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# PRESENT TRENDS IN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

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Our population has recently crossed the 200 million mark, and we are currently growing about 1 percent per year. The babies of the early postwar baby boom are reaching marriage age, and consequently we can expect an increase in marriage and new families through the 1970's. Increasingly these families will demand the services and facilities which have become important elements in the ever-rising level of living. For the most part, they will be suburban or small city residents rather than big city or rural residents. Their schooling will exceed that of previous generations.

Major changes lie ahead. How we meet them, how we adjust our social arrangements to deal with the problems generated by increased numbers and increased concentration of our population in our urban and, especially, in our metropolitan areas will have long-term consequences for the quality of life in the United States.

## THE POPULATION OF THE FUTURE

A major feature of the development of our population in the near future is the fact that a large number of young people will be reaching marriage and childbearing age throughout the 1970's and into the 1980's. There are now about 43 million persons between 20 and 34 years old. By 1980 that number will have gone up to 58 million, an increase of more than one-third in ten years. The number of marriages has been increasing for several years, and this number is likely to go up. The increase in this part of our population, the young marrieds, is the basis for the expectation that even with somewhat lower birth rates than those of recent years, the number of children under 5 in 1980 will be greater than it is at present.

The history of birth rates in the United States clearly shows they can change rapidly. With increased knowledge of control and increased effectiveness of the methods available, changes may come more rapidly and be more marked than they were in the past. The important question in relation to future trends deals with the attitudes of the people who will be contributing the bulk of the children. Women who are not yet married will contribute about 80 percent of the babies born in the next ten years. Their attitudes toward family size and

spacing of children will play a very large role in determining population growth during that period and beyond.

Unless the women now entering the family formation and childbearing ages depart sharply from the patterns set by young people throughout the last decade and a half, the number of births will continue to increase for some years to come. Under these circumstances, a stable population size and zero growth are not likely in the short run. Even if women now entering the childbearing period should stop having children beyond the numbers needed for replacement (about 2,110 children per 1,000 women), our population will continue to increase until well into the next century. One computation shows that under these circumstances we might reach stability in numbers by the year 2037, when our population would have reached 276 million.

There have been important changes in American patterns of family formation and childbearing. A larger proportion of women marry, and they are marrying at a younger age. A larger proportion of women are having children, and they are completing their childbearing within a shorter period. The no-child or one-child family of the thirties has given way to the two- or three-child family. Fashions and practices in these matters are subject to change, as they have changed during the last generation. Surveys in which women of childbearing age are asked how many children they expect to have, regularly report two or three as the preferred number. If women average only two children, we would cease to grow, except as immigration would make up the deficit. If women average three children, which is near the number young married women say they expect to have, we would grow rapidly.

The Bureau of the Census has recently issued a series of projections of the future population. Assuming that the young women who are beginning their childbearing after 1970 have babies at the replacement average of 2,110 children per 1,000 women, our population would be 266 million by the year 2000. If, however, we continue at the rates which have prevailed in recent years, the size of our population in the year 2000 would have reached 281 million. The effect of these differences in the assumed fertility rates is 15 million by the year 2000.

There have been major changes in American society since the days when a family of ten or more children was considered desirable. We have become a predominantly urban society; our educational levels have increased substantially for both men and women; and we have become a more prosperous society. All of these changes have served

to reduce the size of families and the levels of fertility. There are still some differences in the fertility of several groups in our population. Urban rates are below those of the rural population; the higher the educational level of a woman, the lower her fertility; and on the whole the higher the family income, the lower the fertility. There is every reason to believe that we will continue to become even more urban, that we will continue to increase the proportion of women—and of men—who finish high school and college, and that family incomes will increase. However, recent experience has shown that differences in fertility may exist under conditions when fertility is relatively high as well as when it is relatively low. The fact that we grow more urban, better educated, and more wealthy suggests, but does not in itself assure, that birth rates will decline.

