



2023 VCE Geography external assessment report

General comments

In the 2023 VCE Geography examination most students attempted the whole paper with few questions left blank. Students were able to demonstrate good geographic knowledge, with some displaying skilful writing throughout the examination. Most students utilised up-to-date case studies and statistics; lower-scoring responses used recent generalisations, such as 'India lacks jobs'. Students need to exercise discernment in using these case studies and data appropriately, to respond to the questions asked, rather than giving a scattering of data in the hope that some part of it will be relevant.

In general, the case studies used in the student responses were appropriate and on topic, with a significant reliance on material learnt through a textbook and classwork evident across all areas of assessment. This was particularly shown with Greenland as a case study for land cover change. There were less off-topic, prepared responses, but there was an increased use of the criterion 'assessment of effectiveness' when it was not required. Rote learning of responses is not encouraged, and the application of key skills and key knowledge continue to be the focus of the examination. As in all assessments, students need to ensure they understand the command/instructional terms. In particular, in this examination when students were directed to 'discuss', a sophisticated response was required. Good answers could include some underlying analysis, such as positive/negative, social/economic or short-/long-term impacts. Students should refer to the [VCAA command terms](#) during their examination preparation.

Students should alert examination supervisors if they need extra writing space for their responses.

Specific information

Note: This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding, resulting in a total of more or less than 100 per cent.

Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	16	84	0.9

Correct answer: C

Question 1b.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	20	80	0.8

Correct answer: B

Question 1c.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	53	47	0.5

Correct answer: secondary growth or B. Not just 'forest'.

Question 1d.

Marks	0	1	Average
%	45	55	0.6

Correct answer: mangroves or stream perennial or lack of road access or rising sea levels because it's so close to the ocean.

Basic map-reading skills displayed in this examination were not of a high standard, with even some generally high-scoring responses showing simple errors. These include not knowing how to locate a grid square and using the legend incorrectly. Common errors included students writing the entire legend rather than selecting the correct piece from the legend, and students taking information from Area Reference 8485 instead of Area Reference 8584, indicating a lack of understanding of how to correctly use a topographic map.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	5	18	21	24	16	12	3.6

This question was generally answered well and showed that students had a good understanding of the process of deforestation and their case studies. Students were able to correctly classify their impacts as environmental. Some students spent too much time explaining the case study location and giving general facts or data relating to the case study instead of being specific to the impacts as asked by the question. Most students were able to write about two environmental impacts and name a case study location. Lower-scoring responses made general comments about impacts that could have been applied to many locations, particularly when discussing the impacts of biodiversity and carbon sinks. Bushfires were referred to frequently, but how this is an impact of deforestation was not clarified sufficiently in many cases.

Higher-scoring answers focused on the impacts at their case study location that were the immediate result of deforestation. While the impacts could be interconnected, better answers clearly distinguished between the two impacts and used specific examples and data to support their explanation. They were specific to the selected location with multiple points of data, including names and statistics, and were able to elaborate on their impacts, while connecting it to the process of deforestation. Some of the better responses focused on specific locations within their case study. Discussions of erosion as a result of deforestation and its effects on

the water cycle allowed for some in-depth geographical explanation, and when explained well, attained full marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

One environmental impact resulting from deforestation in Indonesia is a loss of wildlife and habitat. In the past 60 years, 55% of orangutan habitat has been deforested in Borneo, with the population decreasing by $\frac{1}{2}$ in this period, due to large-scale logging which accounts for $\frac{2}{5}$ ths of all deforestation in Indonesia.

Additionally, another environmental impact of deforestation is CO₂ emissions, with Indonesia often in the top 10 global emitters, with deforestation alone accounting for 7 billion tons of CO₂ in 2021 in Indonesia alone.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	5	9	17	19	20	24	4.0

Generally better done than 2a., the answers for 2b. were well prepared and often very long. The best answers linked the response to reducing the process of deforestation rather than just to stopping the impact given in part 2a.

