

Issue Brief for Work Group 1

**INTERNAL MIGRATION AND POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION**

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The Population Turnaround and the Turnaround Reversal

The last 20 years have seen two dramatic shifts in the pattern of nonmetropolitan population change. In contrast to previous decades, the "nonmetropolitan turnaround" of the 1970s was a period of renewed and widespread nonmetropolitan growth which overall was at a higher level than metropolitan growth. Much of this was due to migration, for by the early 1970s U.S. Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data showed that the number of metro-to-nonmetro migrants had exceeded the number going in the opposite direction. This period was followed, however, by the "turnaround reversal" of the 1980s, during which nonmetro growth slowed considerably, and was again outpaced by the growth of metropolitan areas. By 1982-83 the CPS once more showed there were more migrants from nonmetro to metro areas than from metro to nonmetro areas, and this continued through the decade. The first of these unanticipated trends led to a great deal of research, but work on the second has been more limited. Now that new data are becoming available, it is important to give more attention to recent changes, and to reappraise the 1970-80 turnaround period in the light of the succeeding decade.

Trends since 1950 in nonmetropolitan and metropolitan population change are given in table 1. (Appropriate migration data are not yet available). For the US as a whole the population change pattern of the turnaround decade clearly stands out as the anomaly. Although in every decade nonmetro counties adjacent to metro counties as a whole grew faster than nonadjacent nonmetro counties, the difference was least in 1970-80, and the enormous increase between 1960-70 and 1970-80 in the growth of nonadjacent counties showed the turnaround was not just metro spillover. The most recent decade, however, is clearly a return to the previous pattern. Early in the 1980s, using the 1983 and 1984 county population estimates, some of us bravely said that there had been a reversal, but we were not going back to the situation in the 1960s. On the contrary, the results here, using the metro-nonmetro county designation at the beginning of each decade for comparability, actually gives some support to the view that the 1980s represent a return to the 1950s in growth differentials, though of course without the overall rapid growth of that decade that was fueled by the baby boom. Nonmetro rates are 35 percent of metro rates in 1980-90, and almost the same, 38 percent in 1950-60, but they were 68 percent of metro growth in 1960-70. Similarly, the relative difference between adjacent and nonadjacent nonmetro county growth is closer to the 1950s than the 1960s.

Figure 2 shows the turnaround was found in all regions except the South, although there nonmetro percent change was almost twice as great in the 1970-80 as any other decade. Metro is above nonmetro in every region in the other decades. The most striking trend in the regional tables, however, is the very slow growth in the North as compared to the South and West over the last two decades. This trend definitely did not reverse itself in the most recent decade, and work on recent metro-nonmetro change must be done in the context of this regional redistribution. Overall, both the turnaround and the turnaround reversal was widespread. In 1970-80 fully 81 percent of the nonmetro counties grew in population, whereas in 1980-90 only 47 percent grew. Comparable figures for 1950-60 and 1960-70 are 46 and 51, again showing a return to an earlier period in growth pattern.

### Specific Reasons

Many specific reasons have been given for the turnaround:

- During the 1970s there was less movement out of agriculture than previously, as the industry was doing relatively well.
- Previous outmovement meant that the absolute numbers involved in the shift from agriculture had reached a low level.
- With the energy crisis early in the 1970s, there was an increase in mining employment.
- Manufacturing continued to deconcentrate into nonmetro areas, providing increased employment, particularly in low-wage industries.
- Large numbers of people moving to nonmetro communities gave quality-of-life reasons for their decision to move, based on a favorable views about rural life, and negative views of the big city.
- Recreation continued to increase in importance, and there was an appreciable amount of migration of retired persons to those nonmetro areas situated in attractive locations.
- There was also additional growth at the nonmetro peripheries of metropolitan areas during the decade.

Each of these rather concrete explanations tend to apply to specific areas, so that the widespread nature of the turnaround could be considered due to the convergence of several trends during the same period.

Similarly, several specific reasons have been given for the downturn in growth in the 1980s.

- With the "farm crisis" of the early 1980s, areas dependent on agriculture were particularly hard-hit economically, and this was reflected in absolute population declines.
- The energy boom of the 1970s was followed by sharp declines in most such activities in nonmetro areas in the 1980s.
- Manufacturing, a basis for growth in the 1960s and 1970s went into a decline nationally in the early 1980s, and this slump was felt particularly in nonmetro areas.

