

National and District Overview

281

Million and Counting

by Howard J. Wall

According to the results of Census 2000, the population of the United States was more than 281 million in April 2000, having grown by about 13.2 percent since 1990.¹ As with economic growth during the 1990s, this rate of population growth was relatively higher than in recent decades.

The U.S. population grew by 11.4 percent in the 1970s, and by only 9.8 percent in the 1980s. The sources of population growth also differed in the 1990s, as natural population growth—the difference between births and deaths—has declined substantially. The U.S. birthrate has been falling, while the death rate has remained roughly constant. The decline in natural population growth has been filled by international migration, which accounted for 31.3 percent of population growth between 1990 and 1999 (the most recent period for which complete data are available), compared with only 25.9 percent of growth in the 1980s.

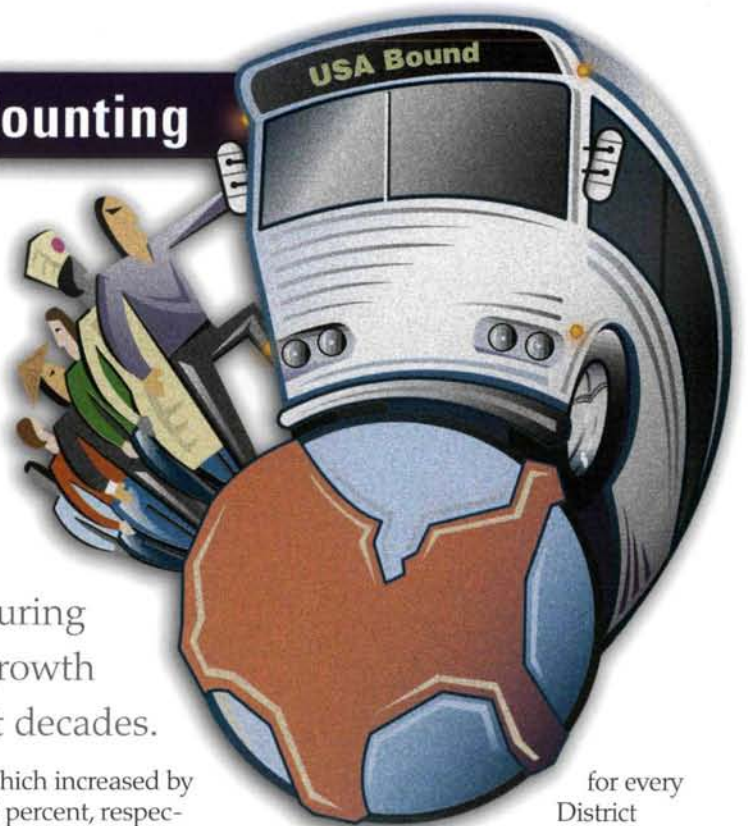
The populations of the seven states that lie at least partly in the Eighth District tended to grow slower than the country as a whole between 1990 and 1999. The estimated change in the U.S. population over this period rose by about 10 percent. Only Tennessee's population—at 12.4 percent—grew faster. Arkansas' population growth of 8.5 percent was not far behind the country's, but the remaining District states—Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi and Missouri—fell well short, growing by between 6 and 7.5 percent. While these numbers look rather dreary next to the national numbers, they need to be put into perspective. Although the District's population grew much slower than in the West

and South, which increased by 13.6 and 12.9 percent, respectively, it grew much faster than the Northeast region's, which posted only a 2 percent gain.

Go (Mid)West, Young Man

Several trends are behind the differences between District and national population growth rates in this period. For one thing, all District states but Illinois had substantially lower rates of natural population growth. In the United States and Illinois, the number of births exceeded the number of deaths by more than 75 percent, whereas in the rest of the District births exceeded deaths from just 35 percent to 61 percent. Net international migration was also lower in the District than in the country as a whole. For the United States, net international migration rate between 1990 and 1999 was about 3 percent, while for no District state except Illinois—where it was 3.4 percent—did migration exceed even 1 percent.

In all District states except Illinois, more people moved in from the rest of the country than moved out. This made up for the low natural growth rates and low net international migration. In Arkansas and Kentucky, positive net migration from the rest of the country accounted for more than half of the population change for 1990-99, and



for every District state except Illinois, it accounted for 20 to 36 percent of the change. Illinois, on the other hand, lost more people to other states than it gained, canceling out some of the population advances it made through having a high natural growth rate and high net international migration.

Onward to 300 Million

In its *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1999*, the Census Bureau predicts that U.S. population growth will slow in the next decade, while still coming out 8.4 percent higher in 2010 than in 2000. This prediction is based on a birth rate that will stabilize at just below the current level, and a death rate that will rise as the baby boom generation enters old age. Lower foreign immigration rates are projected as well. The Census Bureau also predicts slower population growth for the District states, with a more marked slowing than for the country as a whole.

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¹ These estimates are at the Census Bureau's web site, <www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/popest.html>.