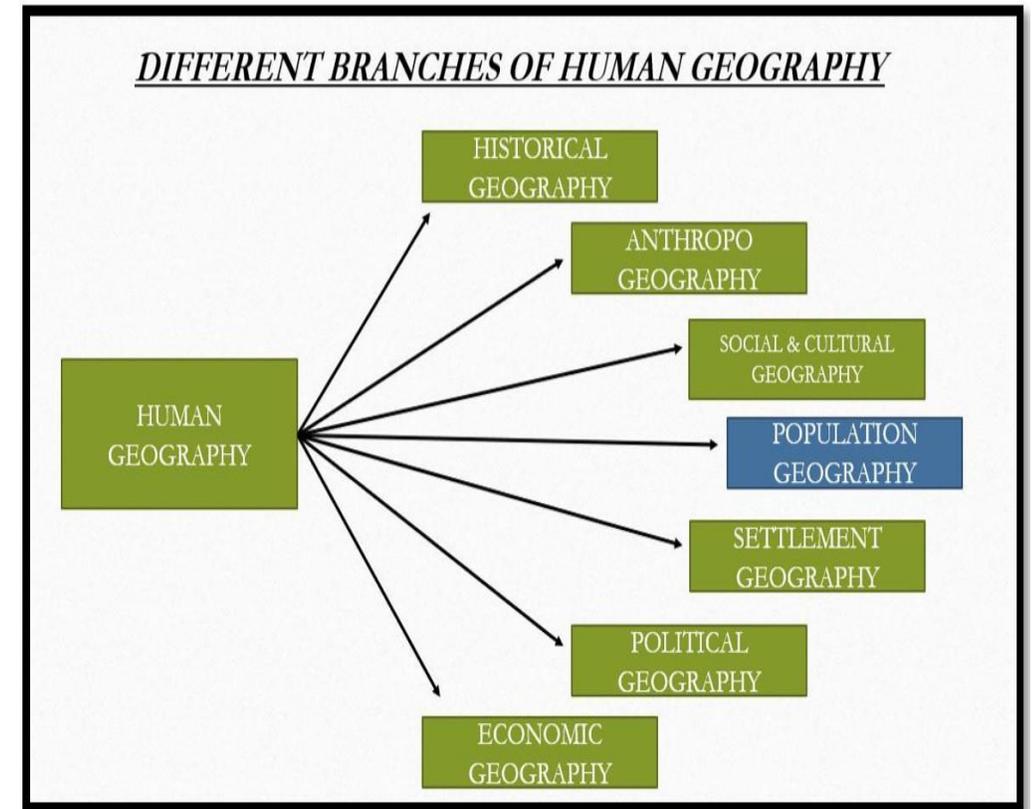
A high-angle, wide shot of a massive, diverse crowd of people at what appears to be a festival or public event. The crowd is densely packed and extends across the entire frame. People are wearing a variety of colorful clothing, including t-shirts, hats, and jackets. Some individuals are holding flags, and others are holding drinks. The overall atmosphere is one of a large-scale public gathering. A dark red rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing white text.

