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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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## DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION ACCORDING TO DENSITY: 1890.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,

CENSUS OFFICE,

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 10, 1891.

SIR :

In the following tables and accompanying map, prepared by Mr. HENRY GANNETT, Geographer, special agent of the Census Office, are presented certain facts relating to the density of the rural as distinguished from the urban population of the country, and in the tables comparison is made with similar facts from other censuses.

The method of preparing the map was as follows: The county was in general taken as the unit. Its population having been ascertained, the number of inhabitants in all cities of 8,000 inhabitants or more existing within it has been deducted therefrom, the location and population of such cities being represented upon the map by circles in heavy body color of area roughly proportional to the number of inhabitants. The rural population has then been divided by the area of the county in square miles, and the quotient accepted as the average density of settlement of the county in question. In cases, however, where the county is of unusual extent, as is the case with most counties in the Cordilleran region, northern Maine, etc., or where there was reason to believe that the different parts of the county differed decidedly in density of population, the county was not treated as a whole, but an approximation to the distribution of the population within it was obtained by the use of the town or township as the unit of computation, or by other less exact means, in case this was not practicable. The average density of each county or part of a county having thus been ascertained, the figures representing them were platted upon a county map of the United States and were grouped in accordance with the legend upon the map. The subdivisions are those in use in former censuses, viz:

- (0) Less than 2 inhabitants to a square mile. (Regarded as unsettled.)
- (1) 2 to 6 inhabitants to a square mile.
- (2) 6 to 18 inhabitants to a square mile.
- (3) 18 to 45 inhabitants to a square mile.
- (4) 45 to 90 inhabitants to a square mile.
- (5) More than 90 inhabitants to a square mile.

These limits define in a general way the extent and prevalence of various classes of industries. The first group, 2 to 6 to a square mile, indicates a population mainly occupied with the grazing industry or a widely scattered farming population. The second group, 6 to 18, indicates a farming population, with systematic cultivation of the soil, but this either in an early stage of settlement or upon more or less rugged soil. The third group, 18 to 45 to a square mile, almost universally indicates a highly successful agriculture, while in some localities the beginnings of manufactures have raised into this group a difficult farming region. Speaking generally, agriculture in this country is not carried

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on with such care and refinement as yet to afford employment and support to a population in excess of 45 to a square mile; consequently, the last two groups, 45 to 90 and 90 and above to a square mile, appear only as commerce and manufactures arise and personal and professional services are in demand.

In reports of former censuses that portion of our domain which contains less than two inhabitants to a square mile has been regarded as unsettled territory, and throughout this discussion the same distinction will be observed.

Upon the map the lines limiting the areas of different densities have not been left to follow strictly the boundary lines of counties, as would be required by a literal interpretation of the figures platted upon the map, but have been drawn in a more natural course, avoiding sharp angles and straight lines, but still in such a way as not to depart materially from the indications of the figures. In one noticeable respect the present map differs from the density maps of former censuses. This is, that care has been taken to avoid passing directly from one grade to another removed from it by two or three steps, for example, from grade 5 to grade 3. This has been done upon the assumption that, whatever the figures indicate, there must be a gradation in population as with contour lines, and hence the intermediate grades have been represented, even though it be in narrow bands, as more nearly approaching the truth.

From the map and the records of past censuses the following table has been prepared, presenting the areas in square miles of different classes of settlement and the total settled area at the date of each census:

AREAS IN SQUARE MILES OF THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF SETTLEMENT.

YEARS.	Total area of settlement: 2 or more to the square mile.	1	2	3	4	5
		2 to 6 to the square mile.	6 to 18 to the square mile.	18 to 45 to the square mile.	45 to 90 to the square mile.	90 and over to the square mile.
1790.....	239,935	83,436	83,346	59,282	13,051	820
1800.....	365,708	81,010	123,267	82,504	17,734	1,193
1810.....	407,945	116,629	154,419	108,155	27,499	1,243
1820.....	508,717	140,827	177,153	150,390	39,004	1,343
1830.....	632,717	151,460	225,894	186,503	65,416	3,414
1840.....	807,292	183,607	291,819	241,587	84,451	5,828
1850.....	979,249	233,697	294,698	338,796	100,794	11,261
1860.....	1,194,754	260,866	353,341	431,601	134,722	14,224
1870.....	1,272,239	245,897	363,475	470,529	174,036	18,302
1880.....	1,569,570	384,820	373,890	554,300	231,410	25,150
1890.....	1,947,285	592,037	393,943	701,845	235,148	24,312

It will be noted that the settled area has constantly and rapidly increased, but by no means at a uniform rate or at rates proportional to the increase of population. The following table shows the rates of increase of the settled area and of the population placed in juxtaposition:

PER CENT OF INCREASE OF SETTLED AREA AND OF POPULATION.

