

Module: Cultural Geography
Topic Content: Developed and Developing Countries

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Introduction

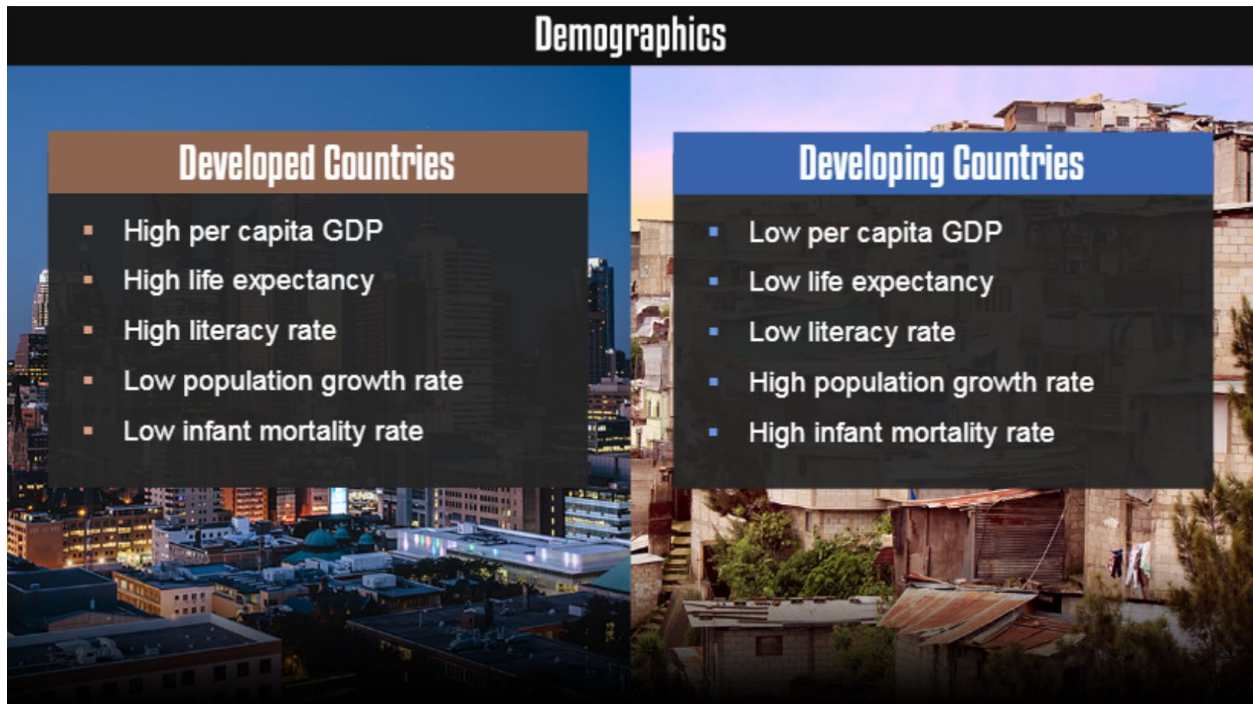


Geographers and economists commonly use the terms developed and developing to describe nations. These labels are roughly based on a country's level of economic development. Developed countries have stronger economies and higher standards of living, while developing countries have weaker economies and lower standards of living. This definition is a little oversimplified however, as countries are classified based on a variety of population characteristics.

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Demographics



Countries are considered to be developed or developing based on demographic data. Developed countries generally have:

- high per capita GDP;
- high life expectancy;
- high literacy rate;
- low population growth rate; and
- low infant mortality rate.

These factors contribute to a higher standard of living and quality of life for those who live in a developed country.

