

New Hampshire's Population Exceeds Maine's for the First Time in 200 Years

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For the first time in more than 200 years, the population of New Hampshire exceeds that of Maine. Data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the population of New Hampshire at 1,324,575 as of July 1, 2009, compared to 1,318,301 in Maine. The last time New Hampshire's population exceeded that of Maine was in 1800 when Maine had 152,000 residents and New Hampshire had 184,000.

In his analysis of these new U.S. Census Bureau data, Kenneth M. Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, reports that New Hampshire has been growing faster than Maine throughout the decade. Since 2000, New Hampshire gained 89,000 new residents compared to Maine's 43,000.

New Hampshire is growing because it had nearly 43,000 more births than deaths between 2000 and 2009 compared to only 12,000 in Maine. The smaller excess of births over deaths in Maine is because its population is considerably older, resulting in higher mortality according to Johnson.

New Hampshire also gained 53,000 migrants between 2000 and 2009. This included 35,000 migrants from elsewhere in the United States together with 18,000 immigrants. Maine only gained 39,000 migrants during the same period, including 31,000 migrants from other states and 8,000 immigrants.

Johnson warns that although population estimates like those released today have proved reliable in the past, they do need to be interpreted with caution. Definitive data on the populations of each state will come from the 2010 census next year.

Key Findings

- For the first time since 1800, New Hampshire's population had exceeded Maine's.
- Since 2000, New Hampshire gained 89,000 new residents compared to Maine's 43,000.

Population Growth Slowing in New Hampshire due to Migration Losses

New Hampshire's population growth slowed last year compared to gains earlier in the decade. The population of New Hampshire grew by only 2,700 between 2008 and 2009. This continues a trend of smaller population gains that began in 2005.

The slower growth in New Hampshire results from less migration to the state. Much of New Hampshire's growth in recent years occurred because more people moved to the state than left it. However, from 2008 to 2009, New Hampshire lost 2,600 migrants in exchanges with other states. In contrast, New Hampshire's migration gain between 2000 and 2005 averaged 5,400 annually.

Most of New Hampshire's recent migration loss is because fewer people are moving to the state. Internal Revenue Service data shows that the number of migrants moving to

New Hampshire diminished by 13 percent from 2006 to 2008. In contrast, the percent of migrants leaving the state only slowed by 6 percent. Massachusetts has traditionally provided many of the migrants to New Hampshire, but in recent years, migration from Massachusetts to New Hampshire has declined by 34 percent.

New Hampshire's migration slowdown is consistent with national trends, which show fewer people moving to traditionally fast-growing states. Both Florida and Nevada experienced migration losses similar to New Hampshire's last year. In contrast, states like Massachusetts, which have traditionally experienced substantial migration losses from domestic out-migration, actually gained migrants from other states last year. The economic recession is the primary reason for this change in migration trends. The recession tends to make it more difficult for people to move because of concerns about selling homes and jobs. As a result, fewer people are moving to New Hampshire.

New Hampshire continues to receive a modest immigration. Last year, approximately 1,800 immigrants moved here from other countries. However, this immigrant gain was not enough to offset the net domestic migration loss. As a result, the state lost more people than it gained from migration.

The population of New Hampshire grew last year because the excess of births over deaths was sufficient to offset this migration loss. Last year, there were 14,000 births in the state compared to only 10,400 deaths. This gain of 3,600 from natural increase was sufficient to offset the loss from migration and provide for modest growth in the state.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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