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# TEXAS

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## BUSINESS REVIEW

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College and Graduate School of Business, University of Texas at Austin

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### The Size, Distribution, and Growth of the Texas Population, 1980-1990

From 1980 to 1990, the population of Texas increased by 19.38 percent. According to the 1990 U.S. census, the state population grew by 2,757,319 people, from 14,229,191 in 1980 to 16,986,510 in 1990. Believing that the Texas population may have been *under* counted by perhaps as much as a half-million people, a number of state authorities dispute these 1990 figures. Nevertheless, these figures have been officially accepted by the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and will remain in effect throughout this decade.

In 1987, I authored a research monograph that discussed the size, distribution, and growth of the Texas population.<sup>1</sup> In that monograph three suppositions were presented. Two of these—that the population of Texas would continue to grow and that it would grow faster than the average for the United States (Texas, 19.38 percent; United States, 9.8 percent)—were proved correct by the 1990 census figures. The third supposition, that new population in Texas will follow the pattern of distribution documented in 1980, could only be tested after the 1990 census data became available at the county level. This report deals primarily with this third supposition, after first looking at the Texas total population among the other states.

#### The Position of Texas Population Among Other States

The state population again grew at a faster rate than the total U.S. population from 1980 to 1990. However, the rate of growth decreased sharply in 1983 from its highest rate in 1982, when it was estimated that over 609,000 people

were added to the state population. Since 1984 the estimated yearly increase in population has varied around 300,000, a slowdown due mostly to a reduction in net migration. Since 1984 net migration has added less than 1 percent annually to the total population. The natural rate of population increase in the state has held very steady at around 1.2 percent since 1982. So the growth in population in the past decade has been largely the result of the natural increase in population. This slowing in population growth undoubtedly can be attributed to the sluggish economy in the early part of the decade when Texas became less attractive to migrants from outside the state.

Despite this slowdown, Texas maintained its third place listing among the most populous states. From 1980 to 1990 the number one position of California was enhanced by the addition of over 6 million people, which is more than the 1990 total population of 38 other states. If this rate of growth continues even moderately, the population of California could nearly double the total population of the second place state in the year 2000.

In my 1987 study I suggested that Texas would pass New York in total population some time in the 1990s. This assumption is now supported by the growth figures projected for both states by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The population of second place New York grew at a modest rate of only 2.5 percent from 1980 to 1990, adding only about 432,000 persons to the total population. In contrast, Texas grew by 19.38 percent, or 2.7 million people, in the past decade, and our 1990 total population is only a million less than that of New York. If even the modest rate of growth the state experienced toward the end of the past decade continues into the 1990s, Texas should displace New York

from second place some time in the mid-1990s.

The biggest surprise among the ten most populous states was Florida's jump from seventh to fourth place from 1980 to 1990. Among these states Florida had the fastest rate of growth (32.7 percent) in the decade, adding 3.2 million new people to the state population.

### The States with Highest Percentages of Population Growth, 1980-1990

With a small total population of 1.2 million in 1990, Nevada did not need a large number of new people to give it the fastest rate of population growth (50.1 percent) for the decade. In fact, the approximately 402,000 people added to its population between 1980 and 1990 represent only about one-seventh of the number added to the Texas population during the same period.

Texas ranked seventh on the list of fastest growing states, up from tenth in 1980. Perhaps the biggest surprise was that four states—California, ranked fifth; New Hampshire, sixth; Georgia, eighth; and Washington, tenth—unranked in 1980 joined the top ten states with fastest growing populations in 1990. Obviously, economic opportunities or a perceived high quality of life can prove powerful incentives for migration. Further, these perceptions change with time, so some states experience periods of rapid growth.

### The Distribution of Texas Population

In my earlier study of Texas population, I documented three major and nine minor population concentrations in the state.<sup>2</sup> The major areas include Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston-Galveston, and San Antonio-Austin-Waco; the minor, El Paso, the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Beaumont-Port Arthur, Corpus Christi, Lubbock, Midland-Odessa, Amarillo, Plano, and Denton. Research suggested then that new state population would settle in or follow the pattern of distribution established in Texas in these major and minor regions. If this supposition is correct, we would expect most of the new state population to be added to the major and minor population centers.

In most, but not all, cases, the population of these regions increased as a percentage of the state total from 1980 to 1990. The total for all regions combined was 69.26 percent of the state population, an increase of 1.76 percent for these regions over the 1980 percentage of 67.50. In other words, almost 70 percent of the population lives in just 29 counties that together make up less than 10 percent of the state land area.

