Population in the Great Plains

Population Variation. Population change within the Great Plains varies dramatically by location and level of geography. For example, all 12 states within the region grew between 1990 and 2000. However, at a county level the picture is much different. Approximately half of the counties declined during that time period. A similar disparity in growth exists by county type. Nearly all metropolitan counties in the region gained population during the past decade while only one-third of the rural counties sustained growth. Thus, it is important to understand the geographic context when developing policy.

Highlights

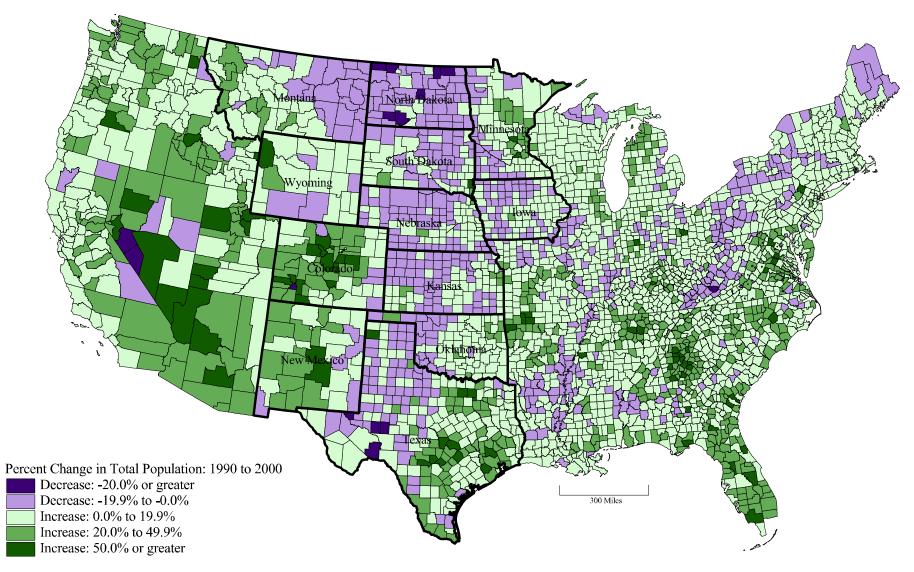
Figure 2. The Great Plains population, as a whole, grew between 1990 and 2000 by 6.7 million people or 17%. However, 85% of that growth is attributed to metropolitan counties which account for 71% of the entire Great Plains population. In contrast, the 358 rural counties in the region, which account for only 4% of the population base, grew by only 5% or 82,721 people.

More than 56% of the counties in the U.S. that declined during the past decade were located in the Great Plains. Of the 1,009 counties in the region, 38% lost population during the past decade.

- Table 4.Population loss in the region is almost exclusively rural. Between 1950 and 2000, the 358 rural counties in the region lost more than a half million
people or 21% of their population base. In contrast, the 142 metropolitan counties nearly tripled their population during that time period. Overall, the
non-metropolitan counties in the region have declined during three of the five decades since 1950.
- Figure 3. Nearly one in five counties in the region has continuously lost population since 1950.
- Table 5-6.Nearly 40% of the rural counties in the region have continuously lost population since 1950. Of the 358 rural counties, 87% had their peak population
prior to 1950. In contrast, 62% of the region's metropolitan counties have continuously gained population since 1950.
- Table 7-8.Population change within the region varies greatly by state. Texas, which accounts for nearly 46% of the region's population base, grew by 23% during
the past decade including a 12% growth among its rural counties. Colorado grew by more than 30% during the 1990s with its rural counties expanding
by nearly 45%. In contrast, overall losses occurred in the rural counties of Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Oklahoma.

Figure 2. Percent Change in Total Population for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census



- Research area for the Great Plains Population Symposium in October 2001

Table 4. Population and Population Change in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1950 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