Continued growth of the population of the metropolitan areas in the future seems clearly indicated. Even if migration into these areas were to drop below the levels of the 1960's, there would be a substantial growth in their population because of the excess of births over deaths. The metropolitan areas include about two-thirds of the population, and they are likely to continue to have a substantial majority of the excess of births over deaths. Although birth rates tend to be lower in urban and suburban areas than in the more rural areas, the metropolitan areas have a relatively large proportion of young people. The black population of these areas is a particularly youthful one, with large cohorts of children and youth who will be moving into adult ages in the next two decades. Unless there is a large and unprecedented movement out of the metropolitan areas, they will continue to grow, and at a rate no less than that of the nation as a whole.

For purposes of discussion we might assume that by the year 2000 we would have added about 75 million to our present numbers. If we continue our present annual rate of growth to the end of the century, this would be the total growth. Where would these additional people live? If present trends continue, at least 60 million of them would be added to our metropolitan areas.

The National Committee on Urban Growth Policy in 1969 proposed that the government take an active role in planning where and how development should take place. Specifically, the committee suggested that in the next thirty years the United States create 100 cities of 100,000 each and 10 cities of about 1 million each. Such a program would provide a place to live for about 20 million of the total expected growth, leaving 40 million to be added to the existing metropolitan areas. Or to put it another way, accommodating the expected growth of the population without increasing the population in the present

metropolitan areas would require the development of the equivalent of two cities of 75,000 every month between now and the year 2000.

It seems likely that the American desire to live in metropolitan areas will continue to be asserted in the future as it has in the past. Whether this carries with it also a continuation of the types of residential segregation which have developed in recent years may be open to question, but there has been a growing tendency for blacks and other minority groups to be concentrated in the central cities, with the white population more and more in the suburbs. Between 1960 and 1970 the proportion of blacks in the population of the central cities increased from 16 to 21 percent, and the percentage was higher in cities of 1 million or over.

### TRENDS IN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Our founding fathers dealt with a nation in which only 5 percent of its population was classified as urban. As our nation grew, its urban population continually grew more rapidly than its rural population. Sometime during the years of World War I, the halfway point was reached. The 1970 census reports that almost 74 percent of the population lives in urban areas. No doubt the number would be even larger if there were some effective way of classifying as urban a substantial number of persons who live outside recognized population clusters but are oriented to the nearby urban centers for their employment and modern-day services. Despite assertions that they would prefer to live in a rural setting, nearly three-fourths of Americans now live in areas classified as urban. The urban population continued to increase more rapidly than the total during the 1960's, as it had during earlier decades.

There were about the same number of people in rural areas in 1970 as in 1960, even though the national population had grown by about 13 percent. The village population at 7 million showed virtually no change, and this was also the case for the open-country population, which stood at about 47 million in 1960 and 1970. The farm population, however, declined by about one-third and is now less than 10 million, about 5 percent of the national total.

During the ten-year period ending in 1970, the United States added about 24 million persons to its total—the largest absolute increase in any ten-year period except that of the 1950's. Nevertheless, the rate of growth was the lowest for any decade in this century, with the single exception of the depression decade of the 1930's.

About two-fifths of the counties lost population, and about one-third of the counties gained at less than the national average. This

leaves only one-fourth of the counties which gained more rapidly than the national average. A considerable number of counties have now had population declines for four, five, and more decades.

In many areas population loss is not new and for many of them it is likely to continue. There were 124 counties which had more deaths than births in the 1960's. The continued out-migration of the past has left behind an elderly population which is likely in the future to result in more deaths than births. Although the national population includes about 10 percent of its population in the age bracket 65 and over, that figure is more than 12 percent in Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota. The percentage for Kansas is just below 12.

Population declined in a broad band of counties in the Great Plains, extending from the Canadian border through Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota and south to Texas and then across the Southern states and into the Southern Appalachians. Interspersed among these are metropolitan areas which have continued to grow, and some smaller places which have had significant industrial growth. Some other counties with substantial growth are the site of colleges or universities which grew significantly, or of military establishments which increased their station strength during the decade. A location with ready access to one or more of the interstate highways also increases the likelihood of population growth.