- Macroeconomic policies made for a strong dollar which particularly placed the products of nonmetro areas at a competitive disadvantage.
- Counties with a high degree of commuting to metro areas, however, showed slower, but at least moderate growth in the 1980s.
- Recreation and retirement counties continued to grow more rapidly than the metropolitan population as a whole across both decades, though at a slower pace than previously.

This brief summary suggests a set of period explanations for both the turnaround and its reversal, particularly as they relate to the ups and downs of the extractive and manufacturing industries. Though there was much emphasis on the noneconomic quality-of-life bases for the turnaround, the subsequent decade made it clear that economic considerations were fundamental, as nonmetro America suffered an economic slump throughout most of the period that corresponded to the downturn in population. The remaining growth was much more tied to adjacent counties, however, as well as in recreation and retirement counties, which retain important ties to metropolitan areas through migration. No one ever contended that the turnaround represented less interdependence between metro and nonmetro areas, but the present pattern of growth, like the 1950s and 1960s, seems more closely linked geographically to large cities than did that of the 1970-80 decade.

Part of the new trend in the 1970s within nonmetro areas was a pattern of local deconcentration, with the population outside incorporated places generally growing faster than in such places, even at some distance from metropolitan areas. Evidently this aspect of deconcentration has continued in the 1980s. Table 1 shows that although all nonmetro growth was down in the most recent decade, the population outside places was growing almost twice as fast as the population in places. This pattern also was evident in nonadjacent counties, where population grew slightly outside cities and villages, but the population living in such places declined overall. The recent widespread prevalence of slow growth and decline for cities and villages in rural America is bound to command considerable attention in the years to come.

#### General explanations

Similarly, there are a number of more general approaches to explanations of the turnaround, if not also for the reversal. From a demographic perspective, a point occasionally made is that the turnaround was tied to a cohort effect, given that the 1970s was a time most baby-boomers were in their prime migration ages. Support for this attractive proposition seems to be lacking however; indeed, a higher proportion of persons in the young adult ages should have an opposite effect on migration, since there was a net gain of young people for metro areas throughout the turnaround. On the other hand, the 1970s was a time when perhaps the first large cohort of the elder emerged who had the means to live where they chose, and many individuals in this group had ties to rural areas. Related to the cohort approach are speculations about the effects of compositional changes, as in household composition, the rise of two-earner families, and socioeconomic status on migration trends. The increase in the footloose elderly population similarly is mentioned.

Perhaps the most common general explanation relates to overall processes of population deconcentration, and convergence between metro and nonmetro areas. Although higher nonmetro growth during the turnaround was not limited to areas near metropolitan centers, it was argued that technological changes, particularly in transportation and communication, have further loosened the need for people and activities to be concentrated in large population nodes, and with declining socioeconomic differences between metro and nonmetro areas, shifts to nonmetro become more feasible and attractive. Related to this at the individual level, studies showed large numbers of people moving to nonmetro communities gave quality-of-life reasons for choosing their destinations, and also expressed negative views about big cities. (For example, see Long 1981).

Other approaches concentrated more on the economic downturn in metropolitan areas, and the shift of people and activities away from the core metropolitan region of the northeast and east north central states. This includes the political economy perspective which focused on capital, multinational economic activity and governmental policy, as well as other economic approaches to industrial restructuring, which gave attention both to the shift out of conventional manufacturing and to the continuing important role of many major metropolitan areas as economic and social "command and control" centers. In recent work, Frey (1987) combines these latter approaches into a "regional restructuring" perspective which he contrasts with the "deconcentration" perspective.

Successfully fitting these more general explanations to the trends of both decades appears problematic at this time. The deconcentration perspective particularly gave no hint of the 1980-90 reversal. Supporters of the deconcentration perspective could argue that the period effects of the 1980s, or perhaps of both decades resulted in unexpected shifts, but that underlying this is a general trend toward deconcentration. Certainly extractive industries have always had boom and bust cycles, and the limited finding of higher nonplace growth in both decades seems to support this view. Just as it was easy to assume that everything was in place to support a continuation of the turnaround at the beginning of the 1980s, however, it is difficult to see a basis for any widespread nonmetropolitan economic revival at this time, that could underlie yet another reversal of nonmetro population trends. The shift of low-wage manufacturing to, and then away from nonmetro areas appears to be part of the industrial restructuring that has been associated with recent regional shifts and nonmetro declines. Without denying the continued importance of quality-of-life and family considerations, the trends of the 1980s have underscored the underlying economic basis of population growth and decline that we tended to minimize in the turnaround era.