					Non-Metropolitan Counties							
	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500	
Year	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Population:												
1950	22,937,101	100.0	11,519,486	50.2	11,417,615	49.8	2,181,363	9.5	6,885,014	30.0	2,351,238	10.3
1960	26,690,557	100.0	15,401,303	57.7	11,289,254	42.3	2,502,613	9.4	6,691,865	25.1	2,094,776	7.8
1970	29,647,276	100.0	18,627,554	62.8	11,019,722	37.2	2,629,331	8.9	6,519,961	22.0	1,870,430	6.3
1980	34,970,287	100.0	22,839,309	65.3	12,130,978	34.7	2,983,069	8.5	7,254,571	20.7	1,893,338	5.4
1990	38,736,776	100.0	26,698,025	68.9	12,038,751	31.1	3,044,336	7.9	7,226,040	18.7	1,768,375	4.6
2000	45,461,286	100.0	32,429,884	71.3	13,031,402	28.7	3,305,226	7.3	7,875,080	17.3	1,851,096	4.1
Population Change:												
1950 to 1960	3,753,456	16.4	3,881,817	33.7	-128,361	-1.1	321,250	14.7	-193,149	-2.8	-256,462	-10.9
1960 to 1970	2,956,719	11.1	3,226,251	20.9	-269,532	-2.4	126,718	5.1	-171,904	-2.6	-224,346	-10.7
1970 to 1980	5,323,011	18.0	4,211,755	22.6	1,111,256	10.1	353,738	13.5	734,610	11.3	22,908	1.2
1980 to 1990	3,766,489	10.8	3,858,716	16.9	-92,227	-0.8	61,267	2.1	-28,531	-0.4	-124,963	-6.6
1990 to 2000	6,724,510	17.4	5,731,859	21.5	992,651	8.2	260,890	8.6	649,040	9.0	82,721	4.7
1950 to 2000	22,524,185	98.2	20,910,398	181.5	1,613,787	14.1	1,123,863	51.5	990,066	14.4	-500,142	-21.3

Figure 3. Population Growth Patterns in the Great Plains States by County: 1950 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census

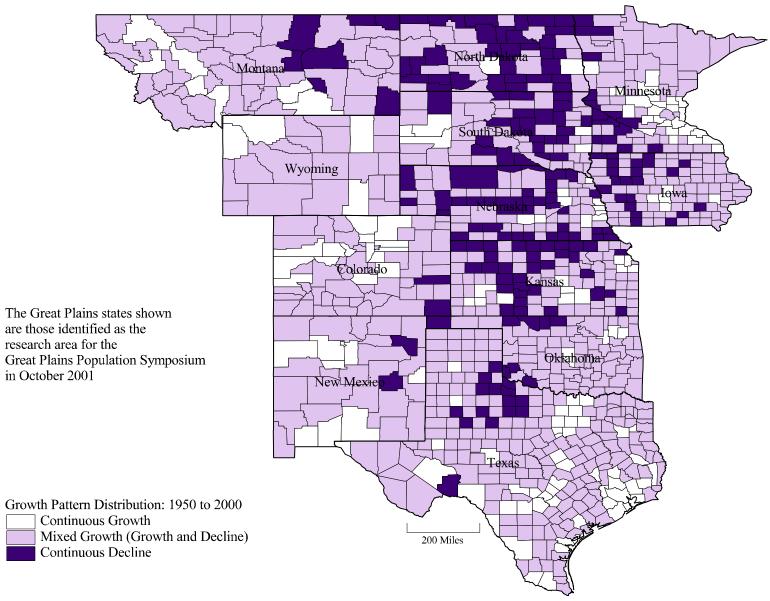


Table 5. Growth Patterns in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1950 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Data reflect the actual number and percent of counties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses

				Non-Metropolitan Counties										
		Metropolitan Counties		Metropolitan Counties Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500				
Growth Patterns: 1950 to 2000	Total Counties	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Continuous Growth	150	88	62.0	62	7.2	21	31.8	36	8.1	5	1.4			
Mixed Growth (Growth & Decline)	666	54	38.0	612	70.6	45	68.2	357	80.6	210	58.7			
Continuous Decline	193	0	0.0	193	22.3	0	0.0	50	11.3	143	39.9			
TOTAL	1,009	142	100.0	867	100.0	66	100.0	443	100.0	358	100.0			

Table 6. Peak Population Periods in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Data reflect the actual number and percent of counties.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses

				Non-Metropolitan Counties									
	T-4-1	Metropolitan Counties		Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500			
Peak Population Period	Total Counties	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent		
Before 1950	553	4	2.8	549	63.3	7	10.6	232	52.4	310	86.6		
1950 - 1960	52	3	2.1	49	5.7	6	9.1	38	8.6	5	1.4		
1960 - 1970	14	2	1.4	12	1.4	3	4.5	7	1.6	2	0.6		
1970 - 1980	48	5	3.5	43	5.0	11	16.7	28	6.3	4	1.1		
1980 - 1990	10	1	0.7	9	1.0	2	3.0	6	1.4	1	0.3		
1990 - 2000	332	127	89.4	205	23.6	37	56.1	132	29.8	36	10.1		
TOTAL	1,009	142	100.0	867	100.0	66	100.0	443	100.0	358	100.0		

