

2020

# Florida Population Growth

A Technical Memorandum from FDOT Forecasting and Trends Office

April 2021

## Introduction

People travel to engage in employment, school, shopping, social, and recreational activities. Understanding the number of people and their residential and activity locations is critical for planning transportation infrastructure and services to meet people's travel needs. Each year, the Forecasting and Trends Office (FTO) of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) publishes population estimates and future year projections based on the population study of the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) at the University of Florida. The population estimates are developed by FDOT district, county, city, urbanized area, urban cluster, and metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The population estimates can be used for a variety of planning studies including statewide and regional transportation plan updates, subarea and corridor studies, and funding allocations for various planning agencies.

This Technical Memorandum provides an overview of the population changes in Florida in 2020 at various geographic levels. The focus is on the location and magnitude of the population changes at three commonly used geographic levels: county, urbanized area, and MPO. This Technical Memorandum works in conjunction with the 2020 population estimates which can be downloaded from the FTO's [Demographic and Commuting Analysis](#) website.

## Population Change at County Level

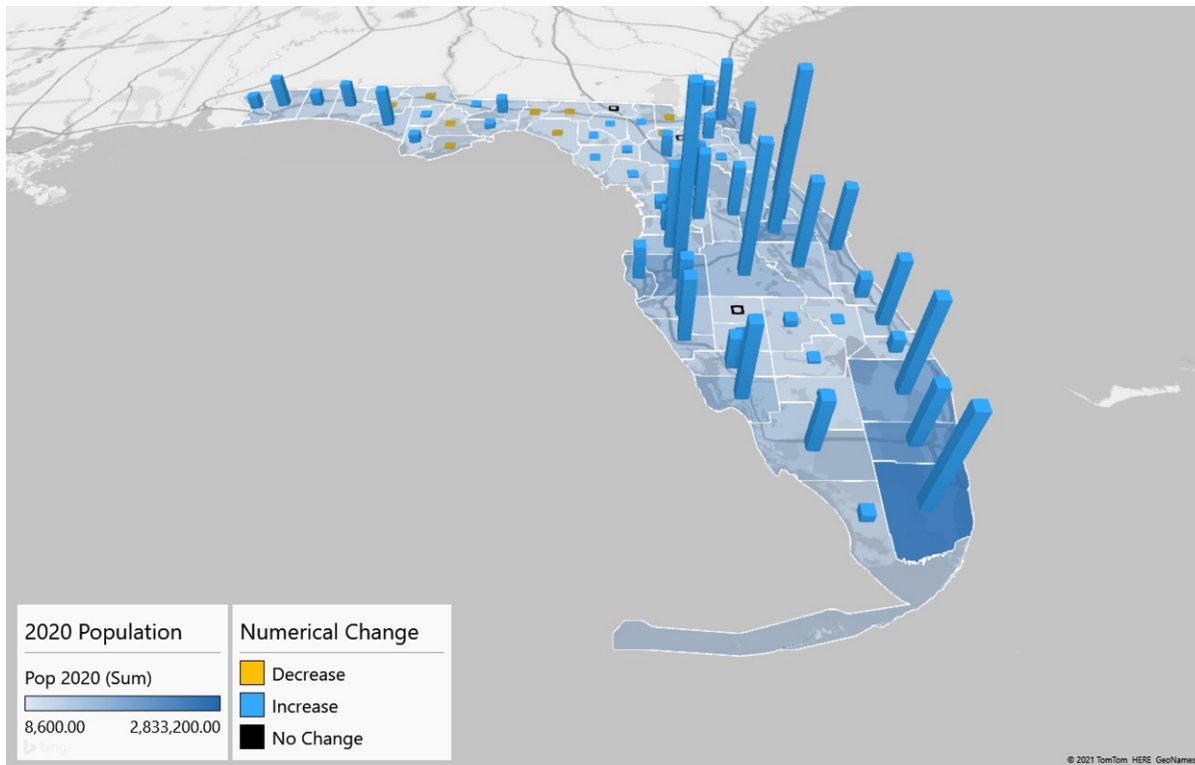
The [FDOT District by County Population Estimates](#) sheets include the estimated county population for 2019 and 2020 developed by FTO, together with the 2010 population counts by U.S. Census Bureau. Now the third most populous state in the nation, Florida gained 388,700 people in 2020 to reach a total population of 21,597,400, an increase of 1.8% over the past year. Since the 2010 Census, Florida's population has grown by nearly 2.8 million, an increase of 14.9% over the time period.

### Numerical Change in County Population

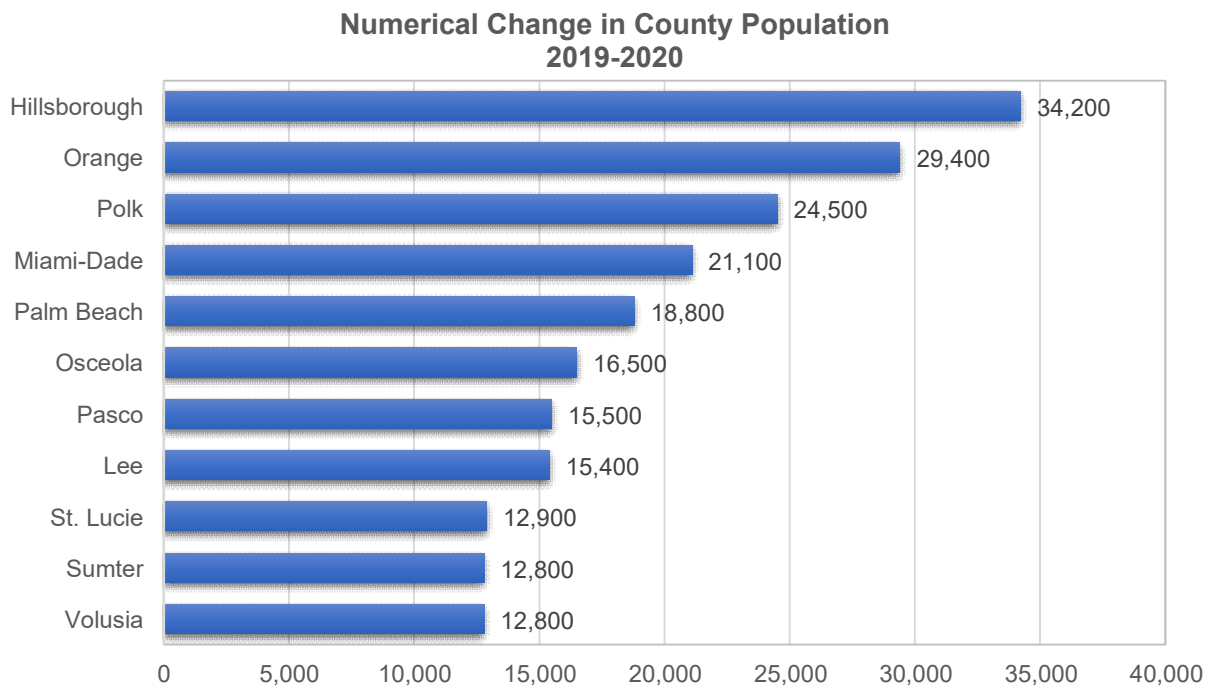
**Figure 1** depicts the 2020 population by county and the 2019-2020 numerical change in population for each county. The population is represented by shade, with darker shade indicating higher population counties and lighter color lower population counties. The bar chart represents the growth in population. In 2020, 54 of the 67 counties in Florida saw an increase in population. The population in four (4) counties, Bradford, Hamilton, Hardee, and Holmes, remained the same in 2020. The remaining nine (9) counties experienced a decrease in population, including four (4) counties in District 2 (Baker, Madison, Taylor, Union) and five (5) counties in District 3 (Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Liberty, and Washington), all located along the I-10 corridor in North Florida.