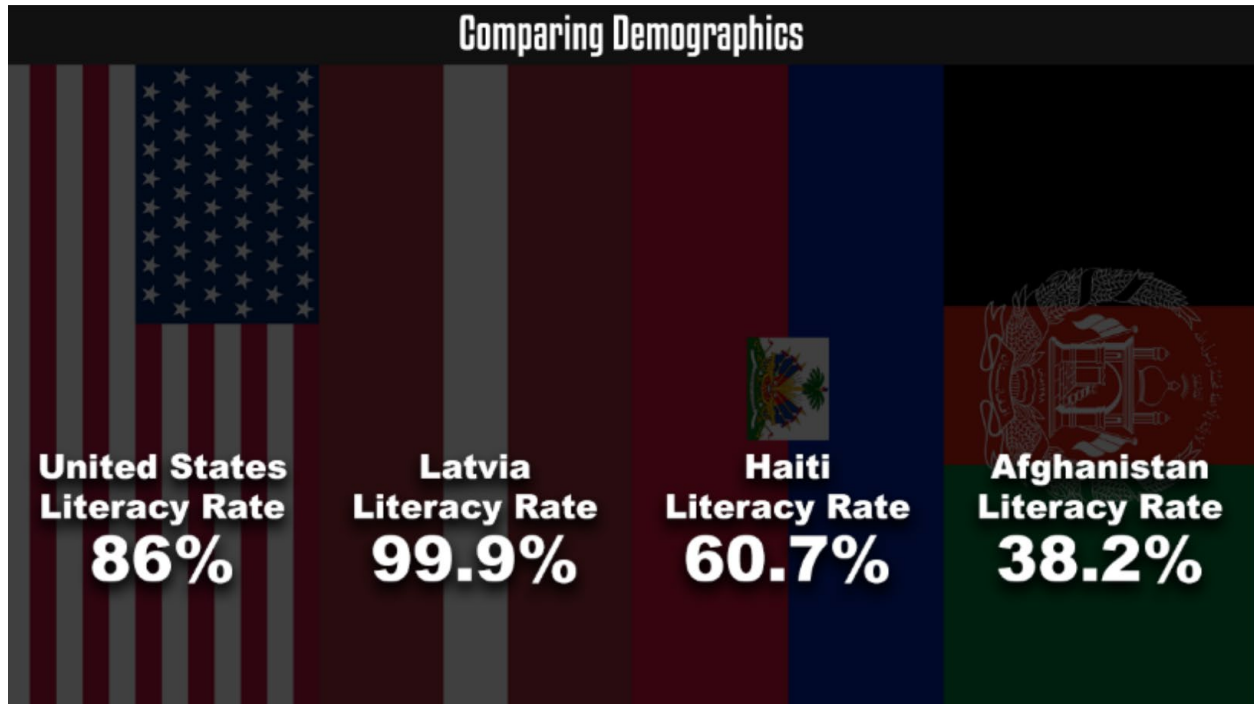
Developing countries generally have:

- low per capita GDP
- low life expectancy
- low literacy rates
- high population growth rates; and
- high infant mortality rates.

These factors contribute to a lower standard of living and quality of life for those who live in a developing country.

