ON THE MONEY

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Population Changes in Ohio's Metropolitan and Rural Areas

This is an annual review of statewide and regional population changes in Ohio. The Census Bureau typically issues county population estimates in March, but population releases were (and are) delayed by the pandemic. The 2020 estimates were released May 4. This article explores three types of areas: metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), micropolitan statistical areas (MicroSAs), and rural counties.

It is important to keep in mind that these are not results from the 2020 Census; they are estimates based on projections from 2010 Census counts. They are a preview of what the yet-to-be-released 2020 counts might show, and they will provide a way to evaluate the accuracy of the annual estimates that have been released over the past decade once 2020 Census data are released. Eventually, the Census Bureau will release revised annual population estimates, called intercensal estimates, that reflect results from both the 2010 and 2020 Censuses.

Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas

MSAs are collections of counties defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and are intended to give federal agencies a consistent geographical basis for statistical analysis and reporting. MSAs are centered on an urban core (one or more cities) with a population of at least 50,000.

The county or counties containing the urban core are "central counties" and are automatically included in the MSA. Adjacent counties are included if they have what OMB terms, "a high degree of social and economic interaction with the core as measured by commuting ties." Specifically, outlying counties are included in the MSA if at least one of two conditions applies: (1) at least 25% of the employed residents of the outlying county commute to one of the central counties for work; and/or (2) at least 25% of the jobs in the outlying county are filled by workers who live in a central county. These areas are home to 80% of the state's population.

There are 12 MSAs with urban cores in Ohio. These MSAs and their component counties are listed in Table 1.[1]

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[1] Belmont County is an outlying county of the Wheeling MSA and Lawrence County is an outlying county of the Huntington-Ashland MSA. These MSAs are not included in this analysis because their urban cores are outside of Ohio.

Table 1: Component Counties of Ohio MSAs

Akron, OH MSA
Portage County, OH
Summit County, OH
Canton-Massillon, OH MSA
Carroll County, OH
Stark County, OH
Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN MSA
Dearborn County, IN
Ohio County, IN
Union County, IN
Boone County, KY
Bracken County, KY
Campbell County, KY
Gallatin County, KY
Kenton County, KY
Pendleton County, KY
Brown County, OH
Butler County, OH
Clermont County, OH
Hamilton County, OH
Warren County, OH

Cleveland-Elyria, OH MSA
Cuyahoga County, OH
Geauga County, OH
Lake County, OH
Lorain County, OH
Medina County, OH
Columbus, OH MSA
Delaware County, OH
Fairfield County, OH
Franklin County, OH
Hocking County, OH
Licking County, OH
Madison County, OH
Morrow County, OH
Pickaway County, OH
Union County, OH
Dayton, OH MSA
Greene County, OH
Miami County, OH
Montgomery County, OH

Lima, OH MSA
Allen County, OH
Mansfield, OH MSA
Richland County, OH
Springfield, OH MSA
Clark County, OH
Toledo, OH MSA
Fulton County, OH
Lucas County, OH
Wood County, OH
Weirton-Steubenville, WV-OH
Jefferson County, OH
Brooke County, WV
Hancock County, WV
Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA MSA
Mahoning County, OH
Trumbull County, OH
Mercer County, PA

MicroSAs are analogous to MSAs, except the urban core's population is between 10,000 and 50,000. As Table 2 reveals, Ohio has 33 MicroSAs. In all of these except the Point Pleasant MicroSA, the area consists of a single county. There are 17 other counties in Ohio that are neither MSA nor MicroSA counties.

Table 2: 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

As discussed in the April 30 issue of *On the Money* (Vol. 134, No. 8), the minimum population of the urban core for an area to be designated an MSA is currently under review. The 50,000

minimum has been in effect since MSAs were first defined in 1950, but the proposed guidelines raise the minimum to 100,000. This will affect Lima, Mansfield, Springfield, and Weirton-Steubenville. If this change is implemented, these areas will be designated as MicroSAs.

Population Changes

The Census Bureau's approach to derive population estimates relies on the fact that the population in 2020 must be equal to the population in 2010 plus births, less deaths, plus movers into the area, less movers out between 2010 and 2020. 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. As a result, the estimates include both the most recent year and revisions of previous years.

