

Introduction to Demography

After reading this chapter, you will be conversant with:

- Definition and Meaning of Demography
- Nature and Scope of Demography
- Historical Background of Demography
- Relationship of Demography with Other Social Sciences

INTRODUCTION

An important component of any society is its members. Without population, there will be no society. Since population is an integral part of society, it is important to have information about various aspects of population. It is here that demography or population studies have evolved as an important discipline in the social sciences. In a broad sense, demography is the study of various aspects of population. It focuses on numbers (size), fertility (births), mortality (deaths), migration (movement of people from one place to another), the density of population, the composition and characteristics of population and changes taking place therein.

DEFINITION AND MEANING OF DEMOGRAPHY

Demography is a term derived from the two Greek words—*demos*, meaning the people, and *logos*, which means to draw or to write. Nowadays, it is used to refer to the use of statistical methods to study human populations. It deals primarily with the size and growth, or diminution, of populations: with the numbers and proportions of persons living, being born or dying within some area or region and with the measurement of related functions such as rates of fertility, mortality and marriage. In other words, it is the processes of population growth or decline, fertility, mortality and migration.

The word 'demography' was for the first time used by A. Guillard, a Frenchman, in his book Elements de Statistique Humanine. It is a statistical study of population composition, distribution and trends. 1855

Demography has been defined as follows:

Demography is the study of the size, territorial distribution, and the composition of population, changes therein, and the components of such changes, which may be identified as natality, mortality, territorial movement (migration), and social mobility.

—Hauser and Duncan

Demography is the statistical and mathematical study of the size, composition and spatial distribution of human populations, and of the changes over time in these aspects through the operation of the five processes of fertility, mortality, marriage, migration and social mobility. Although it maintains a continuous descriptive and comparative analysis of trends, in each of these processes and in their net results, its long-run goal is to develop a body of theory to explain the events that it charts and encompasses.

—Donald J. Bogue

Demography is the study of statistical methods of human population involving primarily the measurement of the size, growth and diminution of the members of the people, the proportions of living being born or dying within the same area or region and the related functions of fertility, mortality and marriage.

—Peter Cox

In a broad sense demography includes both demographic analysis and population studies. A broad study of demography studies both qualitative and quantitative aspects of population.

—Frank Lorrimer

The population student is interested in a population's size, composition and distribution, and in changes in these aspects through time, and the causes of these changes. Ultimately, he is interested in these changes because they are related to human welfare.

—Thompson and Lewis

Demography is a broad social science discipline concerned with the study of human populations. In general, demographers deal with the collection, presentation and analysis of data relating to the basic life-cycle events and experiences of people. They are birth, marriage, divorce, household and family formation, employment, ageing, migration and death. The discipline of demography stresses on the importance of empirical investigation of population processes, their conceptualization, measurement, determinants and consequences. Demographers depend upon their related disciplinary areas such as sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, psychology,

Competing
Density
Dist.
Growth
movement
size
Structure
of Pop.

Life cycle

→ narrow view

→ calm
change
interacts
strongly

→ Broad view

→ Balance view

public health and ecology for their study and analyses. They may explore biological and biosocial aspects of fertility and mortality in areas such as reproductive health and epidemiology; study of the social, economic, ecological and genetic aspects of high and low fertility and mortality; economic and geographical aspects of migration; the influence of geography and ecology on composition and distribution of population and the consequences of a particular population composition on the socio-economic fabric of a society.

Demography is concerned with the broader nature of social and economic change, and the impact of demographic change on the natural environment. Various concepts based on demography, such as cohorts, life tables, event histories, population momentum and stable populations, have significantly contributed to an understanding of social change.

The following are some of the reasons for studying populations:

- These studies have several administrative uses. Population statistics are related to matters such as the election of representative governing bodies, tax collection and the working of industry and commerce. The State also depends upon such studies for the provision of social services and health services, maintenance of law and order and so on.
- Every society has the specific aim of improving the quality of human life, or at least of ensuring that it does not worsen. This aspect is associated with the resources needed by people—food, shelter, mechanical power and so on.
- Population studies are essential for future planning. The available number of people, and the estimated increases, will help the state to plan for the coming years. It is on the basis of population statistics that various state departments allocate funds for various developmental programmes and activities.
- On the basis of demographic data, the level of economic and social growth and development can be ascertained. Social and economic change can be ascertained through such data.
- It is important to know details of a population in order to understand change in populations and the impact of such changes on the environment.
- An intellectual necessity of satisfying the need for ascertaining why things happen as they do. This innate curiosity to find out the what, when, why and where of a population leads individuals to study various demographic aspects.

Population change is affected by various components such as birth, death and migration rate. These put together determine the numbers in the population.