Population and Employment in Ohio's Non-Metropolitan Counties

Summary

- This issue of *On the Money* focuses on Ohio population and employment growth outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs). Because of the large population and employment concentrations of MSAs, their performance overshadows changes in the other 50 counties of the state. These counties are either within Micropolitan Statistical Areas or are not part of a statistical area.

- Non-metropolitan population recently reversed at least 60 years of growth with a 1.8 percent decline between 2009 and 2018. The severity of the recession in these counties probably began the trend, and uneven employment growth in subsequent years has caused its continuation.

- Ohio's employment growth during the 2002-2007 expansion was among the weakest in the nation. The 33 micropolitan counties outperformed the state during this period thanks to smaller early declines. The 17 counties outside of statistical areas significantly underperformed during both this expansion and the recession. Although employment has grown in most areas during the expansion that began in 2010, growth has been spotty and less than the statewide average in many cases.

Ohio's Non-Metropolitan Counties

Previous issues of *On the Money* have analyzed population and employment changes in Ohio and 13 all-encompassing regions. These regions include the state's six largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and seven other regions defined for these articles. These seven regions combine similar counties based on employment concentrations primarily in agriculture and manufacturing, and include Ohio's six smaller MSAs. But because a large majority of Ohio population and employment is located in metropolitan counties, trends in these counties overshadow those in the less-populous counties. These 50 non-metropolitan counties are home to one-fifth of Ohio's population and one-eighth of Ohio's jobs. Because population and employment changes differ from those at the state level, it is worthwhile to focus on these counties.

Types of Non-Metropolitan Counties

Non-metropolitan counties can be classified according to the population of the county's largest municipality. As discussed in previous articles, MSAs are federally-defined collections of counties centered on an urban area with a population of at least 50,000. The federal government also defines Micropolitan Statistical Areas (MicroSAs) as counties centered on a municipality with a population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000. There are 33 MicroSAs that include Ohio counties, including the Point Pleasant, West Virginia-Ohio, MicroSA that includes Gallia County, Ohio, and Mason County, West Virginia. All other Ohio MicroSAs include only one county. These are listed in Table 1. Ohio has 17 more rural counties with no municipality with a population of at least 10,000. These counties are not classified within either an MSA or a MicroSA.
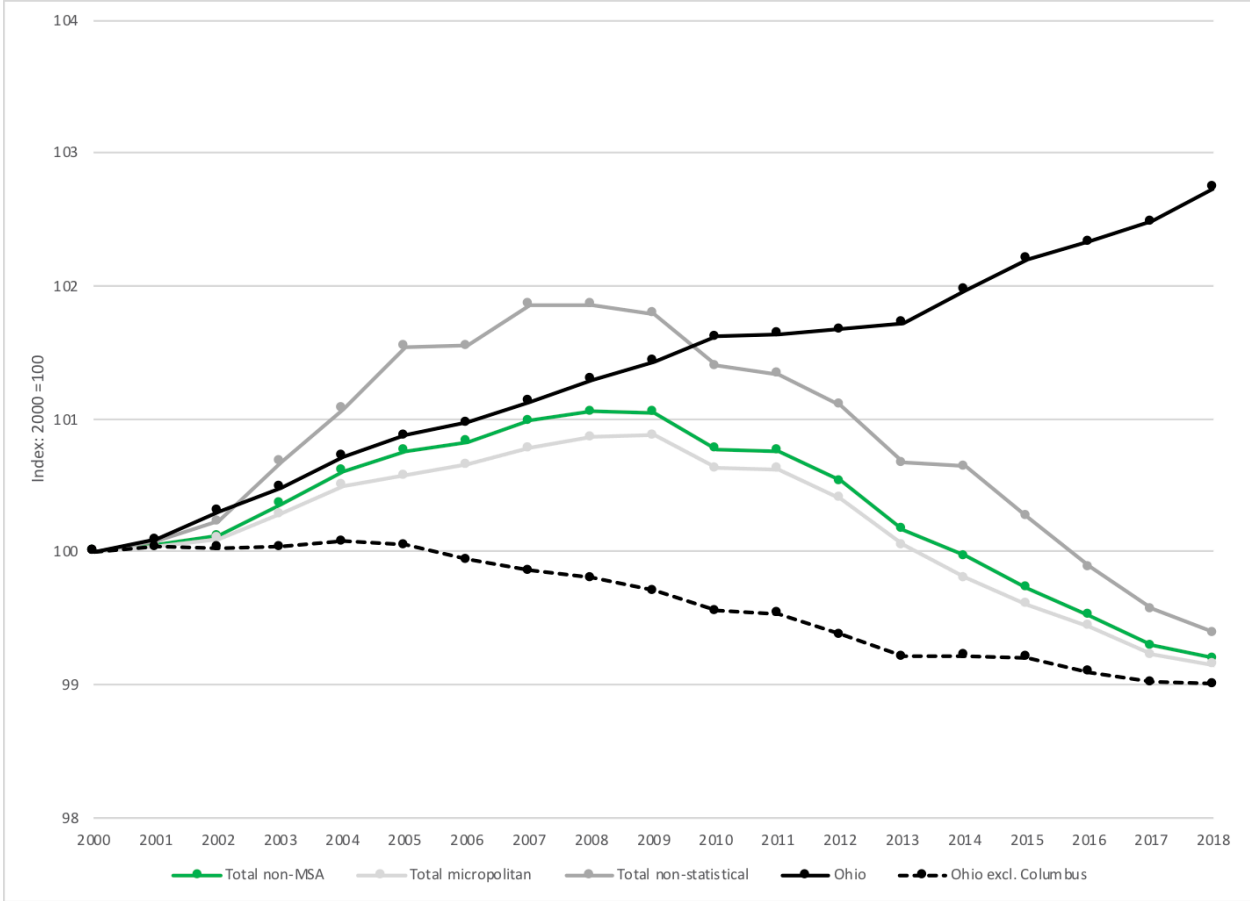
Table 1
Micropolitan Statistical Areas in Ohio

