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Rural America Growing Again Due to Migration Gains

Kenneth M. Johnson

For the first six years of this decade, rural America experienced overall population loss for the first time in history. New Census Bureau estimates suggest that last year overall growth accelerated in nonmetropolitan America where 46.1 million people reside. The population gain was small, just 37,000 (0.1 percent), but it contrasts with a loss of 32,000 just two years ago and to a modest population gain last year. Population growth was fueled by renewed net migration coupled with more births than deaths, though this natural increase is dwindling. The population grew in rural counties near metropolitan areas, which have historically grown faster than more remote rural counties because of the advantages of metropolitan proximity. The Great Recession reversed this long-term trend and for several years adjacent counties lost more population than remote rural counties. Between July of 2017 and July of 2018, adjacent rural counties gained 46,000 residents because a domestic migration gain supplemented immigration and natural increase. In contrast, rural counties that were not near metropolitan areas continued to lose population due to sustained domestic migration loss. Growth rates vary widely across nonmetropolitan America. The fastest growing counties have recreational and scenic amenities that attract migrants including retirees from elsewhere in the United States. Migration slowed to these counties during the Great Recession, but it has significantly increased in the last two years. In contrast, rural farm counties continued to experience domestic outmigration and population loss.



The rate of rural population gain increased last year. Most of the population gain was due to increased migration to rural areas.

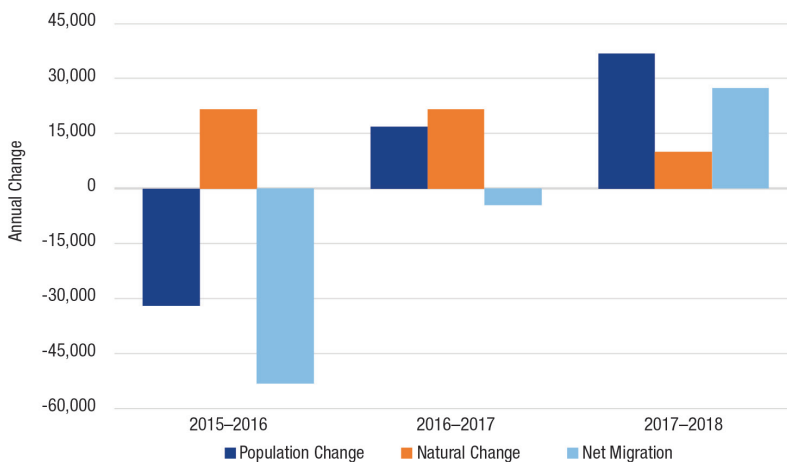
See related publications at carsey.unh.edu

► *Domestic Migration and Fewer Births Reshaping America (March 2018)*

► *Rural Depopulation in a Rapidly Urbanizing America (February 2019)*

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NONMETROPOLITAN DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE, 2015 TO 2018



Source: Census Bureau Estimates