World statistics – 1

Demographics are statistics that provide information about people and the characteristics of populations. The information collected and recorded covers many areas, including the population size and density, measures of health and wellbeing, educational attainments and economic information.

Around the world, governments generally will conduct a census to collect information about people at least once every 10 years. Where this is not possible nor a priority (for example in wartorn countries), agencies such as the UN will gather information. These official censuses commonly gather data to provide an overview of the social, demographic and economic structure of society. Read about some of the main indicators information is gathered on, so that this information can be used to compare countries around the world.

Population

Population statistics give information about the number of people living in a country (or a smaller area such as a state or city). Birth, death and migration rates help statisticians to keep these numbers up to date. Population density of a country can be calculated by dividing the number of inhabitants by the area of a country to determine an average of how many people there are per square kilometre. The age of the population, nationalities and ethnicities, languages spoken and religious affiliations tell about the ancestries and behaviours of people.

Health and education statistics

Maternal (mother) mortality rates provide information on the number of deaths per 100 000 which occur as a result of pregnancy and childbirth. Infant mortality rates give the number of infants (under 1 year old) who do not survive their first year per 1000 live births. The infant mortality rate is often used as an indicator of health in a country. Other health statistics are collected to show rates of infection of HIV and rates of obesity in adults. Other diseases are monitored depending on the relevance to a particular country (e.g. rabies, malaria, tuberculosis). Information on health and deaths helps to determine the average life expectancy of people in the country.

Education statistics tell us about literacy rates, years in schooling and levels of educational attainment. Gender in education shows if there are differences between the literacy rates and levels of educational attainment between boys and girls or men and women.
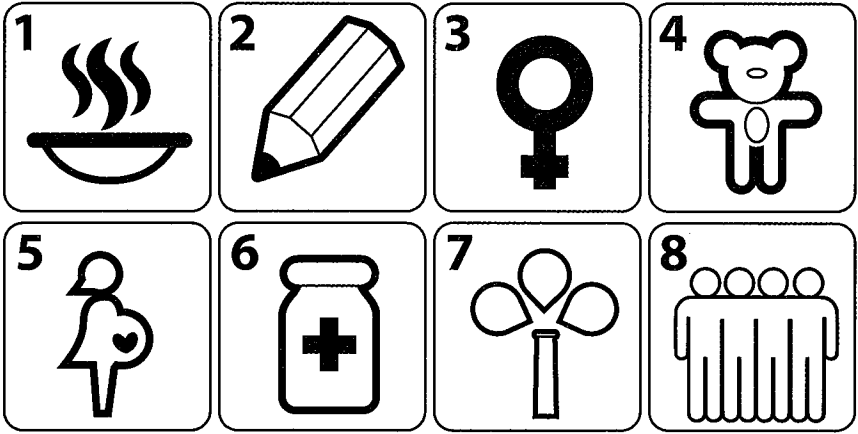
Trade and economy and employment

Economic statistics show the country's imports and exports, the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and its GDP per capita. The GDP is one of the main indicators used to assess the condition of a country's economy; the figure gives the value of the country's products for a year. Dividing this figure by the population gives the GDP per capita, which makes it easier to compare countries with vastly different population sizes.

Employment statistics show the unemployment rates of countries, and youth unemployment rates include people aged 15–24.

The United Nations (UN) Millenium Development Goals aim to improve the lives of the world's poorest and most disadvantaged people.

1. Discuss the graphics on the right. See if you can identify each of the goals. Check your predictions to see if you were correct.

Differences in the economic, demographic and social characteristics between countries across the world (ACHGK032)