Micropolitan area	County(ies)	Micropolitan area	County(ies)
Ashland, OH	Ashland County	New Philadelphia-Dover, OH	Tuscarawas County
Ashtabula, OH	Ashtabula County	Norwalk, OH	Huron County
Athens, OH	Athens County	Point Pleasant, WV-OH	Gallia County
Bellefontaine, OH	Logan County		Mason County, WV
Bucyrus, OH	Crawford County	Port Clinton, OH	Ottawa County
Cambridge, OH	Guernsey County	Portsmouth, OH	Scioto County
Celina, OH	Mercer County	Salem, OH	Columbiana County
Chillicothe, OH	Ross County	Sandusky, OH	Erie County
Coshocton, OH	Coshocton County	Sidney, OH	Shelby County
Defiance, OH	Defiance County	Tiffin, OH	Seneca County
Findlay, OH	Hancock County	Urbana, OH	Champaign County
Fremont, OH	Sandusky County	Van Wert, OH	Van Wert County
Greenville, OH	Darke County	Wapakoneta, OH	Auglaize County
Jackson, OH	Jackson County	Washington Court House, OH	Fayette County
Marietta, OH	Washington County	Wilmington, OH	Clinton County
Marion, OH	Marion County	Wooster, OH	Wayne County
Mount Vernon, OH	Knox County	Zanesville, OH	Muskingum County

Because economic conditions vary significantly among Ohio's regions, some of the analysis is based on the familiar regions discussed above. The regions and their relevant counties are mapped in Figure 1. The counties that are not colored are components of MSAs and are therefore excluded from the analysis. The Northwest and East North Central regions are identical to that typically analyzed; each of the other regions is missing at least one county.

Figure 1
Ohio Regions and Non-Metropolitan Counties

Northwest ▮ (pink)   West North Central ▮ (green)   Northeast ▮ (brown)   West ▮ (yellow)   East North Central ▮ (purple)

South ▮ (blue)   Southeast ▮ (cream)

Counties without shading are not included in the analysis.