**Figure 2** lists the top eleven (11) counties with the largest population growth during the past year. Hillsborough County gained the most with 34,200 people, followed by Orange County with 29,400 people. Polk County came in third with an increase of 24,500. The following counties were among the top nine: Miami-Dade, Palm Beach, Osceola, Pasco, Lee, and St. Lucie. Sumter and Volusia

Counties gained the same number of people and were tied for the 10<sup>th</sup> highest growing county in 2020.



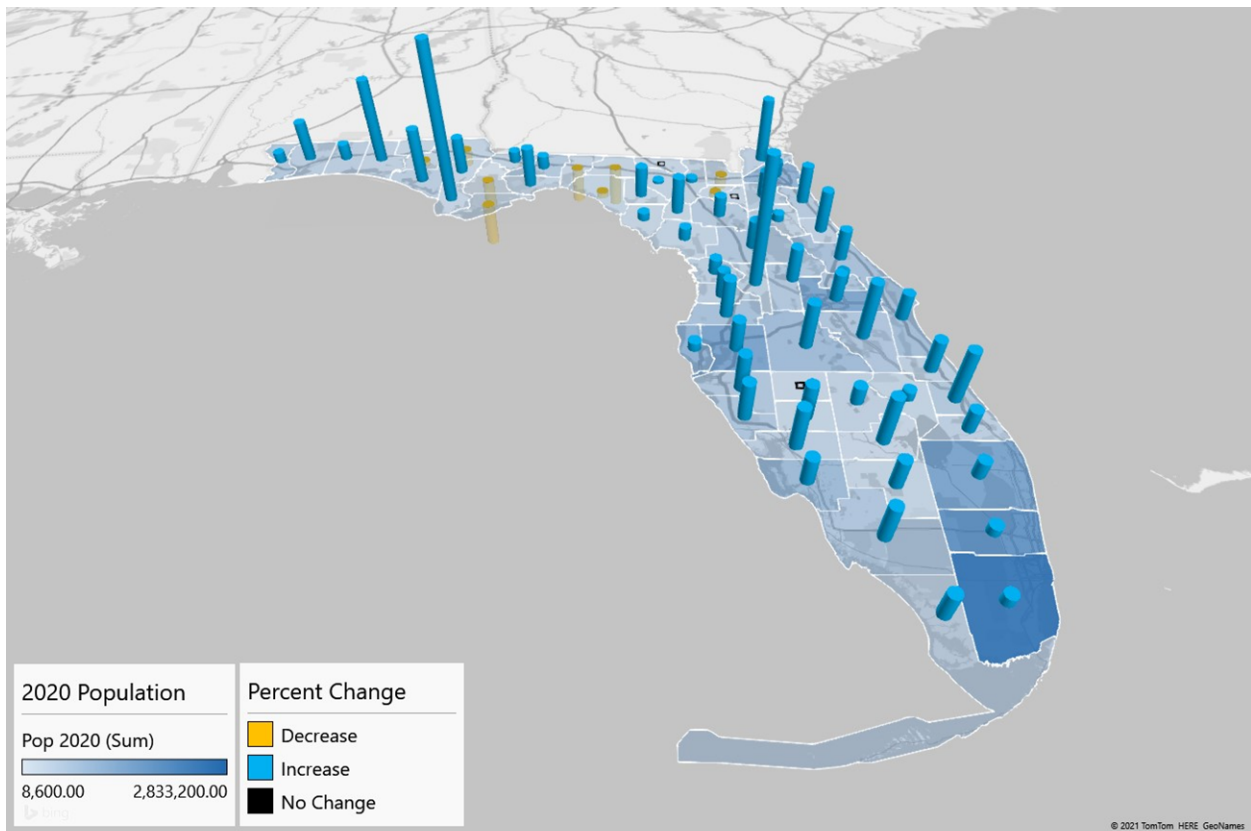
**FIGURE 1 – NUMERICAL CHANGE IN COUNTY POPULATION**



