

Human geography

What is the relationship between climate change and human societies? What are the effects of migration on towns and cities?

Human Geography is the study of the relationship between people and places.

Why study human geography?

Human geography is a wide-ranging discipline that draws together many of the strands important for understanding the world today. It examines human societies and how they develop, their culture, economy and politics, all within the context of their environment. With the rise of globalisation and climate change, it has become increasingly relevant. Students are attracted to a subject that allows them to examine the relationship between global and local issues and equips them with the analytical and practical skills needed in many careers.

What will I study at university?

There are over 100 geography courses in the UK that offer specialism in human geography. Some courses are combined with other subjects such as:

- Law
- Economics
- Business
- English

Other combined courses include a focus on specific areas of human geography, such as:

- Human Geography with Environmental Studies, which explores human-environment interactions and their affects
- Geography and Planning, including the role that town and country planning has on changing settlements and landscapes
- Population and Geography, exploring the implications of population change by births, deaths and migration on society and the environment

“There has never been a more exciting time to study geography at university. It helps explain much of what is going on in the world right now.”

**Dr Martin Degg,
University of Chester**

First year lays the foundations of the subject, covering core geographical methods and theories, and may include some Physical Geography. Later on in the degree, students can find themselves specialising in areas as diverse as:

- Urbanisation, which explores why people move to urban areas from rural locations
- Sustainable development, including the relationships between societies and the natural environment
- Postcolonial culture, which explores the cultural identities of settlers and colonised people



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What skills will I gain?

Human geography students leave university with a broad range of transferable skills, including:

- Analytical and critical thinking
- Research and report writing
- Communication and presentation skills
- Data collection and evaluation
- Technical skills including Geographical Information Systems (GIS) skills

After my degree... what next?

Graduates of human geography are highly employable, as employers recognise the value of a discipline that combines qualitative research and essay writing with proficiency in using data and statistics. Because of the growing need to assess environmental impact, such skills are much in demand by many different kinds of organisation.

Geography graduates have one of the highest rates of graduate employment. In 2011, 83 per cent of graduates of human geography were in employment or doing further study six months after graduating, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Graduates may consider careers in related areas such as:

- Urban regeneration and conservation
- International development
- Tourism

Many human geography graduates gain jobs in the public sector, local government departments or government agencies responsible for town planning, transport, housing, environmental services and recycling, regeneration and economic development. Those who enjoy collecting and analysing spatial and environmental information will find opportunities in the armed services, energy and water suppliers, as well as in government and business.



Geography-based skills are also valued in the private sector, and many graduates go on to work in the property industry. Some popular options, such as chartered surveying or urban planning, will involve further study to gain vocational qualifications.

Because of the training in social science research methods, a degree in human geography also forms an excellent foundation for postgraduate work.

Human geography is also transferable to broader career options including:

- Accountancy
- Management
- Marketing
- Computing

What do students say?

“My human geography degree has given me the ability to think critically and holistically about the current and future challenges we face in an increasingly interconnected world - from climate change to economic crises - as well as equipping me with a diverse, flexible skill-set opening up a wealth of career options.”

Human geography graduate, University of Bristol

SOCIAL SCIENCE FOR SCHOOLS

Further resources

- **Royal Geographical Society (RGS)** supports education, research and fieldwork in geography. The professional body for geographers, it has a comprehensive microsite 'Study Geography' which includes guidance on why students should study geography, how to choose the best degree course and details of career options after graduation. It also has some useful information about gaining professional accreditation for your geographical skills by becoming a Chartered Geographer.
www.rgs.org
- **Centre for Population Change** was established in January 2009, and funded by the ESRC as the UK's first research centre on population change. Based jointly at the University of Southampton and the National Records of Scotland, the ESRC Centre for Population Change brings together expertise from the Universities of Southampton, St Andrews, Edinburgh, Strathclyde and Stirling as well as the National Records of Scotland and the Office for National Statistics.
www.cpc.ac.uk
- **Living with Environmental Change (LWEC)** partnership consists of 22 public sector organisations that fund, carry out and use environmental research and observations. LWEC aims to ensure that decision makers in government, business and society have the knowledge, foresight and tools to mitigate, adapt to and benefit from environmental change.
www.lwec.org.uk
- **Centre for Human Geography** is based at Brunel University. Its academics conduct collaborative research projects in Europe, Africa and South Asia with a focus on citizenship, children and youth with a view to having an impact on policy.
www.brunel.ac.uk/shssc/research/chg
- **Institute of Development Studies** is a think-tank specialising in international development affiliated to the University of Sussex. It has around a hundred researchers, and produces publications on a wide range of topics from urbanisation to food security.
www.ids.ac.uk/study
- **21st Century Challenges** is a Royal Geographical Society public talk series. The website explores a number of key challenges where Geography is at the heart of issues concerning places, societies, environments and livelihoods, both locally and globally. The site also has a schools section with useful resources to supplement the 21st Century Challenges.
www.21stcenturychallenges.org

