

# AFRICAN POPULATION

**RECOMMENDED GRADES: 4-8**



**TIME NEEDED: 45 MINUTES**

### Description

Using props, teams divide Africa into regions and place population chips in each country using data on the Country Cards. Teams compare the population patterns to maps showing climate and vegetation to gain a better sense of factors that influence human settlement patterns.

### Learning Objectives

Students will:

- explore the five major regions of Africa
- examine the population distribution patterns (human settlement) within these areas
- learn how physical features influence these human settlement patterns

### Materials

- Africa Country Cards
- Africa Map Key
- Africa's Population Regions Map
- Bingo chips
- Orange poly spot disk
- Plastic chains (or similar, large enough to circle regions on the map) (5)

### Preparation

*15 minutes*

- Read over the activity and acquaint yourself with the locations you will be bringing students to on the map.

### Tips/Modifications

*Modification*

- Substitute materials (color, size, type) for materials you have available.
- Make sure chain is long enough to measure 805 kilometers (500 miles) on the scale bar.

### Rules



Have students remove shoes before walking on the map.

## DIRECTIONS

1. Assign students to "Base Camps" (the four colored circles in the corners of the map). For this activity you will need a fifth team as well. Put the orange-colored poly spot disk on the map for the fifth team to use as its Base Camp. Review the concept of region with

students. A region is a place or area that shares common characteristics. Regions can be based on any criteria, such as culture, economy, physical characteristics, political identity, or religion.

2. To the side of the map, have students divide themselves into “regions” based on criteria that you choose. Some possible ways students could divide into regions could be by eye color, hair color, shoe type, shirt color, etc.
3. Explain to students that each team will be responsible for a specific region of Africa. For the purposes of this activity they will be using the population regions as designated by the Population Reference Bureau.
4. Assign teams to regions as follows:
  - **Red Team:** Western Africa
  - **Green Team:** Northern Africa
  - **Yellow Team:** Middle Africa
  - **Blue Team:** Eastern Africa
  - **Orange Team:** Southern Africa
5. Give each team a plastic chain matching the team’s color and show them the map of Africa’s regions. Explain that they are to take the chain and roughly outline the borders of their designated region.
6. After students have placed their chains around their regions, tell them they are responsible for determining the population of their region. Give each team a set of the color-coded Africa Country Cards and bingo chips. Explain that one chip will equal one million people. For example, if the card for Algeria indicates that the population of Algeria is 38.3 million, they will find Algeria on the map, place the card on the country, and place 38 chips on the country to represent the population. You may want to limit the number of team members on the map at a given time. Other team members may assist in locating countries from the map’s border, and may count chips.
7. After each team has placed all the cards and chips on the map, direct them to sit in their region on the map. Have them discuss the following:
  - *Where do people live? Why?*
  - *Where do people not live? Why?*
8. Deepen this discussion by directing them to look at both the Giant Map of Africa and the climate and vegetation information on the Africa Map Key to see how the geography of their region has influenced population patterns.
9. Introduce (or review) the following terms:
  - **Biome:** a community of plants and animals that have adapted to the specific conditions in that area. Examples include deserts, rain forests, and savannas.

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- **Climate:** weather patterns that an area or region experiences over a long period of time.
- **Landforms:** features found on Earth. Examples include mountains, rivers, plateaus, valleys, plains, etc.
- **Vegetation:** the plants in an area.

10. Have students discuss why people live where they do in Africa, and choose one student to report back to the class. Possible answers may include:

| Factors that influence population density and distribution   | Places people tend to live  | Places people tend not to live  |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Topography, landforms</li><li>• Soils</li><li>• Vegetation</li><li>• Climate</li><li>• Resources</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Areas with flat land</li><li>• Near the coast, other bodies of water</li><li>• Areas where food can be produced</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Places that are too hot</li><li>• Mountainous areas</li></ul> |

### TEACHER REFERENCE INFORMATION

Use this information either to help groups as they use the climate and vegetation maps or to facilitate discussion afterward.

**Northern Africa** (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Western Sahara)

- The majority of this region is desert with an arid or semiarid climate, with the Sahara dominating the region. Some areas of the region can support large populations. These include the Nile River Valley and Delta (Egypt and Sudan), the valleys of the Atlas mountains (Morocco, northern Algeria, and northern Tunisia), and the Mediterranean coast. These areas are inhabited because they include a water source for drinking and irrigation, fertile soils, and a climate that supports the growth of food crops.

**Western Africa** (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

- The country with the highest population in all of Africa is in this region—Nigeria, home to more than 173 million people. Nigeria contains many areas with moderate climates and soil suitable for agriculture. Additionally, Nigeria has good seaports (unlike most of Africa) and a large amount of oil and gas. The largest countries of this region (by area) are Mauritania, Mali, and Niger. They have low populations because they are mainly located in the Sahara region.

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**Eastern Africa** (Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe)

- Both Ethiopia and Kenya have highlands with mild temperatures and plenty of rain that allow a large population to live in this area. Population is also concentrated around Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa, which supports populations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

**Middle Africa** (Angola, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Sao Tome and Principe)

- The country with the highest population in this region is the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is due to the fact that the Congo River System (also called the Zaire River) provides extensive food, water, and transportation for the area.

**Southern Africa** (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland)

- The country with the highest population in this region is South Africa, where there is a coastal plain that receives a moderate amount of rain, enabling agriculture.

## AFRICA'S POPULATION REGIONS



Source: Population Reference Bureau

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