Lower-scoring answers had little to no connection to part 2a., giving instead a general outline of a global response to deforestation. Additionally, these tended to provide little beyond the student's opinion that the response was either effective or ineffective, without explaining why this was their evaluation. Some answers did not name a specific response and made a general comment about reducing deforestation and illegal logging.

Most students incorporated an evaluative statement early in their answer, then used data to support this. Very specific data points linking to the responses to the impacts from part 2a. distinguished high-scoring answers from others. Good answers provided the name and a detailed outline of the response at a specific location. Links to local and national responses tended to be more successful. Evaluations used several approaches including Strengths/Weakness/SWOT or three pillars of sustainability. These approaches, along with data, provided more detailed evaluations, but they were not criteria as such, merely reference points to discuss the evaluation given.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

One response to the environmental impact of carbon emissions is the global Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Regulation (REDD+) initiative. Launched in 2005, REDD+ provides a monetary value to the carbon stocks of global forests, compensating for their lack of economic acknowledgement. In Brazil REDD+ finances the Amazon Fund, which seeks to halve deforestation via such financial manipulations of forest value. Since being implemented in 2008, the Amazon Fund has catalyzed reduction in deforestation from 16000 km² loss in 2008 to a mere 5000km² in 2014. However this success has not really been sustained. Upon becoming President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro abolished the Amazon Fund Committee in 2019, resulting in deforestation resurging to 11,500km² in 2022. As such, carbon emissions too have increased to 4.8 million tonnes emitted annually between 2016 and 2022. Thus, REDD+ has been unable to attain effectiveness in the long term – though it did achieve short term success – with carbon emissions from deforestation increasing over time, further enhancing the greenhouse effect.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	3	6	9	13	14	14	13	11	7	6	5.6

Most students provided very detailed answers for this question, sometimes with subheadings. A range of different case-study locations were used, such as Switzerland, Peru and Bhutan, with a significant number focused on Greenland. Many students were able to discuss a range of appropriate impacts well. Most responses used the terms 'economic' and 'social', which ensured they were linking their answer back to the question. Students are reminded to only provide required information: some students provided lengthy introductions on the causes of melting, which was not relevant to the question.

Students were able to show their general knowledge of the impacts on economic activity and social conditions, and could clearly link to a selected location. Answers needed to include specific evidence linked to the selected location to ensure that their answers were not general. A common error was to report that the warming of Greenland's sea levels, which caused interruption of fish stocks, resulted from melting ice, when the two processes have a common cause. Many students struggled on the subject of social conditions, with Greenland answers often stating that the melting of the ice is interrupting traditional lifestyles, leading to depression and suicide, without explaining what aspects of those lifestyles were being interrupted.

Responses that scored highly were succinct, with a range of relevant and supporting quantification and evidence to support discussion. High-scoring responses were able to briefly provide some initial context by outlining the trend in melting and some associated issues and challenges for the specific location. Impacts needed to be explicitly classified as economic or social, and some students went further by considering whether they were positive or negative and short-term or long-term impacts. Geographic literacy was shown when students were able to incorporate some geographic concepts, such as considering how social and economic impacts may be interconnected, such as can be seen in the following examples.

The following are examples of high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

In Kyrgyzstan, a country located in Northern Asia, the impacts of melting ice sheets and glaciers has been both positive and negative. Currently, 80% of Kyrgyzstan's water comes from glacial meltwater, so water supply is increased as glacial melting accelerates. This is positive for the agricultural industry which employs around 50% of the working population which contributes toward 30% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP. Another positive impact of melting ice sheets and glaciers in Kyrgyzstan is the rise in tourism it brings. Tourism represents 3% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP with over 1.5 million people visiting Lake Issyk-Kal in 2019, which is directly fed by glacial meltwater. Most tourists are climate change tourists who are visiting to see the effects of climate change on our world. Negative effects of melting ice sheets and glaciers are the long term water security of the nation. While there is an abundance of water supply in the short term, the long term implications are a decreased water supply for Kyrgyzstan. This can economically impact the country as the agricultural industry will have less water availability, affecting its potential revenue and socially a decrease in agriculture could see jobs lost for the 50% of workers in Kyrgyzstan that work in this industry.