### **Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas**

The Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) gives recognition to the fact that political boundaries such as those of cities change much less rapidly than the pattern of settlement in the vicinity of the large cities. An SMSA includes a city of 50,000 or over plus the county in which it is located and adjoining counties which meet certain criteria of metropolitan character and are closely tied to the central city. In New England the component areas are towns rather than counties.

More than four-fifths of the national growth took place within the SMSA's. Reflecting this growth, the number of SMSA's itself increased from 212 in 1960 to 243 in 1970.

Within the SMSA's more than four-fifths of the growth took place outside the central cities. In fact, a large number of the central cities lost population, or gained only by virtue of annexations. The central cities as a whole gained about 5 percent, most of this by annexation. In spite of those losses by annexation the population in areas outside the central cities increased by 28 percent.

For the first time, areas outside the central cities but within the

SMSA's have a larger population than the central cities themselves. The suburban areas accounted for a total of 76 million persons, whereas the central cities had only 64 million. However, the total population outside the metropolitan areas was only 63 million, which is less than the population of the central cities.

SMSA's have consistently grown more rapidly than the rest of the country. Before 1920, the central cities were growing more rapidly than the population living elsewhere in the SMSA's, but since 1920 the suburban areas have been growing more rapidly.

The suburban areas themselves include a wide variety of density and settlement patterns. The 76 million residents classified as suburban include 44 million who live in separately incorporated cities, including some 11 million who live in cities of 50,000 or over. Such places would be identified as central cities if they were not within the shadow of a larger central city.

The Bureau of the Census for some years has identified urbanized areas. These are cities of 50,000 or over, plus the adjoining densely built-up areas, whether they are themselves incorporated or not. In the case of New York, the city itself has a population of about 8 million, but the New York-Northeastern New Jersey urbanized area has a population approximately double that of the central city.

One of every four Americans is now living in the 10 largest urbanized areas. One of every three is in the 25 largest areas. Virtually all of the increase in the urban population during the 1960's took place within the urbanized areas, that is, close to the large centers, but not in them.

The population within the SMSA's is also diversified in terms of settlement patterns. It includes not only the people in the crowded portions of the big cities, but also about 16 million rural residents, many of whom live in the more remote sections of the counties which include the central cities. In recent years, some cities have annexed substantial areas with a low density of settlement, and in three instances metropolitan area governments have been established to include not only the central city, but the entire county in which it is located.

## Places

Within the last 10 years, Houston has joined the cities with a million or more inhabitants. The older members of this club are New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Detroit. Together these six cities include almost 19 million inhabitants, about half again as many as are found in the 20 cities with between half a million and

a million residents. Together these 26 large cities include about 30 million persons—which nearly equals the number of persons in the 18,500 places with fewer than 10,000 persons.

In 1970 there were 18,666 incorporated places in the United States—about 1,000 more than ten years previously. There were increases in the number of places in all size classes above 1,500, but a decline in the number of places with fewer than 1,500 persons.

Municipal boundaries often do not clearly define urban concentrations of population. Settlement patterns have frequently gone far beyond these boundaries, and in many cases there are important legal barriers to extending the city limits. This has long been recognized by chambers of commerce and others who have used such terms as “Greater New York” or “Greater Chicago.”

### Internal Migration

Americans have generally been characterized as a mobile people. At the end of a year, some 20 percent of all persons are living at an address different from the one at which they had lived at the beginning of the year. The 1960 census found that half the people had moved at least once during the preceding five years, and one-third of those had moved across a county line.

Differences in the rates of growth of states and of other areas are in large part the result of differences in the extent of migration. During the 1960's the North Central states generally were areas of out-migration, the Northeastern states had a small net in-migration. The West was clearly an area of in-migration. The South, which had for many years been an area of out-migration, had a net gain by migration during the 1960's. That gain was the result of a net inflow of about 1.8 million whites, in contrast to a net out-migration of 1.4 million blacks.