Table 7. Population by State in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

					Non-Metropolitan Counties										
	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500				
States in the Great Plains	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Colorado	4,301,261	9.5	3,491,401	10.8	809,860	6.2	116,255	3.5	517,712	6.6	175,893	9.5			
Iowa	2,926,324	6.4	1,326,133	4.1	1,600,191	12.3	414,299	12.5	985,491	12.5	200,401	10.8			
Kansas	2,688,418	5.9	1,521,063	4.7	1,167,355	9.0	428,878	13.0	531,896	6.8	206,581	11.2			
Minnesota	4,919,479	10.8	3,463,360	10.7	1,456,119	11.2	201,194	6.1	1,050,894	13.3	204,031	11.0			
Montana	902,195	2.0	209,709	0.6	692,486	5.3	328,426	9.9	247,182	3.1	116,878	6.3			
Nebraska	1,711,263	3.8	899,838	2.8	811,425	6.2	269,913	8.2	343,073	4.4	198,439	10.7			
New Mexico	1,819,046	4.0	1,035,055	3.2	783,991	6.0	464,492	14.1	281,961	3.6	37,538	2.0			
North Dakota	642,200	1.4	283,966	0.9	358,234	2.7	58,795	1.8	139,001	1.8	160,438	8.7			
Oklahoma	3,450,654	7.6	2,098,362	6.5	1,352,292	10.4	351,959	10.6	942,583	12.0	57,750	3.1			
South Dakota	754,844	1.7	260,977	0.8	493,867	3.8	35,460	1.1	255,600	3.2	202,807	11.0			
Texas	20,851,820	45.9	17,691,880	54.6	3,159,940	24.2	565,928	17.1	2,329,347	29.6	264,665	14.3			
Wyoming	493,782	1.1	148,140	0.5	345,642	2.7	69,627	2.1	250,340	3.2	25,675	1.4			
TOTAL	45,461,286	100.0	32,429,884	100.0	13,031,402	100.0	3,305,226	100.0	7,875,080	100.0	1,851,096	100.0			

Table 8. Change in Population by State in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1990 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

					Non-Metropolitan Counties										
	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500				
States in the Great Plains	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent			
Colorado	1,006,867	30.6	805,060	30.0	201,807	33.2	23,110	24.8	124,347	31.6	54,350	44.7			
Iowa	149,569	5.4	126,235	10.5	23,334	1.5	6,761	1.7	18,596	1.9	-2,023	-1.0			
Kansas	210,844	8.5	188,135	14.1	22,709	2.0	13,032	3.1	11,902	2.3	-2,225	-1.1			
Minnesota	544,380	12.4	452,466	15.0	91,914	6.7	12,754	6.8	67,478	6.9	11,682	6.1			
Montana	103,130	12.9	18,599	9.7	84,583	13.9	58,622	21.7	17,431	7.6	8,530	7.9			
Nebraska	132,878	8.4	112,503	14.3	20,375	2.6	18,228	7.2	11,026	3.3	-8,879	-4.3			
New Mexico	303,977	20.1	193,371	23.0	110,606	16.4	55,847	13.7	45,852	19.4	8,907	31.1			
North Dakota	3,400	0.5	26,578	10.3	-23,178	-6.1	874	1.5	-7,286	-5.0	-16,766	-9.5			
Oklahoma	305,069	9.7	228,520	12.2	76,549	6.0	12,270	3.6	67,163	7.7	-2,884	-4.8			
South Dakota	58,840	8.5	40,398	18.3	18,442	3.9	-120	-0.3	17,068	7.2	1,494	0.7			
Texas	3,865,310	22.8	3,526,222	24.9	339,088	12.0	59,505	11.8	251,562	12.1	28,021	11.8			
Wyoming	40,194	8.9	13,772	10.2	26,422	8.3	7	0.0	23,901	10.6	2,514	10.9			
TOTAL	6,724,458	17.4	5,731,859	21.5	992,651	8.2	260,890	8.6	649,040	9.0	82,721	4.7			