Population Changes in Ohio and Non-Metropolitan Counties

The Census Bureau publishes annual population estimates for the U.S., states, counties, and places (e.g., cities, villages, and townships). The population estimates are based on the most recent census totals (2010 in this case). The approach relies on the fact that the population in 2018 must be equal to the population in 2010 plus births, less deaths, plus movers into the area, less movers out between 2010 and 2018. The problem is that these changes, especially mobility changes, are measured with imperfect data. This means that the resulting population estimates have an error component that increases as the time between the census and the estimation date increases.

Figure 2 graphs indexed population trends since 2000 for the state, the state excluding the Columbus MSA, all non-metropolitan counties, MicroSA counties, and counties not in statistical areas. As discussed in previous articles, Ohio's population growth becomes negative when the Columbus MSA is excluded. The striking feature of Figure 2, however, is the population break following 2009 in both groups of non-MSA counties. In earlier years, population grew in both

classes of counties; growth in MicroSA counties was somewhat slower than the state average, while growth in counties not in statistical areas was faster. The trend reversed in more recent years, with MicroSA counties losing 1.7 percent and non-statistical area counties losing 2.3 percent since 2009.
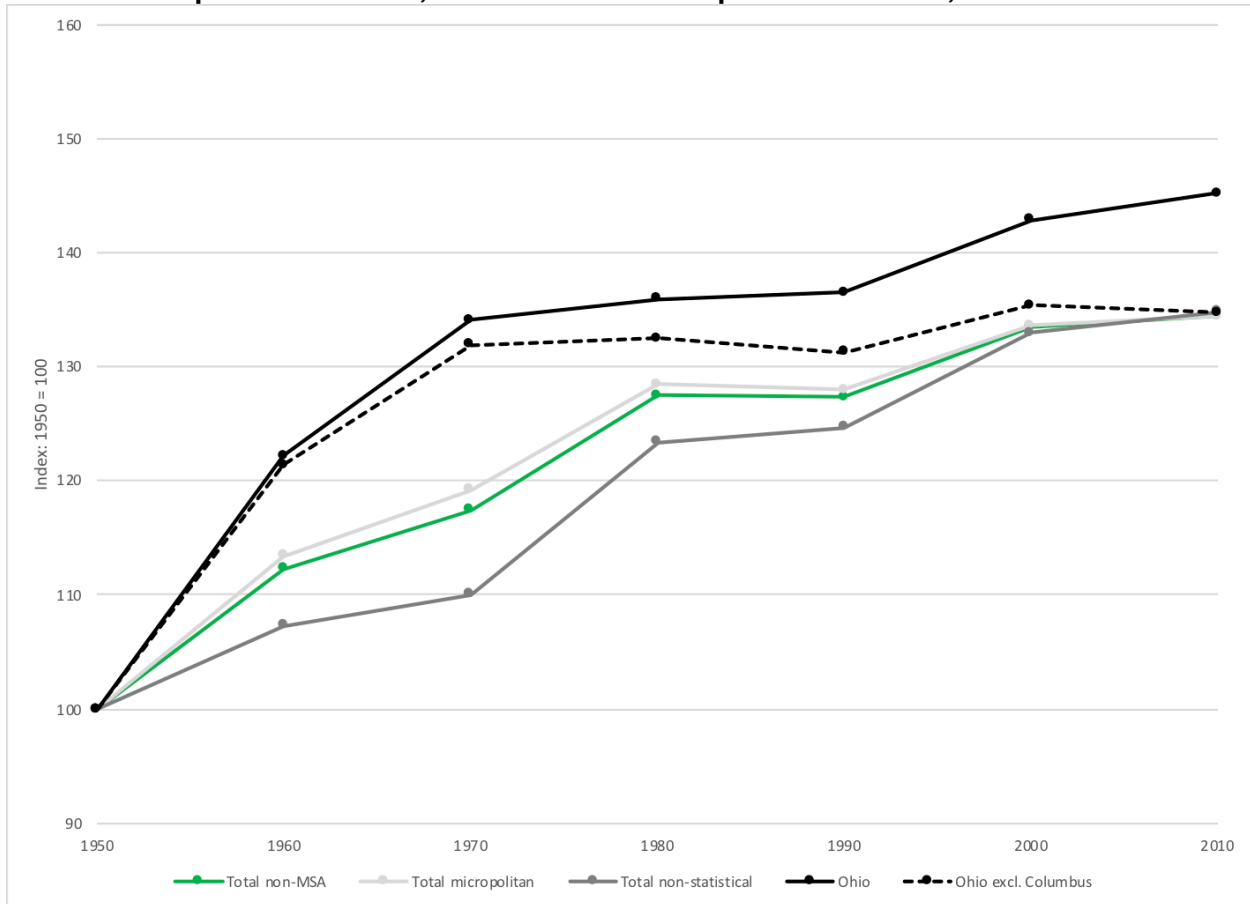
Figure 2
Population Growth, Ohio and Non-Metropolitan Counties, 2000-2018