The total population of the major and minor population regions was 11,765,384 in 1990, an increase of 2,160,503 people in the past decade. The total increase in population for the state was 2,757,319, which means that 78 percent of the new population added since 1980 was in the

### States with the Highest Percentage of Population Growth, 1980-1990<sup>1</sup>

1990 rank	State	1980 rank	1980 population (in thousands)	1990 population (in thousands)	Percentage increase
1	Nevada	1	800	1,202	50.1
2	Alaska	6	402	550	36.9
3	Arizona	2	2,718	3,665	34.8
4	Florida	3	9,746	12,938	32.7
5	California <sup>2</sup>	unranked	23,668	29,760	25.7
6	New Hampshire	unranked	921	1,109	20.5
7	Texas	10	14,229	16,986	19.4
8	Georgia	unranked	5,463	6,478	18.6
9	Utah	5	1,461	1,723	17.9
10	Washington	unranked	4,132	4,867	17.8

1. *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1991*, U.S. Department of Commerce, p. 21.

2. California added the largest number of people (6,092,000) to its population from 1980 to 1990.

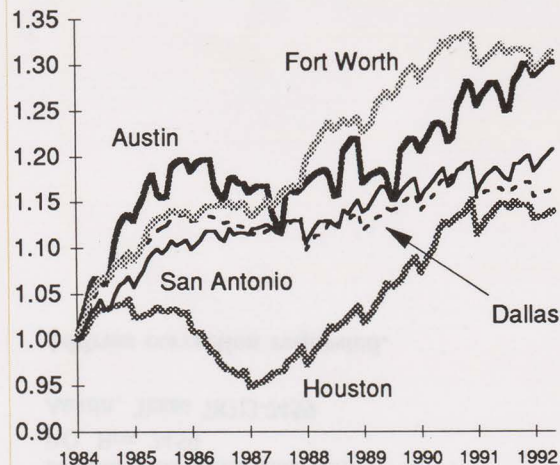
## Employment and Unemployment Rate by Metropolitan Area

Area	Total nonagricultural employment (thousands)			Total employment (thousands)			Unemployment rate
	May 1992	May 1991	Percentage change	May 1992	May 1991	Percentage change	May 1992
Abilene	49.6	48.7	1.8	48.4	47.3	2.3	6.4
Amarillo	80.5	79.6	1.1	93.1	92.1	1.1	5.6
Austin	398.6	391.7	1.8	437.2	428.6	2.0	5.1
Beaumont-Port Arthur	153.7	149.5	2.8	164.0	158.4	3.5	8.6
Brazoria	72.6	72.9	-0.4	89.3	88.6	0.8	7.4
Brownsville-Harlingen	80.8	77.0	4.9	100.3	94.9	5.7	12.2
Bryan-College Station	58.6	57.2	2.4	63.7	61.7	3.2	4.2
Corpus Christi	135.4	136.0	-0.4	152.5	153.0	-0.3	9.8
Dallas	1,380.4	1,377.8	0.2	1,356.5	1,355.1	0.1	7.0
El Paso	214.7	209.4	2.5	229.9	224.1	2.6	10.6
Fort Worth-Arlington	588.7	588.4	0.1	690.6	691.9	-0.2	6.8
Galveston-Texas City	79.4	78.8	0.8	105.7	104.7	1.0	8.6
Houston	1,638.1	1,640.6	-0.2	1,662.9	1,656.5	0.4	7.0
Killeen-Temple	76.5	74.8	2.3	92.7	90.1	2.9	7.5
Laredo	49.1	47.3	3.8	51.9	49.8	4.2	9.1
Longview-Marshall	71.1	70.3	1.1	75.1	73.6	2.0	9.2
Lubbock	98.0	98.1	-0.1	108.9	108.7	0.2	6.2
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission	106.0	104.0	1.9	139.7	137.4	1.7	15.5
Midland	46.1	46.2	-0.2	46.4	46.4	0.0	7.4
Odessa	45.0	45.4	-0.9	49.2	49.9	-1.4	10.1
San Angelo	38.4	37.2	3.2	43.1	41.5	3.9	6.1
San Antonio	537.8	528.6	1.7	578.2	569.3	1.6	6.8
Sherman-Denison	37.0	37.7	-1.9	43.2	44.1	-2.0	7.3
Texarkana	47.1	46.2	1.9	53.9	52.5	2.7	8.2
Tyler	64.4	64.0	0.6	70.9	70.5	0.6	7.0
Victoria	30.8	30.1	2.3	36.6	35.5	6.4	6.4
Waco	81.8	82.6	-1.0	86.4	86.8	-0.5	7.4
Wichita Falls	50.2	50.2	0.0	51.4	51.1	0.6	7.2
Total Texas	7,254.4	7,173.8	1.1	8,082.0	7,999.5	1.0	7.4
Total United States	108,830.0	108,640.0	0.2	117,535.0	116,624.0	0.8	7.2

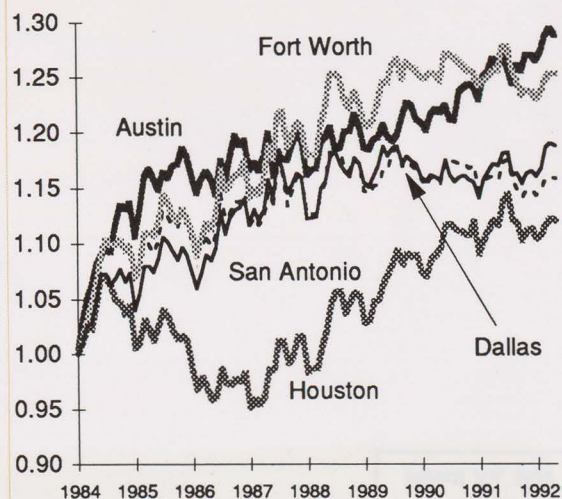
Note: Data are not seasonally adjusted. Figures for 1991 have undergone a major revision; previously published 1991 figures should no longer be used. Revised figures are available upon request. All 1992 figures are subject to revision.