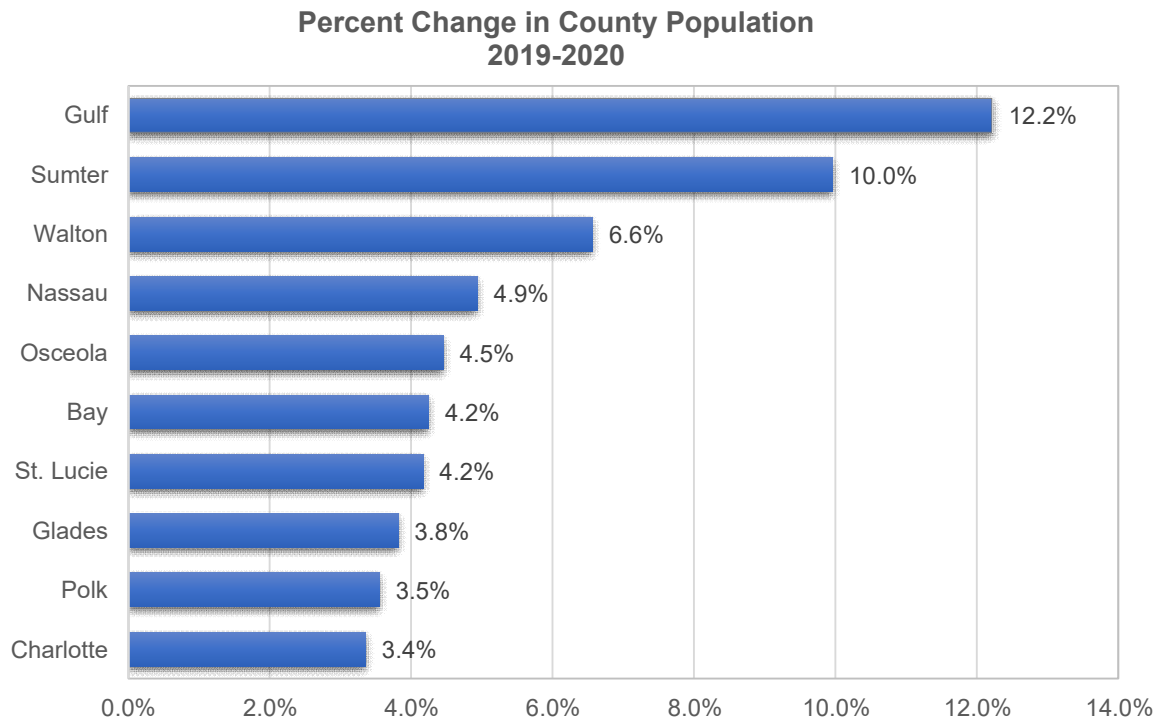
**FIGURE 2 – FLORIDA COUNTIES WITH LARGEST NUMERICAL CHANGE IN POPULATION**

### Percent Change in County Population

The numerical change in county population reflects the magnitude of growth or decline in population, whereas the percent change indicates the rate of change in population. **Figure 3** shows the population and percent change for each county in 2020. Compared to the numerical changes, the percent changes show a different pattern. The most populous counties did not necessarily have the highest growth rates. In fact, counties with the largest percent growth are, in general, those neighboring the more populous counties in Central, Northeast, Central West, and Northwest Florida. **Figure 4** lists the top ten (10) counties with the largest percent growth. In 2020, Gulf County led the state with 12.2% growth in population, followed by Sumter County with 10.0%, and Walton County with 6.6%. Other counties with high percentage population growth include Nassau, Osceola, Bay, St. Lucie, Glades, Polk, and Charlotte. Among the nine (9) counties that saw a population decline in 2020, Franklin County had the largest percent decrease with -3.3%, followed by Madison County with -3.1%. Jefferson and Liberty Counties experienced smaller percentage changes with -2.7% and -2.3%, respectively. Jackson, Baker, Union, Taylor, and Washington Counties all had a population decrease of -1.3% or less.



**FIGURE 3 – PERCENT CHANGE IN COUNTY POPULATION**



**FIGURE 4 – FLORIDA COUNTIES WITH LARGEST PERCENT CHANGE IN POPULATION**

## Population Change at Urbanized Area (UA) Level

The U.S. Census Bureau delineates the nation's geographic areas into urban areas and rural areas based on population and population density. The 2010 Census defines an urban area as a densely developed territory that encompasses residential, commercial, and other non-residential urban land uses. To qualify as an urban area, the territory must encompass at least 2,500 people, at least 1,500 of which reside outside institutional group quarters. The U.S. Census Bureau identifies two types of urban areas:

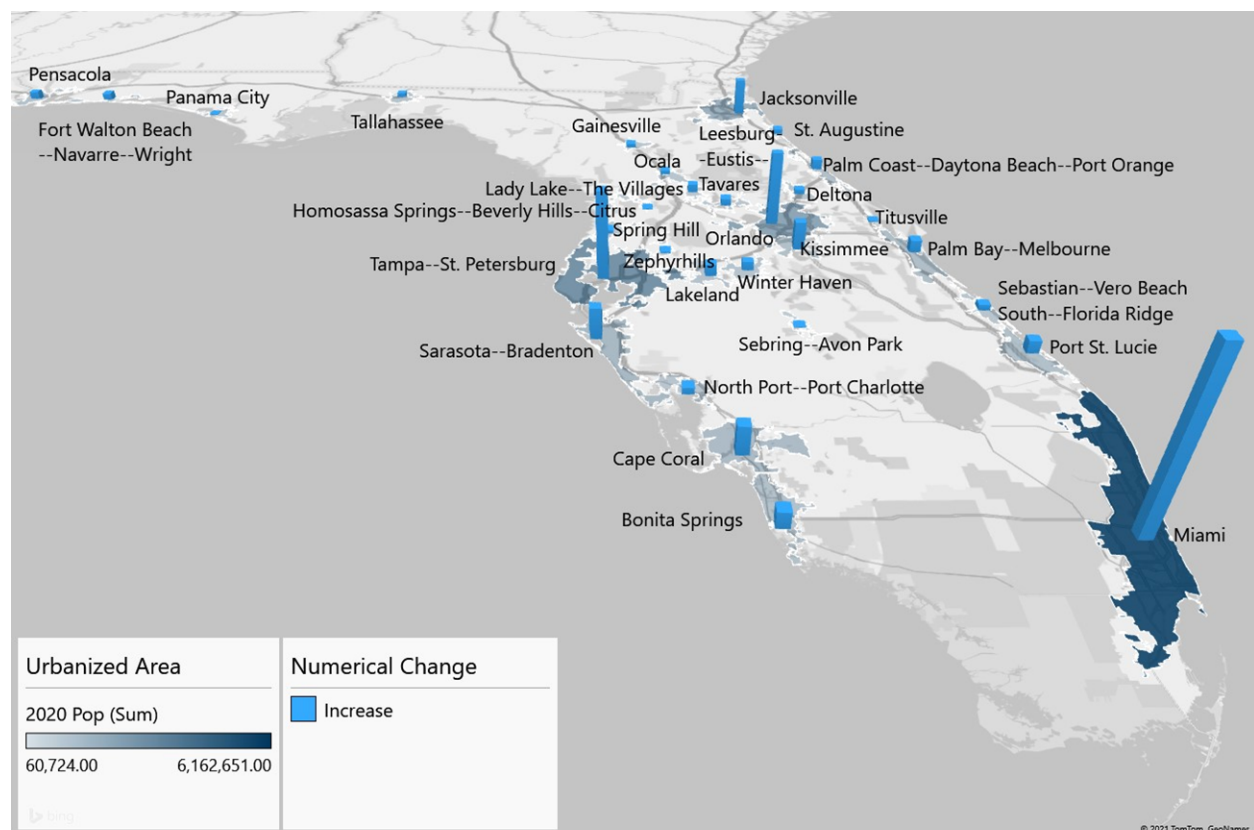
- Urbanized Areas (UAs): an urban area with 50,000 or more people; and
- Urban Clusters (UCs): an urban area with at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people.

Rural areas encompass all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area.

