

Factors Affecting Human Settlement

Physical Factors

One of the most basic factors affecting settlement patterns is the physical geography of the land. Climate is key, because if a place is too dry, too cold or too hot, it's more difficult for large numbers of people to settle there, especially if they make their living from farming. The land itself is important too because some types of soil are much better for agriculture than others, or they support different types of crops. Though modern transportation allows people to settle farther from where their food is farmed, places with wet, mild climates are still more densely populated than places that are very dry or very cold.

Natural Resources

Forest-wood to build homes and provide heat

Oil/Coal/Natural Gas- to provide heat/cooking

Climate

Mild Temperatures/Some Rain

Latitude

Most of the population on Earth lives in the mid latitudes.

Bodies of Water

Lakes and Rivers-which provide drinking water and food, as well as transportation.

Oceans and Seas-provide access to food and transportation.

Landforms

Mountains-difficult to build shelter and transportation difficult

Deserts-lacks water and resources and temperatures can be extreme



Human Factors Part 1

Settlement patterns have always been affected by the technology available to settlers, and especially by methods of transportation. In the past, when boats were the best way to transport goods and people, most major settlements were located next to the sea or rivers. In fact, the world's biggest cities today are still located next to water, though transportation technology has allowed inland regions to be populated too. In the 1800s, the American West and other parts of the world saw settlements spring up along the newly built railroads, and today highways and roads form an even bigger factor.



Level of Technology

Communication – telephone and email from telegraph and postal mail.

Trade- increased due to improved communication and transport methods ex)air and rail

Infrastructure-improved technology increases availability of infrastructure ex) electricity, water, roads



Human Factors Part 2

Economics often drive settlers to seek opportunity in new places, creating their own settlements or increasing the size of existing ones. Historically, settlers often came in search of places to start farms, and later they came to cities to look for jobs. If economies in the countryside collapse, that can drive even more people into the cities. It's also possible for jobs to move from cities to the suburbs, leading immigrants to settle in suburban neighborhoods more often than city centers.

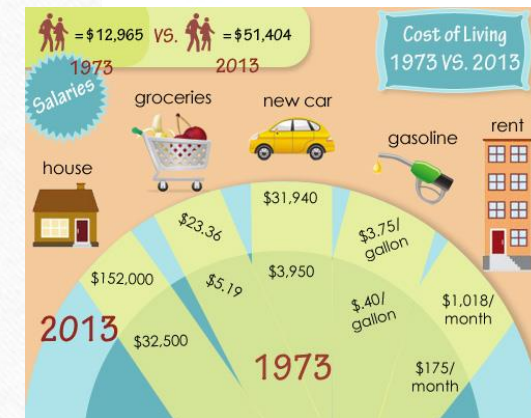
Economic Activity

Trade-ability to sell and purchase goods and services encourages settlement

Cost of living-being able to afford to live comfortably determines where someone can or wants to live.

Job availability-having access to means to make money to afford a place to settle.

Industry-increased industry increases the availability of jobs



Human Factors Part 3

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Transportation Routes

Rivers- early settlement relied on access to rivers to ship materials inland and is still used today to some extent.

Railroads- the expansion of the rail system increased the movement of people and goods into inland areas that may not have access to rivers.

Highways- the growth and improvements to the highways systems have allowed for transport of goods by large trucks across a region in a timely manner.

Airplanes- the invention of air travel and development of larger planes has increase the ability to transport large amounts of goods quickly and also enables people to move and relocate ith greater ease.



Human Factors Part 4

The government's land policies can also have a lasting effect on settlement patterns. Today many city governments enforce zoning rules, controlling the growth of settlements by allowing people to live in some areas but not others. Similarly, when the United States and Canada were expanding west across North America, they each instituted rules that allowed settlers to claim land for farms. Huge areas of land were divided into grids of square plots on official maps, resulting in a checkerboard of square fields, straight-line roads, county lines and state borders across much of the Great Plains. This top-down settlement policy often destroyed the settlement patterns -- and livelihoods -- of the Native American people already living there.

Urbanization and Growth

Industry/Business- tend to develop in a central region to provide for collaboration between businesses which creates an urban area. Ex) banks near business that may require their services.

Jobs-people tend to settle where there is access to work which means that it is more populated in urban areas.

Ease of access to Goods-the close proximity of business provides easier access to items that people need within a short distance. In urban areas it may not be necessary for people to have a car because they live within walking/biking distance to work and stores.

Urban Sprawl- many people choose to live outside of the hustle and bustle of the urban center but do not wish to live in a rural community because they still work in the urban area. This leads to the development of suburban areas. Many times it becomes difficult to see where the division lies between urban and suburban areas because of unregulated growth.

