CFE HIGHER GEOGRAPHY

Human Environments: Population

Collecting Population data

METHODS

How can a Government collect information about its population?

1) Doing a Census
2) Using Birth and Death Registration
3) Monitoring migration

What do you know about these methods?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of these methods?

WHAT IS A CENSUS?

A *Census* is a survey, which provides detailed, reliable, statistical information of an entire population.

It is a count of all people and households by the *Government* so that they (and all other organisations) can target resources, decide policies and plan services.

In the UK a census has been taken *every ten years* since 1801 (except for 1941)

1) What is a census?
2) Why do governments conduct a census?
3) Give an example of how a census might target resources or help plan policies.
4) Why was there no census in 1941? Give some reasons why the government chose not to do a census in this year.

WHAT DOES THE CENSUS COVER?

Household Questions

× Type

× Number of rooms

× Bathroom facilities

× Number of cars

× ownership

Personal Questions

× D.O.B

× Marital status

× Education

× Employment

× Religion

× Ethnic origin

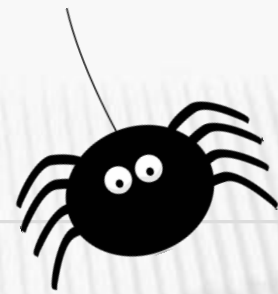× General health

× Number of children

Take some notes

Collect an example census form. Have a look at some of the questions

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THEY?

Many countries are very efficient at collecting regular, reliable counts of their population and therefore valuable data for governments and planners.

However, it requires massive amounts of **planning** and is very **expensive** (UK census costs approx. £255 million!)
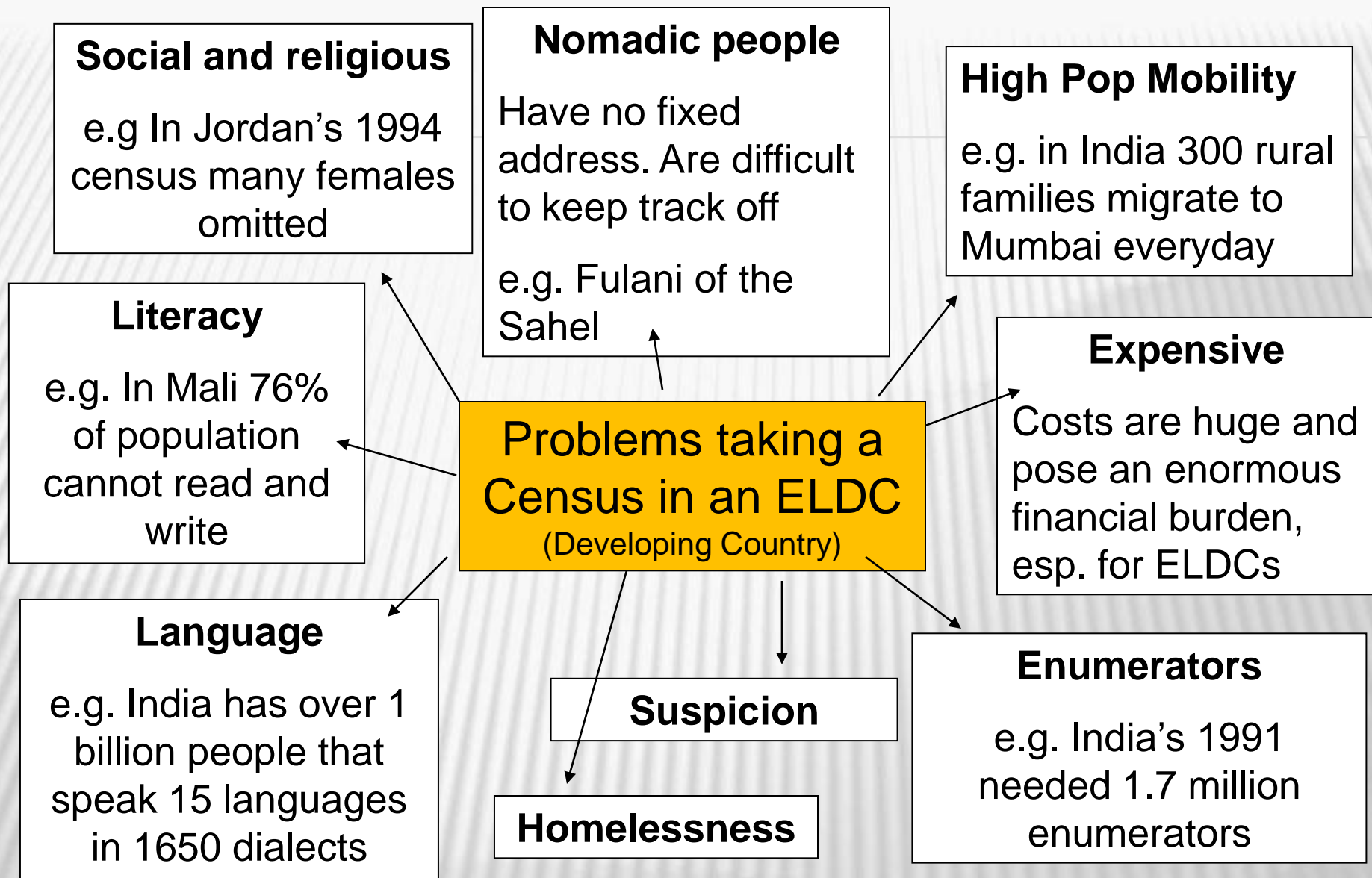
Some countries find it very **difficult** to conduct a census. Data is often inadequate, unreliable or non-existent.