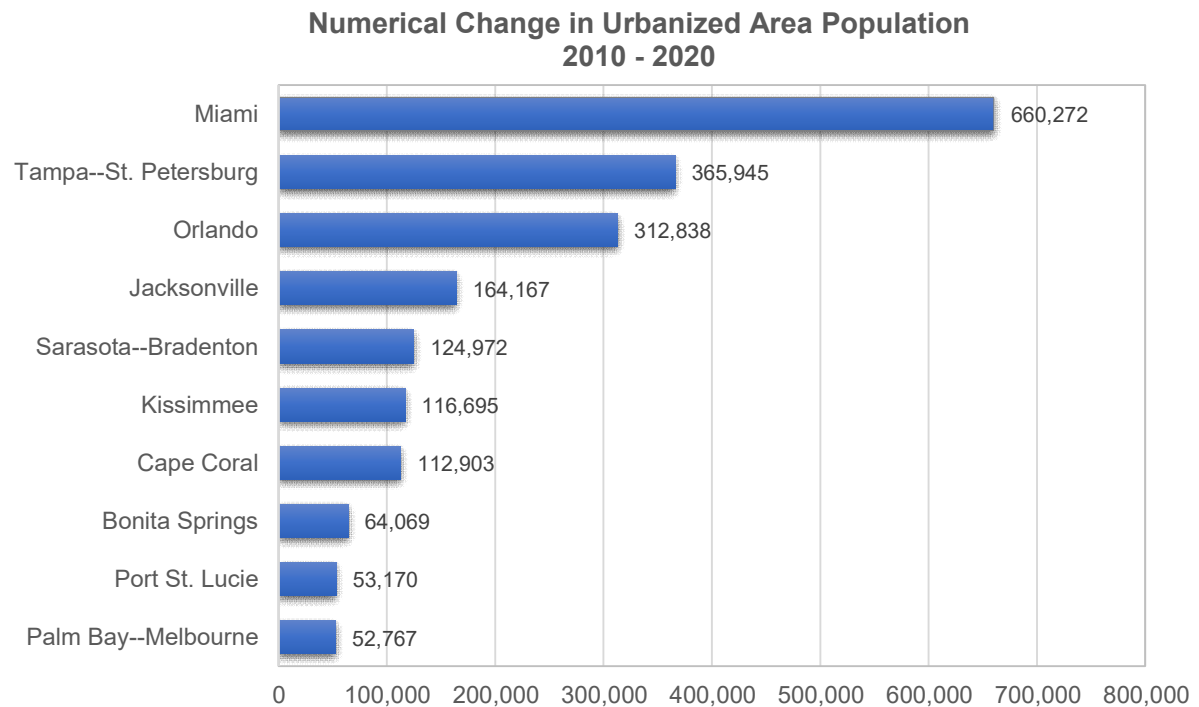
There are currently 30 Urbanized Areas and 74 [Urban Clusters](#) in Florida. The [Florida Urbanized Area Population Estimates](#) sheets contain the estimated population for the 30 Urbanized Areas in 2020 and the corresponding 2010 population based on 2010 U.S. Census. In 2010, approximately 16.4 million of 18.8 million Florida's residents (87.4%) lived in urbanized areas. From 2010 to 2020, the Florida's population grew by 14.9% to reach 21.6 million. During the same time period, however, the population in urbanized areas grew by 15.2% to reach 18.9 million. A slightly higher percentage of the state's population (87.7%) lived in urbanized areas in 2020.

### Numerical Change in Urbanized Area Population

**Figure 5** shows the 2020 population for the urbanized areas and the numerical change in population from 2010 to 2020 for each urbanized area. From 2010 to 2020, all urbanized areas experienced varying levels of growth in population. The largest growth occurred in the largest urbanized areas. **Figure 6** lists the ten (10) urbanized areas with the largest numerical change in population. Miami gained more than 660,272 people. Tampa--St. Petersburg and Orlando saw their population grow by 365,945 and 312,838 persons, respectively. The population in Jacksonville increased by 164,167. In descending order, Sarasota--Bradenton, Kissimmee, and Cape Coral each gained more than 110,000 people. The populations in Bonita Springs, Port St. Lucie, and Palm Bay--Melbourne also rose by more than 52,000 people.