Table 3 shows census totals for Ohio, the 12 MSAs based in Ohio, and the U.S. for 2000 and 2010, estimates for 2019 and 2020, and percentage changes in population between each of the three earlier dates and 2020. The totals include population in adjoining states for the three multi-state MSAs, but also the portion of the total population in Ohio. Because the population and employment growth of Columbus is so much greater than that of the rest of the state, Ohio totals are also calculated excluding the 10-county Columbus MSA. Totals for 2000 and 2010 are shown for the MSAs as they are currently configured. As discussed in the April 5, 2013, edition of *On the Money* (Vol. 130, No. 7) MSAs nationwide went through their once-a-decade comprehensive redelineations in February 2003 and 2013. But all population totals in Table 3 are calculated assuming the 2013 boundaries rather than the 1993 delineations effective in 2000 and the 2003 delineations effective in 2010.

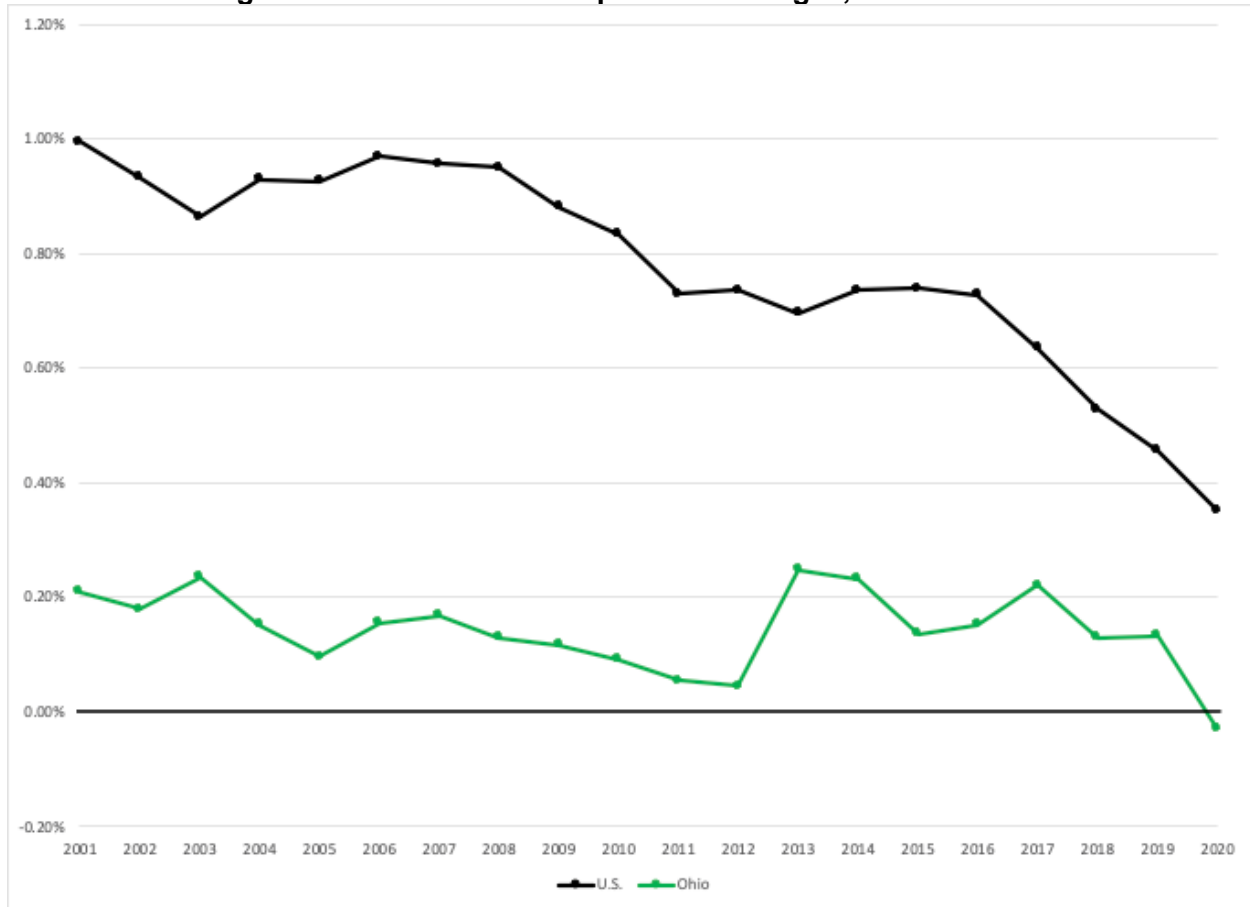**Table 3: Ohio, MSA, and U.S. Population and Population Changes**

