

# **Population Change Within the U.S. And Its Territories**

The understanding population demographics is key in predicting future outcomes, anticipating needs, and most importantly being able to address the causes of identified trendlines and institute policies that guide us towards inclusivity and prosperity.

As a matter of course a population's absolute size is an important metric when understanding the status of that population and one the most fundamental demographic parameters (Lebreton et al. 1992).

## **Overview:**

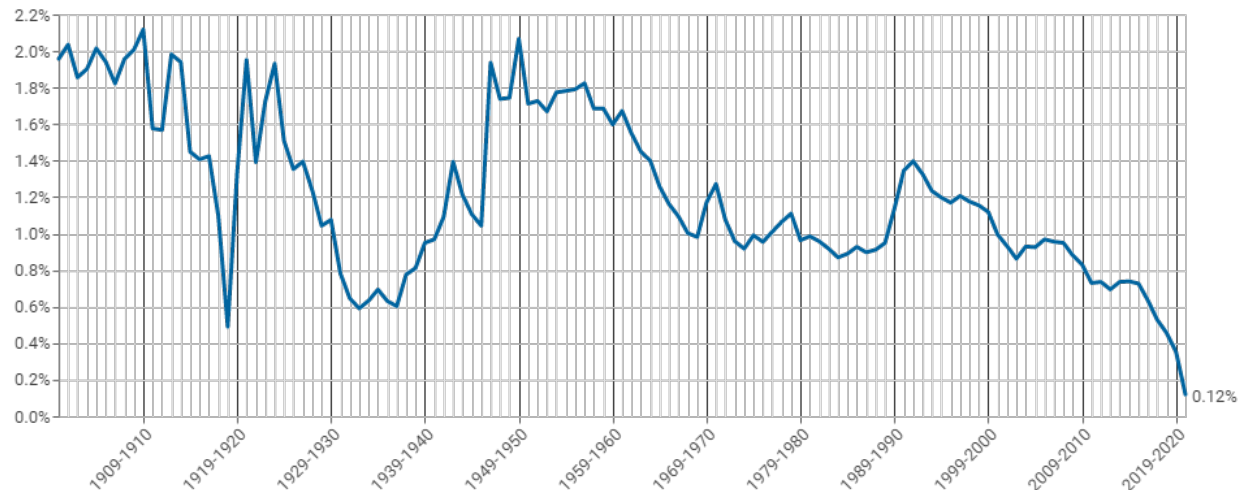
The dataset utilized in this report contains a series of state population counts from The American Community Survey (ACS), a survey sent to a portion of the U.S. population every year and conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This data was then processed to derive percentile increases/decreases year over year per state in order to understand population change. I have supplemented this data with analysis on the 2021 census by William H. Frey, notable American demographer.

## **Findings:**

Using our findings from the ACS dataset we can see that of the states surveyed there is a general trend towards decreasing population year over year, particularly in the final year of the dataset, 2019. This demarks an overall decrease in U.S. population growth over time, with 17 of the states surveyed showing decreases in population growth. This trend shows no improvement in recent years, increasing to 31 states with declining growth from their previous year and in 2021 population growth overall stood at just 0.12%, the lowest annual growth on record. (Frey, W. H.). Frey largely attributes the general decline of population growth within the U.S. to an aging

population as well as the after-effects of the Great Recession resulting in a general postponement of childrearing among effected young adults.

**Figure 1. US annual population growth, years 1900–01 to 2020–21**



Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census Bureau historical estimates, including 2010-2021 annual estimates, released 12/21/2021

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The states with the largest decreases in population in 2019 were: Alaska (-0.8), West Virginia (-0.76%), Illinois (-0.54%), New York (-0.45%) and Vermont (-0.37%). There are several reasons why one could see decreases in these states. One possible reason could be due to cost of living, as out of the five states Alaska, New York, and Vermont all count among the states with the highest cost of living indices (*Cost of living data series*). As cost-of-living increases citizens often seek to migrate towards states whose housing prices and cost of living are more affordable.

The states with the largest population increases in 2019 were: Idaho (1.87%), Nevada (1.52%), Arizona (1.42%), Utah (1.42%), and South Carolina (1.01%). These states themselves seem to buck the trend previously observed, with each state, except for South Carolina, generally being average with respect to their cost-of-living index within the U.S. These states are however adjacent to states whose cost of living is among the highest, states such as California, Oregon, and Washington.

It is difficult to place exactly why, among the multitude of factors at play contribute most to this decrease in population growth across the U.S., from the observed migration away from more expensive states to the general impact of the Great Recession on childbirth rates, to the general aging population, there are several forces at play interacting with one another. The data, however, is clear, the U.S. is declining in population and one must account for these changes, particularly in sectors that deal with aging clients and healthcare.

## Works Cited

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- Frey, W. H. (2022, March 9). *U.S. population growth has nearly flatlined, new census data shows*. Brookings. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from [https://www.brookings.edu/research/u-s-population-growth-has-nearly-flatlined-new-census-data-shows/#:~:text=The%20states%20that%20led%20in,and%20North%20Carolina%20\(93%2C000\).](https://www.brookings.edu/research/u-s-population-growth-has-nearly-flatlined-new-census-data-shows/#:~:text=The%20states%20that%20led%20in,and%20North%20Carolina%20(93%2C000).)
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