YEARS.	Areas.	Population.	PER CENT OF INCREASE.	
			Area.	Population.
1790.....	239,935	3,929,214	.....	.....
1800.....	365,708	5,308,483	27.41	35.10
1810.....	407,945	7,239,881	33.44	36.38
1820.....	508,717	9,633,822	24.70	33.07
1830.....	632,717	12,866,020	24.33	33.55
1840.....	807,292	17,069,453	27.59	32.67
1850.....	979,249	23,191,876	21.30	35.87
1860.....	1,194,754	31,443,321	22.01	35.58
1870.....	1,272,239	38,558,371	6.49	22.63
1880.....	1,569,570	50,155,783	23.37	30.08
1890.....	1,947,285	62,622,250	21.06	21.86

In 1890 the population was nearly sixteen times as great as in 1790, while during the century the settled area was increased only about eightfold. In general, the increase of population has gone on at a much more rapid rate than that of settled area.



Notwithstanding the constant passage of territory from lower groups into higher by reason of increase in the number of inhabitants, the lower groups have been so rapidly increased by settlement of new territory that they have increased in every case, excepting that in 1870 a slight diminution is noted in group 1. In 1890 a trifling reduction is seen in the highest group. This is doubtless an indirect result of the rapid development of cities in the territory falling into this group, as each city, upon reaching a population of 8,000, is subtracted from the population of its county, thereby materially reducing the apparent density of the population of the county. To a certain extent the case is similar in the next group, that of 45 to 90 inhabitants to a square mile, which during the past decade increased in area but 3,738 square miles.

During this period the inroads upon the unsettled region have been unprecedented in amount, not less than 377,715 square miles having been redeemed, exceeding by 80,384 square miles the area settled between 1870 and 1880.

The following table shows the proportion of the area of each group of population to the total area of settlement at each census:

YEARS.	1	2	3	4	5
1790.....	348	348	247	54	3
1800.....	265	403	270	58	4
1810.....	286	379	265	67	3
1820.....	277	348	296	76	3
1830.....	239	357	295	103	6
1840.....	228	361	299	105	7
1850.....	239	301	316	103	11
1860.....	218	296	361	113	12
1870.....	193	286	370	137	14
1880.....	245	238	353	148	16
1890.....	304	202	361	121	12

The most striking fact which appears upon a study of the map is the numerous additions which have been made to the settled area within the Cordilleran region. Settlements have spread westward up the slope of the plains until they have joined the bodies formerly isolated in Colorado, forming a continuous body of settlement from the east to the Rocky mountains. Practically the whole of Kansas has become a settled region, and the unsettled area of Nebraska has been reduced in dimensions to a third of what it was ten years ago. What was a sparsely-settled region in Texas in 1880 is now the most populous part of the state, while settlements have spread westward to the escarpment of the Staked Plains. The unsettled regions of the Dakotas have been reduced to half their former dimensions. Settlements in Montana have spread until they now occupy one-third of the state. In New Mexico, Idaho, and Wyoming considerable extensions of area are to be noted. In Colorado, in spite of the decline of the mining fever and the depopulation of its mining regions, settlement has spread, and two-thirds of the state is now under the dominion of man. Oregon and Washington show equally rapid progress, and California, although its mining regions have suffered, has made great inroads upon its unsettled regions, especially in the south. Of all the western states and territories Nevada alone is at a standstill in this respect, its settled area remaining practically the same as in 1880. When it is remembered that the state has lost one-third of its population during the past ten years, the fact that it has held its own in settled area is surprising until it is understood that the state has undergone a material change in occupations during the decade, and that the inhabitants, instead of being closely grouped together and engaged in mining pursuits, have become scattered along its streams and have engaged in agriculture.

