**Explain the term population density and population distribution**

Population density is the number of people living in a square kilometre (KM), while population distribution is the way people are spread out across a given areas.

**Explain why the population of a region you have studied has varied over time.**

The west of Ireland has a lower population density than the rest of the country. Over the last number of centuries the population of the west has fluctuated for a number of reasons.

Before the famine the population in the west was increasing because farmers were subdivided. This meant that there were lots of farmers with small amounts of land. People were also getting married young and having large families. With the introduction of the potato, food supply increased which increased population and reduced mortality rates.

Between 1845-1852 blight caused the potato crop to fail. This cut off the populations main food source and caused 1 million to die and a further 1 million migration. Farms were abandoned and birth rates dropping also casuing the population plummet. Even after the famine the population continued to drop due to the oldest son inheriting all the land forcing younger sons to migrate. Also people were now getting married later and having smaller families. This reduced the birth rate.

Today the rural west is still suffering from a falling population as people move from the countryside into large cities for education and work (rural depopulation). The population in the west is greying as the vast majority of migrants are people aged 18-30 who take work opportunities in cities and never come back. This also lowers birth rates and the population decreases.