

Demographic Changes



Tell a Story of Opportunity

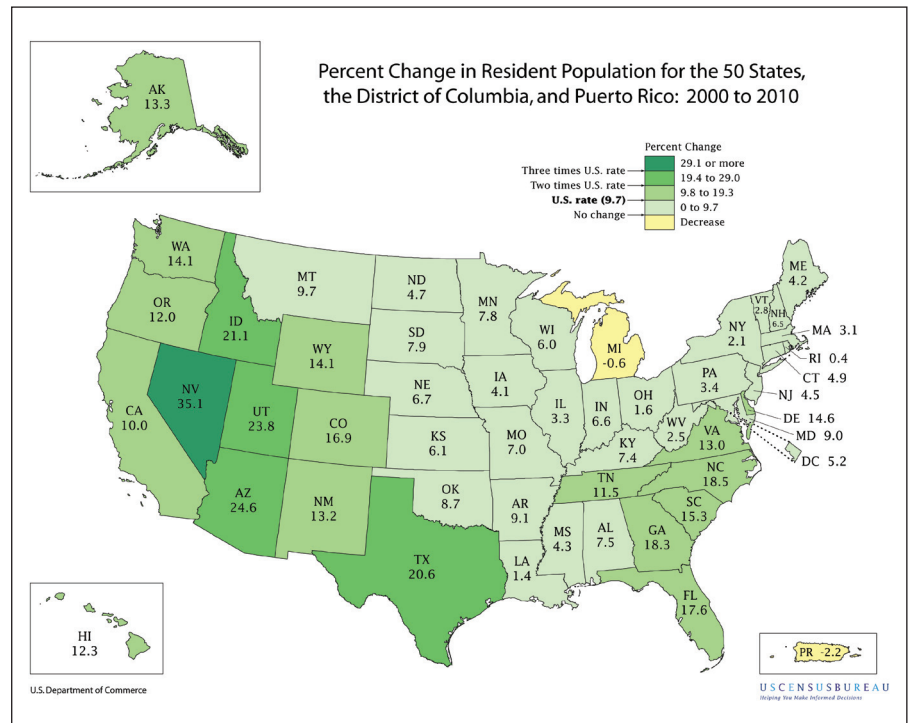
By *MARTIN ROMITTI*

The population of Massachusetts has increased every decade since the first federal census in 1790, but only twice—in the 1930s and the 1970s—did it grow as slowly as it did in the past decade. With an increase of nearly 200,000 residents between 2000 and 2010, the state's population stands at just over six and a half million. The 3.1 percent rate of growth was just one-third of the national average, dropping Massachusetts from the thirteenth most populous state to fourteenth (being surpassed by Washington).

Perhaps this should not be cause for great concern, except that, by design, census counts have direct and significant implications on the apportionment of political sway and the distribution of more than \$400 billion in federal funds. Massachusetts will lose a hefty amount in potential revenue, as well as a Congressional seat, due to the continued and deliberate choices by people, both foreign-born and U.S. citizens, to reside in America's South and West.

The story of U.S. Census data is really one about opportunity. The vast majority of people and their families choose to live where they feel they will have the most opportunity. This will be judged on their terms: be it job prospects, safety and security, proximity to family and friends, housing stock, school performance, health care, climate, cultural environment, or a host of other reasons. Every choice to settle in an area recognizes the location as having the right combination of factors, individually weighted for importance, and ultimately deemed a good fit by each person.

So the federal counts provide valuable insights into the ability of states and



municipalities to foster individual opportunity. A growing population is a good measure of the attractiveness and success of a community, whereas trends in the data can reveal where imbalances and deficiencies exist that may need to be addressed.