Area	Census		Estimates		Percentage change		
	2000	2010	2019	2020	2000-20	2010-20	2019-20
Ohio	11,353,336	11,536,504	11,696,507	11,693,217	3.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Excluding Columbus	9,678,110	9,634,530	9,571,000	9,554,271	-1.3%	-0.8%	-0.2%
Akron	694,975	703,200	703,240	701,449	0.9%	-0.2%	-0.3%
Canton	406,966	404,422	397,707	396,669	-2.5%	-1.9%	-0.3%
Cincinnati	1,994,818	2,114,580	2,202,499	2,210,146	10.8%	4.5%	0.3%
Ohio share	1,556,764	1,625,406	1,688,181	1,692,908	8.7%	4.2%	0.3%
Cleveland	2,148,041	2,077,240	2,049,028	2,043,807	-4.9%	-1.6%	-0.3%
Columbus	1,675,226	1,901,974	2,125,507	2,138,946	27.7%	12.5%	0.6%
Dayton	805,971	799,232	808,488	809,248	0.4%	1.3%	0.1%
Lima	108,464	106,331	102,450	101,980	-6.0%	-4.1%	-0.5%
Mansfield	128,932	124,475	121,384	120,891	-6.2%	-2.9%	-0.4%
Springfield	144,742	138,333	134,315	133,593	-7.7%	-3.4%	-0.5%
Toledo	618,216	610,001	602,152	601,296	-2.7%	-1.4%	-0.1%
Steubenville	131,995	124,454	116,252	115,184	-12.7%	-7.4%	-0.9%
Ohio share	73,886	69,709	65,494	64,939	-12.1%	-6.8%	-0.8%
Youngstown	603,061	565,773	534,875	531,420	-11.9%	-6.1%	-0.6%
Ohio share	482,693	449,135	425,579	422,875	-12.4%	-5.8%	-0.6%
U.S. (000)	281,425	308,746	328,330	329,484	17.1%	6.7%	0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Population growth has slowed markedly during this 20-year period. Figure 1 charts the year-over-year percentage change in population nationwide and in Ohio since 2001. (Population estimates are as of July 1 each year.) U.S. population growth between 2019 and 2020 was