Work in pairs

Draw a spider diagram.

Add ideas to explain why might some Governments not be able to do an accurate / reliable census

Social and religious

e.g In Jordan's 1994 census many females omitted

Nomadic people

Have no fixed address. Are difficult to keep track off

e.g. Fulani of the Sahel

High Pop Mobility

e.g. in India 300 rural families migrate to Mumbai everyday

Literacy

e.g. In Mali 76% of population cannot read and write

Problems taking a Census in an ELDC
(Developing Country)

Expensive

Costs are huge and pose an enormous financial burden, esp. for ELDCs

Language

e.g. India has over 1 billion people that speak 15 languages in 1650 dialects

Suspicion

Homelessness

Enumerators

e.g. India's 1991 needed 1.7 million enumerators

You are expected be familiar with some case studies that reflect the problems associated with taking a census in an Developing Country

For each of the following factors, explain how it will make conducting a census:
a) difficult
b) unreliable

High illiteracy rates, for example in Mali where literacy is only 27%

Add named examples

War in places like Sierra Leone or Syria

High rates of homelessness

A country where several languages are spoken e.g. India where there are over 15 languages spoken.

Suspicion of government. In Russia some people do not trust the census collectors and give false information because they are worried about paying more taxes

Low GNP or counties like Ethiopia which are ridden with debt

Mountainous, inaccessible regions like in Afghanistan or those with rainforest (Brazil)

Social / religious factors e.g. China's One Child Policy

High rates of population mobility i.e in Syria refugee crisis due to civil unrest

Population / country size e.g. China is a huge country covering thousands of square kilometres.

Nomadic People like the Fulani tribe who live in Sahel Countries
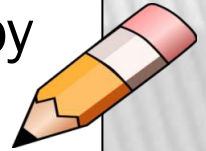
OTHER METHODS

Some countries use other methods of collecting data about their populations:

- Birth, marriage and death registration
- This data is useful for monitoring population change at a at local, regional

  and national levels.
- In Scotland the Register General supervises this.
- Also, the government monitors migration.

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING

Now try the following exam question: (Don't forget to copy down the questions!)

(a) Describe the ways in which countries can obtain accurate population data **(3 marks)**

(b) Explain (referring to specific named examples)

(i) Why **developing countries** may find the collection of such data more difficult, and

(ii) Why the quality of data obtained may be less reliable than that gathered in an **developed country**

(8 marks)

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS!

(a) **Information about a country's population can be collected by taking a census or count of the population.** ✔ **This is a questionnaire that is sent to every household in the country usually once every ten years.** ✔ **(1) The census records both household information (e.g. type of house, number of cars etc.) as well as personal information (e.g. age and sex of people in the household, ethnic origin, religion etc.) ✔ (1). Some countries use other methods to gather population data like birth, marriage and death registration ✔ which will indicate and accurate record of population change in a country but does not provide as much detail as an accurate census ✔ (1).**

(b) Some countries (especially developing counties) may find it very difficult to take an accurate census for a number of reasons. Many countries in the Sahel have many nomadic people like the Fulani who have no permanent address and therefore are often missed out from the count or counted twice ✔ (1). Some countries have physical restraints e.g. mountain ranges (Afghanistan) or rainforest (Brazil) where communications networks are very poor, which makes contact with some regions difficult ✔ (1). Often in developing countries there are quite high illiteracy rates therefore people are unable to understand the census so responses will be inaccurate ✔ (1). Other countries such as India have over 15 languages which makes the census even more expensive to produce and collate ✔ (1). In very poor, debt ridden countries such as Ethiopia, the Government simply cannot afford to carry out a census due to the costs involved in printing the forms, training enumerators and analysing the results ✔ (1). People can also often be suspicious of certain questions (like religion) resulting in mistakes and non returns, for example in China where people are unlikely to declare baby girls under the one child policy ✔ (1). Homelessness and the rapid development of shanty towns in some developing countries also result in people being missed out from the count (1) ✔ . Countries suffering form war like Afghanistan find it too dangerous for enumerators to enter regions and therefore whole communities can be missed out (1) ✔ .