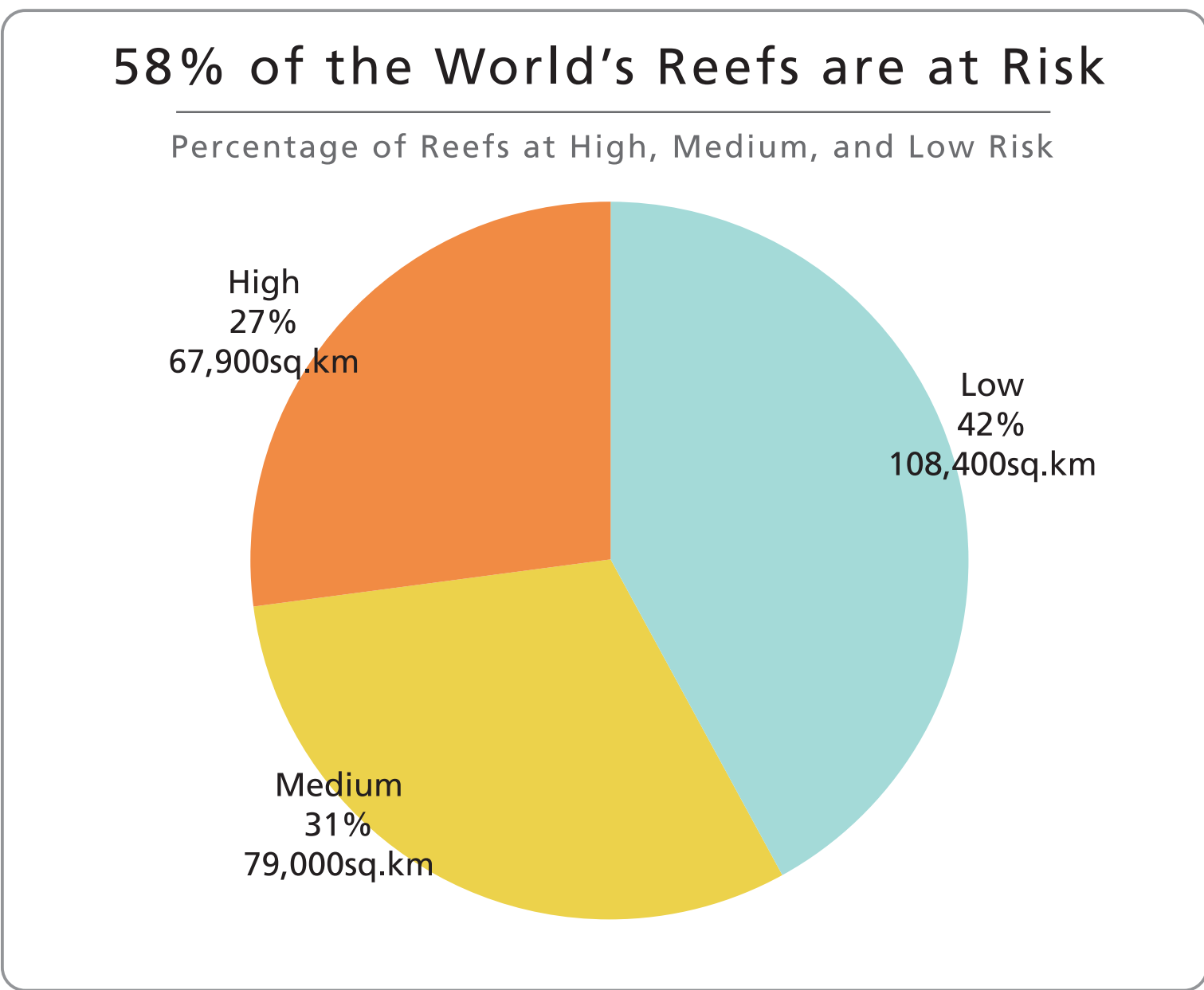
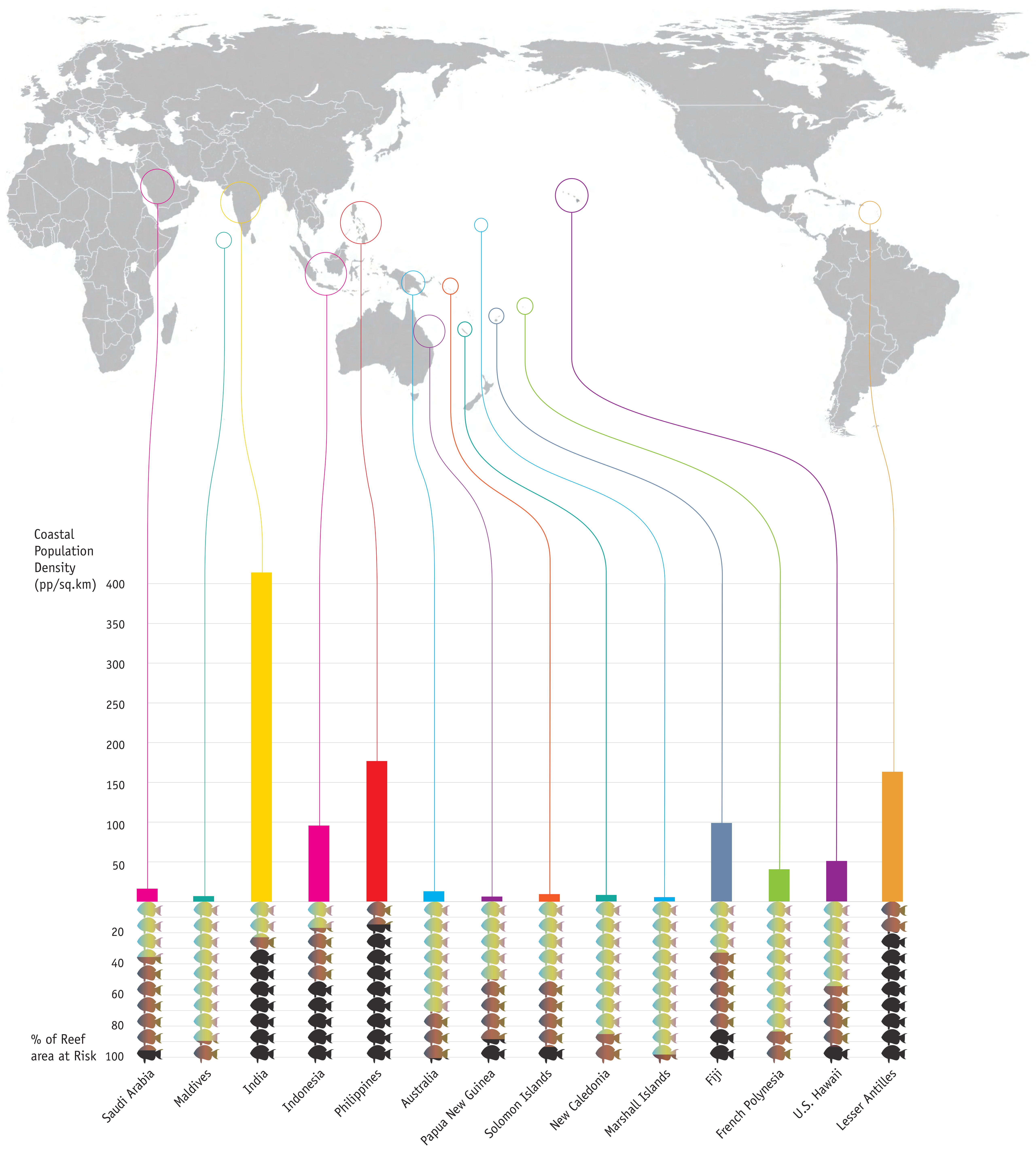