#### Some Items for a Research Agenda

It seems fair to say that all of the above perspectives and explanations could lead to worthwhile research activities in the 1990s. Perhaps more important, many of the specific explanations and regional differences point to a significant areal variation in trends, that can be explored on a long-term basis when the 1990 data become available. This is also important for policy relevance, since nonmetro America is too heterogeneous to be

encompassed adequately by unitary programs. Below are a few ideas to consider, not ordered in any priority, with no pretense that the list is exhaustive:

Migration and natural increase in population redistribution.

Although it is sometimes assumed that differentials in population change are primarily a function of migration, this is not always the case. We recently showed, for example (Fuguitt, Beale and Riebel 1991) that the further convergence in metro-nonmetro fertility after 1980 was an important component in the increased difference in metro-nonmetro growth favoring metropolitan areas. Substantial metro-nonmetro differences in the timing of fertility was behind the apparent convergence of rates, and suggest it is risky to assume this convergence is permanent. What will be the consequence of the present baby boomlet on growth differentials? Present trends are bound to accelerate the aging of the nonmetro population, resulting in the increase prevalence of natural decrease across much of nonmetro America. The consequence of this for population growth as well for community institutions should receive further attention.

The spatial structure of migration streams. The 1990 migration data provides an important opportunity to understand more about the structure of metro-nonmetro and within-nonmetro migration streams. The availability of county-to-county migration stream data along with detailed social and economic variables provides a great opportunity to make 1975-80 and 1985-90 comparisons, but also creates a challenge due to the added analytical complexity, so it is perhaps not surprising that few moved to grasp this opportunity after 1980. Yet the limited work that has been done with county and regional classifications is intriguing. Wilson (1986) for example, showed that metro to nonmetro migration was mostly within census divisions in the more metropolitanized north, but that the north was a source of nonmetro in-migrants in the other divisions. To what extent can this be considered return migration, or a search for amenities? Using 1965-70 and 1975-80 SEA stream data, Roseman (1983) showed the migration fields for metro to nonmetro movers were more diverse than those for nonmetro to metro movers. Swanson (1983) compared the characteristics of metro areas sending 1975-80 out-migrants to nonmetro areas. Have these patterns changed over the two decades that were so different? Are migration flows for example relatively constant, with changes in the number of in- and out-migrants, or did the new situation in the 1980s result in a changed pattern of flows, that might help to explain what went on in the 1970s and the 1980s?

New migration differentials? Following the turnaround there were a number of studies considering differential migration between metro and nonmetro areas, and its possible consequences for areas of origin and destination. Results were mixed, but in general those moving to nonmetro areas were older and somewhat lower in socioeconomic status than those moving elsewhere, but they typically were above those they joined in nonmetro areas. (Fuguitt, 1985). This needs to be updated with 1990 data. Unfortunately, little could be done on this in the 1980s because the 1980-85 CPS migration question could not be used, and in more recent CPSs nonmetro was miscoded. Did the nonmetro economic downturn result in less selectivity of in- and out-movement? Or, is the pattern more invariant, and

perhaps related to differences in level of development between metro and nonmetro areas (Wilson 1988)?

There seems to be a widespread acceptance of the need for dealing with both in- and out-migrants, and some recognition of potential problems with the analysis of rates of net migration. With the turnaround reversal, attention should shift to out-migration in many areas, and why this out-migration is not as responsive as in-migration to differentials in economic opportunity. There are analytical problems in the interpretation of aggregate rates but outmigration is an important issue relating to rural policy, particularly as it relates to possible programs to encourage out-migration (Drabenstott, Henry and Gibson 1987). Also we need to know more about migration "counter streams," that is those who move into depressed areas. They are not all return migrants, and may represent a significant replacement of human resources (Voss and Fuguitt 1991).

Alternatives to Migration. Understanding lower-than-expected outmigration rates must include a consideration of alternatives to migration. For example, the increase in female labor force participation and in two-earner families is a potentially important substitute for migration. Most of the nonmetro job growth in the 1960s was absorbed by increases in the employment of female residents, whereas this was not true in the 1970s, when the pool of women who could make that transition was much smaller, and there was rapid population growth.