Sample 2

Melting glaciers and ice sheets in Bhutan have had a negative social impact on the villagers of the Luanna Region after the 1994 Luanna GLOF. In 1994, the Luggye glacier had expanded more than 800% since 1970, causing the moraine wall to break and flood the local villages causing a social impact of loss of livelihoods and farmland. 21 people in total were killed by the GLOF with 12 hectares of farmland completely eradicated by the floodwaters. Because most Bhutanese people are subsistence

farmers, this natural disaster severely impacted their livelihoods and quality of life. With only an hour warning before the GLOF (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood), many people (particularly the elderly or the very young) had difficulties with evacuating their home and moving up to dry lands resulting in the loss of life. An economic impact of melting glaciers and ice sheets is the significant amount of funding needed from international donors and the Bhutanese government to prevent future GLOFs from happening. In 2009 international donors gave Bhutan approximately \$5 million US to assist in the artificial lowering of the Thorntormi Lake over the Pho Chu River Valley which was an area at risk of a GLOF. The Bhutanese government also has to provide regular funding to the use of satellite technology such as the 'Bhutan Himalayan App' that uses remote sensing to analyse rate of glacial melt of Bhutan's 567 glacier sites.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	14	12	20	26	27	2.4

Students were required to correctly identify one local response at the same location as Question 3. Students were generally able to achieve good marks on this question. Most were able to provide an appropriate answer related to one of their selected impacts. Students are reminded to carefully review the instructional command term for each question. As the students were asked to 'describe', no evaluation of the response was necessary and would have taken significant amounts of writing time. Loss of marks often resulted when students did not make the clear link to the social or economic impact reported for Question 3. Lower-scoring answers seemed to confuse impacts and responses. These simply repeated an impact described in Question 3. Higher-scoring answers could clearly distinguish the impact from the response and were able to clearly establish the local context in which this response operates.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

A local response to the melting glaciers and ice sheets in Greenland, and the consequences of a change in traditional hunting can be found in the Inuit settlement Niaqornat. Niaqornat is a small settlement that currently has a population of only 35. Due to the need to shift away from dogsled hunting, due to safety issues and reduced reindeer and caribou populations, many residents started fishing. In 2011, the local Royal Greenland Fishing Company processing plant closed. The closest plant would now become a 200 km round trip, so in response, the locals purchased the plant to provide a source of income and allow residents to not be forced to move away to find alternative means of income.

Question 5a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	5	15	28	28	20	3.3

The question required students to name and describe a geospatial technology used in their fieldwork, and also required a valid research question and an evaluation of how the technology assisted in answering the research question.

Geospatial technology uses data that is spatial in nature (georeferenced to an exact location on the earth's surface). Survey 123, for example, does collect spatial data, but presenting it as graphs does not address this question, as it does not allow for analysis of the data in regard to its spatial nature. Some of the common geospatial technologies mentioned included satellite imagery, Google Maps, ARCGIS / Survey 1,2,3 and EpiCollect 5.

Generally, this question was well handled, with most students able to successfully identify a geospatial technology and describe how it was utilised. Many students did write their research question or at least refer

to it indirectly, but the link between the research question and the data collected/observed using the technology was the least successful element of the question. Some of the most common sites examined for land use change included Docklands, Fisherman's Bend Montague Precinct, Burwood Brickworks, the Yarra Valley Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery, the Phillip Island Nature Park, and quite a few greenfield site housing developments.

Some of the changes to land use that were investigated are now quite old, having occurred in or earlier than the first decade of this century. It is specified on page 23 of the study design that change needs to have 'recently occurred'. Likewise, the research question under review must revolve around the **change** to land use. Some students wrote about land use itself, which was not appropriate in the context of the study design and the examination, for example:

- Is Docklands a thriving water place?
- Is xx a viable place for the elderly to live?
- Is there a need for increased public transport at x?