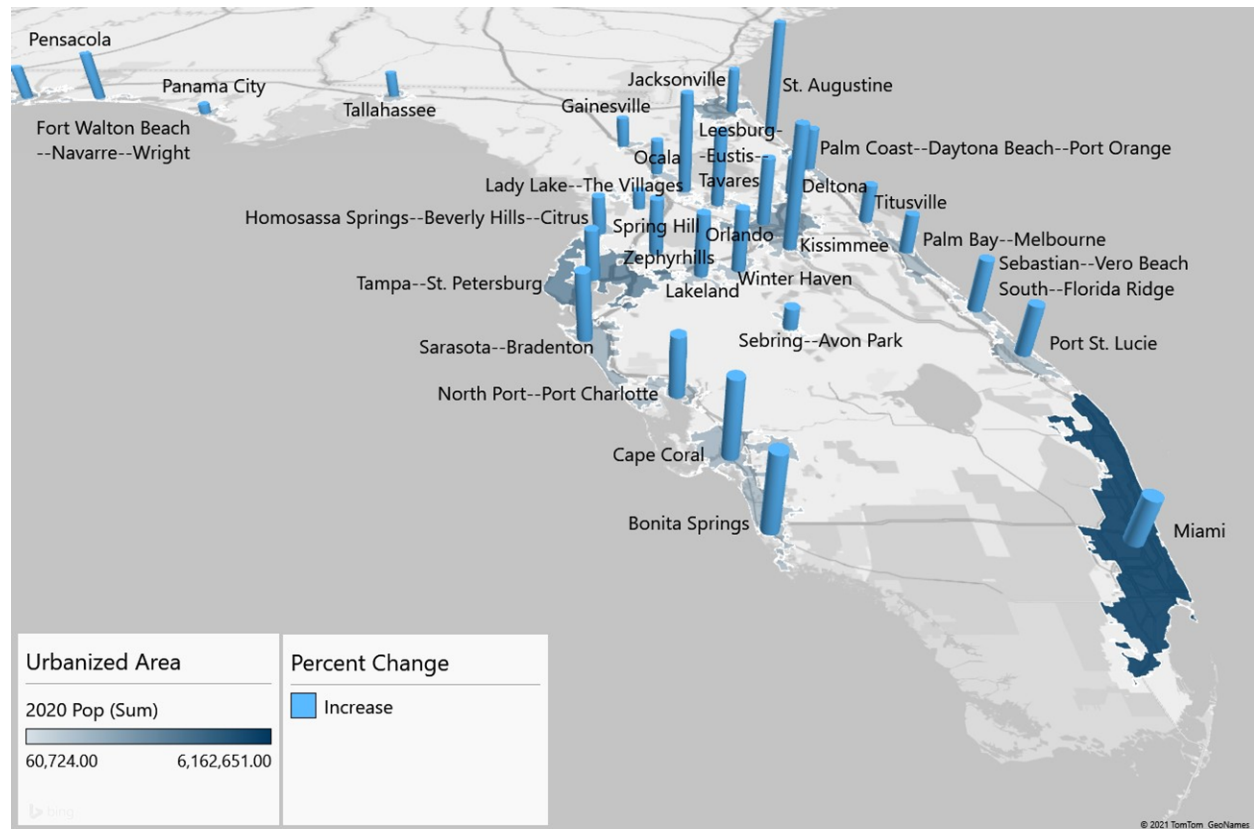
**FIGURE 5 – NUMERICAL CHANGE IN URBANIZED AREA POPULATION**



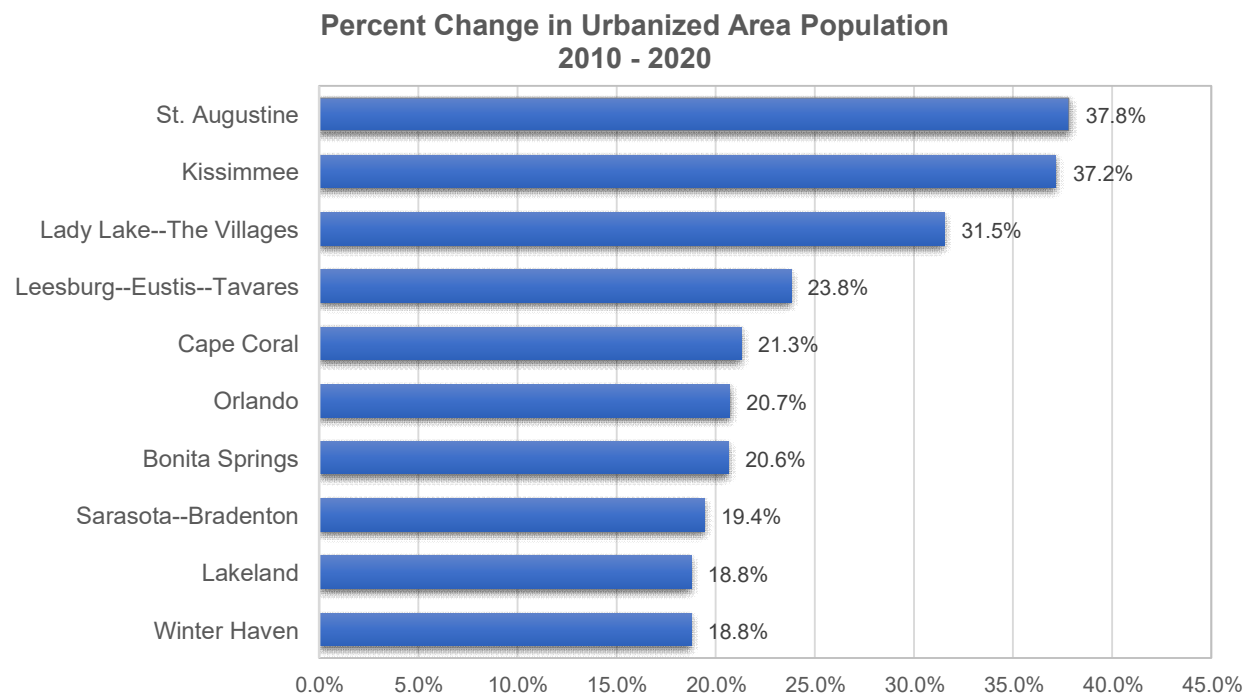
**FIGURE 6 – URBANIZED AREAS WITH LARGEST NUMERICAL CHANGE IN POPULATION**

### Percent Change in Urbanized Area Population

**Figure 7** shows the 2020 population and percent change for each urbanized area from 2010 to 2020. **Figure 8** lists the top ten (10) urbanized areas with the largest percent change in population. From 2010 to 2020, St. Augustine experienced the fastest growth in population at 37.8%, followed closely by Kissimmee with 37.2%. The two urbanized areas, Lady Lake--The Villages and Leesburg--Eustis--Tavares, located in Lake County, Sumter County, and Marion County of Central Florida, also grew at a faster pace with 31.5% and 23.8%, respectively. The Orlando Urbanized Area nearby saw a slightly lower growth with 20.7%. The three urbanized areas along Florida's west coast, Cape Coral, Bonita Springs, and Sarasota -- Bradenton, experienced high growth at 21.3%, 20.6%, and 19.4%, respectively. Lakeland and Winter Haven both grew by 18.8%.



**FIGURE 7 – PERCENT CHANGE IN URBANIZED AREA POPULATION**



**FIGURE 8 – URBANIZED AREAS WITH LARGEST PERCENT CHANGE IN POPULATION**

## Population Change at Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Level

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an agency created by federal law to provide local elected officials input into the planning and implementation of federal transportation funds to metropolitan areas with populations over 50,000. Federal law (23 USC 134(b) and 49 USC 5303(c)) requires that every urbanized area must be represented by an MPO. MPOs are also known as Transportation Planning Organizations (TPOs), Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organizations (MTPOs), or Transportation Planning Agencies (TPAs). In this Technical Memorandum, MPO will be used as a generic term to represent MPOs, TPOs, MTPOs, and TPAs. There are currently 27 MPOs in Florida. Designated in 2014, the Heartland Regional TPO is the most recent addition in the state. Most of the MPOs encompass one or more counties that contain either partial or an entire urbanized area. The Florida-Alabama TPO contains the Pensacola Urbanized Area and adjacent areas in Escambia County, Santa Rosa County, and Baldwin County, Alabama. According to 2010 U.S. Census, the population of the Florida-Alabama TPO consists of 95.3%, 93.6%, and 5.1% of the residents from the three counties, respectively.

The *MPO Population Estimates* sheet contains the estimated population for the 27 MPOs in 2020 and the corresponding 2010 population based on 2010 U.S. Census. In 2010, approximately 18.1 million of 18.8 million Florida's residents (96.1%) lived in an area covered by an MPO. From 2010 to 2020, Florida's population grew by 14.9% to reach 21.6 million. During the same time period, however, the population covered by the MPOs increased by 15.3% to reach 20.8 million. By 2020, a slightly higher percentage of the state's population (96.5%) resided in the MPO areas.

