

Case study: Australia – an under-populated country?

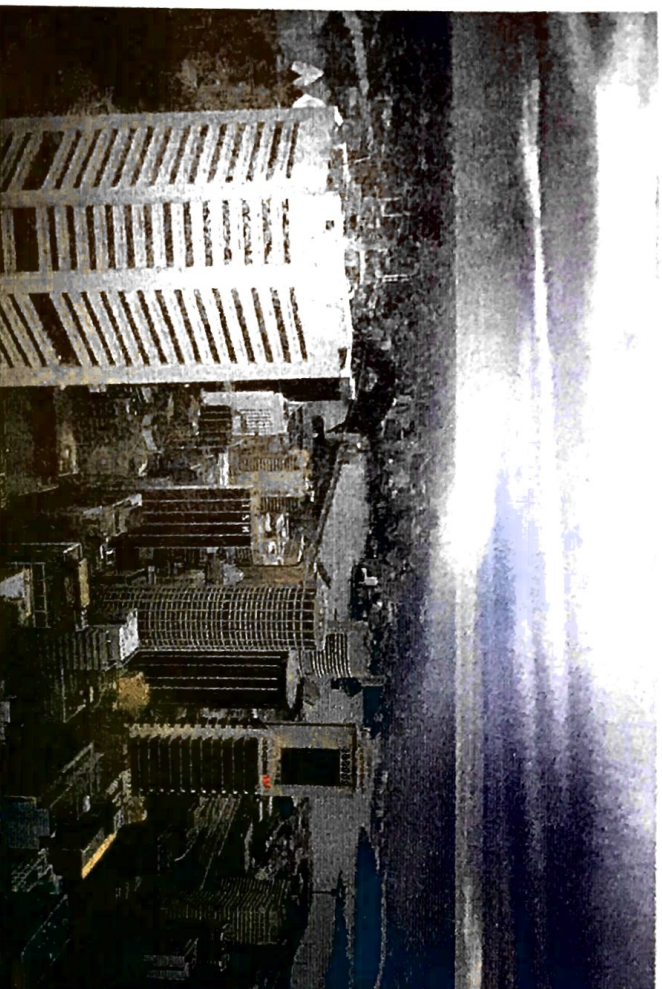


Figure 24 Sydney, Australia

Australia is generally regarded as an example of an under-populated country although there are some experts who would disagree because much of the interior of the country is so inhospitable. In the world's sixth largest country in land area, most of the population is concentrated in two widely separated coastal regions – the south-east and east, and the south-west (Figure 25) – and within these regions there is considerable concentration in urban areas.

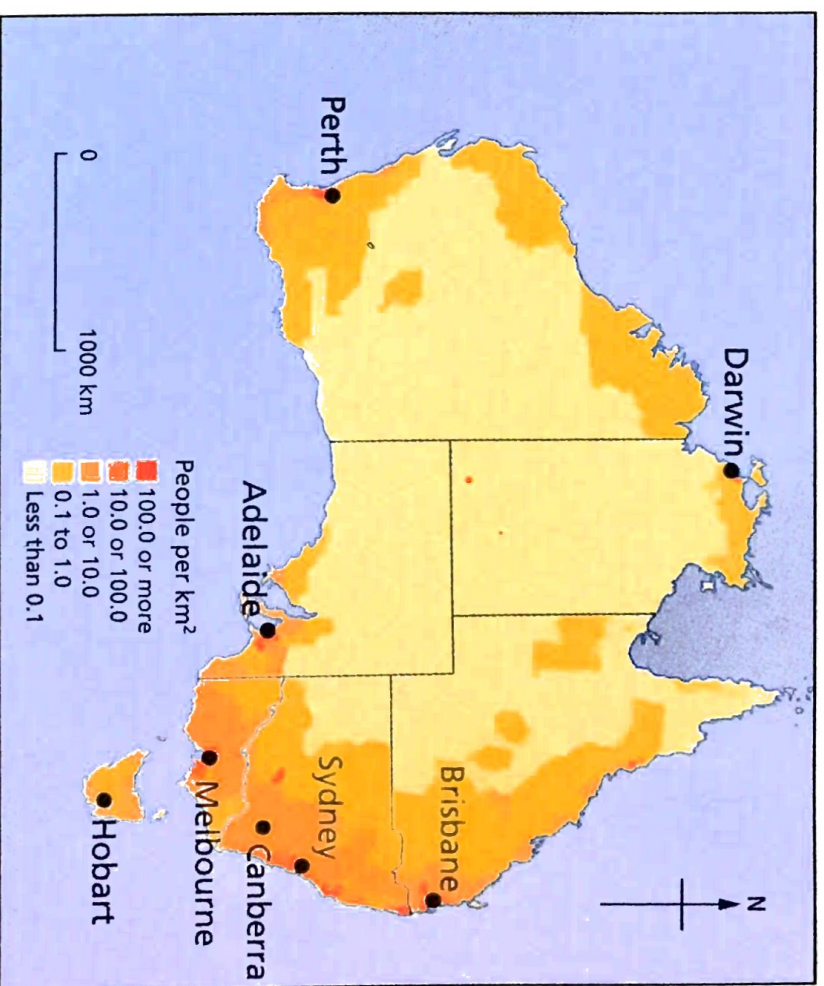


Figure 25 Population density map of Australia

This country of continental size had a population of only 22 million people in 2012 (Table 7). The population of Australia is forecast to rise to 26 million in 2025 and 33 million by 2050. The current population density is only 3 per km², one of the lowest figures in the world.

Table 7 Comparing Bangladesh and Australia

Indicator	Bangladesh	Australia
Population 2012	153 million	22 million
Population forecast 2025	183 million	26 million
Population density 2012	1062/km ²	3/km ²
Rate of natural change 2012	1.6%	0.7%
Net migration rate 2012	-3/1000	+8/1000
Infant mortality rate	43/1000	4/1000
Life expectancy	69 years	82 years
% urban	25%	82%
GNI PPP per capita (\$)	1810	36910

Australia is a resource-rich nation, exporting raw materials in demand on the global market all over the world. The country's major resources include coal, iron ore, copper, gold, natural gas and uranium. Australia also has great potential for renewable energy, particularly in terms of wind and solar power. Such an abundant resource base has attracted a high level of foreign direct investment. Countries that need to import large amounts of natural resources, such as China, Japan and Korea, have been major investors in Australia. The country has a well-developed infrastructure and a relatively highly skilled population which enjoys a generally high income. Australia exudes an image of an affluent outdoor lifestyle that

attracts potential migrants from many different countries. Australia was ranked second in the world (after Norway) according to the 2012 Human Development Index.

Net migration is a good measure of how attractive a country is to people from other countries. While Bangladesh has negative net migration (Table 7), Australia has one of the highest positive net migration figures in the world. Australia's extremely high Gross National Income per capita is not just a major attraction to potential international migrants, it is also a useful statement of the opportunities available in the country and the relationship between population and resources.

Another useful indicator of the population/resources relationship is unemployment. In 2012, Australia's unemployment rate was 5.2 per cent, a low figure by global standards. Unlike Bangladesh, underemployment is not a significant problem. Australia scores highly for virtually all measures of the quality of life, including health and education. Although Australia's population is highly concentrated in certain areas, there are undoubtedly more genuine opportunities for population increase here than in most other parts of the world.

Case study analysis

- 1 Describe the location of Australia.
- 2 Use Figure 25 to briefly comment on the population distribution of Australia.
- 3 What evidence would you produce to support the statement that 'Australia is an under-populated country'?