Visualizing A Decade Of Population Growth And Decline In US Counties

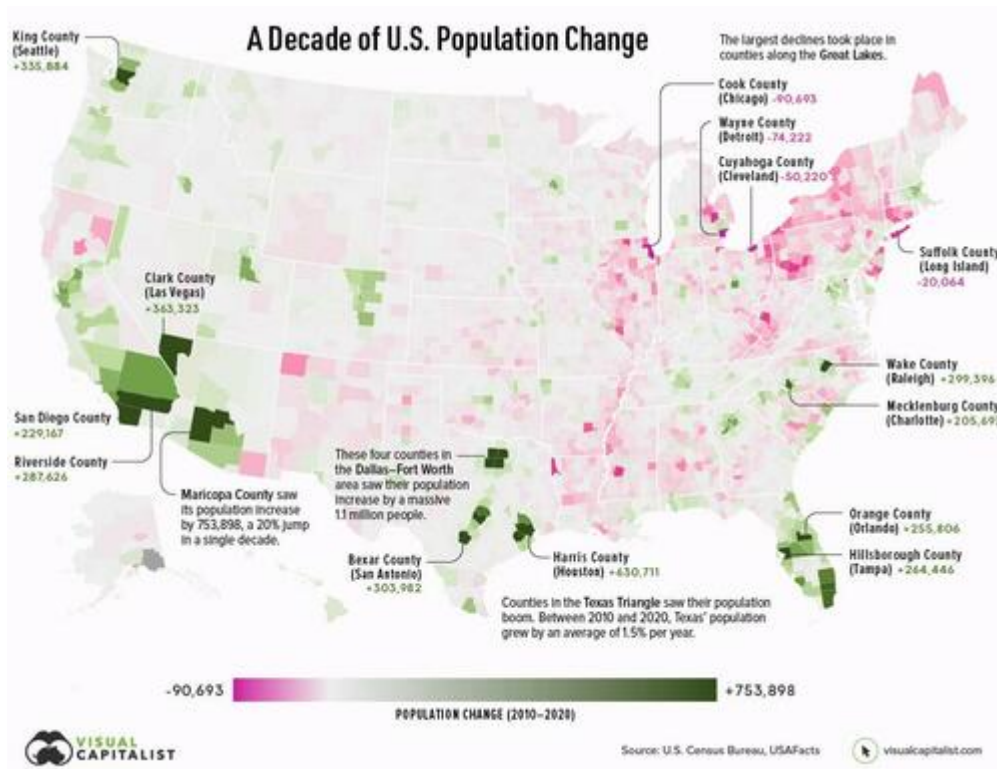## Description

USA: There are a number of factors that determine how much a region's population changes.

If an area sees a high number of migrants, along with a strong birth rate and low death rate, then its population is bound to increase over time. On the flip side, as *Visual Capitalists Nick Routley details below,* if more people are leaving the area than coming in, and the region's birth rate is low, then its population will likely decline.

Which areas in the United States are seeing the most growth, and which places are seeing their populations dwindle?

This map, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, shows a decade of population movement across U.S. counties, painting a detailed picture of U.S. population growth between 2010 and 2020.

A Decade of U.S. Population Change

Counties With The Biggest Population Growth from 2010-2020

To calculate population estimates for each county, the U.S. Census Bureau does the following calculations:

A county's base population ? plus births ? minus deaths ? plus migration = new population estimate

From 2010 to 2020, **Maricopa County** in Arizona saw the highest increase in its population estimate. Over a decade, the county gained **753,898** residents. Below are the counties that saw the biggest increases in population:

Rank	County	Point of Reference	State	Pop. Growth (2010–2020)
#1	Maricopa County	Phoenix, Scottsdale	Arizona	+753,898
#2	Harris County	Houston	Texas	+630,711
#3	Clark County	Las Vegas	Nevada	+363,323
#4	King County	Seattle	Washington	+335,884
#5	Tarrant County	Fort Worth, Arlington	Texas	+305,180
#6	Bexar County	San Antonio	Texas	+303,982
#7	Riverside County	Riverside, Palm Springs	California	+287,626
#8	Collin County	Plano	Texas	+284,967
#9	Travis County	Austin	Texas	+270,111
#10	Hillsborough County	Tampa	Florida	+264,446

Phoenix and surrounding areas grew faster than any other major city in the country. The region's sunny climate and amenities are popular with retirees, but another draw is housing affordability. Families from more expensive markets—California in particular—are moving to the city in droves. This is a trend that spilled over into the pandemic era as more people moved into remote and hybrid work situations.

Texas counties saw a lot of growth as well, with five of the top 10 gainers located in the state of Texas. A big draw for Texas is its relatively affordable housing market. In 2021, average home prices in the state stood at $172,500—**$53,310** below the national average.