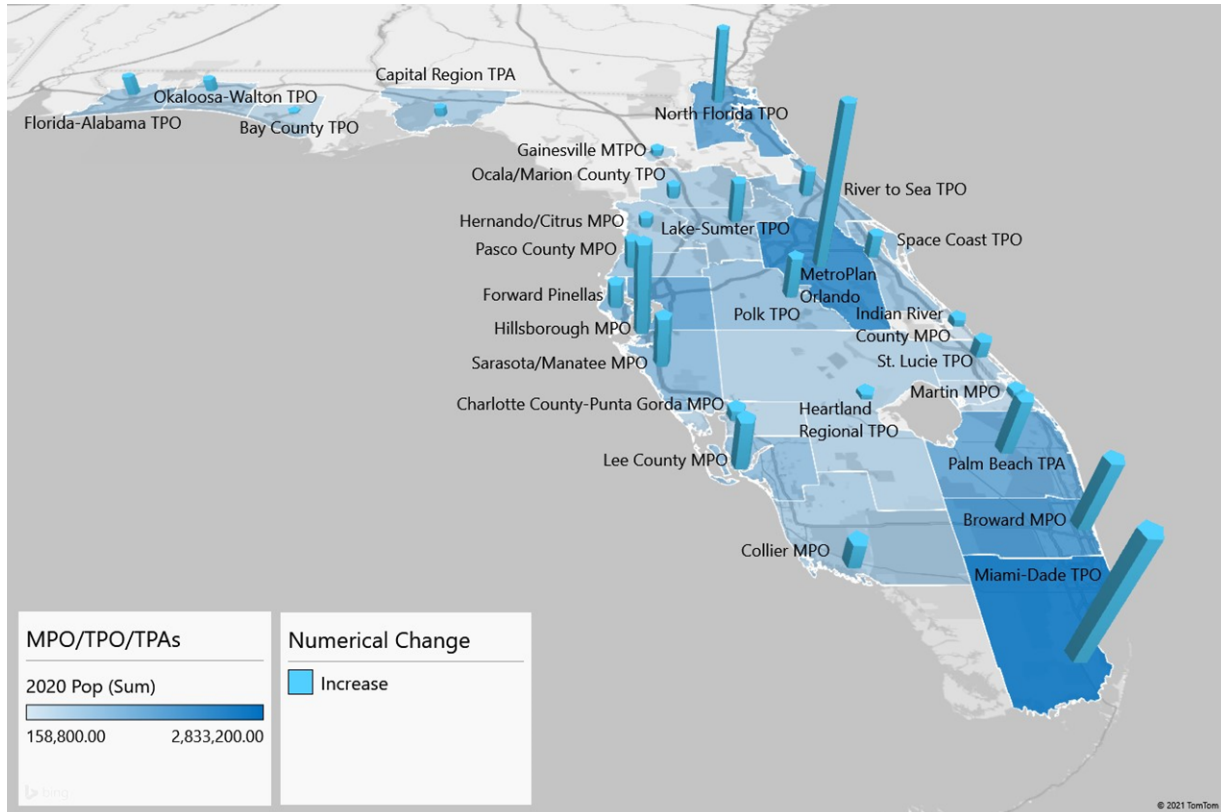
### Numerical Change in MPO Population

**Figure 9** shows the 2020 population for the MPOs and the numerical change in population from 2010 to 2020 for each MPO. During the period from 2010 to 2020, population grew in all MPO areas. The largest growth occurred in the largest MPOs. **Figure 10** lists the top ten (10) MPOs with the largest numerical change in population. Metroplan Orlando led the MPOs in population growth with an increase of 441,941, followed by Miami-Dade TPO with a population increase of 336,743. Hillsborough MPO had the third highest increase in population with 249,874. North Florida TPO gained 234,319 people. The other two large MPOs in South Florida, Broward MPO and Palm Beach TPA, saw their population grow by 184,134 and 146,566, respectively. The two MPOs along the west coast, Lee County MPO and Sarasota/Manatee MPO, gained more than 131,000 people each. The two MPOs in Central Florida, Lake-Sumter MPO and Polk TPO, saw their population increase by more than 113,000.

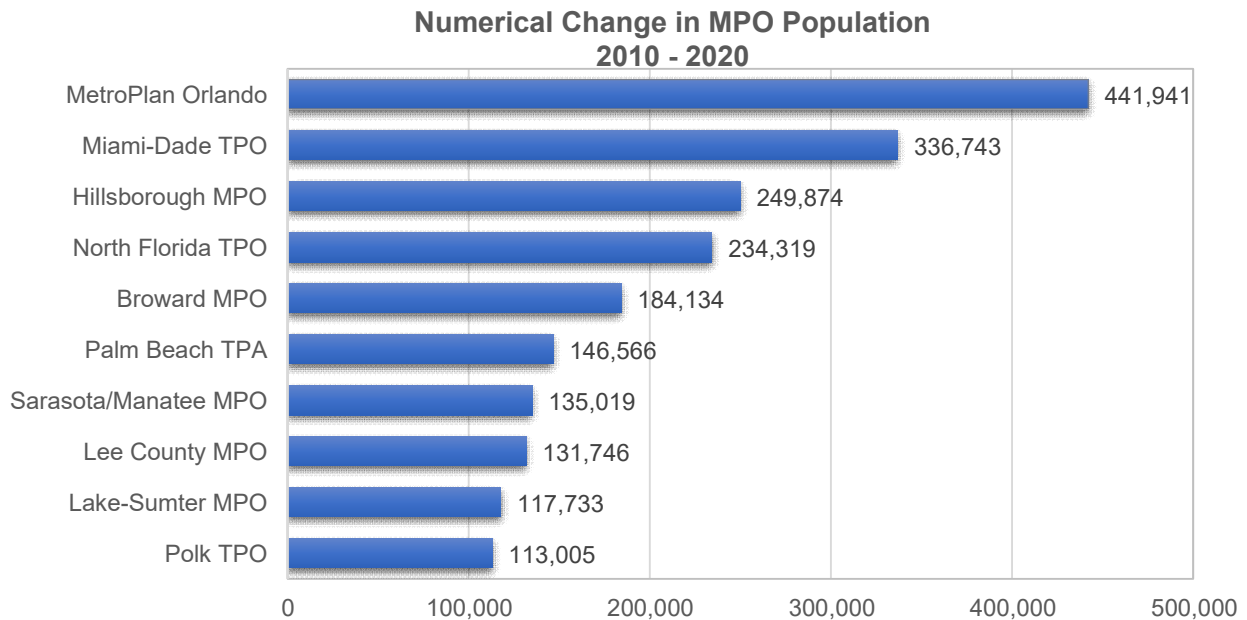
### Percent Change in MPO Population

**Figure 11** shows the 2020 population and percent change for each MPO from 2010 to 2020. **Figure 12** lists the top ten (10) MPOs with the largest percent change in population. From 2010 to 2020, Lake-Sumter experienced the fastest growth in population with 30.2%, followed by MetroPlan Orlando with 24.1%. Lee County MPO came in third with a population growth of 21.3%. The population in Collier MPO grew by 20.5%, and Hillsborough County MPO witnessed an