Commuting as an alternative to migration deserves special attention to help understand variations in both in- and out- migration rates. In the 1980s most nonmetro cities were like metro central cities in having more jobs than people. Is the extension of this trend at least in part behind the slow growth and decline of many nonmetro cities in the 1980s? This would support the importance of ongoing local population deconcentration in nonmetro areas. Nonmetro commuting is not primarily to metropolitan centers, and indeed to a degree this is built in to the definition of a metropolitan area. A series of three county-to-county commuting stream files for 1970, 1980 and 1990 to provide an important opportunity for trend work.

Migration from a life-course perspective. A major thrust of migration research today is in the analysis of longitudinal data such as the PSID or the SIPP files. This provides a major shift in perspective from that provided by one-time surveys or the decennial census, and can lead to a more direct consideration of life cycle and family factors, repeat and return migration, and cohort effects. Though a detailed disaggregation of nonmetro areas is not possible with these data, information on characteristics of areas can be obtained and compared.

Economic vs. noneconomic factors in migration. During the turnaround era, a lot of attention was given to economic vs noneconomic (amenities) factors in migration decisions. At the macro level, county units were associated with economic and amenity variables, and at the micro level, individual reasons for migration were assessed. In a sense, this is a false

dichotomy, since we can assume most decisions have to take both into account. For most people economic considerations are necessary for migration, and few can ignore other considerations. But with the turnaround reversal, there is need for further consideration of this issue, not as an either-or matter, but with greater concern for the interrelations between economic and noneconomic factors. At the county level, despite the general downturn in the 1980s, amenity areas continued to grow faster than metro areas as a whole and faster than most other areas. But this is hardly sufficient reason to conclude that amenities are more important than economic considerations in the movement to nonmetro areas, particularly since economic factors are probably basic to the lack of migration gain elsewhere. Except for the amenity counties, the overall redistribution pattern showed more urban-oriented growth, which certainly suggests a resurgence of economic-related considerations in migration and/or a more urban-oriented distribution of economic opportunities in the 1980s.

Further tests of the interrelation between migration and employment growth in nonmetro areas, such as done with earlier data by Williams (1981) and Mead (1982), should make a contribution to this problem, particularly if comparisons between the two decades can be made. Similarly, the temporal association between employment and migration, over the most recent decade, if appropriate data are available, as from the annual Internal Revenue Service Match files, could add to our understanding of nonmetro migration and short-term economic trends (see Greenwood 1985).

Related to this is the migration of the elderly. Presumably this is "noneconomic" in the sense that most elderly are not likely to be moving for employment reasons, but there needs to be investigation of the importance the search for low-cost housing or a lower cost of living in general as motivating the elderly (as well as those of other ages) to move to nonmetro areas. Even in "retirement" counties, the elderly are a small part of the in-migration stream. To what extent are the others moving to capture economic opportunities in the service industries because the elderly are moving in? To be sure, retirement counties grew faster than other nonmetro counties, but why did their growth slow down for the 1970-80 levels, if it was based directly or indirectly on elderly (i.e., "noneconomic") migration? Trends in elderly in- and out-migration streams might help to answer this question, but there also needs to be a consideration of other sources of job growth in these areas.

Migration decision-making. Underlying these macro considerations is the actual decision-making process of individuals. Microdata, including the PUMs and the CPS files make it possible to relate individual migration decisions with personal characteristics, though usually at the end of the migration interval. Although there are difficulties in asking people, usually after the fact, about their migration decisions, this perspective is also necessary to gain understanding of decision-making. Previous research indicated the willingness of many to make a "trade-off" of income for amenities in deciding to move from metro to nonmetro areas. Can anything be said about trends in this tendency? Most migrants from metro to nonmetro areas have been married couples, yet we know nothing about the joint decision-making process that no doubt was behind these moves (Subcommittee on Migration Statistics 1988).

