

Population Trends in Metropolitan Areas and Central Cities

1990 to 1998

Population Characteristics

Issued July 2000

P25-1133

The populations of both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan territories increased between 1990 and 1998, with strong growth in the South and West, particularly in the South Atlantic and Mountain Divisions. Among metropolitan areas of different sizes, medium-sized areas grew the fastest. Within metropolitan areas, the population outside central cities grew faster than the population inside them.

Both Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Areas' Populations Increased Between 1990 and 1998

From 1990 to 1998, the population of the country's MAs grew by 9.1 percent, increasing from 198.5 million to 216.5 million. Over the same period, the population in nonmetropolitan territory in the United States grew at a slower rate — 7.0 percent — increasing from 50.3 million to 53.8 million. The growth rate for the entire U.S. population from 1990 to 1998 was 8.7 percent.

Metropolitan Areas

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines Metropolitan Areas (MAs) according to published standards.¹ MAs consist of one or more counties, except in the New England states, where the components are cities and towns. MAs include metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) and consolidated metropolitan statistical areas (CMSAs). CMSAs are composed of primary metropolitan statistical areas (PMSAs). There are 276 MSAs and CMSAs in the United States (effective June 30, 1999).

¹ The MA standards identify the largest city in each MSA or CMSA as a "central city." Additional cities may be central cities if they meet specified population size and commuting thresholds.

Figure 1. List of States by Region and Division

The U.S. Census Bureau divides the country into four regions. These regions, in turn, are subdivided into nine divisions.

Northeast Region

New England Division

Maine
New Hampshire
Vermont
Massachusetts
Rhode Island
Connecticut

Middle Atlantic Division

New York
New Jersey
Pennsylvania

South Region

South Atlantic Division

Delaware
Maryland
District of Columbia
Virginia
West Virginia
North Carolina
South Carolina
Georgia
Florida

East South Central Division

Kentucky
Tennessee
Alabama
Mississippi

West South Central Division

Arkansas
Louisiana
Oklahoma
Texas

Midwest Region

East North Central Division

Ohio
Indiana
Illinois
Michigan
Wisconsin

West North Central Division

Minnesota
Iowa
Missouri
North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas

West Region

Mountain Division

Montana
Idaho
Wyoming
Colorado
New Mexico
Arizona
Utah
Nevada

Pacific Division

Washington
Oregon
California
Alaska
Hawaii

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Current Population Reports

By Paul J. Mackun and Shawn R. Wilson

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Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Areas' Growth Rates Varied by Region and Division

As in the case of population growth in the country as a whole, substantial differences in growth for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas were evident by region and division. In general, the largest growth occurred in the South and West, constituting 81.3 percent of the population increase in the country's MAs and 78.7 percent of the population increase in the country's nonmetropolitan areas. The smallest population growth occurred in the

