

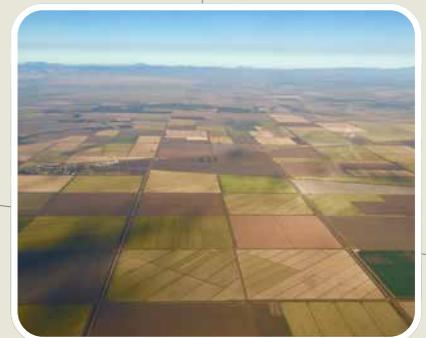
Population Density, 2010

Every 10 years, the federal government counts the number of people who live in the United States. This is called our national census. Each state is divided into many “census blocks” that may vary in size from a few city blocks to an entire small town. Census blocks in rural areas may be large and irregular and contain many square miles. The irregular shapes in this map result from census blocks of different sizes.

Census data allow us to determine the number of people in each area. By comparing the count of people to the size of an area, we can calculate the population density. Population density is typically expressed in people per square mile. About half of all Californians live in the densely populated urban areas of San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Diego. In contrast, less than 1% live in the sparsely populated northeastern and southeastern corners of the state.

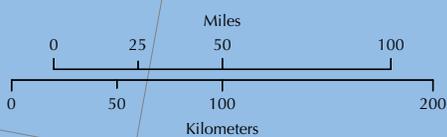
Images below: Population density is low in areas where a lot of land is used for farming.

Population density is very high in large cities where people are crowded together. This often occurs near the coast, such as seen here in San Francisco.

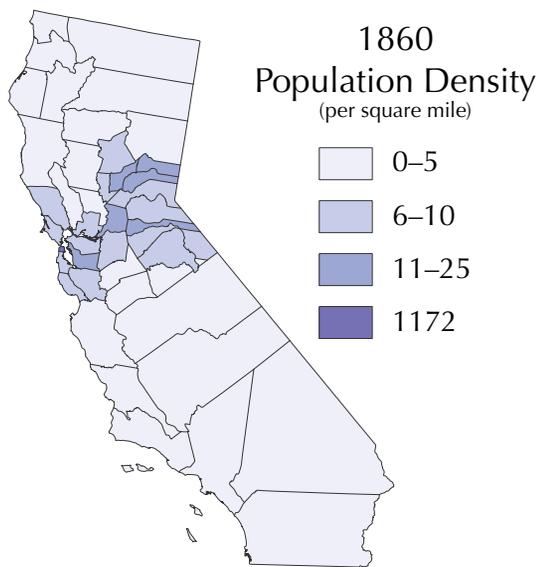


Population Density by Census Block Group (per square mile)

- < 1
- 1–10
- 11–100
- 101–1,000
- 1,001–5,000
- 5,001–10,000
- 10,001–50,000
- 50,001–158,417



County Population Change Since 1860



Patterns of settlement have changed over time in California. After the Gold Rush, four out of every five residents lived between San Francisco and the Sierra Nevada **foothills**. In the early 1900's, new population centers were appearing in Southern California. By 1920, opportunities for farming drew people into the Central Valley while a thriving logging industry also attracted people to the northern coast.

The state's population boomed during and after World War II. Military workers returning from the war joined the shipbuilders and factory workers who had moved west to take on jobs supporting the war effort. Throughout the 1950's Americans migrated into Southern California and the San Francisco Bay Area in increasing numbers at the same time that the post-war baby boom contributed to population growth everywhere. By the end of the 1960's, California was the most populous state in the nation.

Since 1990, the number of people moving out of California to other states has been larger than the number of Americans moving into California. They leave California in search of more affordable housing and new job opportunities. However, the total population continues to grow with the arrival of new immigrants from other countries, combined with domestic births. As the population density of coastal cities increases, competition for space increases. This encourages both companies and people to move to the Central Valley and Mojave Desert.

