You have seen how Earth’s population is distributed. Now you will examine why humans live where they do. There are two groups of factors that influence settlement patterns:

- **Natural factors:** the availability of resources like good soil for farming, climate, fresh water, vegetation, and landforms
- **Human factors:** religious, economic, political, and historical reasons for settling in a particular area

### NATURAL FACTORS

The physical environment has a strong influence on where people live. Nine of every ten people on Earth live on just 10 percent of the land area. Much of Earth’s surface cannot support large populations. These unsuitable areas have low population density.

Places with **arable land**, like river valleys with flat or gently rolling plains, attract large numbers of people. Arable land is good for farming since the fertile soil is rich in nutrients. The climate is also suited for agriculture. Places with other natural resources, such as forests and minerals, also attract settlement, since these natural resources provide materials for food, shelter, and trade.

People also tend to settle in areas with a deep and sheltered harbour, where rivers meet, or at the end of a mountain pass, for their transportation advantages. Figures 1.15 and 1.16 show examples of settlements that take advantage of natural features.

Waterways are also important for trade between settlements and for providing access to food and drinking water. Some of the world’s largest cities have developed on coasts.
HUMAN FACTORS

People may also choose to live in a particular area for human factors, which include historical influence, government decisions, and shared political or religious views.

HISTORICAL INFLUENCE

Have you ever considered why some areas had settlements before others? In North America, many Indigenous peoples lived in scattered, semi-permanent villages for thousands of years. Population density did not increase until Europeans began to settle regions along the coast in the 1600s. The first large European settlements were clustered along the east coast of what we now call Canada and the United States. These first settlements included Boston, New York, Halifax, and Montréal, as you can see in Figure 1.17. Newcomers to North America tended to settle in these established areas. However, Indigenous peoples were forced to settle in certain areas decided by land treaties made with the Europeans. This often meant Indigenous peoples had to leave their lands for less suitable areas. Today’s population patterns are often influenced by what happened hundreds of years ago.

A similar settlement pattern occurred in Australia. English settlers established the first colonial settlements in Australia during the eighteenth century. The first settlements, including Sydney and Perth, were located on the coast. Sydney and Perth have continued to grow from their colonial days. Both cities are adding thousands of people to their populations every year.

European Exploration Routes in the 1600s

FIGURE 1.17 This map shows a few routes Europeans took to settle new lands in the 1600s. European settlers first arrived on the east coast of North America. The cities along these coasts are among the first large settlements established on each continent.

FIGURE 1.18 The Trans-Siberian Railway is the world’s longest railway line. The railway is 9289 km long, or about the width of Canada. It takes passengers a week to travel its length.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Governments often make decisions that influence the growth of settlements. For example, a decision to build a railway could lead to linear settlement patterns being developed along the route. The world’s longest railway is the Trans-Siberian Railway, across southern Russia from Moscow to Vladivostok. Many settlements grew along this railway line, as people wanted to live in places that had access to markets and easy transportation. Figure 1.18 shows the lights from settlements along the Trans-Siberian Railway, which can be seen from space.

In 1956, the Brazilian government saw that the interior of the country was underdeveloped. They decided to move its capital to the middle of the country. The government planned and built a city, called Brasilia (Figure 1.19), which replaced Rio de Janeiro as Brazil’s capital in 1960. Today, Brasilia is growing faster than the former capital. Brasilia’s population growth is 2.82 percent per year, compared with Rio de Janeiro’s growth of 0.9 percent per year.

Political conflict can also influence settlement patterns. Political refugees are migrants that leave their home countries because they fear they will be harmed due to their political beliefs. Refugees may choose to escape to other countries instead of staying in their home countries. Refugee settlements in receiving countries can grow if a conflict continues for a long time. Also, if a government goes to war, settlement growth in their own country could decrease.
MOHAMMED AL KARAD: SUPPORTING REFUGEE YOUTH IN JORDAN

Mohammed Al Karad was the national wrestling champion and national team coach in his native Syria. He never imagined that he would one day become a refugee and live in the Za’atari camp in Jordan.

Al Karad left Syria to escape the violent civil war. Not having anywhere else to go, he ended up in Za’atari. Like Al Karad, many youth in Za’atari have been separated from their families, often arriving at the camp alone. They are unable to contact their families or friends. They cannot work or continue their education. Some of these youth become involved in illegal or violent activities.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide support for refugees in their new host countries. After arriving at the Za’atari camp, Al Karad discovered that the American-based NGO Mercy Corps was building Shabab Littagheer (Youth Centre). He decided that he wanted to help in some way.

At the Youth Centre, young refugees have access to a gym and training in fine arts, martial arts, computers, and life skills, such as communication and leadership.

The Youth Centre has assisted more than 1000 youth by helping them find support and have a little fun.

In the Za’atari camp, Al Karad has become the Youth Centre’s volunteer head coach (Figure 1.20). Al Karad’s fame draws curious teens to the Youth Centre. Many of them stay to spend time in a positive and safe space. “I wanted to serve my community and help youths adjust to this very difficult life. I came as a refugee. I live in a tent. I know how hard it is,” said Al Karad. He continues to reach out to more young refugees, providing hope for their future outside the camp.