# POPULATION GEOGRAPHY : DEFINITION, NATURE AND SUBJECT MATTER

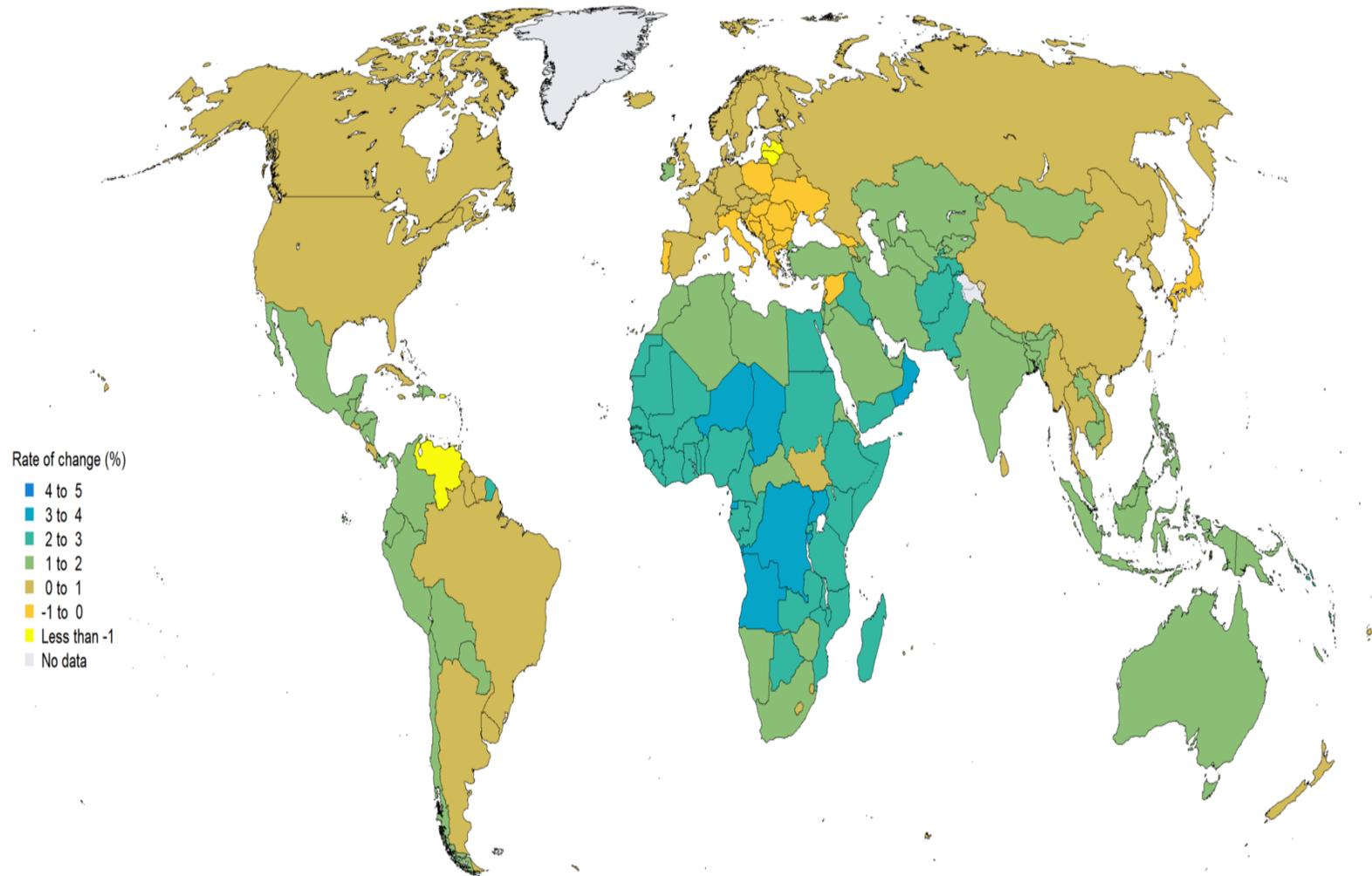
- Population Geography as an independent sub-field of human geography is a comparatively recent phenomenon (second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).
- In the expression 'population geography', the term 'population' signifies the subject matter and 'geography' refers to the perspective of investigation. Thus, population geography can be interpreted as the study of population in spatial perspective.
- Etymologically, population geography implies the investigation into human covering of the earth and its various facets with reference to physical and cultural environment.