Turning now to the east, it is seen that settlement is spreading with some rapidity in Maine, its unsettled area having dwindled from 12,000 down to about 4,000 square miles. The unsettled portion of the Adirondack region in New York has also diminished, there being now but 1,000 square miles remaining unsettled. The frontier has been pushed still farther southward in Florida, and the unsettled area has been reduced from 20,800 to 13,000 square miles.

The lumbering and mining interests of Michigan have practically obliterated its wilderness and have reduced that of Wisconsin to one-half of its former area. In Minnesota the area of its wild northern forests have been reduced from 34,000 to 23,000 square miles.

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The following table presents in detailed form, by states, the extent of settled area and the area in each of the density groups:

AREAS IN SQUARE MILES OF THE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF SETTLEMENT IN 1890, BY STATES.

STATES AND TERRITORIES.	Total area of settlement.	2 to 6 to the square mile.	6 to 18 to the square mile.	18 to 45 to the square mile.	45 to 90 to the square mile.	Above 90 to the square mile.
Total.....	1,947,285	592,037	393,943	701,845	235,148	24,312
Alabama.....	51,540		9,472	37,717	4,351	
Arizona.....	24,645	24,645				
Arkansas.....	53,045		23,212	29,833		
California.....	96,604	57,657	28,716	10,181		50
Colorado.....	68,492	57,810	9,439	1,243		
Connecticut.....	4,845				4,072	773
Delaware.....	1,960			810	1,150	
District of Columbia.....	65					65
Florida.....	41,070	18,688	20,451	1,931		
Georgia.....	58,980	1,166	16,153	35,040	6,621	
Idaho.....	39,143	37,233	1,910			
Illinois.....	56,000			41,890	14,110	
Indiana.....	35,910			12,484	23,426	
Iowa.....	55,475		4,246	50,167	1,062	
Kansas.....	80,971	24,920	22,493	32,449	1,109	
Kentucky.....	40,000		1,643	25,149	12,491	717
Louisiana.....	45,420	7,608	18,490	18,319	816	187
Maine.....	25,729	9,624	6,596	6,703	2,806	
Maryland.....	9,860			2,900	6,123	837
Massachusetts.....	8,040			959	4,149	2,932
Michigan.....	57,430	12,349	13,651	16,844	13,806	780
Minnesota.....	56,259	9,871	25,766	20,622		
Mississippi.....	46,340		10,007	35,502	831	
Missouri.....	68,735		14,892	52,765	1,030	48
Montana.....	46,796	45,941	855			
Nebraska.....	63,061	26,801	17,040	19,220		
Nevada.....	11,948	10,022	1,208	718		
New Hampshire.....	8,828	708	886	5,245	1,989	
New Jersey.....	7,455			1,550	3,055	2,850
New Mexico.....	45,589	35,625	9,964			
New York.....	46,580	1,427	1,887	13,172	28,266	1,828
North Carolina.....	48,580		6,313	38,060	4,207	
North Dakota.....	26,973	17,835	9,138			
Ohio.....	40,760			1,616	37,744	1,400
Oklahoma.....	2,890			2,890		
Oregon.....	46,189	39,124	5,018	2,047		
Pennsylvania.....	44,985			10,617	23,692	10,676
Rhode Island.....	1,085				320	765
South Carolina.....	30,170		369	23,560	6,241	
South Dakota.....	43,848	19,343	23,150	1,355		
Tennessee.....	41,750		4,114	24,985	12,651	
Texas.....	150,810	59,755	40,313	50,742		
Utah.....	27,580	20,421	5,701	1,458		
Vermont.....	9,135		730	7,487	918	
Virginia.....	40,125		3,109	29,895	7,121	
Washington.....	36,945	22,202	13,461	1,282		
West Virginia.....	24,645		9,190	11,766	3,689	
Wisconsin.....	51,148	8,410	14,360	20,672	7,302	404
Wyoming.....	22,852	22,852				

Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports.

Very respectfully,

ROBERT P. PORTER,  
*Superintendent of Census.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.



ELEVENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES  
 ROBERT P. PORTER, SUPERINTENDENT





MAP  
 SHOWING, IN SIX DEGREES OF DENSITY, THE DISTRIBUTION  
 OF THE  
**POPULATION OF THE UNITED STATES**  
 at the Eleventh Census (1890)  
 Compiled by  
**HENRY GANNETT, GEOGRAPHER.**