Related to migration decision-making is concern about residential preferences. We have shown that preferences changed slightly since the 1970s in a direction consistent with the change in redistribution patterns (Fuguitt and Brown 1990). The "two-stage" model of migration decision-making showed a lot of anti-urban sentiment as a basis for reasons for moving out of metro areas. Does the decline in anti-urban sentiment explain at least some of the decline in metro-to-nonmetro migration? There is no easy way to answer this, but given the great emphasis which was placed on residential preferences as a basis of the turnaround, I would argue for additional work, relating preferences to migration decision-making. Howell and Frese (1983) and Zuiches and Rieger (1978) showed the potential for longitudinal research by demonstrating the association between preferences or changes in preferences and actual migration. Studies of preferences and the migration decisions of individuals has suffered particularly from being done largely by non-specialists, that is, persons not trained in social psychology, or having much experience dealing with complex problems of question reliability and validity in tapping such a broad concept. Also, demographers and rural sociologists working in this area usually pay little attention to related work, such as that in fertility expectations, or the parallel efforts by geographers on perception of the environment, and this information gap seems to be reciprocal.

The consequences of decline. The consequences--demographic and otherwise of drastic, wide-spread decline needs to be assessed. Some counties in the midwest have been losing for 40 years, and in the most recent decade more than three-fourths of the nonmetro cities and villages are declining in some midwestern states. What does this do for current vital and migration rates, as well as social and economic institutions? This is an old problem which is reemerging as a focus of attention, but it needs another look.

Policy and population redistribution. Most would agree that population redistribution is directly or indirectly influenced by a broad array of public policies and programs, but little work has been done to trace out these influences precisely. Explicit rural programs generally take one of two approaches: easing the transition out of depressed rural areas, including assistance to migration, or improving the economic situation in the local area (Drabenstott, Henry and Gibson 1987). Other programs also may have important indirect or direct effects on where people live, such as those relating to international trade, agriculture, housing, international immigration or welfare. Much of the research suggested above should provide important information necessary for the design of rural development programs. In addition, more work explicitly designed to look at policy impacts is needed. If new programs are established during the coming decade as a response to the distressed situation in rural areas, we also should consider evaluating their demographic consequences.

This, of course, does not begin to exhaust the list of possible research activities. For example, the metro-nonmetro migration patterns for race and ethnic groups, and the importance of international migration also need to be considered. But modifying, adding to and subtracting from these very preliminary ideas is the task of the Work Group.



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(Note: no attempt is made here to provide a comprehensive literature review. For recent reviews, see Greenwood, 1985, Fuguitt, 1985 and Lichter and DeJong, 1990).

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Table 1

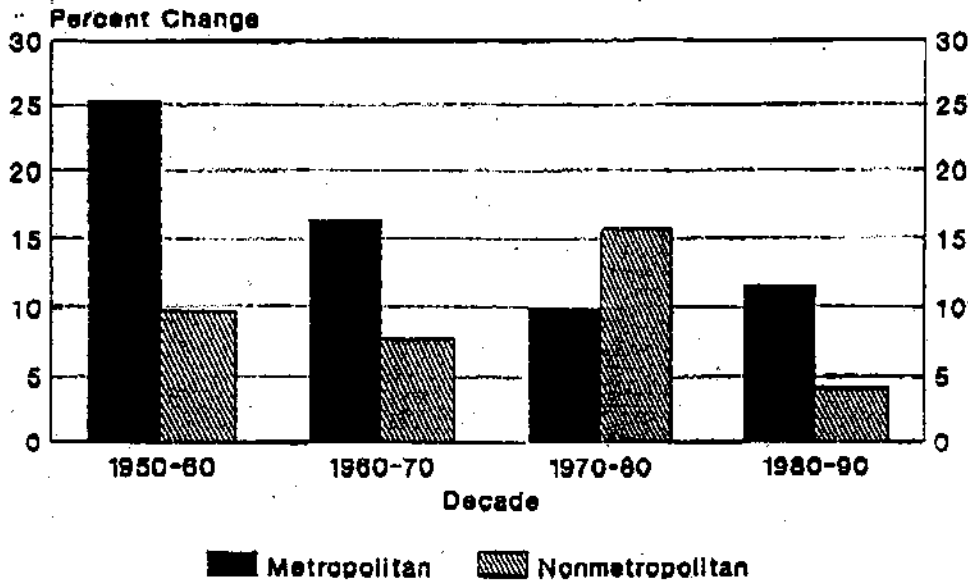
## PLACE-NONPLACE NONMETROPOLITAN POPULATION CHANGE 1950-1990\*

	1950-60	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90
<b>NONMETRO TOTAL</b>	9.7	7.8	15.7	4.1
Place	18.6	9.7	9.6	0.5
Nonplace	2.7	6.0	21.5	7.3
<b>ADJACENT TO METRO</b>	17.8	12.2	17.2	5.8
Place	22.6	11.8	9.5	1.7
Nonplace	13.7	12.5	24.2	9.1
<b>NOT ADJACENT</b>	4.7	3.7	13.8	1.5
Place	16.0	2.7	9.7	-.6
Nonplace	-4.1	.3	17.8	3.5