Source: Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 3 provides additional context by charting longer-term population trends beginning in 1950. Population growth in non-MSA counties (based on current MSA delineations) was slower than average through 1970, but then accelerated to the point that total growth through 2010 was equal to that of Ohio excluding Columbus. Thus, the recent decline in population in these counties is a break not only in the short-term trend, but a break in the long-term trend as well.

Figure 3
Population Growth, Ohio and Non-Metropolitan Counties, 1950-2010

Source: Decennial Censuses, 1950-2010, U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 2 presents population totals for Ohio with and without the Columbus MSA, all non-MSA counties, each of the two classes of counties, and each of the seven regions. Given the trend break shown in Figure 2, the table provides population totals for 2000, 2009, and 2018 and changes before and after 2009. Growth weakened in each of the seven regions, with several regions changing from growth to decline. This same pattern is visible in virtually all of the 50 counties. This weakening was in marked contrast to the performance of the state, which saw only slightly weaker growth in the second nine years than that experienced in the first nine. The recession was in full force in 2009, so that may have driven residents of these counties to the larger MSAs. While the economy in these areas was certainly no better (other than in the Columbus MSA) the larger absolute number of openings may have provided more opportunity. As will be discussed in the next section, although the employment trend in these counties over the course of the expansion has been close to the statewide average outside of Columbus, the growth of individual regions has in some cases been weak. This could be part of the reason for this trend reversal.

