

Population Redistribution Trends in Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan America 2000 to 2010

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ABSTRACT

The release of 2010 Census data provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the population redistribution trends that have occurred in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan America over the past decade. Our primary interest is with the question of how economic forces have reshaped recent patterns of U.S. population growth and redistribution. Our analysis centers on the three major demographic components of population change: (1) internal migration; (2) immigration; and (3) natural increase. Data comes from the ACS, 2010 and 2000 Censuses, and the Vital Registration System (NCHS) and the IRS data on county-county migration file. Our analysis will compare demographic change in different types of nonmetropolitan counties. We also plan to compare the differential impact of the recession on demographic trends in urban cores to those in suburban areas. Our results will provide a rich and nuanced picture of how recent demographic changes have redistributed the U.S. population.

Population Redistribution Trends in Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan America 2000 to 2010

The release of 2010 Census data provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the population redistribution trends that have occurred in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan America over the

past decade. During the decade, the nation enjoyed both a protracted demographic boom and the worst recession since the 1930s. Our primary interest is with the question of how these economic forces have reshaped recent patterns of U.S. population growth and redistribution. Our analysis centers on the three major demographic components of population change: (1) internal migration; (2) immigration; and (3) natural increase.

Each of the three major mechanisms of demographic change shifted in unanticipated ways during the boom and recessionary period of the last decade. For example, domestic migration (i.e., county-to-county flows) is currently at its lowest levels since record-keeping began after booming earlier in the decade. Immigration also has recently slowed after more than a decade of unprecedented increases (e.g., nearly 1 million annual immigrants). Boom communities are now losing jobs in employment sectors, such as construction, that first attracted new immigrant workers. And, recently-released ACS data indicate that U.S. birth rates declined unexpectedly over the past two years.

This research is guided by a theoretical framework that emphasizes population responses to economic dislocations. Indeed, the impact of the recession appears to have been most immediate and pronounced on domestic migration. Our preliminary analysis suggests that the recession had the effect of “freezing people in place,” while severing the historical link between spatial and social mobility. In regions that grew rapidly during the mid-decade boom (e.g., Sunbelt states), the recession has sharply diminished the volume of in-migration, while outflows increased more gradually. The result has been smaller net migration gains and less population growth in these formerly fast-growing areas which include many rural amenity and retirement destination counties.

Paradoxically, the recession has revealed a strikingly different pattern in formerly declining areas. Here, the recent slowing of domestic out-migration has resulted in smaller population losses or outright population gains. Many large urban cores experienced substantial domestic migration losses during the boom years of the mid-decade. Even though domestic migration losses were offset or cushioned by immigration and natural increase, the overall result was slower growth or outright population decline. Our preliminary analysis suggests the outmigration streams from the cores slowed much more dramatically than the streams of immigration. In contrast, growth on the fringe of many large metropolitan areas and in the adjacent nonmetropolitan areas just beyond it, where sprawl was widespread during the boom years appears to have slowed or reversed. Our knowledge of population changes across the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan hierarchy of places remains limited and fragmentary at best. Our purpose here is to expand and deepen our understanding of how migration is acting to redistribute the population.

Early results from the 2010 Census also indicate that most of the 2000 to 2010 population growth resulted from natural increase. With both domestic migration and immigration at low ebb, natural increase is likely to play an increasingly large role in growth and decline processes over the foreseeable future. Past immigration also is now having large second-order effects on natural increase. Fertility rates (especially among Hispanics) are well above replacement levels, while the majority white population has below-replacement fertility. Our analysis suggests that America's minority populations have accounted for vast majority of the overall U.S. population growth. Thus, the impacts of minority population growth on national growth and declines processes cannot be ignored. Population gains have been most pronounced among the young

population. The 2010 Census and American Community Survey (ACS) provide a unique and timely opportunity to examine these newly emerging population shifts.

Our analyses will be based largely on data from the ACS, 2010 and 2000 Censuses, and the Vital Registration System (i.e., fertility and mortality data from NCHS). We will also use the IRS data on migration to examine how the recession has differentially impacted the streams of migrants moving into and out of different U.S. regions and how they have differentially impacted places in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan America. We are particularly interested in how demographic trends in nonmetropolitan America have been influenced by the turbulent economic environment of the last decade. Our analysis will compare demographic change in nonmetropolitan areas proximate to metropolitan areas and those remote from such areas as well as compare different types of rural counties. We also plan to compare the differential impact of the recession on demographic trends in urban cores to those in suburban areas. The results of our research will provide a rich and nuanced picture of how the demographic changes of the last decade have redistributed the population in metropolitan and nonmetropolitan regions of the United States.