barely more than a third of its 2000-2001 level, and the change in Ohio was slightly negative. Some were surprised when the pandemic lockdowns did not lead to a baby boom, but that would have been highly inconsistent with this longer, demographic-driven trend.
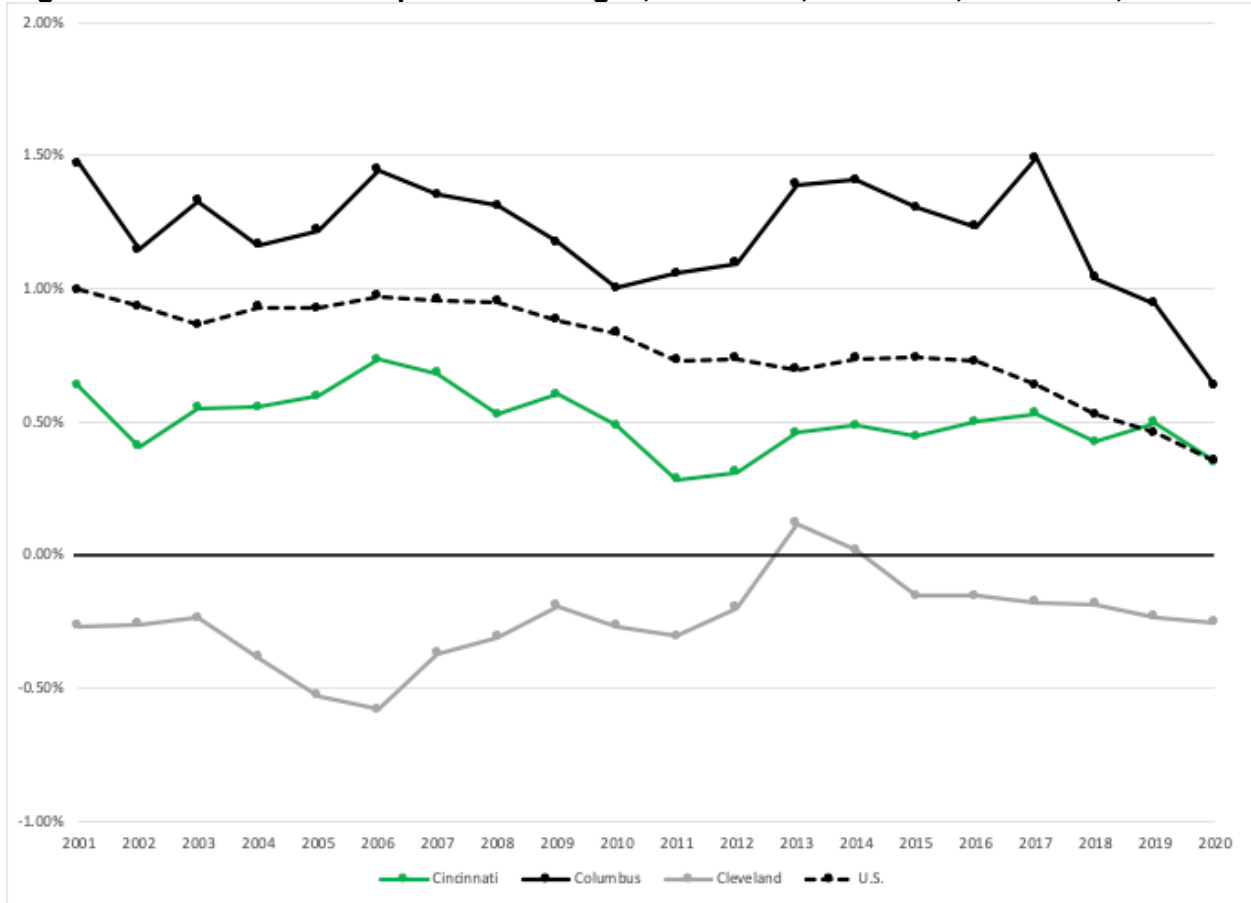
Figure 1: Year-over-Year Population Changes, Ohio and U.S.

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

Metropolitan area population changes were also less than in previous years, including the two MSAs with consistent growth, Cincinnati and Columbus. As shown in Figure 2, the Columbus MSA's growth of 0.6% was greater than the U.S. average as in previous years, but down from 1.5% in 2000-2001. The weakening of growth was less in Cincinnati. Growth in Cincinnati was consistently near 0.5% per year through most of the 2010s; the 0.3% in 2019-2020 was the first break in this trend. In contrast, Cleveland's loss of 0.3% in 2019-2020 was only marginally weaker than that during the four previous years.