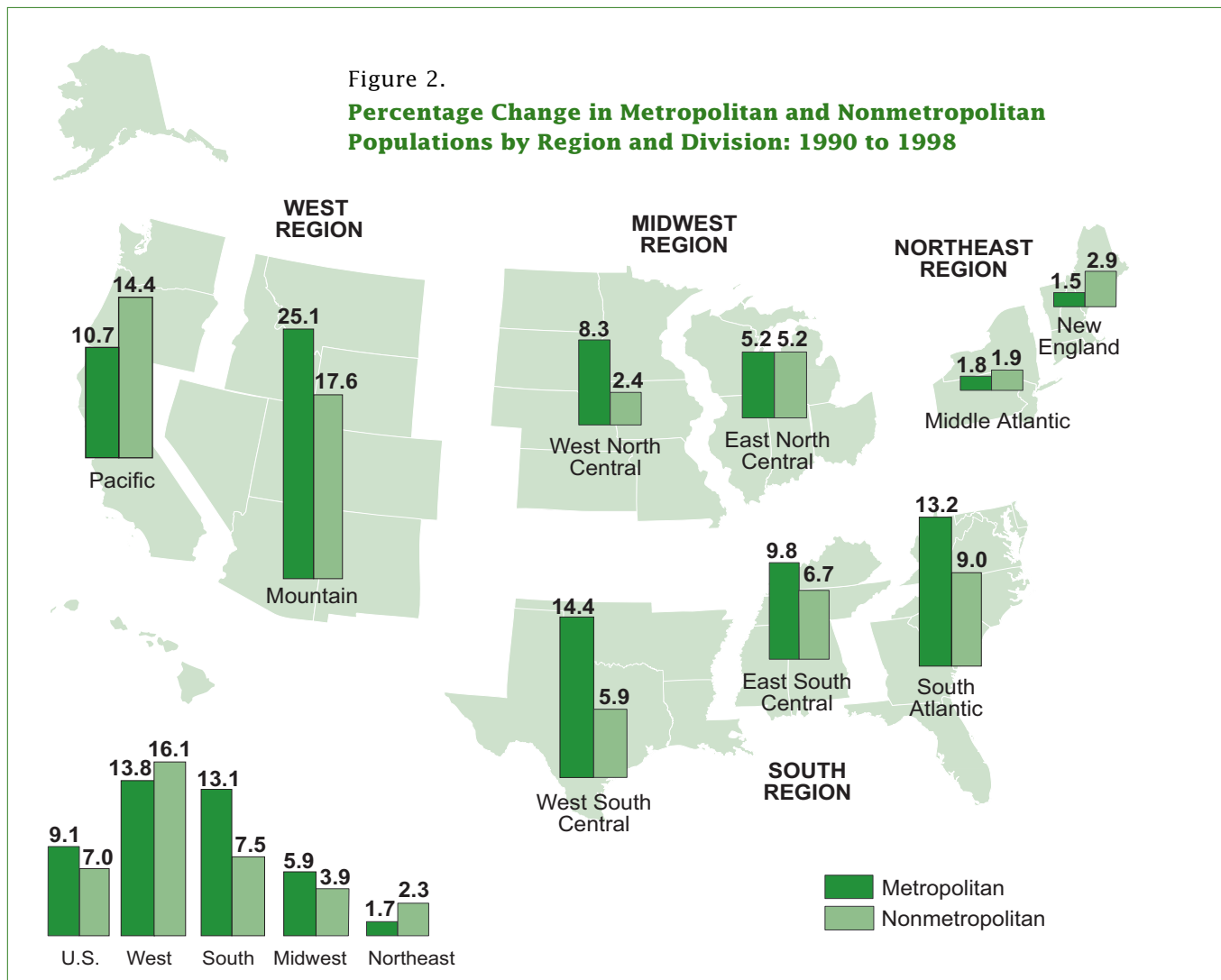
Northeast, with only 4.3 percent of the increase in the metropolitan population and 3.5 percent of the growth in the nonmetropolitan population. The population growth for the Midwest accounted for 14.4 percent and 17.8 percent of the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan population change, respectively.

The interior of the country contained a higher proportion of the nonmetropolitan population than did either of the coasts. In 1998, among the nine divisions, the East South Central Division and the West North Central Division contained the highest

percentages of the population living in nonmetropolitan areas, 41.6 percent and 40.3 percent, respectively. In contrast, the Pacific, Middle Atlantic, and New England Divisions had the highest percentage of the population that was metropolitan, 91.6 percent, 91.3 percent, and 84.1 percent, respectively.

Metropolitan Areas' Growth Was Fastest in the West

The West experienced the fastest metropolitan population growth rate of the four regions (13.8 percent), led by a 25.1 percent increase in the Mountain Division (see Figure 2).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

MAs in the South grew by 13.1 percent, led by an increase of 14.4 percent in the West South Central Division. The population of the Northeast's MAs grew by 1.7 percent, with a 1.5 percent increase in the New England Division and a 1.8 percent gain in the Middle Atlantic Division. In the Midwest, the growth rate for MAs was 5.9 percent; the fastest rate of

patterns similar to those of MAs. The fastest growth rate for nonmetropolitan areas occurred in the West, with 16.1 percent. Like MA growth in the region, nonmetropolitan population in the Mountain Division states grew faster than population in nonmetropolitan territory in the Pacific Division states, increasing by 17.6 percent and 14.4 percent, respectively. The

New England Divisions had higher rates of growth for nonmetropolitan areas than for metropolitan areas.