California led all the states as the goal of migrants. It had a net gain of 2.1 million migrants during the decade. Florida with a net gain of 1.3 million was next. No other state gained as many as 1 million persons by migration, but New Jersey had a total of nearly 500,000 and Maryland followed with nearly 400,000. Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, and Washington each gained more than 200,000 by migration during the decade, and Nevada, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia each gained more than 100,000.

Pennsylvania led all the states in the number of migrants which it contributed to other states, with a total of nearly 400,000. Alabama, Mississippi, and West Virginia each contributed more than 200,000. The District of Columbia, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, New



Mexico, New York, Ohio, and South Carolina each contributed more than 100,000, while North Carolina and North and South Dakota added nearly 100,000 each.

Although on the whole the volume of interstate migration was somewhat less during the 1950's, many persons are involved in this exchange of population. The numbers cited are net figures, the total volume of migration is, of course, much larger.

Although the amount of net migration is large, it was only in the West that migration contributed a significant part of the total increase in population. In that region, 42 percent of the growth during the decade was the result of in-migration. In the Northeast and the South the volume of net migration contributed only about 7.5 percent to the total growth. On the other hand, if the North Central states had not had a net out-migration, population in the region would have increased about one-seventh more than it did. Clearly, natural increase was the more important element in the growth of the population in the region. The same statement applies to most of the states, although in the case of Florida and Nevada net migration contributed more than half of the total increase, and in a number of other states, migrants accounted for more than 40 percent of the gain during the decade.

### **Our Largest Minority**

The black population includes about 11 percent of the total, up 0.3 percent since 1960. This reflects the higher growth rate of the black population as compared with the white. The black population at one time was predominantly in the South, but that has been changing rapidly and at present the South includes only 53 percent of the black people. Three of every four black persons live in SMSA's, a higher proportion than among the white population. Outside the South nearly all of the black residents are within the SMSA's—95 percent. In the South, too, the majority, 56 percent, are in the metropolitan areas.

Within the metropolitan areas, the black population is found chiefly in the central cities. There were some relative increases in the number of blacks in suburban areas, but the numbers involved are small, and the proportion of blacks in suburban areas was almost the same in 1970 as it had been in 1960—about 5 percent.

Within the central cities of the SMSA's the number of black residents increased by 3.2 million, whereas the white population declined by 600,000. As a result, the percentage of the population of the central cities which is black increased from 16 percent in 1960

to 21 percent in 1970. The increase was especially marked in the largest cities—those with half a million or more inhabitants.

Four central cities—Washington, Gary, Newark, and Atlanta—have more than half their population classified as black. In seven other large cities, Baltimore, Birmingham, Detroit, New Orleans, Richmond, St. Louis, and Wilmington, 40 percent or more of the residents are classified as black.

Although there has been considerable emphasis on the role of migration, the majority of the increase in the black population of central cities was the result of the excess of births over deaths in that population group. There are exceptions—in New York City the black population increased by 703,000, of which more than half, 436,000, was the result of net in-migration. In Los Angeles, net migration and natural increase contributed almost equally to the increase of 225,000. Chicago, the only other city with a net in-migration of more than 100,000 blacks, added more than that number by natural increase. In Detroit the net in-migration of 98,000 was slightly more than half the total gain of 185,000.

Continued growth of the black population in metropolitan areas is clearly indicated. Even if migration into these areas were to be reduced below the levels of the 1960's, there would be a substantial growth in their black population due to excess of births over deaths. Blacks in these areas are relatively young, with large numbers of children and youth who will be moving into adult ages in the next decades.

## CONCLUSION

The shift from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban and metropolitan nation has taken place in relatively recent times. Nostalgic views of rural life seem to persist for a long time and may underlie the fact that responses to public opinion polls show a large proportion of persons who say they would prefer to live on a farm or in some rural area. Increasing affluence may continue to make it possible for some urban dwellers to maintain a second home in more rural surroundings, but this is quite different from any out-migration from the cities to the rural areas. What seems most likely is further development of the metropolitan areas, along with their enlargement. The high degree of concentration in the central cities is likely to continue to give way to a greater flexibility of location and activity within the metropolitan areas.