Table 2
Ohio, MSA, and U.S. Population and Population Changes

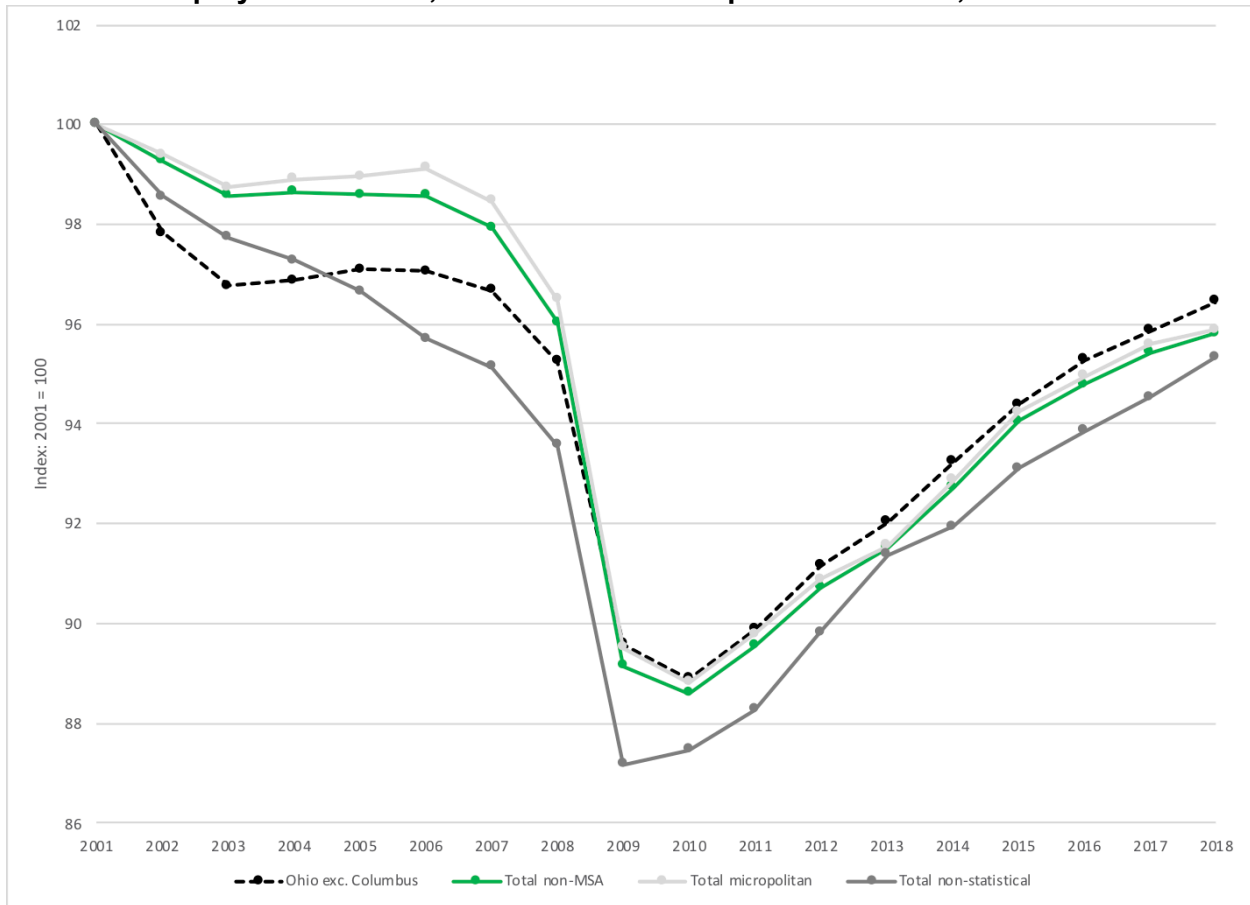| Area	Population totals			Percentage changes		
	2000	2009	2018	2000-09	2009-18	2000-18
Ohio	**11,363,543**	**11,528,896**	**11,689,442**	**1.5%**	**1.4%**	**2.9%**
Excluding Columbus	9,681,475	9,641,348	9,582,901	-0.4%	-0.6%	-1.0%
Total non-MSA	**2,377,096**	**2,396,020**	**2,352,916**	**0.8%**	**-1.8%**	**-1.0%**
Total micropolitan	1,925,488	1,937,653	1,905,166	0.6%	-1.7%	-1.1%
Total non-statistical	451,608	458,367	447,750	1.5%	-2.3%	-0.9%
Northeast	321,650	317,976	307,508	-1.1%	-3.3%	-4.4%
Southeast	295,263	297,071	293,926	0.6%	-1.1%	-0.5%
South	417,318	430,423	420,613	3.1%	-2.3%	0.8%
West	419,329	425,113	419,232	1.4%	-1.4%	0.0%
Northwest	192,465	188,423	182,876	-2.1%	-2.9%	-5.0%
West North Central	436,512	429,335	416,635	-1.6%	-3.0%	-4.6%
East North Central	294,559	307,679	312,126	4.5%	1.4%	6.0%

Source: Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau.