High-scoring answers indicated that the question had been read carefully. They clearly stated their research question and what the change in land use involved, from what [original] land use to what [new] land use. They then went on to indicate the geospatial technology they had used and what it enabled them to do. Finally, they made a clear link between the use of this geospatial technology and how it assisted answering this specific research question.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The Geographic Information System (GIS) iNaturalist was used in the investigation to determine 'what are the environmental impacts of the land use change at the Knoxfield development site (609-621 Burwood Highway Knoxfield)?' A GIS is a computer based mapping software where layers of data are used to determine spatial association. The GIS was used to post data of a 20 minute bird survey. Photos of birds taken were time-stamped and location-stamped and then peer-reviewed by experts in the local community to prevent the error of misidentification. iNaturalist allowed for the ecological importance of the site to avian species to be determined and thus allowed us to find how the land use change would affect it.

Question 5b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	5	8	16	24	23	25	3.3

This question required students to evaluate the impact of land-use change in the region surrounding their fieldwork area. It was handled well by many students, who understood that the 'surrounding region' needed to be the focus, and not the site where land use change was occurring. There was a lack of quantification across most answers: one of the key elements of fieldwork is 'expected to collect primary data in the field', by which students would know how to apply their data to their answer. Many wrote about the impacts, or listed advantages and disadvantages, of the land use change, but did not write about the impact on the region. A few answers referred only to general commentary such as increased traffic or a boost to the local economy.

The most successful answers firstly spelled out what the land use change was (often in the previous question) and then specified the region surrounding the fieldwork location, e.g. by neighbouring suburb name/s, local government area (LGA), or within a particular radius or catchment area. They identified whether the impacts they discussed were positive or negative and often classified these as being on the environment, the economy or social conditions. Some students made specific reference to fieldwork data or observations to support their statements.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The land use change of open space to mixed land use (predominantly residential) will affect the local blue billed duck populations in the nearby Lakewood Nature Reserve. The dam at the site (known as Lake Knox) provides feeding habitat for the blue billed ducks which is supported by breeding habitat in Lakewood Nature Reserve. The endangered blue billed ducks require deep permanent water bodies for feeding which Lake Knox provides with a depth of 5 m. However, the land use change will change Lake Knox into an artificial wetland with a depth of 2 m. This land use change will cause an abandonment of the site by the duck and due to the site supporting the breeding habitat of Lakewood Nature Reserve, both sites will be abandoned by the duck if the land use change takes place.

Questions 6a. and 6b.

Marks (6a.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	2	6	14	27	30	20	3.4

Marks (6b.)	0	1	2	3	4	5	Average
%	4	9	20	30	24	13	3.0

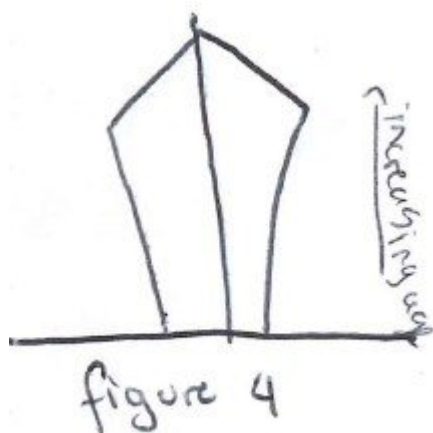
Students were required to identify the implications of fertility rates for two countries, Country A and Country B.

Both of these questions were similar in nature in that they required students to analyse and interpret data, making future predictions on the changes to both countries A and B. Generally, students were able to interpret data for country A more so than for country B, identifying that the falling total fertility rate (TFR) would result in an aging/declining population. Most students were able to access marks, with most utilising the data in their answers. Mentioning which stage of the Demographic Transition Model (DTM) was frequent but it was left to the reader to work out what this meant in terms of major age groups. Many students erroneously wrote about either the current population structure and its needs or the implications to the country of the changes. Such responses made suggestions about what governments would need to do or what the problems would be in the future, rather than writing about the structure of the future population.