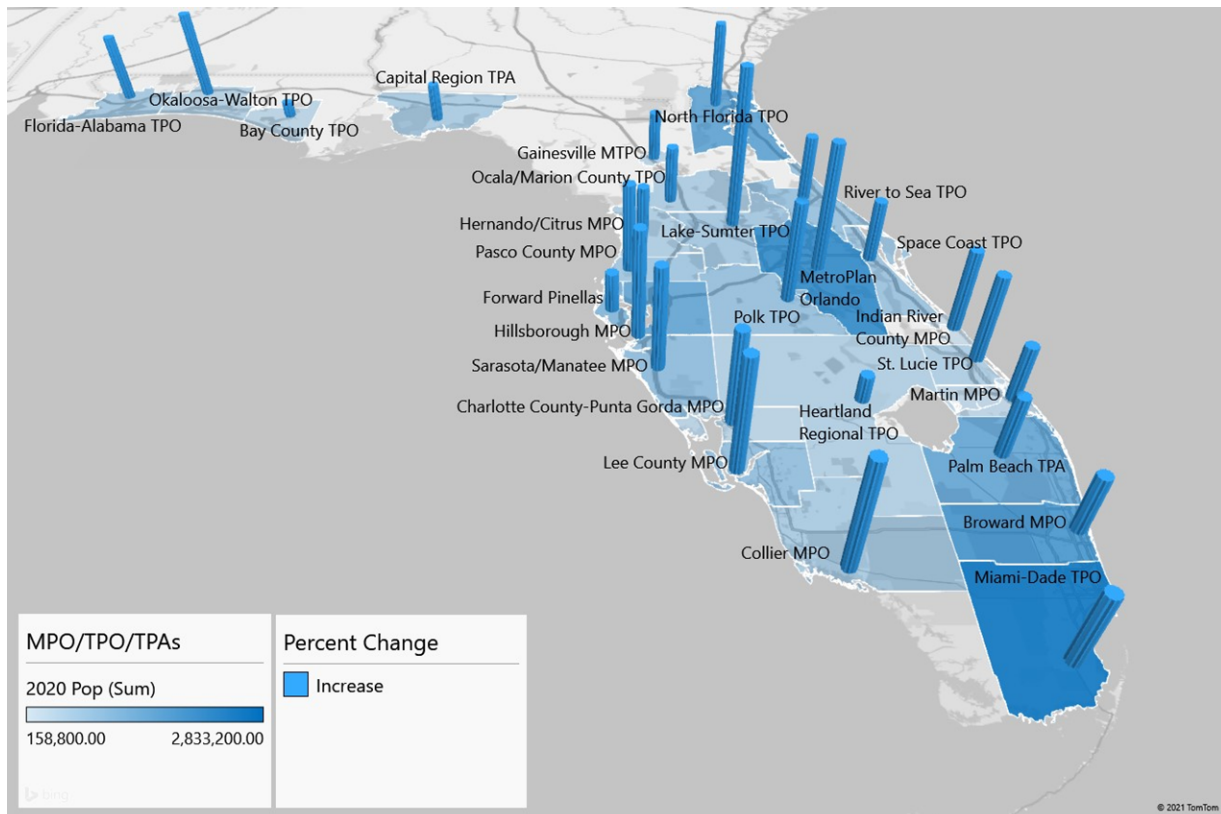
expansion of 20.3%. The percent change for the next five fastest growing MPOs ranged from 17.5% to 19.2%.



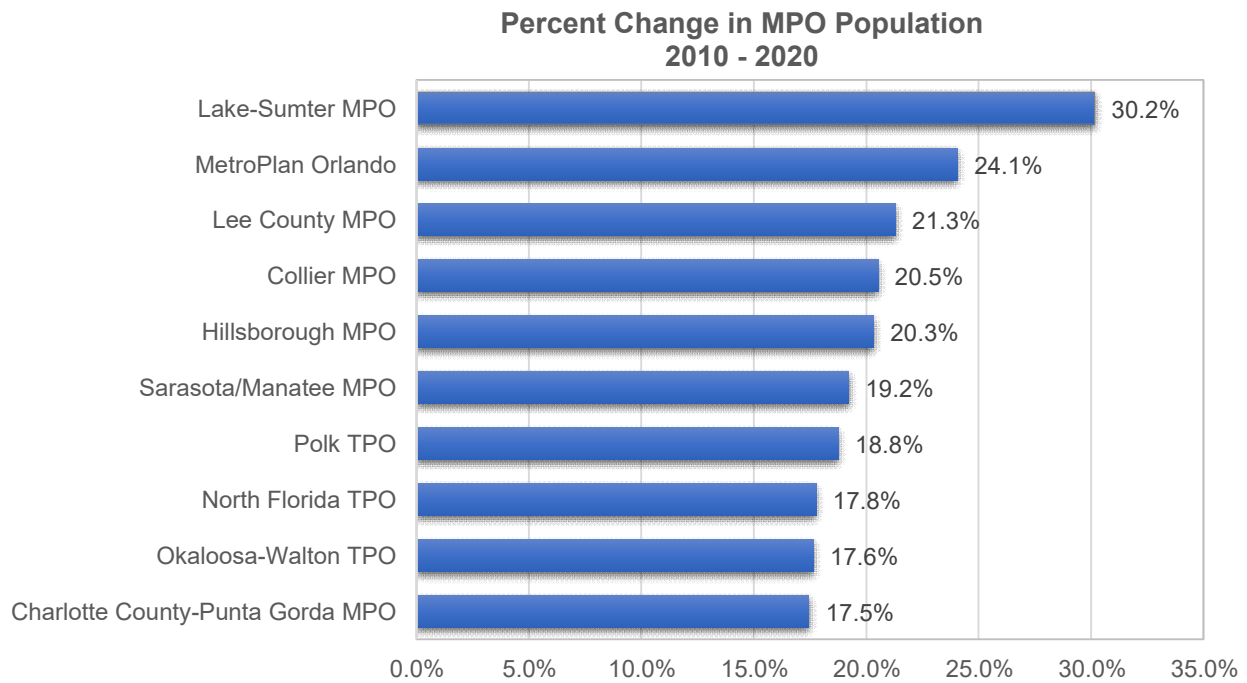
**FIGURE 9 – NUMERICAL CHANGE IN MPO POPULATION**