Trends in Cities and Towns

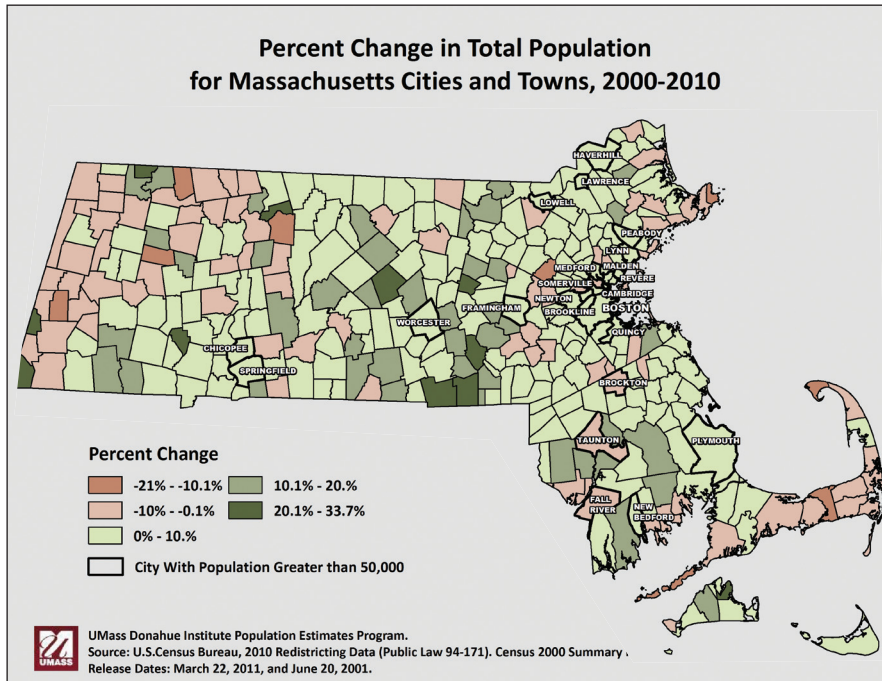
The most recent census data show significant variation among the 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts; 251 municipalities gained population between 2000 and 2010, while 100 lost residents. Values ranged from population declines of more than 20 percent to increases above 33 percent (in select very small towns); 171 municipalities grew faster than the 3.1 percent of the state overall. All but four of the most populous places in Massachusetts grew over the decade.

The twenty-three largest municipalities in the state, those with populations above 50,000, account for 37 percent of the total population. The fastest-growing among these was Plymouth (9.2 percent). Boston, by far the largest city in the state, gained 28,453 residents, or 4.8 percent. Quincy also grew by 4.8 percent. Growing at an even faster pace were Lawrence (6 percent), Malden (5.5 percent), and Worcester (4.9 percent). Cambridge (3.8 percent growth) and Haverhill (3.2 percent) also exceeded the state average. Large cities that lost population over the decade included Fall River (-3.4 percent), Somerville (-2.2 percent), Brockton (-0.5 percent), and Taunton (-0.2 percent).

Compared to all cities and towns in the Northeast (including those in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey,

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DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES TELL A STORY OF OPPORTUNITY



Reflections on Growth

The census numbers show that Massachusetts is getting older and more diverse, but remains highly educated. In 146 communities, at least 15 percent of all residents are age 65 or older; this group is led by Orleans (39.8 percent), Chatham (37.7 percent), Eastham (32.4 percent), Dennis (32.2 percent), and Yarmouth (29.4 percent). The state's Asian population increased fifteen times faster than the overall state population from 2000 to 2010. This is also the case for residents of Hispanic or Latino origin. The black or African-American population grew eight times faster than the overall state growth rate. The foreign-born population also grew rapidly over the decade, at five times the state rate.

Massachusetts started and ended the decade as the state with the largest share of its population, age 25 and over, having completed a bachelor's degree or higher (38.2 percent versus the national average of 27.9 percent). The state also maintained its reputation for having high-quality institutions of higher education. In short, Massachusetts remained the most educated state in the nation.

