

MICHIGAN POPULATION TRENDS

An Update to the Monograph:  
Michigan's Current and Projected Population Trends  
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Kurt Gorwitz, Sc.D.  
Vice President for Research

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**PUBLIC SECTOR CONSULTANTS, inc.**

704 ABBOTT • EAST LANSING • MICHIGAN 48823 • TELEPHONE (517) 337-8188

Recently released U.S. Census Bureau estimates noted that over the past two years Michigan's population contracted for the first time in its history, declining 1.7 percent from 9,262,000 in 1980 to 9,109,000 in 1982. This decline was four times larger than the loss for any other state.

During this period, births in Michigan exceeded deaths by 152,000. Consequently these figures indicate that 305,000 residents, or one out of every 31 Michigan inhabitants, moved from the state between 1980 and 1982. In contrast, the total United States population increased by 2.2 percent between 1980 and 1982. Most of the increase occurred in the western and southwestern states. This growth was primarily due to substantial in-migration.

In a February 1983 monograph entitled "Michigan's Emerging Work Force," Public Sector Consultants, Inc. reported that Michigan has been losing population since the 1980 census. This decline is directly attributable to Michigan's economic recession with its record high unemployment rates. The majority of those currently leaving Michigan are adults seeking better employment opportunities in other states. Michigan cannot afford to lose a major portion of its workers without significantly impeding its aspirations for economic recovery. In previous years most of the people leaving Michigan were retirees moving to the sunbelt states.

Since young men and women comprise a large share of Michigan's labor pool, this trend will have serious consequences for the state and its residents if it continues for any length of time. In addition to the direct loss of tax revenue caused by exiting workers, Michigan also stands to lose federal aid. Many federal funding programs, including revenue sharing, are allocated in part on the basis of population size. The resulting decrease in funds provided the state and its local units of government could be sizable. Michigan, which lost one seat in the U.S. House of Representatives as a result of the 1980 census, could lose one or two more seats after 1990 if this trend continues.

We do not believe that this population loss will continue if appropriate initiatives are taken. Michigan has a unique combination of ingredients including its central location, a wide variety of natural resources and a large renewable source of water, excellent educational institutions, and a highly skilled work force, all of which offer the potential for significant industrial diversification and expansion. With a national economic recovery, Michigan's large industrial base, in conjunction with a rapid expansion in tourism as well as growth in the service sector, offers the potential for substantial employment growth. We anticipate a state unemployment rate under 10 percent by 1985. Full employment (an unemployment rate of 6.5 percent or less) is possible by the latter part of the 1980s. Expanding employment opportunities in Michigan should result in greatly reduced out-migration of younger people and a renewal of population growth. We project Michigan's 1990 census count to be approximately 9,500,000. We continue to anticipate pronounced growth in the southwestern part of the state and in the northern counties of the lower peninsula.

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