Fastest-Growing Metropolitan Areas Were in the West and South

The location of the fastest-growing MAs provides another view of regional differences in metropolitan population change. All of the ten fastest-growing MAs between 1990 and 1998 were in the West or in the South, led by Las Vegas, NV-AZ (55.0 percent), Laredo, TX (41.2 percent), and McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX (36.2 percent) (see Table 1). MAs in the Midwest and the Northeast grew more slowly. The fastest-growing MAs in the Midwest were Sioux Falls, SD and Madison, WI at 17.4 percent and 15.7 percent, respectively. Barnstable-Yarmouth, MA (11.6 percent) and York, PA (9.9 percent) were the two fastest-growing MAs in the Northeast.

Table 1.
Ten Fastest-Growing Metropolitan Areas: 1990 to 1998¹

Metropolitan area	1998 population	Population change—1990 to 1998	
		Number	Percent
Las Vegas, NV-AZ	1,321,546	468,900	55.0
Laredo, TX	188,166	54,927	41.2
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	522,204	138,659	36.2
Boise City, ID	395,953	100,102	33.8
Naples, FL	199,436	47,337	31.1
Phoenix-Mesa, AZ	2,931,004	692,506	30.9
Austin-San Marcos, TX	1,105,909	259,682	30.7
Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR	272,616	61,708	29.3
Wilmington, NC	218,248	46,979	27.4
Provo-Orem, UT	335,635	72,045	27.3

¹Each of these metropolitan areas is a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

growth for this region, 8.3 percent, occurred in the West North Central Division.

Patterns in Nonmetropolitan Territory Were Similar to Those in Metropolitan Areas

From 1990 to 1998, nonmetropolitan territory had regional growth

nonmetropolitan growth rate in the South was 7.5 percent, led by the South Atlantic Division with a 9.0 percent growth rate. The slowest growth rate for nonmetropolitan territory was in the Northeast (2.3 percent). Nonmetropolitan growth for the Midwest was 3.9 percent. Among the nine divisions, only the Pacific, Middle Atlantic, and

Metropolitan Growth Differed Among Population Size Categories

Of the country's total population in 1998, 28.1 percent lived in MAs with 5,000,000 or more population. All eight MAs in this size category grew between 1990 and 1998 (see Table 2). Within the group, the population

Table 2.
Metropolitan Areas With Populations of 5,000,000 or More: 1990 to 1998¹

Metropolitan area	1998 population	Population change—1990 to 1998	
		Number	Percent
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA	20,126,150	558,939	2.9
Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, CA	15,781,273	1,249,744	8.6
Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI	8,809,846	570,026	6.9
Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV	7,285,206	558,811	8.3
San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA	6,816,047	538,522	8.6
Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, PA-NJ-DE-MD	5,988,348	95,329	1.6
Boston-Worcester-Lawrence, MA-NH-ME-CT	5,633,060	177,657	3.3
Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint, MI	5,457,583	270,412	5.2

¹Each of these metropolitan areas is a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA).
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

of Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, CA, and San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA, increased most rapidly — 8.6 percent in each case.

The 12 MAs with 1990 populations between 2,000,000 and 4,999,999 grew the fastest of any size category (see Table 3). Between 1990 and 1998, these MAs increased by 13.8 percent, led by Phoenix-Mesa, AZ, with a growth rate of 30.9 percent. The 96 MAs with population size between 250,000 and 999,999 experienced the next-fastest growth rate, increasing by 10.8 percent during the same period. Las Vegas, NV-AZ, was the fastest-growing MA in this category, with a growth rate of 55.0 percent.