Figure 2: Year-over-Year Population Changes, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and U.S.
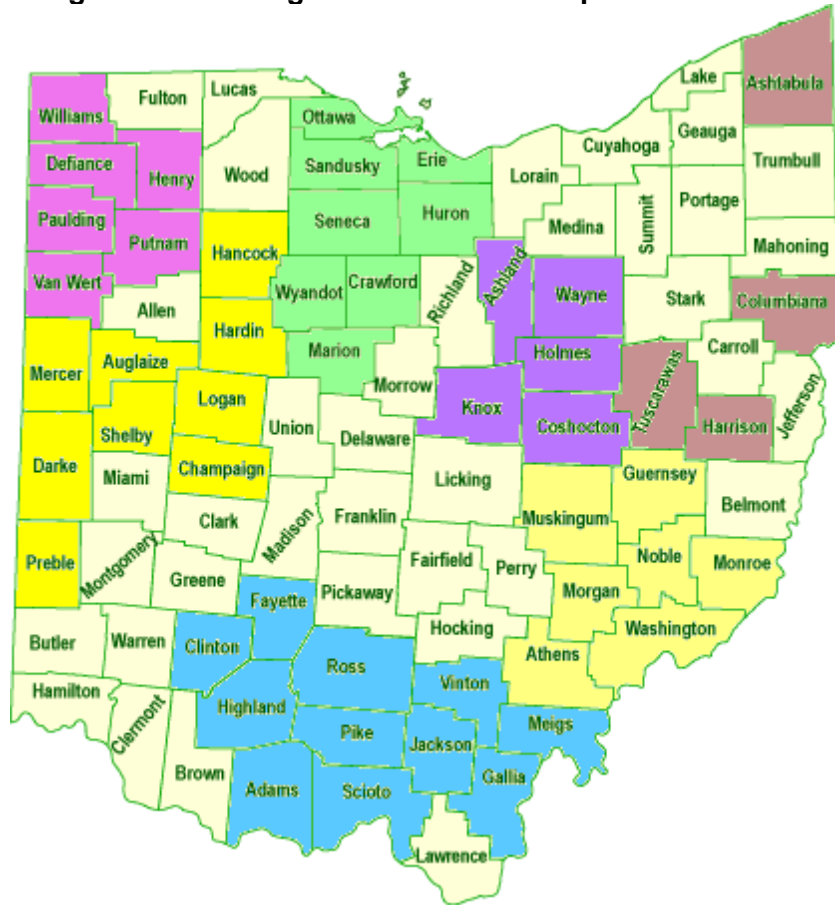

Source: Population Estimates Program, U.S. Census Bureau.

Micropolitan and Rural Population Changes

Counties outside Ohio's MSAs are home to 2.3 million people, just under 20% of the state's total population. As frequently noted in these articles, there are notable differences among the state's regions, so non-metropolitan population changes are analyzed both in total and at a regional level. The relevant counties in each region are mapped in Figure 3; the underlying regions are those consistently analyzed in these articles.

Figure 3: Ohio Regions and Non-Metropolitan Counties

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

South ◻ (blue) Southeast ◻ (pale yellow)

Counties without shading are not included in the analysis.

Table 4 replicates the format of Table 3, presenting population totals and changes statewide, in all of these counties, in micropolitan areas, in non-statistical rural counties, and in each region.

Table 4: Ohio and Non-Metropolitan Population and Population Changes

Area	Census		Estimates		Percentage change		
	2000	2010	2019	2020	2000-20	2010-20	2019-20
Ohio	11,353,336	11,536,504	11,696,507	11,693,217	3.0%	1.4%	0.0%
Excl. Columbus	9,678,110	9,634,530	9,571,000	9,554,271	-1.3%	-0.8%	-0.2%
Total non-MSA	2,375,891	2,362,655	2,312,448	2,305,265	-3.0%	-2.4%	-0.3%
Total micropolitan	1,924,663	1,918,104	1,881,813	1,875,934	-2.5%	-2.2%	-0.3%
Total non-statistical	451,228	444,551	430,635	429,331	-4.9%	-3.4%	-0.3%
Northeast	321,497	317,784	305,928	304,421	-5.3%	-4.2%	-0.5%
Southeast	294,974	297,037	293,182	292,187	-0.9%	-1.6%	-0.3%
South	416,906	457,246	444,714	443,228	6.3%	-3.1%	-0.3%
West	419,286	424,210	419,069	418,494	-0.2%	-1.3%	-0.1%
Northwest	192,566	187,751	182,431	181,708	-5.6%	-3.2%	-0.4%
West North Central	436,508	411,462	400,721	399,134	-8.6%	-3.0%	-0.4%
East North Central	294,154	267,165	266,403	266,093	-9.5%	-0.4%	-0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Ohio's non-MSA counties lost an estimated 0.3% of their population between 2019 and 2020, with equal percentage losses in the groups of micropolitan and rural counties. As is apparent from the table, though, this was not the case in previous years. The total 2000-2020 decline in the non-statistical counties was twice as great as that in the micropolitans, and the 2010-2020 decline was more than half again as great. The largest 20-year decline was in the East North Central region, with the West North Central region a close second. As is apparent from the 2010-2020 declines, though, the pattern of population loss in these two areas was different: declines continued in the West North Central region (but at a slower pace) while the East North Central population stabilized. The most striking change, though, was in the South region. There population increased nearly 10% between 2000 and 2010 but fell 3.1% since 2010.