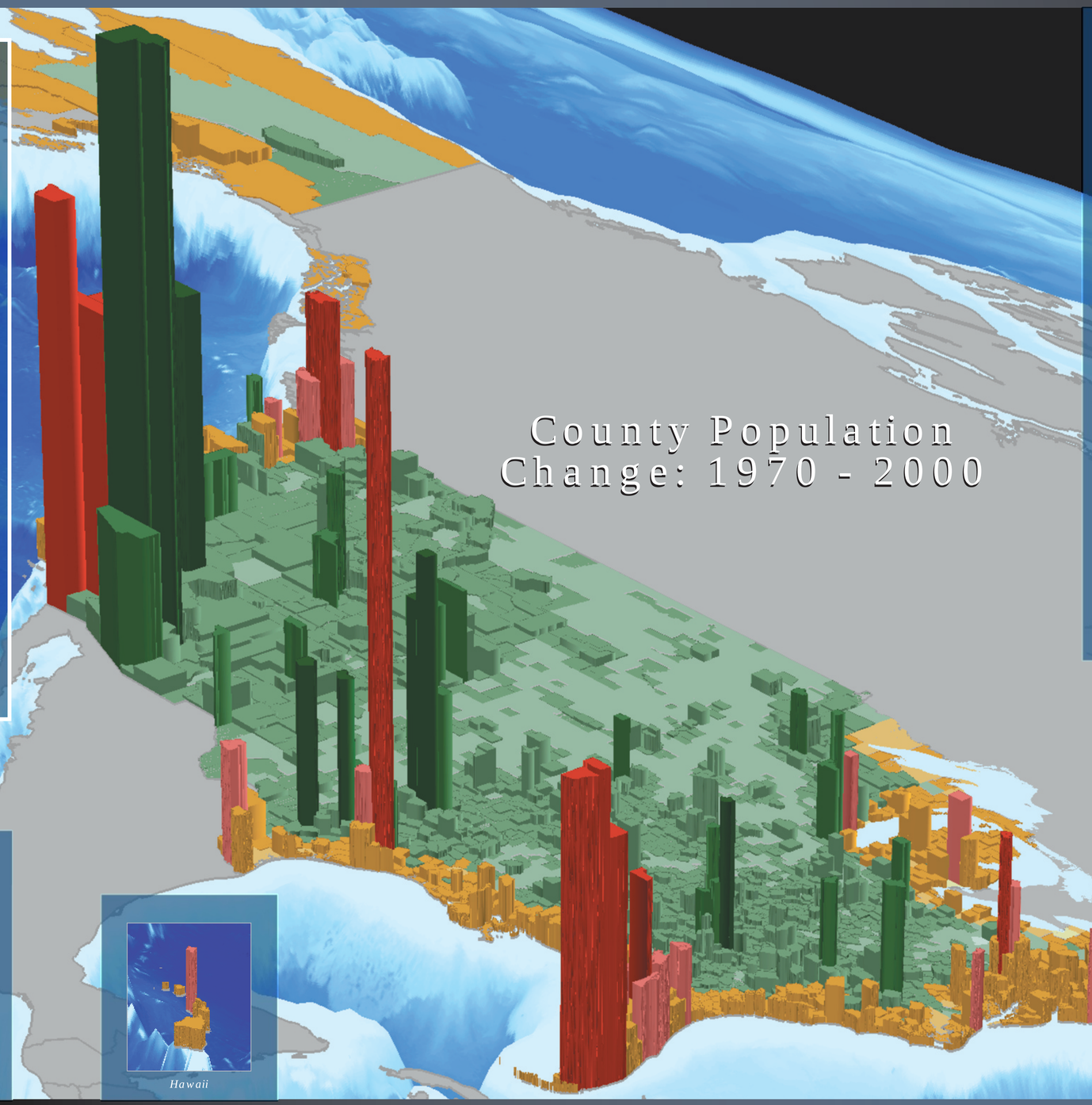
THE CROWDED COAST: POPULATION TRENDS, 1970-2000

From 1970 to 2000, population continued to grow in coastal counties. Although population increase and coastal development give rise to numerous economic benefits, they also may result in the loss of critical habitat, green space, and biodiversity. Public policymakers and coastal managers are confronted with the daily task of finding a balance between benefiting from economic growth and mitigating the effects of this growth on coastal environments. This task is becoming ever more challenging as the coastal population continues to grow in a limited space.



FACTS

In 2000, of the 281 million people that lived in the U.S., more than 148 million people lived in coastal counties.

Coastal counties contain 53% of the nation's population, yet, excluding Alaska, only account for 17% of U.S. land area.

From 2000 to 2015, coastal county population is expected to increase by 17 million people.

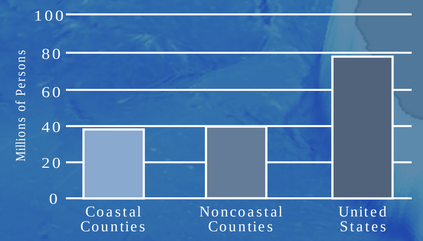
22 of the 25 most densely populated counties are coastal.

Coastal counties average 291 persons per square mile (not including Alaska), over five times greater than the population density of noncoastal counties.

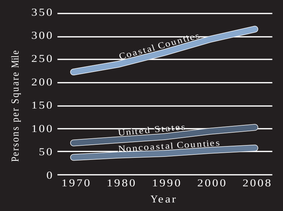
Thousands of Persons

Coastal Counties	Noncoastal Counties
	< -100
	-100 - 0
	0 - 200
	200 - 500
	> 500
	Insufficient Data

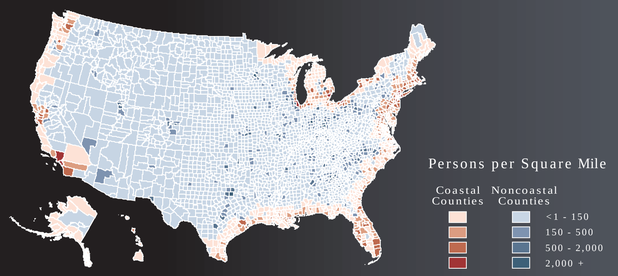
Population Change: 1970-2000



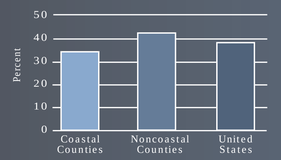
Population Density



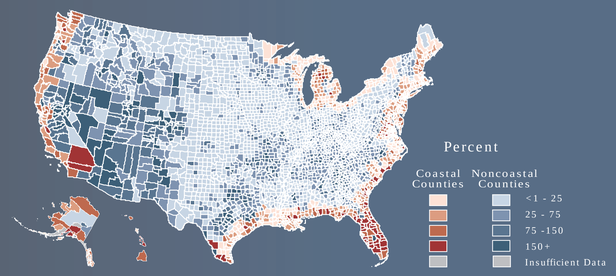
Population Density in Coastal and Noncoastal Counties: 2000



Percent Population Change: 1970-2000



Percent Population Change in Coastal and Noncoastal Counties: 1970-2000



NOAA's National Ocean Service
Management and Budget Office
Special Projects

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Source: U.S. Census Bureau (data accessed via Spatial Trends in Coastal Socioeconomics (STICS) Web site; http://stics.noaa.gov); NOAA's National Geophysical Data Center (data accessed via ETOPO2 Global 2' Elevations CD-ROM)

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