Table 3.
Population Change in Metropolitan Areas by Size Category: 1990 to 1998

Population size category (based on 1990 population)	Percent change	Numeric change	Number of MAs
Total	9.1	18,027,785	276
Less than 250,000	8.3	1,580,228	140
250,000 - 999,999	10.8	5,027,506	96
1,000,000 - 1,999,999	10.1	2,724,167	20
2,000,000 - 4,999,999	13.8	4,676,444	12
5,000,000 or more	5.6	4,019,440	8

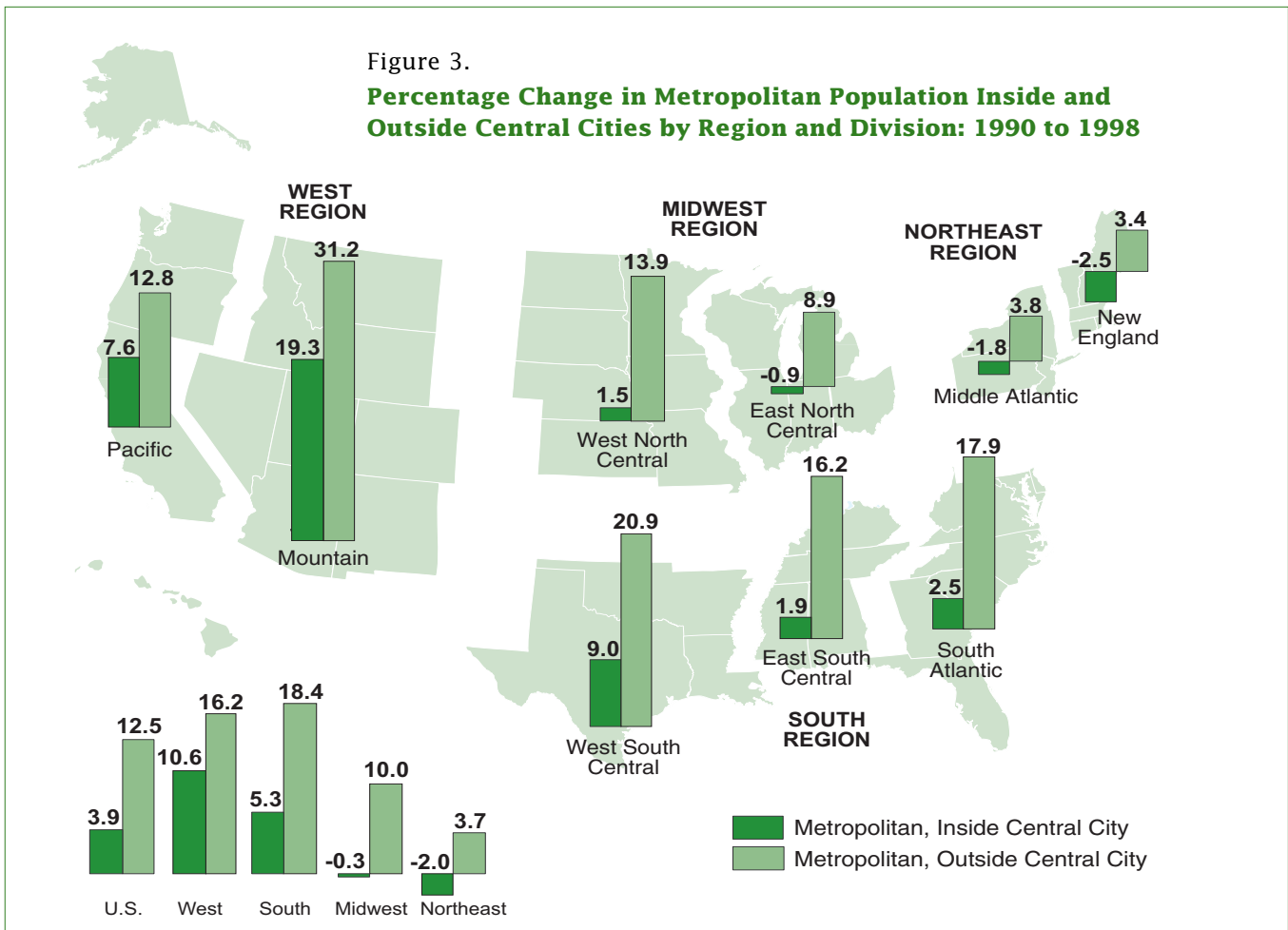
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

Population Growth Deferred Inside and Outside Central Cities

Total Central City Population Experienced Slow Growth

The patterns of population distribution and growth for central cities were different from that of entire MAs. From