**FIGURE 10 – MPOs WITH LARGEST NUMERICAL CHANGE IN POPULATION**



**FIGURE 11 – PERCENT CHANGE IN MPO POPULATION**



**FIGURE 12 – MPOs WITH LARGEST PERCENT CHANGE IN POPULATION**

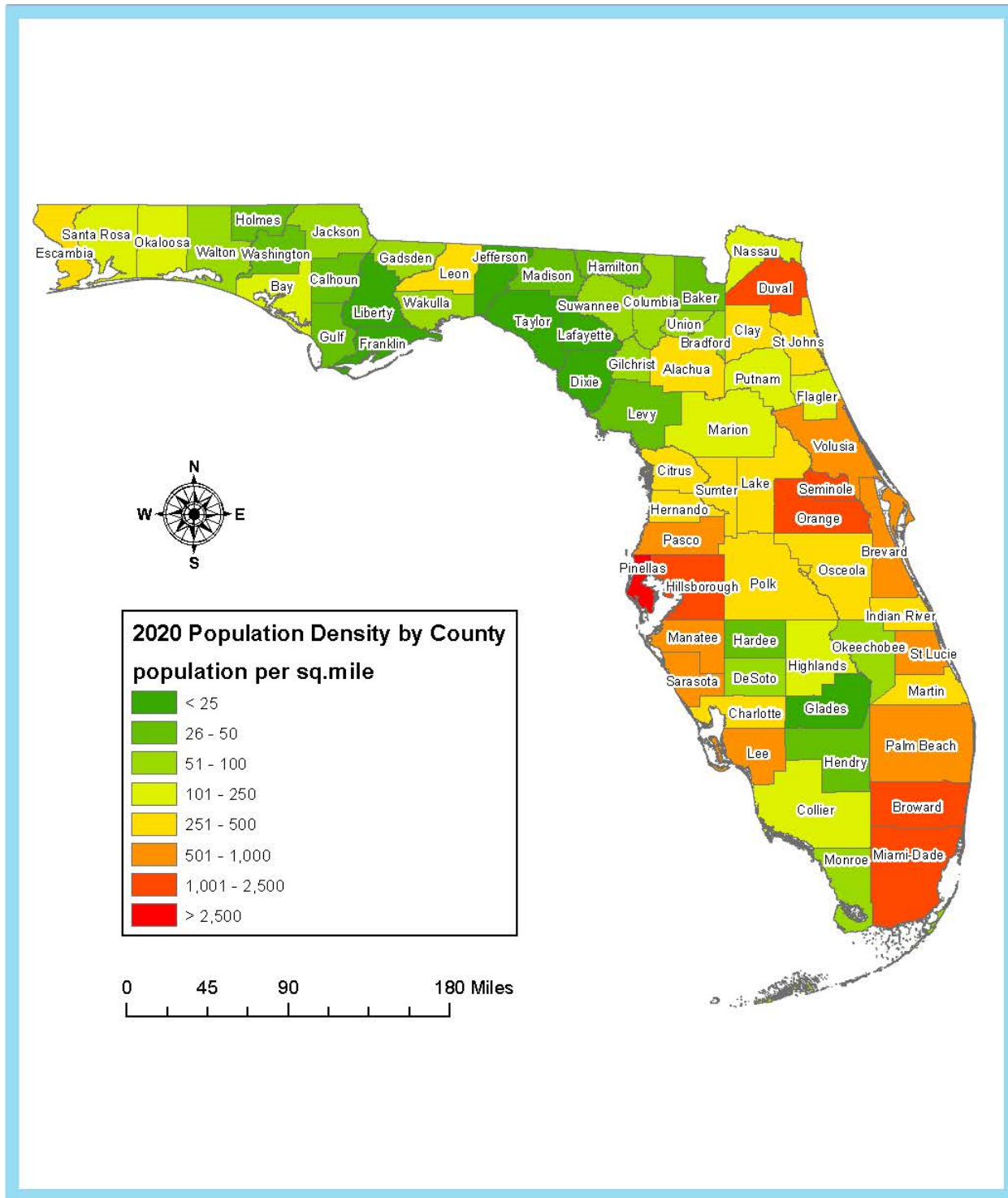
## Population Density

The spatial distribution and concentration of people is an important factor impacting urban structure and transportation requirements. Population density influences both travel patterns and land use configurations. Increasing development density tends to bring certain benefits such as reducing driving, lowering Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), and providing more opportunities for public transit. On the other hand, lowering development density could result in longer average work trip travel times and greater traffic congestion. In addition to population estimates, the FTO also conducts analysis of population densities for counties, urbanized areas, and Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA). Population density maps and tables are provided on FTO's [Demographic and Commuting Analysis](#) website.

**Figure 13** shows the population density by county based on the 2020 population estimates. The State of Florida has a surface area of 65,757.7 square miles, of which 53,624.8 square miles are land areas. Based on the 2020 population estimates, this equates to 403 persons per square mile of land area, which makes Florida one of the most densely populated states in the US.

The largest county by population is Miami-Dade County with well over 2.8 million individuals residing within the county lines in 2020. The largest county by land area is Collier County with 1,998.3 square miles. However, the County with the highest density is Pinellas County with 3,595 persons per square mile. Other counties with the highest densities are those that contain the largest urban centers in the state, such as Broward County (1,597 persons per square mile), Orange County (1,567 persons per square mile), and Seminole County (1,542 persons per square mile).

On the other end of the spectrum, Liberty County is the most sparsely populated county with a population density of only 10 persons per square mile. Lafayette County and Glades County had similar densities with approximately 16 persons per square mile. Taylor County had slightly higher density with 22 persons per square mile.



**FIGURE 13 – 2020 POPULATION DENSITY BY COUNTY**

## Factors Influencing Population Growth

Two main factors affect population growth: natural growth and net migration (both domestically and internationally). Natural growth is determined by the difference between births and deaths. Births fluctuate more subtly in response to economic conditions. Deaths, on the other hand, change more slowly in response to the age profile of population. Net migration is the combined result of people coming and leaving the state. The migration patterns are heavily influenced by economic conditions but could also be affected by quality-of-life factors, immigration policies, and even political environment. A natural disaster could also have an impact on population changes. Florida has grown steadily over the past few decades, even though the rate of growth has varied depending on the economic conditions and other factors. It is critical to continuously monitor the conditions that influence the population growth and provide accurate population estimates and projections that will ultimately affect transportation investment strategies and decisions.

More detailed population data can be found at FTO's Demographic and Commuting Analysis webpage (<https://www.fdot.gov/planning/demographic>).