Employment Trends

The employment trends in non-MSA counties since 2001 are compared to that of the statewide average excluding Columbus in Figure 4. Ohio employment growth during the 2002-2007 expansion was among the weakest in the nation. Manufacturing employment declines occurred nationwide as automation took hold. This trend hit Ohio hard both because of the above-average concentration of manufacturing in the state and because the employment declines in Ohio were larger than average. The 33 micropolitan counties outperformed the statewide average early in the expansion. The 17 non-statistical counties underperformed throughout, losing 5 percent of their employment before the recession began. Although the manufacturing employment concentration was higher than average in the micropolitan counties, it was double the high statewide average in the non-statistical counties.

The micropolitan counties suffered more severe employment losses than the state during the recession: employment in these counties fell 10.4 percent, compared to a statewide loss of 7.6 percent (8.4 percent outside of Columbus). The loss in the non-statistical counties was 8.6 percent. The overall loss in all 50 counties was 10.1 percent.

Figure 4
Employment Trends, Ohio and Non-Metropolitan Counties, 2001-2018

As is evident in Figure 4, the gains during the current expansion in these counties are close to the average for Ohio outside of Columbus. The statewide gain since 2010 has been 8.5 percent, and the gain in all non-MSA counties has been 8.1 percent. The micropolitan counties have gained 8 percent and the non-statistical counties have gained 9 percent. This growth is documented in Table 3, which shows 2010 and 2018 employment totals for each of the regions and eight-year and one-year employment changes. Of the regions, only two have had employment growth greater than the state outside of Columbus: the West and the East North Central regions. These two regions both enjoyed double-digit gains and have plainly had an impact on the measured growth of all of the non-MSA counties. Likewise, growth over the past year was weak, except in the South and East North Central regions.

Table 3
Employment Growth, U.S., Ohio, and Non-Metropolitan Counties
2010-2018 and 2017-2018

Area	Employment		Percentage change	
	2010	2018	2010-2018	2017-2018
United States	**127,820,442**	**146,117,389**	**14.3%**	**1.6%**
Ohio	**4,908,571**	**5,404,815**	**10.1%**	**0.7%**
Excluding Columbus	4,029,626	4,371,871	8.5%	0.6%
Total non-MSA	**811,588**	**877,576**	**8.1%**	**0.4%**
Total micropolitan	684,539	739,096	8.0%	0.3%
Total non-statistical	127,049	138,480	9.0%	0.9%
Northeast	95,058	100,805	6.0%	0.2%
Southeast	96,911	103,239	6.5%	-0.4%
South	128,258	135,486	5.6%	0.9%
West	161,968	183,490	13.3%	0.4%
Northwest	66,694	72,138	8.2%	0.3%
West North Central	158,111	165,004	4.4%	0.2%
East North Central	104,588	117,414	12.3%	0.9%

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Basing the regional analysis of these 50 counties on the same seven areas that have been used in these articles previously allows a comparison to regional growth including the smaller MSAs. This comparison is shown in Table 4. The non-MSA counties' growth is from Table 3; the growth for all counties is copied from the August 9, 2019, issue of *On the Money* (Vol. 133, No. 15, Table 2). Growth in both categories is identical for the Northwest and East North Central regions because no counties are excluded from these two regions. In some of the other cases, though, differences are significant. This is true especially for the Northeast and West regions, both of which have had stronger growth outside of their underperforming MSAs. The non-MSA Northeast region excludes the Canton, Youngstown, and Steubenville MSAs. The West region excludes Lima and Springfield. The West North Central region excludes Mansfield, but the effect of that omission on employment growth is less substantial.

Table 4
Regional Employment Growth, Non-Metropolitan Counties and All Counties*
2010-2018 and 2017-2018

Area	Percentage change, 2010-18		Percentage change, 2017-18	
	Non-MSA counties	All counties	Non-MSA counties	All counties
Northeast	6.0%	3.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Southeast	6.5%	5.4%	-0.4%	-0.8%
South	5.6%	5.2%	0.9%	0.7%
West	13.3%	9.2%	0.4%	0.2%
Northwest	8.2%	8.2%	0.3%	0.3%
West North Central	4.4%	3.3%	0.2%	0.4%
East North Central	12.3%	12.3%	0.9%	0.9%

*Excluding the six largest MSAs.
Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.