



To indicate its relationship to the three continents of the Southern Hemisphere, Antarctica is shown here much larger than its actual size (See plate 44).



# POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

CN: (1) Do not color the uninhabited areas (A). After coloring region B with a light color, use a slightly darker color for C, and still slightly darker colors for D and E, to suggest an increasing density of population. Don't go so dark that you can no longer see national boundaries.

## RESIDENTS PER

**SQUARE  
MILE**

**SQUARE  
KILOMETER**

UNINHABITED<sup>A</sup>

UNDER 2<sup>B</sup> UNDER 1<sup>B</sup>

2-60<sup>C</sup> 1-25<sup>C</sup>

60-250<sup>D</sup> 25-100<sup>D</sup>

OVER 250<sup>E</sup> OVER 100<sup>E</sup>

Although the overall rate of population growth has been declining since 1963's peak of 2.2% per year, the number of people on the planet continues to increase—a cause of great concern around the world. Much of the earth's landscape is inhospitable and thus thinly populated; the distribution of 6.2 billion people is extremely uneven. Eighty percent live in one of three clusters: (1) eastern, southeastern, and southern Asia, (2) Europe, or (3) central and eastern North America. The majority of these populations are located in the middle latitudes of the North Temperate Zone, a region generally favored by good climate and fertile soil.

Although many countries are densely populated, not all are "overpopulated," a condition in which there are more people than an area can support. For example, because of its high standard of living, the Netherlands, one of the most densely populated nations, is not overpopulated. Uneven population distribution exists within nations themselves.

The greatest concentrations are found in the job-producing urban areas ("urban" means having over 20,000 residents). Close to fifty percent of the world's population now resides in or near cities, and the trend is continuing. In the United States, the figure is over 75 percent. In the past, people congregated only in food-producing areas, and this is still true in much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In

Europe, there is almost an even balance between rural and urban populations. When a nation's birthrate exceeds its death rate, a "natural increase" in population occurs. Immigration and emigration generally play a small role (except in the U.S., which has grown from the significant number of Asian and Latin-American immigrants).

In most of the wealthier, industrialized nations of Europe, a low birthrate is causing a decrease in population. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, an increasing birthrate (due to an increase in food production) and a declining death rate (due to medical intervention) has produced a population explosion, but even in those nations the rate of increase is declining. They all have "young" populations, with half the people under the age of 15. Farmers in the poorer nations depend upon their children to perform free labor and provide old-age assistance. Parents in industrialized nations do not normally need their children's labor, and raising a family can be quite expensive (especially the cost of higher education). The elderly are taken care of by pensions and social security.

Until the developing nations raise their standard of living—which ironically depends on reducing population growth—poor people are unlikely to reduce the size of their families. China's one-child-per-family policy is a notable exception among the developing nations.