These trends shed light on the underpinnings of opportunity, and the differences in population growth, during the past decade. When looking at the fifteen fastest-growing and fifteen slowest-growing communities (with populations over 30,000) in the Commonwealth over the period, fast growers were the ones bucking the trend toward an aging population and capitalizing on the other two trends: diversity and education. The median age for fast-growing Massachusetts communities is lower than for slow growers (37.4 versus 39.1). There has also been a more pronounced rate of increase among the minority and foreign-born populations in fast-growing communities. The black or African-American population increased more in fast growers over slow growers (88.4 percent compared to 40.6 percent), as did the Hispanic or Latino population (87.8 percent to 60.7 percent) and the Asian population (69.1 percent to 36.2 percent). Overall, fast growers started the decade less diverse than slow-growing communities, and they remain so, but to a lesser degree. The one exception is the Asian population totals, which

Massachusetts cities and towns with populations above 50,000

(2010 U.S. Census)

Boston:	617,594
Worcester:	181,045
Springfield:	153,060
Lowell:	106,519
Cambridge:	105,162
New Bedford:	95,072
Brockton:	93,810
Quincy:	92,271
Lynn:	90,329
Fall River:	88,857
Newton:	85,146
Lawrence:	76,377
Somerville:	75,754
Framingham:	68,318
Haverhill:	60,879
Malden:	59,450
Brookline:	58,732
Plymouth:	56,468
Medford:	56,173
Taunton:	55,874
Chicopee:	55,298
Revere:	51,755
Peabody:	51,251

New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont), large and mid-size municipalities in Massachusetts grew at a somewhat slower pace. Massachusetts communities with populations over 50,000 grew at an average rate of 2.22 percent from 2000 to 2010, compared to a 2.45 percent rate for the Northeast. Nine of the Commonwealth's largest cities grew faster than the average, while fourteen grew more slowly.

Among municipalities with populations between 10,000 and 50,000, the Massachusetts growth rate was 3.41 percent, compared to a 4.8 percent rate for mid-size communities throughout the Northeast. Fifty-two of these Massachusetts communities grew faster than the Northeast average, while ninety-eight grew more slowly.

Only the state's small towns, with populations under 10,000, were, on average, ahead of the growth rate for similar communities throughout the Northeast (3.99 percent to 3.18 percent). Among them, eighty-eight grew faster than the Northeast average, while ninety grew more slowly.

Overall, the numbers suggest that many of the Commonwealth's municipalities are not reaching favorable levels of population growth by both U.S. and Northeast standards.

Percentage Population Change 2000 to 2010 for Massachusetts Municipalities with Populations Over 30,000

FASTEST GROWERS		SLOWEST GROWERS	
Shrewsbury	12.5%	Barnstable	-5.5%
Dartmouth	11.0%	Falmouth	-3.5%
Everett	9.5%	Fall River	-3.4%
Revere	9.5%	Watertown	-3.2%
Plymouth	9.2%	Pittsfield	-2.3%
Amherst	8.4%	Somerville	-2.2%
Methuen	7.9%	Leominster	-1.3%
Franklin	7.0%	Beverly	-0.9%
Peabody	6.5%	Brockton	-0.5%
Andover	6.3%	Weymouth	-0.5%
Marlborough	6.2%	Chelmsford	-0.2%
Lawrence	6.0%	Taunton	-0.2%
Braintree	5.7%	Holyoke	0.1%
Malden	5.5%	Chelsea	0.3%
Worcester	4.9%	Springfield	0.6%

consistently represented a higher percentage of total population among the fast growers (6.7 percent to 3.2 percent).

The fastest-growing communities in the last decade also benefited from having a greater proportion of residents with higher levels of educational attainment, and from better school system perfor-

mance in general. Fast growers had a larger proportion of residents with bachelor's degrees and advanced degrees. This suggests a labor force better positioned to connect to today's economy, especially the state's strengths in the education, health care, and technology sectors, which are currently leading the economic

recovery. The fast growers also tended to have better performing elementary and secondary schools, as measured by Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) composite performance index scores, although this is not universally the case. For instance, the most recent set of scores shows that the state's fast-growing communities are above state averages in both English language arts (87.2 to 86.9) and math (82.2 to 79.9), and their scores are well above the averages for slow-growing cities, which were 80.4 in English language arts and 73.6 in math.