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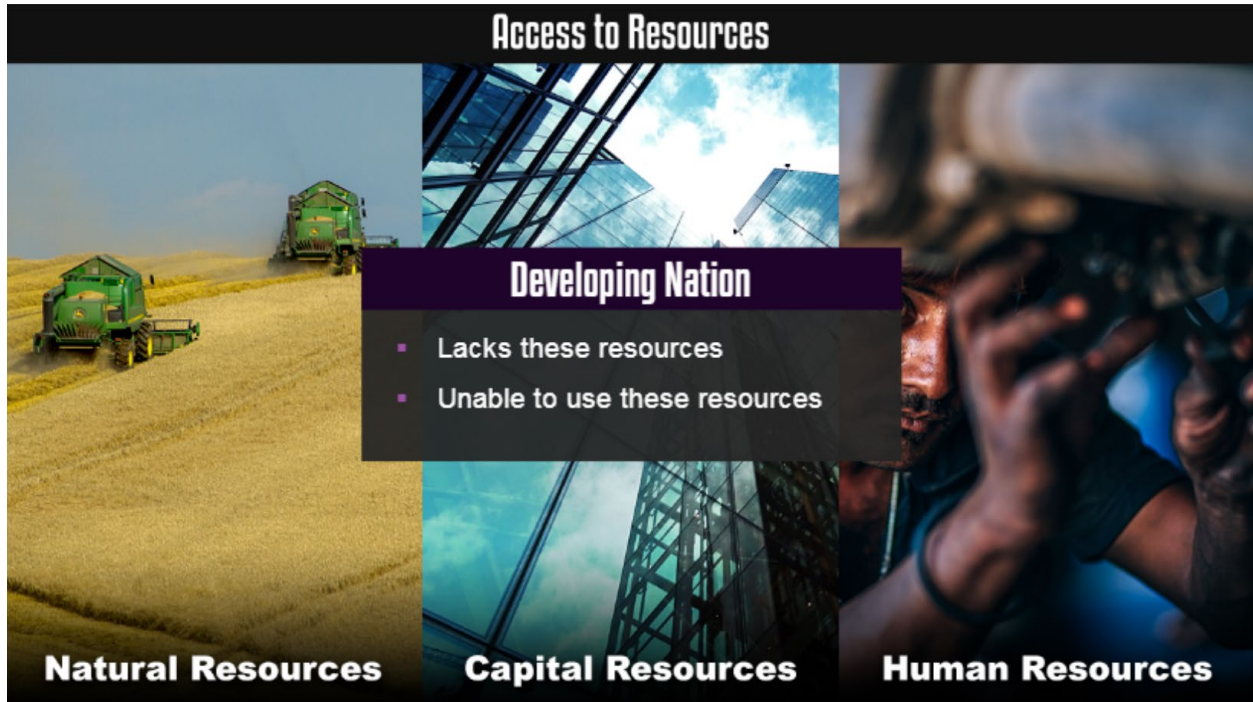
Comparing Demographics



As you can see, developed and developing countries have opposite characteristics; however, “high” and “low” are relative terms that are determined by comparing two or more countries. For example, the literacy rate in the United States is approximately 86%. This number may not seem low, but compare it to Latvia’s literacy rate, which is 99.9%. Compared to Latvia, the figure for the U.S. seems relatively low. Haiti has an estimated literacy rate of 60.7%, which seems relatively low compared to the United States; however, Haiti’s literacy rate seems high when compared to Afghanistan’s, which is 38.2%.

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Access to Resources



A nation's level of economic development often relies on its access to resources. A developed nation requires important resources, including:

- natural resources, like fertile land, water, and oil;
- capital resources, like equipment, technology, and infrastructure; and
- human resources, also called a labor force or workforce.

Typically, a developing nation either lacks these resources or is unable to utilize them. In the case of human resources, a developing nation's workforce may be limited in overall size or skill.

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Standard of Living vs. Quality of Life

Standard of Living vs. Quality of Life

Standard of Living	Quality of Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Material benefits of a society▪ Cost of goods and services▪ Level of income▪ Poverty rate▪ Affordability of housing▪ Higher in developed nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Health, happiness, and comfort of a population▪ Air and water quality▪ Education▪ Life expectancy▪ Freedom of speech▪ The right to vote

When discussing population characteristics, the terms standard of living and quality of life are often used together. Although the two terms are related, they describe different concepts. Standard of living refers to the material benefits of a society, like the cost of goods and services, level of income, poverty rate, and affordability of housing. It is closely tied to a country's economic development; therefore, developed nations generally have higher standards of living than developing nations.

Quality of life refers to the health, happiness, and comfort of a population. It is based on factors like air and water quality, education, and life expectancy, as well as concepts like freedom of speech and the right to vote. Quality of life is generally improved by increased economic development, but this is not always the case. For example, a country may have a strong economy and a high standard of living, but its government may restrict human rights or personal freedoms.