

Additional Notes on Settlement Patterns in Belize

L.O 1.5 Explain how Belize's physical geography influences where people live.

Key terms:

Population Distribution refers to the spread of people across a country or the world. It looks at the patterns of where people chose to live. Areas where many people live are referred to as being densely populated, while areas where only a few people live are referred to as being sparsely populated.

Population Density refers to the average number of people living on every square kilometre in a country. The formula used for calculating population density is: $\text{Total Population} / \text{Land Area} = X \text{ persons/km}^2$

Did you know that gold can be panned in the Ceibo Creeks of the Chiquibul Rainforest where the Friends for Conservation and Development have detained many Guatemalans for such illegal activities? Access to mineral resources means wealth for the exploiters. If the Chiquibul was not a protected area, would you want to settle there? Before you respond, think of these factors that determine population density and distribution.

1. Climate: Is the climate hospitable or inhospitable (too wet or too dry)? What type of crops can be grown based on the amount of rainfall received in the area?
2. Availability of physical resources such as minerals and fertile soil: Are there minerals that can be extracted for job creation? Is the soil fertile enough for the cultivation of crops for commercial or subsistence purposes?
3. Relief of land: Is the land mountainous, flat or swampy? Can homes and transport links be easily constructed? Are there navigable rivers and access to other water sources for commercial and domestic use? Can the relief support agriculture?
4. Availability of Infrastructure: Is there access to wood roads, running water, electricity, telecommunication services, schools, medical facilities, postal services and police stations?
5. Kinship Ties: Do you have family in the area? How can they assist you in getting settled in?

Activity 1:

People tend to live where they live for several reasons. Discuss the story to create a graphic organizer, or some other visual representation, that connects the factors above with the settlement pattern of each cultural group.

Activity 2:

Now go into your own community to determine the factors that influenced the development of your community. Speak to community elders and your community leader to have them share the settlement history of your community. Can you relate their narrative to the factors that determine population density and distribution? Calculate the population density of your community.