REEFS AT RISK

Indicated by Selected Countries in Relation to Coastal Population



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California, USA - December 2009

Case Study No.04
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The 34x44 poster can be folded down
to 8.5x11 as shown on the grid.

Coral reefs, which are among the most biologically diverse ecosystems on the planet, are also some of the most ancient. They first appeared in the Mesozoic era some 225 million years ago and some living coral reefs may be as much as 2.5 million years old. Outstanding examples of our biological and natural heritage, coral reefs are an important asset to local communities — serving as a source of seafood, providing materials for new medicines, generating income from tourism, and buffering coastal cities and settlements from storm damage. Yet, in just a few decades, human activities have devastated many of these biologically rich, ancient ecosystems. In the next two or three decades, more are destined for destruction.

Many of the protective measures needed to ensure the health of these ecosystems are “win-win” options for both reefs and people. For example, creating marine parks and sanctuaries may enrich local communities by attracting tourists and may benefit nearby fisheries by protecting breeding stock of target species. Eliminating perverse and often costly subsidies to fisheries and agriculture, for example, may reduce overfishing, sedimentation, and pollution of reefs, and building sewage treatment facilities within coastal communities may provide both environmental and health benefits.

This analysis offers a stark warning: the pressure of human activities poses grave danger to reefs in most of the world's oceans, and irreparable damage is occurring rapidly. The exceptions are places still isolated from intense human pressures and those few places that have implemented effective measures to protect reefs.