Lower-scoring responses occurred when students failed to directly address the question, and either simply described the data or provided very generalised answers on how changes may result in issues and challenges for each country. Where students performed well, they were able to use the data to explain how changes in the TFR would impact future changes in population structure. There was strong use of geographical terminology and links to data to support their points. Many higher-scoring responses were able to predict what stage of the DTM model each country would be in and/or describe changes in the shape of the population structure.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Country A – As evident in figure 2, Country A displays a low fertility rate of, on average, 1.4. This suggests that individuals will be surviving until old age due to a low death rate with declining numbers of children and subsequently declining workers within future populations. This will look something like figure



4 with a high old age proportion and decreasing age groups as they descend. As this country continues to age, the population will decline (as the figure 4 FR is below the replacement rate) and less and less workers (18-55) will be produced.

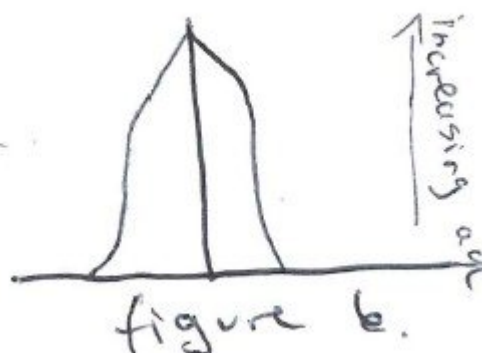
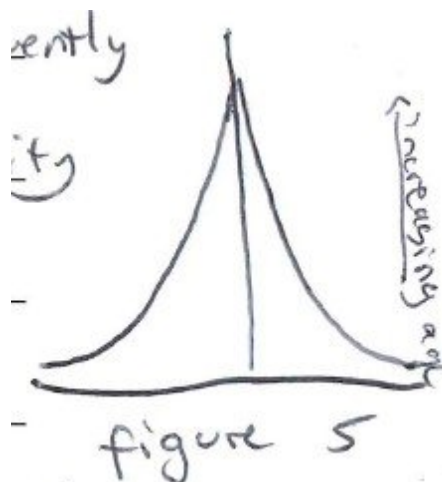
Country B – As evident in Figure 2, Country B has a relatively high Fertility Rate sitting at 6.6 in 2000, yet decreasing to 3.99 in 2022 (still significantly above the replacement rate of 2.1). As such, the population will look something like Figure 5, with a large youth population and a high death rate, consequently small proportions of older age groups. As the fertility rate continues to drop, country B could look like Figure 6, with a lower death rate and longer life expectancy. Eventually they will reach a demographic dividend with the majority of their population being workers. As such, Country B is set to increase in population over the coming years.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	9	21	30	36	2.9

This question was well answered, with nearly all students using place names and geographical directions. Students are encouraged to consider the nature of the data and identify patterns based on what is appropriate rather than a strict Pattern, Quantify, Exceptions/Examples (PQE) format. This includes considering 'random and widely dispersed', 'around the outskirts of the city' and 'dispersed'.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.



Buenos Aires' informal settlements are predominately distributed on the city's outskirts, at the fringes of this 'urban area'. Approximately 85% of these informal settlements are located in locations bordering urban and rural areas, creating an almost peripheral distribution. For instance there is a cluster of around 2 square kilometre west of Lanus in the area bordering rural regions, whilst the municipality of Jose C Paz also contains significant informal settlements in the outskirts of urban areas. There are exceptions to this trend however, with some informal settlements located in these rural areas such as Virrey del Pimo and 10-20 kilometres south of Birazatequi as well as in urban areas such as coastal Buenos Aires. These settlements are primarily distributed in locations bordering both rural and urban areas.

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	15	17	22	18	14	8	6	2.5

This question was one of the lowest-scoring questions in the exam. While many students understood push and pull factors associated with rural to urban migration and the interconnection with the development of urban slums, many students did not refer to a specific example beyond country names to show their deeper understanding. This question required students to take the theoretical information they have studied in class and apply it to a real-world scenario. A few students had no understanding of internal population movement as specified in the study design. Students were not familiar with the term 'informal settlements', and some did not access this information as it was stated in the previous question. Not all internal migration case studies could be used to address this question; appropriate examples had to be chosen. Better answers specified that the creation of informal settlements occurred in countries where there was pre-existing national poverty and therefore an inability to provide the infrastructure for new arrivals.

