

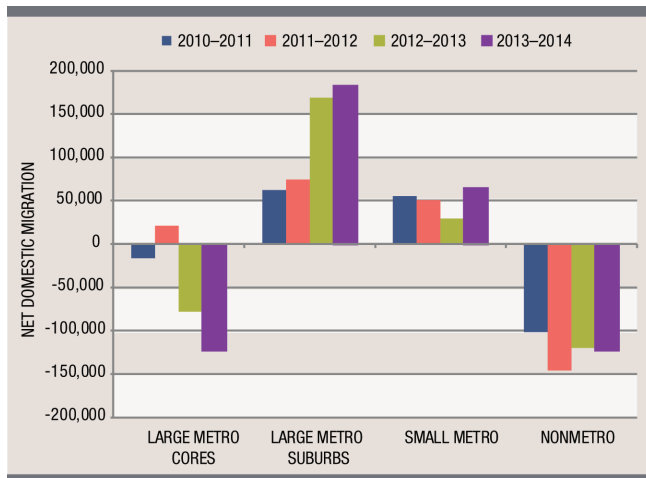


Migration Trends Shifted in 2014 Also Record Deaths and Continuing Low Fertility

Kenneth M. Johnson

New Census Bureau data released on March 26, 2015, provide further evidence that the recession's influence on domestic migration is diminishing. Migration patterns are reverting to those commonly seen before the recession. Suburban counties of large metropolitan areas are receiving more domestic migrants, while large metropolitan core counties are seeing more domestic migration losses. Domestic migration losses also continue in rural areas. (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1. DOMESTIC MIGRATION BY METROPOLITAN STATUS, 2010 TO 2014



Source: Census Bureau Estimates

There is no evidence in these new Census data of any recovery in fertility. Births remain near 15-year lows, and there were a record number of deaths last year. With fewer births and more deaths, over 1,000 U.S. counties (32.5 percent) had more people die in them than be born last year.

KEY FINDINGS



Urban cores experienced growing migration losses, while suburbs saw greater domestic migration gains.



Fewer births but record deaths caused widespread natural decrease.

Migration Shifts Slow Urban Growth and Increase Suburban Gains

Domestic migration is the movement of people from one U.S. county to another. In 2014, there was a net domestic migration loss of 123,000 from the large urban core counties, where 97.5 million people reside in the nation's largest cities and older inner suburbs. This migration loss reduced the population gain in such large urban cores by 5 percent to 971,000 between July 2013 and July 2014. Over the past two years, population growth slowed in these core counties of metropolitan areas of a million or more because the mounting domestic migration losses partially offset population growth from immigration and the excess of births over deaths. Recent domestic migration losses from urban cores are increasing, but they remain far smaller than the migration losses such areas experienced between 2000 and 2010 when the average domestic migration loss was 349,000. Thus, while the impact of the recession on domestic migration is waning, trends have not reverted fully to those before the Great Recession. Because migration is an important source of demographic change, migration shifts have important implications for local areas.

Population gains increased in suburban counties of large urban areas due to more domestic migration. The population grew by 768,000 from July 2013 to July 2014 in the suburban fringe counties of large metropolitan areas of a million or more to 78.4 million. These counties contain many of the newer suburbs. This is the second year of significantly higher domestic migration gain. The domestic migration gain was more than twice as large (352,000) between 2012 and 2014 as it was in the first two years of the decade (136,000). Such domestic migration gains are consistent with trends during the 2000s, when suburban areas gained domestic migrants from the older urban cores. This suggests that the recession's effect on migration is finally beginning to wane.

Growth remained modest in smaller metro areas with less than one million residents that contained 96.7 million people in 2013. Population gains here have remained stable over the past several years. However, domestic migration gains were larger last year than in 2013.

Rural America Sees Different Trends Emerge

Rural America continued to lose population last year. The 1,976 nonmetropolitan counties, which contained 46.2 million people, had a population loss of 31,000 (.1 percent decrease) last year because of continued domestic outmigration. Historically, rural counties near metropolitan areas grew considerably faster than more remote rural counties because the outward sprawl from metropolitan areas spilled over into them. The Great Recession reversed this long-term trend. After 2010, adjacent counties experienced greater population losses than more remote rural counties. This is highly unusual historically, suggesting that the outward growth of metropolitan areas has not fully recovered from the recession.

Growth rates vary widely across rural America. The fastest growing rural counties have considerable recreational and scenic amenities that appeal to retirees and other footloose populations. Such counties have traditionally attracted domestic migrants. This migration diminished during the recession, but the 2013–2014 data suggest it is picking up again. Recreational and retirement counties experienced net domestic migration gains in each of the last two years, suggesting that the slowdown caused by the recession may be waning here as well. Traditionally, farm counties experienced population loss (or little gain) because they lost migrants and have few remaining young people to produce the next generation of children. Farm counties continued to lose population in 2013–2014, just as they

did in the prior three years. Rural manufacturing counties, which have traditionally gained population, lost population because of a significant domestic migration loss. Manufacturing jobs lost during the recession and through globalization contributed to the migration losses from these counties.

Fertility Continues to Lag, but Deaths at Record High

Between July 2013 and July 2014, there were a record number of deaths (2,594,000) and relatively few births (3,958,000). The excess of births over deaths (1,364,000) is the lowest in 35 years. The 3,958,000 births last year compared to a record 4,316,000 births in 2006–2007 at the peak of the economic boom resulting in a birth decline of 8.4 percent in just seven years. The recession was a major factor in this fertility decline. Recent National Center for Health Statistics data shows that both births and fertility rates have dropped sharply over the last several years.¹ Young women, in particular, are having fewer babies. The fertility rate for women 20–24 declined 23 percent from 2007 to 2013 and is now at a record low of 81.2 births per 1,000 women 20–24. Taken together, these data suggest that the impact of the recession has been particularly pronounced among younger women, who are likely delaying plans to have children.

With fewer births and record deaths, there were not sufficient births to offset deaths in 1,020 counties (32.5 percent). Natural decrease (more deaths than births) is occurring in nearly 41 percent of the nation's rural counties compared to 18 percent of urban counties. This year, deaths exceeded births in two entire states: more people died than were born in both Maine and West Virginia.

About the Author

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1. See Kenneth M. Johnson, "The Hidden Cost of the Recession: Two Million Fewer Births and Still Counting," National Fact Sheet #26 (Durham, NH: Carsey School of Public Policy, University of New Hampshire, 2014).