The Next Decade of Opportunities

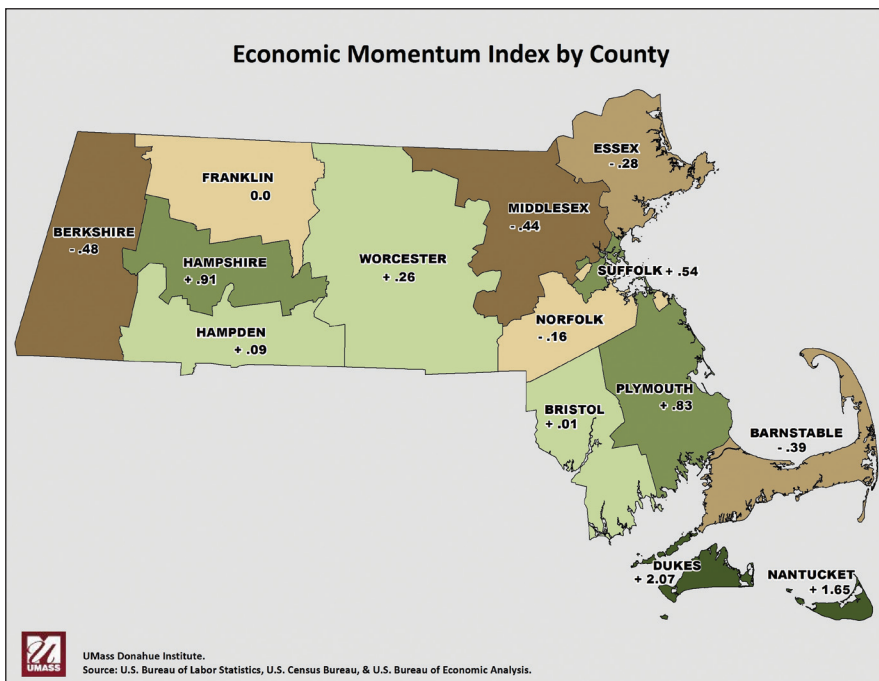
Massachusetts is projected to continue along a slow growth path for the rest of this decade and beyond, setting up the prospect for déjà vu in future census counts. Significant variation is also likely to continue in the fortunes and growth patterns of the state's municipalities. But there are always more ways to draw a crooked line than a straight one, and actions can and should be taken to alter these predicted trajectories.

While the decision of where to live remains an individual one, a strong determinant will always be the proximity to good and plentiful job opportunities. One measure of the creation of good job opportunities is the Economic Momentum Index, which measures percentage changes in area employment, population, and income compared to state averages. An index of 0 shows average economic growth, while an index above or below 0 indicates faster or sluggish growth, respectively.

Between 2000 and 2010, this index shows that more robust economic activity occurred in Boston (Suffolk County), Hampshire County in Western Massachusetts, and Plymouth County in the southeast. The island counties of Dukes and Nantucket showed the greatest gains in economic momentum over the decade. Berkshire and Middlesex counties lagged the most in economic momentum, while Essex and Barnstable counties also saw drops. The remaining counties in the state kept pace with the averages for growing jobs, income and population.

Spurring economic momentum in the

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future will require even more vigilance and effective economic development efforts. These efforts can be especially fruitful when focused on building “regional economies” around existing and emerging industry clusters. Clusters reflect the existing and potential economic strengths among groups of businesses and supporting institutions in the region that have common supply chains, labor needs, technologies, and markets. It is a proven strategy for making regions more competitive within the global economy. By actively working to develop unique regional clusters, all communities in the area can benefit from accelerated innovation, business formation and expansion, and job creation. This approach also allows area leaders to coordinate initiatives and resources.

A second sound strategy for generating momentum is by “looking within” and recognizing that most new economic opportunity will likely come from the ideas and efforts of people already living in our communities. Studies have shown that many of the fastest-growing, job-creating businesses are located in the communities where those business owners live. What does this mean? Where someone lives or grows up matters. Home-grown entrepreneurship and advancing education and workforce development opportunities for area youth, for instance, can pay huge dividends.

Leaders should also be ready and open to growth coming to the region from the outside, however. This requires continued investments in schools, services, basic infrastructure, and the civic and physical environment of communities. It also includes the need to have development-ready buildings and sites and to offer a cost-competitive business environment.

We know that Massachusetts communities have many positives to offer as places to call home. Going forward, municipal leaders can continue to build a menu of opportunity for both current and prospective residents. Growing the regional economy, looking within to develop the talent already here, and being ready to welcome the contributions from outside are the best ingredients for success in the decades ahead. ❁