Counties With The Biggest Population Drops from 2010-2020

On the opposite end of the spectrum, here's a look at the top 10 counties that saw the biggest declines in their populations over the decade:

Rank	County	Point of Reference	State	Pop. Growth (2010–2020)
#1	Cook County	Chicago	Illinois	-90,693
#2	Wayne County	Detroit	Michigan	-74,224
#3	Cuyahoga County	Cleveland	Ohio	-50,220
#4	Genesee County	Flint	Michigan	-20,165
#5	Suffolk County	Long Island	New York	-20,064
#6	Caddo Parish	Shreveport	Louisiana	-18,173
#7	Westmoreland County	Murrysville	Pennsylvania	-17,942
#8	Hinds County	Jackson	Mississippi	-17,751
#9	Kanawha County	Charleston	West Virginia	-16,672
#10	Cambria County	Johnstown	Pennsylvania	-14,786

The largest drops happened in counties along the Great Lakes, including Cook County (which includes the city of Chicago) and Wayne County (which includes the city of Detroit).

For many of these counties, particularly those in America's "Rust Belt", population drops over this period were a continuation of decades-long trends. Wayne County is an extreme example of this trend. From 1970 to 2020, the area lost one-third of its population.
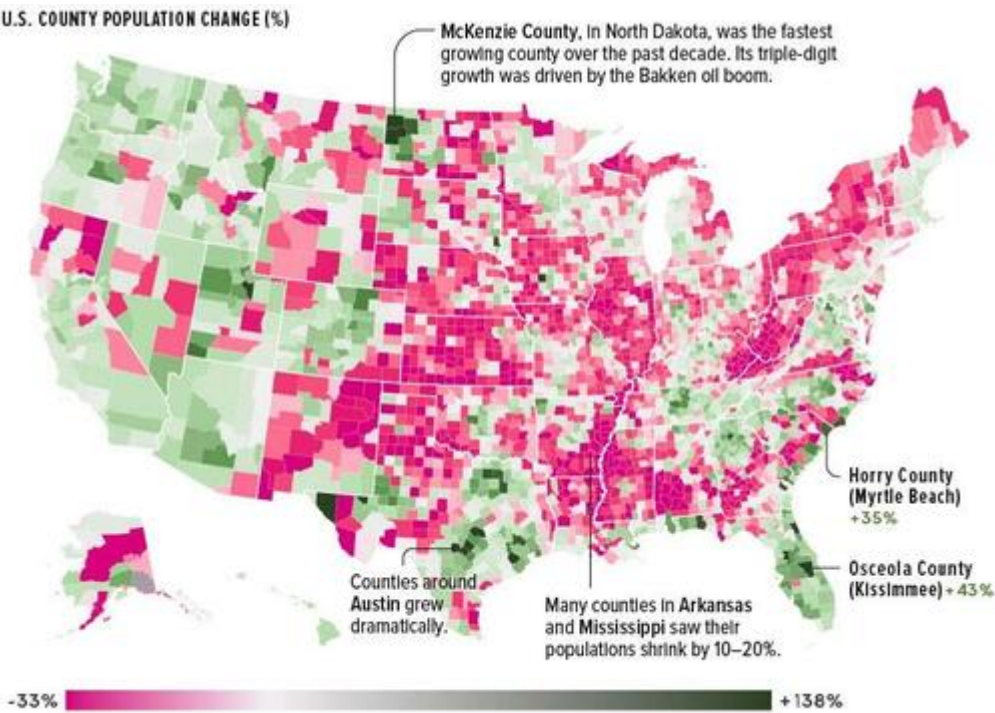
U.S. Population Growth in Percentage Terms (2010-2020)

While the map above is great at showing where the greatest number of Americans migrated, it downplays big changes in counties with smaller populations.

For example, McKenzie County in North Dakota, with a 2020 population of just **15,242**, was the fastest-growing U.S. county over the past decade. The county's **138%** increase was driven primarily by the Bakken oil boom in the area. High-growth counties in Texas also grew as new sources of energy were extracted in rural areas.

The nation's counties are evenly divided between population increase and decline, and clear patterns

emerge.

U.S. COUNTY POPULATION CHANGE (%)

McKenzie County, in North Dakota, was the fastest growing county over the past decade. Its triple-digit growth was driven by the Bakken oil boom.

Horry County
(Myrtle Beach)
+35%

Osceola County
(Kissimmee) +43%

Counties around Austin grew dramatically.

Many counties in Arkansas and Mississippi saw their populations shrink by 10–20%.

-33% ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ +138%

Pandemic Population Changes

More recent population changes reflect longer-term trends. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the counties that saw the strongest population increases were located in high-growth states like Florida and Texas.

Below are the 20 counties that grew the most from 2020 to 2021.

Rank	County	Point of Reference	State	Pop. Growth (2020–2021)
#1	Maricopa County	Phoenix	Arizona	+58,246
#2	Collin County	Plano	Texas	+36,313
#3	Riverside County	Riverside, Palm Springs	California	+35,631
#4	Fort Bend County	Sugar Land	Texas	+29,895
#5	Williamson County	Georgetown	Texas	+27,760
#6	Denton County	Denton	Texas	+27,747
#7	Polk County	Lakeland	Florida	+24,287
#8	Montgomery County	The Woodlands	Texas	+23,948
#9	Lee County	Fort Myers	Florida	+23,297
#10	Utah County	Provo	Utah	+21,843

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Many of these counties are located next to large cities, reflecting a shift to the suburbs and larger living spaces. However, as COVID-19 restrictions ease, and the pandemic housing boom tapers off due to rising interest rates, it remains to be seen whether the suburban shift will continue, or if people begin to migrate back to city centers.

by Tyler Durden

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