

DATA DROP

How and where Minnesota's population grew in the last decade

New population estimates data from the U.S. Census Bureau shed light on what's driving the state's population growth, and where it's occurring.

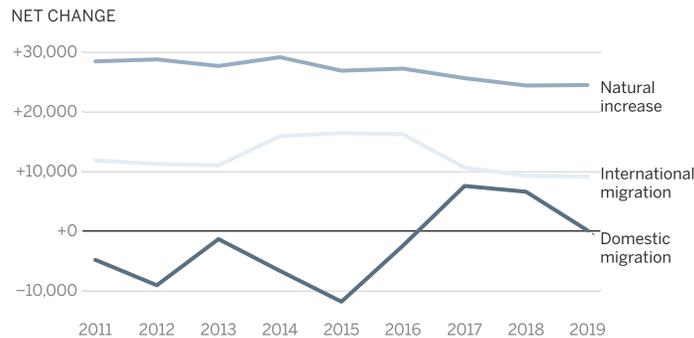
By Natalie Rademacher | APRIL 2, 2020 — 5:44PM

There were two short years this past decade when more people came into Minnesota from other states than left -- a trend the state hasn't seen in decades. But newly released population estimates data shows that reversed in 2019.

The state's population continued to grow, however, thanks to the fact that births outpaced deaths last year. That's not expected to last much longer, though, and it has already reversed in some parts of the state.

Factors leading to slower population growth in Minn.

There's been a slight decline in population growth from natural increases. Domestic migration unexpectedly helped boost population for a couple years, but has since declined again.



Natural increase occurs when there are more births than deaths. Data is based on population estimates.
 Chart: Natalie Rademacher, Special to the Star Tribune • Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Minnesota welcomes you sign at border

Population estimates data for 2019, released by the U.S. Census Bureau in late March, shed some insight into the demographic trends in metro areas and counties that we might see when Census 2020 data is released a year from now.

The [once-a-decade official headcount \(https://www.startribune.com/on-census-day-about-44-of-minnesota-households-have-said-we-re-here/569287182/\)](https://www.startribune.com/on-census-day-about-44-of-minnesota-households-have-said-we-re-here/569287182/) is currently underway, attempting to count every person in the United States and gather some basic demographic information on everyone, as of April 1st.

The estimates data provide policymakers and others a gauge of population trends in the years between the decennial censuses, relying on administrative records such as birth certificates, death certificates, international migration records and tax records to estimate population changes.

Domestic migration in Minnesota peaked in 2017, with three times more people moving into the state than leaving it. That was the single largest year for net migration into the state over the past three decades, said Megan Dayton, a senior demographer for the Minnesota State Demographic Center.

At the same time, international migration started to fall due to changes in federal immigration policy.

Minnesota had a long history of more people coming into the state than leaving, but net migration numbers had been gradually declining through the 1990s and then fell to a negative number starting in 2002.

This makes the spike in 2017 particularly unusual. Since this is a net number, it could be due to more people staying in the state than usual, more people coming into the state, or a combination of both.

It may be explained by something as simple as a large company reorganizing one year, bringing more people into the state, said Louis Johnston, an economist at the College of St. Benedict and St. John's University.

Domestic migration has been falling throughout the country. This might be partly due to fewer people moving for jobs. It has become easier for people to move up in their field without having to move and wages do not fluctuate as much by region as they did 40 years ago, Johnston said.

Dayton said Minnesota's decline also can be due to the growing share of people reaching retirement age and moving somewhere warmer or to a place with lower taxes.

Minnesota's population grew by about 6% over the past decade, mirroring national population growth. This is slower than decades past, but faster than most other Midwest states.

Natural increase -- more babies born each year than the number of people who died -- accounted for three-fourths of the state's population growth between 2018 and 2019, the estimates show.

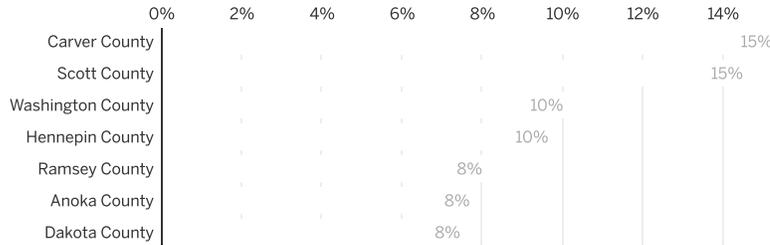
Over the past decade, though, this natural increase rate has been falling. Fewer people are having babies and more people are moving into retirement.

This trend is not new. State demographers have been [predicting a slower growth in population becoming the new normal \(https://www.startribune.com/life-in-the-2020s-slower-growth-will-be-the-new-normal-in-minnesota/566538412/\)](https://www.startribune.com/life-in-the-2020s-slower-growth-will-be-the-new-normal-in-minnesota/566538412/). Minnesota's population is expected to grow by only 5% over the next decade.

By 2040, Dayton said state demographers are predicting that there will be more annual deaths than births in the state, something that has not happened before.

Metro populations have grown since 2010

The number of people living in the 7-county metro increased by 9% overall since the 2010 Census.



2019 population data are estimates.

Chart: Natalie Rademacher, Special to the Star Tribune • Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Most of the state’s population growth this past decade occurred in the Twin Cities metro area. The metro area’s population grew by about 9%, while the rest of Minnesota collectively saw a 3% increase.

The metro area benefits from both a higher rate of natural increase and higher domestic and international migration than what is happening in greater Minnesota.

The Twin Cities is the 15th fastest growing metro area in the U.S. Houston, Dallas, Phoenix and Seattle led the nation with increases of more than 15% each.

The lower growth rate in the Twin Cities is likely due to the lower share of people of color here, Dayton said. Birth rates are higher among women of color.

Outside the Twin Cities, some Minnesota counties have reached a point where deaths are outpacing births, or they are roughly equal.

In Cook County, there is not a natural increase in population anymore. The county’s 6% growth this past decade came solely from migration, including a mix of retirees and international immigrants finding work in the tourism industry.

Johnston said he can see this trend of fewer babies and more retirees at his home in Stearns County.

“The decline in children is changing the characteristics of the whole town,” Johnston said, adding that there’s a need for more health care workers and fewer teachers.

More than three-fourths of Minnesota counties saw a decline or little change in population over the decade. Lac Qui Parle County, which has about 7,000 residents, lost about one-tenth of its population thanks to more deaths than births and more people leaving the county than coming in. Other counties with the largest losses included Traverse, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods and Renville.

Metro areas in southern U.S. among fastest growing

The Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area was the 15th fastest growing city compared to the 25 most-populated metros in the country.

Page 1 of 3 >

Metro Area	Population increase since 2010
Orlando	22%
Houston	19%
San Antonio	19%
Dallas	19%
Phoenix	18%
Charlotte	18%
Denver	17%
Seattle	16%
Tampa	15%
Atlanta	14%

Population data since 2010 are estimates.

Table: Natalie Rademacher, Special to the Star Tribune • Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Natalie Rademacher, nrademacher@startribune.com, is a University of Minnesota students on assignment for the Star Tribune.