Population	Geography
Subject matter	Perspective



# Average annual rate of population change (%), 2015-2020



**AN INSTANCE OF  
POPULATION  
PHENOMENON STUDIED  
FROM GEOGRAPHICAL  
PERSPECTIVE**



# DEFINATIONS

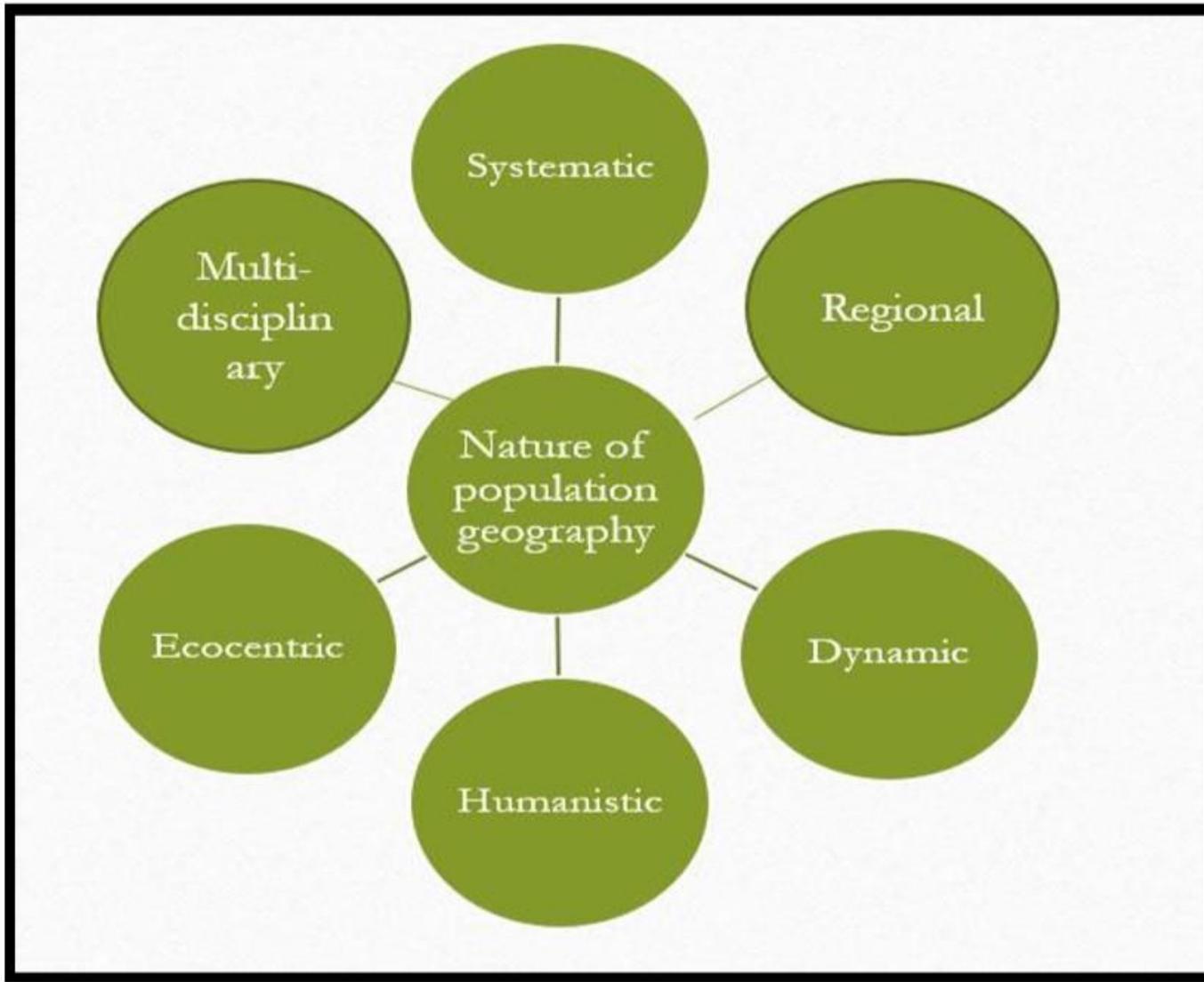
- The following are some definitions offered by the practitioners of the field:
- Trewartha defines population geography as concerned with the understanding of the regional differences in the earth's covering of people.
- John I. Clarke suggested that population geography is mainly concerned with demonstrating how spatial variation in population and its various attributes like composition, migration and growth are related to the spatial variation in the nature of places.
- W. Zelinsky, defines the sub-discipline as a science that deals with the ways in which geographic character of places is formed by and, in turn, reacts upon a set of population phenomena that vary within it through both space and time as they follow their own behavioural laws, interacting one with another, and with numerous non-demographic phenomena.



# **NATURE AND SUBJECT MATTER OF POPULATION GEOGRAPHY**

- The nature and subject matter of population geography can be understood by attempting an in-depth analysis of the contribution of various scholars of the field.
- Trewartha in his influential statement at the Association of American Geographers (1953) emphasised on population geography as concerned with the understanding of the regional differences in the earth's covering of people. "Just as area differentiation is the theme of geography in general, so is of population geography, in particular" (Trewartha, 1953).
- Population geography is the area analysis of population which implies "a wider range of population attributes than most geographers have ordinarily included" in their analysis (Trewartha, 1953).





# **SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF NATURE OF POPULATION GEOGRAPHY**



- Trewartha proposed a very comprehensive outline of the content of the sub-discipline, which many subsequent geographers seem to have adhered to. Broadly speaking, the concerns of population geography, according to Trewartha, can be grouped into three categories:
  - A historical (pre-historic and post-historic) account of population;
  - Dynamics of number, size, distribution and growth patterns; and
  - Qualities of population and their regional distribution.