A CALL TO ACTION

1. The civil war in Syria has caused many people to flee their homes. What do you think are some of the challenges that countries and NGOs, such as Mercy Corps, face in accepting refugees?

2. Refugees from all over the world arrive in Canada. You or someone you know may be a refugee. What might a refugee need when settling in a new place like Canada? What resources exist in your community to support refugees?

RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE

Some settlements have grown around places with spiritual significance (Figure 1.21). The city of Jerusalem in Israel, for example, has holy places for Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is a holy site for Islam’s Grand Mosque. Vatican City was developed as the focal point of Roman Catholicism and is now an independent state in Rome, Italy. Kathmandu, in Nepal, is a religious centre for Hindus and Buddhists. It is also home to four major holy sites for both religions.

The religious importance of holy places attracts people who want to settle in the area. People sometimes migrate from their home countries because of religious persecution. They settle in countries where they are free to practise their religion.

FIGURE 1.21 Religious sites can influence settlement patterns. (A) Jerusalem, (B) Mecca, (C) Vatican City, and (D) Kathmandu were settled for religious reasons.

I wonder if natural features also affected the growth of these settlements?
Successful research begins with a question. An effective question will help you focus on important evidence and data. When researching geographic topics, formulate your question to answer one of the following general questions: “What is where? Why there? Why care?”

Types of Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>definitional</td>
<td>What are the features of arable land? <em>(What is where?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comparative</td>
<td>What are the differences between historical and political influences on settlements? <em>(Why there?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause and effect</td>
<td>Why do settlements form near waterways? <em>(Why there?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decision-making</td>
<td>Is it better to build a settlement near a river or the ocean? <em>(What is where?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speculative</td>
<td>What might happen to settlements near a mine when the mine shuts down? <em>(Why care?)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethical</td>
<td>Should the government care about protecting arable land? <em>(Why care?)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 1.22** The table above shows some examples of effective geographic questions. Each of the sample questions relates to What is where?, Why there?, or Why care?.

**CASE STUDY: THE ISRAELI KIBBUTZ**

In the early twentieth century, many young Jewish people moved to the country known today as Israel. They wanted to create a new type of rural community where everyone worked together and shared responsibilities. This new type of settlement, called a kibbutz, was communal. All members were involved in making decisions about the community. Common living and eating facilities were built to encourage sharing. Kibbutzniks, or community members, were assigned jobs ranging from childcare to farming. Over time, additional services, such as medical clinics, schools, and recreational facilities, were added. Figure 1.23 shows young students in a kibbutz school classroom.

Working together for the common good continues in these communities today. However, factories and other industries have been established alongside the traditional kibbutz. As well, there has been a shift to individual choices, so that people can decide to work inside or outside the kibbutz. People now tend to live together in family groupings. More opportunities for personal expression have helped to continue these unique communities.

**FIGURE 1.23** Education is an important service in the kibbutz. Kibbutz schools are generally smaller in size and also teach students about agriculture.

**TRY IT**

1. Refer to the types of research questions in Figure 1.22. Work with a partner to write a question of each type that is answered by the text about Israeli kibbutz. Make sure each research question answers What is where?, Why there?, or Why care?. For example, a speculative question might be, “What might have happened to the kibbutz if there were no opportunities for personal expression?”

2. Use the Internet to research a settlement (a city, town, or village) that was created because of human factors. Use the questions you developed in question 1 as models for creating questions to guide your research.

**FIGURE 1.24** Single resource communities are often abandoned when the resource runs out or laws change. The Leith Harbour whaling station was abandoned in 1965 when many countries began to outlaw commercial whaling.

**ECONOMIC INFLUENCE**

A region’s economic conditions can impact population growth and settlement. The greater the economic growth in a country, the faster settlements grow. As you learned earlier, Brazil’s population is now growing at a faster rate than Rio de Janeiro (page 35). Mining, forestry, and agricultural industries have developed there. As a result, more people are moving to Brazil because of job opportunities.

However, in all countries, some settlements that develop around economic opportunities close down or become abandoned. Communities that depend on a natural resource, such as gold, can grow very quickly. Jobs can be found easily and businesses can grow. However, when the resource runs out, so do the economic opportunities.

Sometimes unsustainable use of resources will also affect a settlement’s economic future. Leith Harbour is an abandoned whaling station, located on South Georgia Island in the southern Atlantic Ocean. From 1909 to 1965, Leith Harbour was the largest whaling station in the world. Over 48,000 whales were processed at Leith Harbour for their oil, which was used in products like margarine and fertilizer. The whaling station also housed over 500 men in buildings shipped in from Norway. As the global whale population began to decline because of overfishing, countries around the world began to outlaw whaling. Leith Harbour was abandoned for good in 1965 and is now off-limits to tourists because of high levels of toxic material in the buildings (Figure 1.24).

**CHECK-IN**

1. **SPATIAL SIGNIFICANCE** Think about the area where you live. What natural factors influenced the settlements in your area?

2. **INTERPRET AND ANALYZE** How has local history influenced the growth of your community?

3. **SPATIAL SIGNIFICANCE** Describe the political, religious, and economic influences that may have led people to settle in your community.

4. **COMMUNICATE** Use a format of your choosing to summarize how physical features affect where people build settlements.