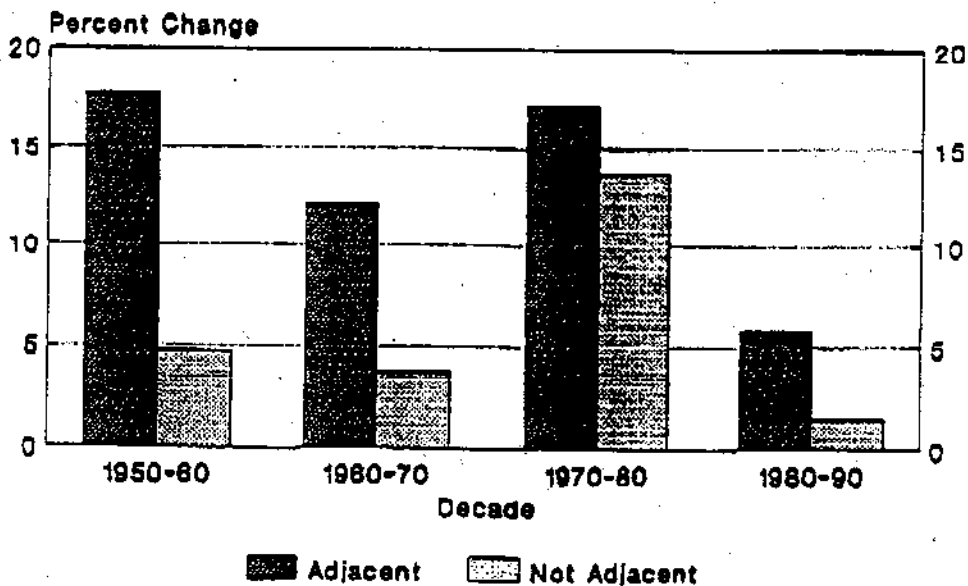
\* Metropolitan designation of 1950 for 1950-60 change; 1963 for 1960-70 change; 1974 for 1970-80 change, and 1983 for 1980-90 change. Places are all nonmetro incorporated cities and villages included in the censuses at the beginning and end of each decade. Thus, the same places are followed across a given decade in calculating percentage change.

