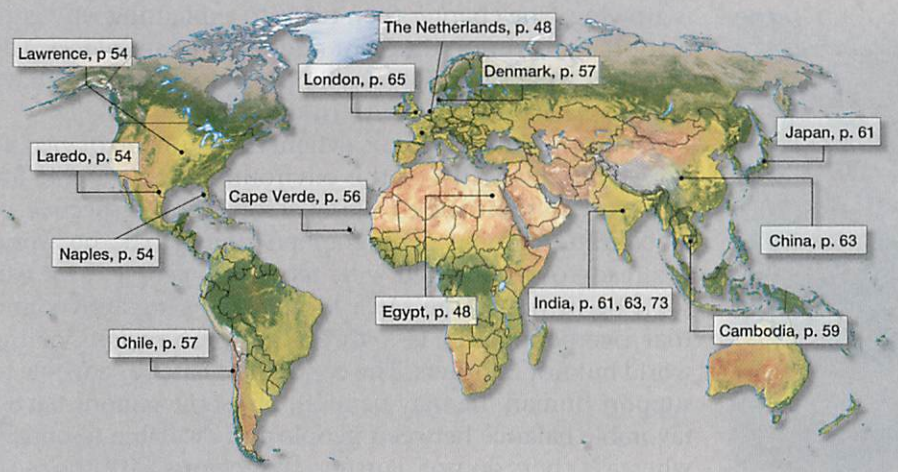
KEY ISSUE 2

Why Is Global Population Increasing?



More and More of Us p. 50

All humans are born, and all must pass away—but their years on Earth vary, depending on where they live.



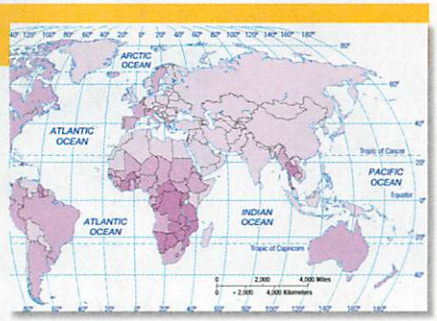
▲ This family lives in Jaipur, India. When these girls are older, how many children will they have? The answer matters for the future sustainability of the world because India adds more people to its population every year than any other country. Will these people have enough food? Will they have jobs?

KEY ISSUE 3

Why Does Population Growth Vary Among Regions?

KEY ISSUE 4

Why Do Some Regions Face Health Threats?



For Richer and for Poorer p. 56

It's probably not a surprise that poorer countries have higher birth rates. But why are the death rates higher in richer countries?

In Sickness and in Health p. 64

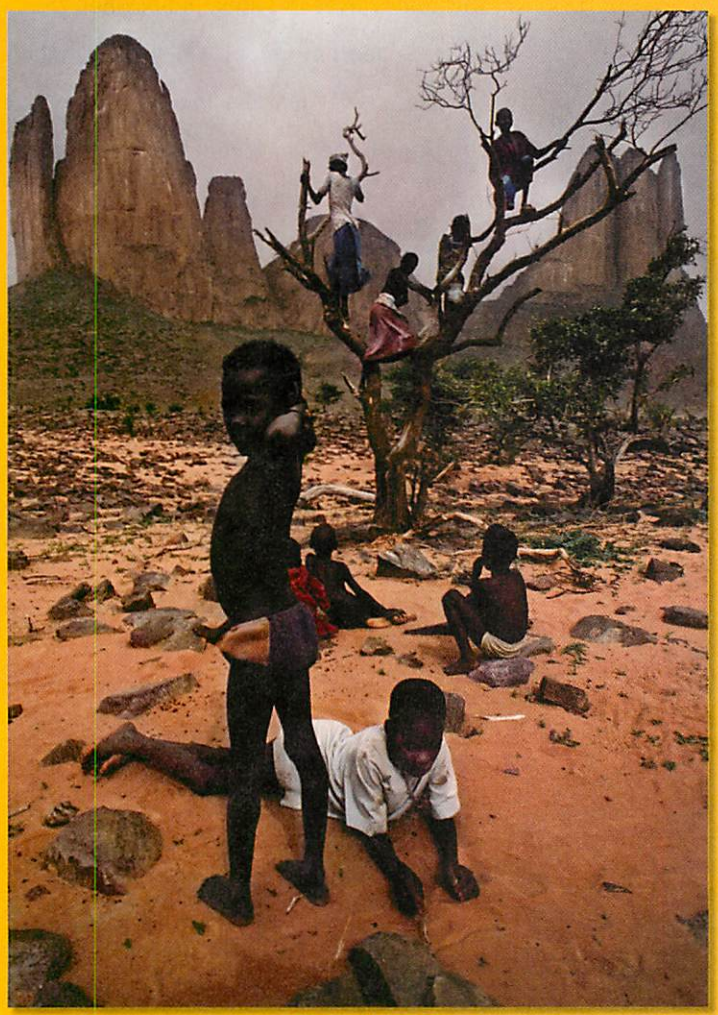
Humans are safer today from many once-frightening diseases, yet they are more vulnerable than ever before to new diseases.

Introducing

Population and Health

The scientific study of population characteristics is **demography.** Demographers look statistically at how people are distributed spatially by age, gender, occupation, fertility, health, and so on. The study of population is critically important for three reasons:

- More people are alive at this time—more than 7 billion—than at any other point in Earth's long history (Figure 2-1).



▲ FIGURE 2-1 **OVERPOPULATION IN MALI** The Sahel region of Africa, including much of the country of Mali, is threatened by overpopulation. The number of people living here is not very high, but the capacity of the environment to support life is extremely low.

- The world's population increased at a faster rate during the second half of the twentieth century than ever before in history.
- Virtually all global population growth is concentrated in developing countries.

These facts lend urgency to the task of understanding the diversity of population problems in the world today.

As introduced in Chapter 1, geographers ask "where" and "why" questions. As we begin our study of the major topics in human geography, note the wording of the four key issues that organize the material in this chapter. The first issue asks a "where" question and the other three ask "why" questions. These four issues rely on the five basic concepts presented in Chapter 1.

Geographers study population problems by first describing where people are found across Earth's ***space***. The location of Earth's 7 billion people forms a highly clustered distribution. The second key issue looks at why population is growing. The chapter then turns to explaining why population is growing at different rates in different ***places***. The final key issue discusses why improved ***connections*** have put people at varying health risks.

Overpopulation occurs when the number of people exceeds the capacity of the environment to support life at a decent standard of living. From the perspective of globalization, some demographers argue that the world is already overburdened with too many people, or it will soon be in the future. At a local ***scale***, geographers find that overpopulation is a threat in some ***regions*** of the world but not in others. The capacity of Earth as a whole to support human life may be high, but some regions have a favorable balance between people and available resources, whereas others do not. Further, the regions with the most people are not necessarily the same as the regions with an unfavorable balance between population and resources.

- KEY ISSUE **1** describes *where* people live around the world. Humans are not distributed uniformly across Earth.
- KEY ISSUE **2** examines ***local diversity*** in key characteristics of population. The population of a particular place increases with births and decreases with deaths. It also changes as a result of migration, which is discussed in Chapter 3.
- KEY ISSUE **3** looks at the reason *why* population grows at different rates in different regions. Every place is at some stage in a process known as the demographic transition.
- KEY ISSUE **4** explains reasons why patterns of health and medical care vary among places. With ***globalization***, health issues are more likely than in the past to diffuse rapidly around the world.