Better answers referred to specific examples from case studies. Details about slums in Dhaka in Bangladesh and Niamey in Niger were used most often to successfully discuss the interconnection of rural urban migration and informal settlements. Some students used examples, possibly from previous studies, such as Kibera in Kenya and Dharavi in Mumbai, to illustrate the connection between rural urban migration and urban slums, and these were quite well done. Good responses explained the reasons for rural migration to cities (push factors such as poverty and environmental disasters and pull factors such as economic and educational opportunities). The students explained that due to low levels of income and increasing costs associated with housing in cities, these migrants tended to settle in areas they could afford. These places often lacked infrastructure and services due to the inability of the government to pay for these. Hence informal settlements tended to occur globally, but more in developing nations. The best responses included specific data about the actual size of the slum settlements, numbers of people, proportion of city dwellers living in slums etc. While the best responses referred to rural urban migration within a country, there were some good examples of migrants leaving rural areas in Bangladesh to go to urban slums in the UAE, which were still acceptable.

The following are examples of a high-scoring responses.

Sample 1

Rural urban migration occurs due to the attraction of services and jobs in cities. For example, on the east coast of China there are population densities of 1000 people per square km due to large cities attracting people from rural areas. The amount of people moving to cities can be significant. On the other hand, informal settlements occur due to a lack of housing that a city is able to provide. For example, in Bangladesh Dhaka has one third informal settlements because urbanisation increased nationally from 8% to 39% over 1971-2022. Rural urban migration is interconnected with informal settlements because the movement of people migrating to urban areas without enough social housing and the people can only live in informal settlements.

Sample 2

There is a moderate interconnection between rural to urban migration and informal settlements. In countries with large populations such as India, which has a population of over a billion, families in rural regions may send a member or two away to find a job in the inner city where it is more urbanised and more economic opportunity is available. Over \$719 million USD was sent home in remittances in 2020, which heavily benefits rural communities as they have more money to spend on resources which strengthens the economy in said regions. However in countries such as India, where the population density is thousands of people per square kilometre, formal settlements such as houses are incredibly expensive especially for people from rural communities and often lead to the labour migrants living in informal settlements such as tents on the sides of the streets. However, this phenomenon mostly occurs in countries that are less economically developed. For example, in Australia, a country with a strong economy, there is a very low spatial association between urban regions and informal settlement because housing options are more available to labour migrants.

Question 9

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	3	2	4	8	12	15	26	8	8	5	7	5.6

This question required students to select one criterion to determine the effectiveness of population strategies. Many answers read like pre-prepared responses. As a result, lower-scoring answers may have included thorough detail about one strategy to respond to an aging population, but did not address the question as it was written. Japan and Germany were widely used as case studies, with Singapore and Australia also a focus. The choice of a country with an aging population scored well. Case study examples that focused on populations that were not clearly aging, or where there are a complex range of factors for population growth, such as China, generally did not score so highly. Some students occasionally cited government responses, such as the One Child Policy, as a strategy to combat an aging population.

Students wrote about strategies readily with some writing about one strategy only. Two or more strategies were required to complete this response fully. Commonly, one or two strategies were given but not an appropriate criterion. The selection of one criterion to determine the effectiveness of both strategies was important. The criterion of 'Sustainability' or 'achieving the aims of the strategy' were applied to good effect, with the higher scoring responses clearly able to interconnect the key aspects of the strategy in response to the issues of aging in their chosen country. Furthermore, the chosen criterion was applied in the evaluation of both strategies' effectiveness in conclusion.