FIGURE 1

POPULATION CHANGE METROPOLITAN  
NONMETROPOLITAN US, 1950-1990



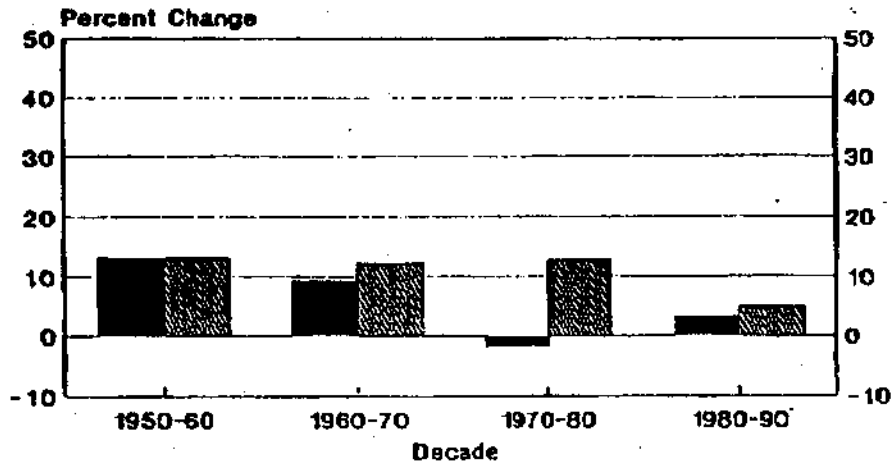
POPULATION CHANGE NONMETROPOLITAN  
ADJACENT, NONADJACENT 1950-1990



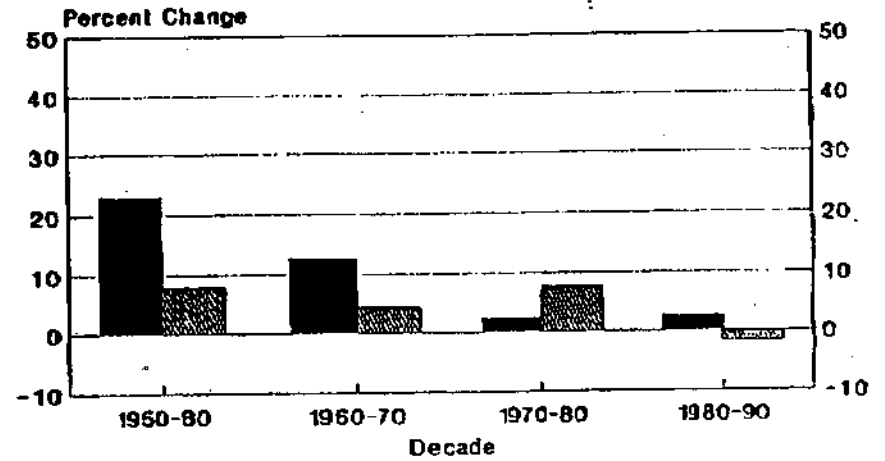
Metropolitan designation at beginning  
of each decade.

**FIGURE 2  
POPULATION CHANGE BY RESIDENCE 1960-90**

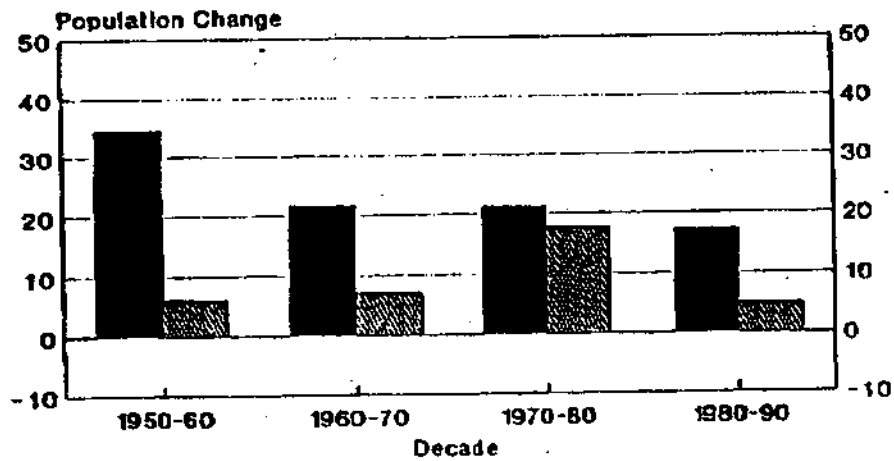
**NORTHEAST**



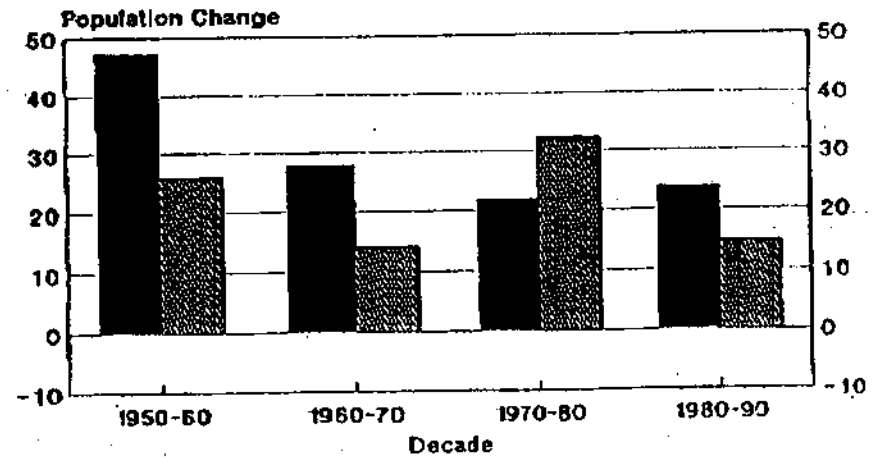
**MIDWEST**



**SOUTH**



**WEST**



Metropolitan
  Nonmetropolitan

Metropolitan designation at beginning of each decade.