Lesson three: Where are all the people? Factsheet for teachers

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce pupils to the population distribution of the USA, develop an understanding of factors that can affect where people live. In addition it provides an opportunity for pupils to begin to investigate a place in-depth using official statistics as well as other information sources.

The starter for the lesson is designed to generate a discussion which not only describes the population distribution of the US, but also the factors that can affect where people live (both human and physical).

USA at Night © NASA Goddard Space Flight Centre, Flickr

Vocabulary

Population Distribution   The pattern of where people live. Places which are sparsely populated contain few people. Places which are densely populated contain many people.

Population Density   Measurement of the number of people in an area. This can be calculated by dividing the number of people by the area in question.

Population density = total population ÷ total land area in km^2

If you wanted to provide comparison of population density figures from the USA with other countries you can use data from the World Bank website
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/en.pop.dnst

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The next exercise in the lesson requires pupils to use the tables below to create a map of the largest cities in the USA. You may wish to include the data showing change in order to talk about reasons why some places grow faster than others.

Top 10 Cities in the USA by Population (2014)

2013 rank	City	State	2014	2010 Census	Change 2010-2014
1	New York	New York	8,405,837	8,175,133	+2.82%
2	Los Angeles	California	3,884,307	3,792,621	+2.42%
3	Chicago	Illinois	2,718,782	2,695,598	+0.86%
4	Houston	Texas	2,195,914	2,100,263	+4.55%
5	Philadelphia	Pennsylvania	1,553,165	1,526,006	+1.78%
6	Phoenix	Arizona	1,513,367	1,445,632	+4.69%
7	San Antonio	Texas	1,409,019	1,327,407	+6.15%
8	San Diego	California	1,355,896	1,307,402	+3.71%
9	Dallas	Texas	1,257,676	1,197,816	+5.00%
10	San Jose	California	998,537	945,942	+5.56%

Source:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_United_States_cities_by_population

Top 10 States in the USA by Population (2014)

Rank 2014	State	Population 2014	Percent of total U.S. pop. 2014
1	California	38,802,500	12.17%
2	Texas	26,956,958	8.45%
3	Florida	19,893,297	6.24%
4	New York	19,746,227	6.19%
5	Illinois	12,880,580	4.04%
6	Pennsylvania	12,787,209	4.01%
7	Ohio	11,594,163	3.64%
8	Georgia	10,097,343	3.17%

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| 9 | North Carolina | 9,943,964 | 3.12% |
| 10 | Michigan | 9,909,877 | 3.11% |

Bottom 10 US states by population (2014)

Rank in 2014	State	Population 2014	Percent of total U.S. pop. 2014
40	Hawaii	1,419,561	0.45%
41	Maine	1,330,089	0.42%
42	New Hampshire	1,326,813	0.42%
43	Rhode Island	1,055,173	0.33%
44	Montana	1,023,579	0.32%
45	Delaware	935,614	0.29%
46	South Dakota	853,175	0.27%
47	North Dakota	739,482	0.23%
48	Alaska	736,732	0.23%
49	Vermont	626,562	0.20%
50	Wyoming	584,153	0.18%

Source:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._states_and_territories_by_population

Links

This video shows how the population distribution of the USA has changed from 1790-2010. Go to the Youtube website
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nu152kQRKeU

This article discusses what might happen to the population of the USA in the future. Go to the Forbes website
http://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2013/09/04/a-map-of-americas-future-where-growth-will-be-over-the-next-decade/

You can view a detailed map with commentary about what might happen here. Go to the Forbes website http://images.forbes.com/special-report/2013/assets/gate.jpg

This website allows pupils to explore population, ethnicity and age across different USA geographies (County, Place, Census tracts). Go to the Census website http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/