

**RESOURCE LIBRARY**  
ACTIVITY : 50 MINS

## Population Density in the United States

Students compare several maps to explore relationships between high and low population density, transportation corridors, climate, and land cover in the United States.

**GRADES**

6 - 8

**SUBJECTS**

*Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography*

**CONTENTS**

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## OVERVIEW

Students compare several maps to explore relationships between high and low population density, transportation corridors, climate, and land cover in the United States.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/population-density-in-the-United-States/>

## Program



## DIRECTIONS

**1. Have students create a thematic map of population density of the United States.**

Have students use data from the provided U.S. Census Bureau website to create a thematic map of population density on one of the large maps of the Americas from the Americas

MapMaker Kit. Have students create a symbol for population density; for example, one figure = one million people, and cut out and tape the symbols onto the large map of the Americas to show the population of different states.

## **2. Have a whole-class discussion about the patterns of population density on the large map.**

Explain to students that people prefer to live in places that are most convenient and hospitable. These places are usually close to the coast or to rivers and other transportation corridors. In the United States, over half the population lives within fifty miles of the coast.

*Ask: Where is the population of the United States most and least dense? Why?*

## **3. Have students compare their thematic map to the NG Education interactive map with the Land Cover data layer selected.**

Display for students the NG Education interactive map with the Land Cover data layer selected. Have students compare it to their population density layer on the large map of the Americas and identify any relationships they see. Point out how the population density is lower in areas with forests, deserts, and mountains. *Ask: Why do those factors affect population density? What other factors affect population density?*

# OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

### Geography

- [Human Geography](#)
- [Physical Geography](#)

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- create a thematic map showing population density in the United States
- describe the patterns on the thematic map and the reasons for them
- compare two thematic maps and recognize relationships between different layers of information

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

# Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Hands-on learning

# Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Themes
  - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information
  - Analyzing Geographic Information
  - Organizing Geographic Information

# National Standards, Principles, and Practices

## NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 3:

People, Places, and Environments

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 1:

How to use maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking to understand and communicate information

- Standard 12:

The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement

• **Standard 3:**

How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface

## **Preparation**

## **What You'll Need**

### **MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE**

- Markers
- Paper
- Scissors
- Transparent tape

### **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector
- Plug-Ins: Flash

### **PHYSICAL SPACE**

- Classroom

### **GROUPING**

- Large-group instruction

### **OTHER NOTES**

Before starting this activity, assemble the Americas Mega Map.

## **BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY**

# **Background Information**

Geographers use maps to convey information to others. You can display physical, political or cultural information, or use maps to illustrate specific themes and topics. Maps are useful in helping to see patterns or relationships between layers of information.

# Prior Knowledge

## Recommended Prior Activities

- None

# Vocabulary

| Term               | Part of Speech | Definition  |
|--------------------|----------------|---|
| population density | <i>noun</i>    | the number of people living in a set area, such as a square mile. |
| thematic map       | <i>noun</i>    | representation of data on a specific topic for a specific area.   |

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## For Further Exploration

### Articles & Profiles

- [National Geographic Magazine: Population 7 Billion](#)

### Maps

- [MapMaker: Population Density](#)