Strategies at a local and national scale were both suitable. Using specific data and examples as evidence to support and justify their effectiveness was an indication of a higher-scoring response. Students who answered this question well were able to briefly outline the two (at a minimum) strategies used to address the issue arising out of their aging case study, then focus upon the one, single criterion to determine the effectiveness of each strategy. The most successful responses stated the criterion and then how each of the strategies met / failed to meet that given criterion.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

The western European nation of Germany currently maintains the world's highest median age of 46.2, an increase of 16.2 since 1950. In response to this trend of aging within the country, the German government has implemented migration and changes to its pension system as a means of responding to the nation's population issues. These namely being a growing elderly dependant population and a shrinking economically active population over time. Though, through using the criterion of efficiency, [as] in is a response efficient in providing a true solution, these responses have varying levels of effectiveness. In relation to migration, Germany currently maintains an annual migration rate of 388,000

annually of which roughly 60% are under 25. Furthermore, migrants typically maintain a TFR of 2.0-2.2 above the native German rate of 1.54. These factors combined will likely aid in growing the active population of Germany in coming years and decades, aiding in reducing the potential for future declines in economic growth.

In terms of changes to Germany's pension system, since 2011 Germans have been granted 5% more pension for every year worked after 65, and 4% less for every year spent retired before 65. In doing so, the government attempted to simultaneously reduce the retired population and increase the working age population. However this response was less effective at meeting the criterion of efficiency as it does not aid in growing the youthful or young economically active population. Thus it is likely to become ineffective in coming decades as only so many elderly people can continue to work beyond retirement age.

Question 10a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	4	19	77	1.7

Students were required to identify a current demographic issue relating to a country with a growing population. The majority of students were able to identify a specific country that had a growing population. Case studies were dominated by Niger followed by Bangladesh. Saudi Arabia was also used as an example of a growing population. China was also used, although 2023 was the year that China is said to have stopped overall growth. Students who applied an historical coverage from 1979 onwards, when China was still seen as growing, received some marks. Some students said that the issue was 'being a growing population'. Most students were able to identify a specific issue resulting from / as a consequence of a growing population. A number of students, however, struggled to quantify or qualify the issues, giving instead the causes of a growing population.

Question 10b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Average
%	6	4	8	11	20	15	15	11	11	4.6

Students were required to discuss the causes of the issue identified in part 10a, with reference to cultural and economic factors. Most students were able to identify at least one cultural and one economic factor, and many were able to identify multiple cultural and economic factors. Many students were confident in identifying the factor and providing an elaboration and/or quantifying statement. The most significant error with this question was attempting to discuss all social factors as being cultural and sometimes even social factors as being economic factors. Some students needed to link their discussion of cultural and economic factors back to the overarching issue being addressed more explicitly to gain higher marks.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

(a) In Saudi Arabia, a current demographic issue that is resulting from the growing populations is a high unemployment rate of around 8.2% in 2020 (which was an increase from around 6.1% in 2019). Particularly for women who have an unemployment rate of around 25.3% currently and youth which have an unemployment rate of around 27.4% for those aged 15-24 years.

(b) A cultural factor that has caused this high unemployment rate for women is the patriarchal society and religious views of Saudi Arabia. In Saudi Arabia, women were only allowed to have a driver's license as of 2018, and only allowed a passport as of 2019. Along with this women are expected to stay at home and raise children and can't go anywhere without a male guardian. This directly results in it being

particularly hard for women to gain employment. Thus this has led to many women not having jobs due to these restrictions and forced discrimination with women only making up 16% of the workforce.

An economic factor that has led to the high unemployment rate of women is the lack of funding businesses receive to renovate their buildings to cater for women employees. Businesses must adhere to a list of criteria, such as having separate bathrooms and prayer/lunch spaces for women if they are to hire female employees. (This is due to cultural factors such as the societal views and attitudes towards women in Saudi Arabia.) This criteria means however that many businesses can't afford to renovate their infrastructure and thus, can't employ women, contributing to the issue of a high unemployment rate of about 23.5% in 2023.

A cultural factor that has led to the high unemployment of youth is that many businesses believe that university degrees and qualifications from international countries is better than those received in Saudi Arabia. This leads to the hiring of foreigners over Saudi nationals (for which expatriate workers outnumber Saudi nationals 3:1 in the work force) contributing to many youth not being able to find employment.