- Regarding historical account of population, Trewartha suggested that where direct statistical evidence is not available, geographers should adopt indirect methods, and collaborate with anthropologists, demographers and economic historians.
- In Trewartha's opinion, an analysis of world population patterns, population dynamics in terms of mortality and fertility, area aspect of over and under population, distribution of population by world regions and settlement types and migration of population (both international and inter-regional) form an important part of analysis in population geography.



- And finally, with regard to qualities of population, he suggested two broad groups – physical qualities (e.g. race, sex, age, health etc.) and socio-economic qualities (e.g. religion, education, occupation, marital status, stages of economic development, customs, habits etc.)
- In his book *A Geography of Population: World Patterns*, published in 1969, Trewartha arranged these topics in two parts. While the first included a geographical account of population in the past, the second incorporated all the characteristic of population including biological, social, cultural and economic characteristics.



- John I. Clarke, who is credited with bringing out the first textbook on the sub-discipline in 1965, suggested that population geography is mainly concerned with demonstrating how spatial variation in population and its various attributes like composition, migration and growth are related to the spatial variation in the nature of places.
- He opines that the main endeavour of population geography is to unravel the complex relationship between the population phenomena, on the one hand, and cultural environment, on the other.
- *(His book on Population Geography (1972) is spread over eleven chapters, and his treatment of the subject matter is in conformity with that of Trewartha, though not as comprehensive as that of the latter.)*



- W. Zelinsky, a contemporary of Clarke, takes a similar view regarding the definition of population geography. He defines the sub-discipline as “a science that deals with the ways in which geographic character of places is formed by and, in turn, reacts upon a set of population phenomena that vary within it through both space and time as they follow their own behavioural laws, interacting one with another, and with numerous non-demographic phenomena”.
- Daniel Noin in 1979, in his book *Geographie de la population*, while agreeing with the scheme of Trewartha, expressed that distribution of population, components of its growth and characteristics are the main concerns of population geography.



- More recently, while discussing the methodological problems in population geography (1984), R. J. Proyer suggested that population geography deals with the analysis and explanation of interrelationship between population phenomena and the geographical character of places as they both vary over space and time.
- According to him, population phenomena include “the dynamics of population distribution, urban/rural location, density and growth (or decline); mortality, fertility and migrations; and structural characteristics including age-sex composition, ethnicity, marital status, economic composition, nationality and religion.”



- Obviously, delineating the precise field of the sub-discipline has been a major problem before the scholars ever since its beginning.
- It has been argued that population geographers have spread themselves too thinly over too large a field that they have not been able to establish a niche for themselves in population studies.
- Scholars have therefore suggested that population geography should narrow its focus and concentrate on the components of population change.



- Woods has made a distinction between broad definition and narrow definition.
- The former is described as an elaboration of Trewartha's wide-ranging agenda in which certain primacy is given to spatial variation in population, while the latter refers to approach which prefers analysis of population dynamics, namely, fertility, mortality and migration only.
- They claim that the narrow definition reflect a new process orientation, contrary to the traditional pattern orientation of broad definitions, and are more in line with current trends in geography as a whole.
- Woods and Rees (1986) propose the term 'spatial demography' in place of 'population geography', which differs from the latter mainly in terms of the equal emphasis on mortality, fertility and migration as components of population change and distribution and its use of the statistical demographic methods and its multi-disciplinary approach. However, Heenan (1988) pointed out that the distinction seems to be one of semantics rather than one based on critical or substantial epistemological or methodological differences.)



# CONCLUSION

- From the above, it is, however, clear that the main difference of opinion is on the main thrust in the sub-discipline and not on approach and methodology per se. Woods himself says that “the role of population geography is to provide the spatial perspective in population studies” and that “population geography should be what geographers active in teaching and research do”.
- To conclude, the main concern of population geography revolves around the following three aspects of human population:
  - Size and distribution, including the rural-urban distribution of population
  - Population dynamics – past and present trends in growth and its spatial manifestation; components of population change, viz. fertility, mortality and migration
  - Population composition and structure. They include a set of demographic characteristics (such as age-sex structure, marital status and average age at marriage etc.), social characteristics (such as caste, racial/ethnic, religious and linguistic composition; literacy and levels of educational attainment etc.), and economic characteristics (such as workforce participation rate and workforce structure etc.).
- In addition to the above, as government policies and measures in a country have significant bearings, population geographers also concerns himself with policies and programmes designed to regulate population size and its attributes.