1990 to 1998, the total central city population increased by a smaller rate, 3.9 percent, than MAs as a whole. During the same period, only 13.0 percent of the country's MAs experienced declines in population, while 38.0 percent of central cities did.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

Table 4.
Ten Fastest-Growing Central Cities: 1990 to 1998

Central city	1998 population	Population change—1990 to 1998	
		Number	Percent
Temecula, CA	44,271	17,094	62.9
Las Vegas, NV	404,288	145,411	56.2
Scottsdale, AZ	195,394	65,295	50.2
Rogers, AR	37,073	12,381	50.1
Nampa, ID	41,951	13,586	47.9
Conway, AR	39,164	12,683	47.9
Laredo, TX	175,783	52,890	43.0
Port St. Lucie, FL	79,351	23,590	42.3
Mission, TX	40,083	11,430	39.9
San Marcos, TX	39,491	10,753	37.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

Central City Population Decline Was Geographically Concentrated

From 1990 to 1998, the central cities in the New England and Middle Atlantic Divisions in the Northeast Region and the East North Central Division experienced overall population decreases (see Figure 3). The population of central cities in the entire Northeast Region fell by 2.0 percent between 1990 and 1998, marked by a 2.5 percent decline in New England. Total central city population decreased slightly by 0.3 percent in the Midwest Region—an increase of 1.5 percent in the West North Central Division states was offset by a loss of 0.9 percent in the East North Central Division. In contrast, the South's central city population

increased by 5.3 percent overall, with the fastest growth rate within the region, 9.0 percent, occurring in the central cities of the West South Central Division states. In the West, the total population of central cities grew by 10.6 percent, the fastest of any region, led by a 19.3 percent increase for central cities in the Mountain Division.

Fastest-Growing Central Cities Were in the West and South

As in the case of MAs, the 10 fastest-growing central cities were all located in the West or the South (see Table 4). The three central cities with the fastest rates of growth from 1990 to 1998 were all in the West: Temecula, CA, 62.9 percent; Las Vegas, NV, 56.2 percent; and Scottsdale, AZ, 50.2 percent. The

fastest-growing central cities in the South were Rogers, AR, 50.1 percent, and Conway, AR, 47.9 percent.

Central City Growth Differed Among Population Size Categories

Central cities with 1990 populations less than 50,000 grew the fastest of any size category, increasing by 5.5 percent (see Table 5). This growth rate was followed by the smaller medium-sized central cities—those with populations between 50,000 and 99,999—which grew by 4.9 percent. Over the 8-year period, central cities between 250,000 and 999,999 grew by 4.5 percent, while central cities with at least 1,000,000 people grew by 1.7 percent.

Metropolitan Population Outside Central Cities Grew Faster Than Inside Central Cities

Between 1990 and 1998, the metropolitan population outside central cities grew 12.5 percent, whereas the population of central cities grew only by 3.9 percent. In fact, the growth rate for metropolitan populations outside central cities surpassed the growth rate inside central cities in every region and division. The fastest rate of metropolitan population growth outside of central cities (31.2 percent) was in the Mountain Division while the slowest growth rate (3.4 percent) was in the New England Division.

In 1998, 62.3 percent of the metropolitan population lived outside of the central city, an increase from 60.5 percent in 1990. The South Atlantic Division had the highest percentage of the metropolitan

Table 5.
Population Change in Central Cities by Size Category: 1990 to 1998

Population size category (based 1990 population)	Percent change	Numeric change	Number of cities
Total	3.9	3,043,643	542
Less than 50,000	5.5	388,088	209
50,000 - 99,999	4.9	591,786	173
100,000 - 249,999	4.3	618,907	96
250,000 - 999,999	4.5	1,113,314	56
1,000,000 or more	1.7	331,548	8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program.

population residing outside of the central city, 72.6 percent, while the West South Central Division had the lowest percentage in the same category, 48.0 percent.

Reference

"Revised Standards for Defining Metropolitan Areas in the 1990s," *Federal Register*, March 30, 1990, Washington, DC: Office of Management and Budget. (Information on metropolitan areas and central cities is also available at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/aboutmetro.html>>.)

Data Access

The 1998 population estimates for metropolitan areas and their components, as well as central cities, are

available at <<http://www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metropop.html>>.

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