Sources: Texas Employment Commission and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**Nonagricultural Employment  
in Five Largest Texas  
Metropolitan Areas**  
(January 1984=1.00)



**Total Employment in Five Largest  
Texas Metropolitan Areas**  
(January 1984=1.00)



major and minor population regions. Again, we can say almost 80 percent of the new population of Texas was added to these twelve regions. Based on these and other supporting figures, we can accept the supposition that the new population of Texas settled largely in the major or minor population regions.

Among the three major regions, Dallas-Ft. Worth and San Antonio-Austin-Waco increased their percentages of the total state population, while the Houston-Galveston region percentage dropped slightly. Census data indicate that nationwide and in Texas the suburbs grew at the expense of cities.

Among the minor regions, only the Beaumont-Port Arthur region lost total population from 1980-1990. While the other eight minor regions all grew in total population, five (Beaumont-Port Arthur, Corpus Christi, Lubbock, Midland-Odessa, and Amarillo) showed a decrease in their percentages of total state population. This suggests that new population growth is concentrating in the areas largely in and around the major metropolitan areas of Texas. As figure 1 illustrates, scattered counties throughout East Texas, along the coast, and in South Texas lost population from 1980 to 1990, but the major concentration of counties showing population decreases was in and around the Texas Panhandle. Generally, the counties showing growth were in the eastern third of the state, along the border, and in the South Plains.

Figure 2 shows population by county classifications and illustrates that, contrary to myth, Texas is an urban-suburban state today and growing more urban each year. An overwhelming majority (80.3 percent) of people living in Texas reside in urban areas, that is, cities of at least 2,500 in size. About 3 million Texans live in areas defined as rural by the U.S. census. This constitutes the largest total rural population in the United States, but it represents less than 20 percent of the state population. Throughout the state as a whole, 30 counties accounted for 92.8 percent of the total population growth in Texas. The remaining 224 counties in the state grew only by 7.2 percent in the decade, or by approximately 200,000 persons.

### Conclusions

The data documented in the 1990 census clearly demonstrate that the state population

continues to grow at a rapid rate, placing Texas among the ten fastest growing states in the United States. Because Texas has a very large population, probably over 17 million by now, the high growth rate means large numbers of new people are being added to the population each year. Furthermore, all empirical evidence suggests that the rapid population growth Texas exhibited over the last three decades will continue into the foreseeable future. A fairly young population, large numbers of minorities, especially Hispanics, and the continued migration into Texas from both foreign and domestic sources, will help maintain its rate of population growth above the national average. Finally, it is evident that these "new settlers on the Texas frontier" will be attracted to already well-established major and minor population regions of the state.

— Robert K. Holz  
Professor of Geography  
University of Texas at Austin

### Notes

1. Robert K. Holz, *The Size, Distribution, and Growth of the Texas Population, 1980 to 2030*, Bureau of Business Research, University of Texas at Austin, 1987.
2. Major population concentrations had more than 12 percent of the total state population; minor concentrations had less than 12 percent, but at least 1 percent of the total state population.

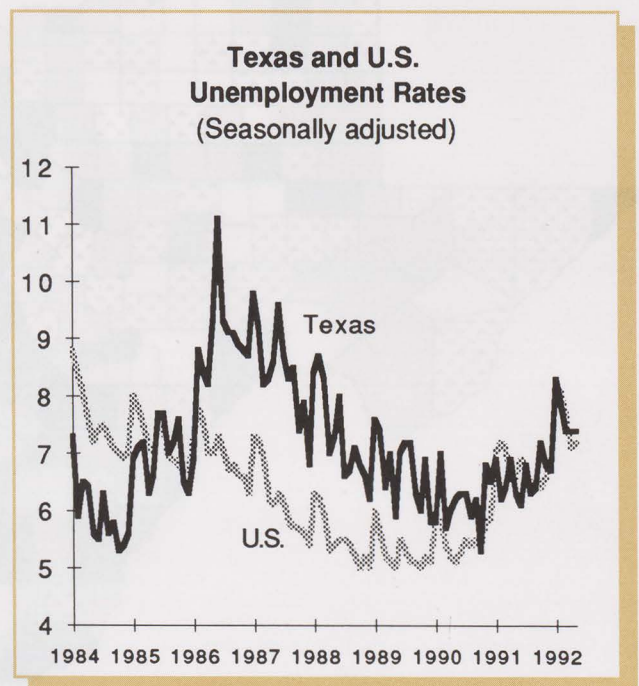


Figure 1

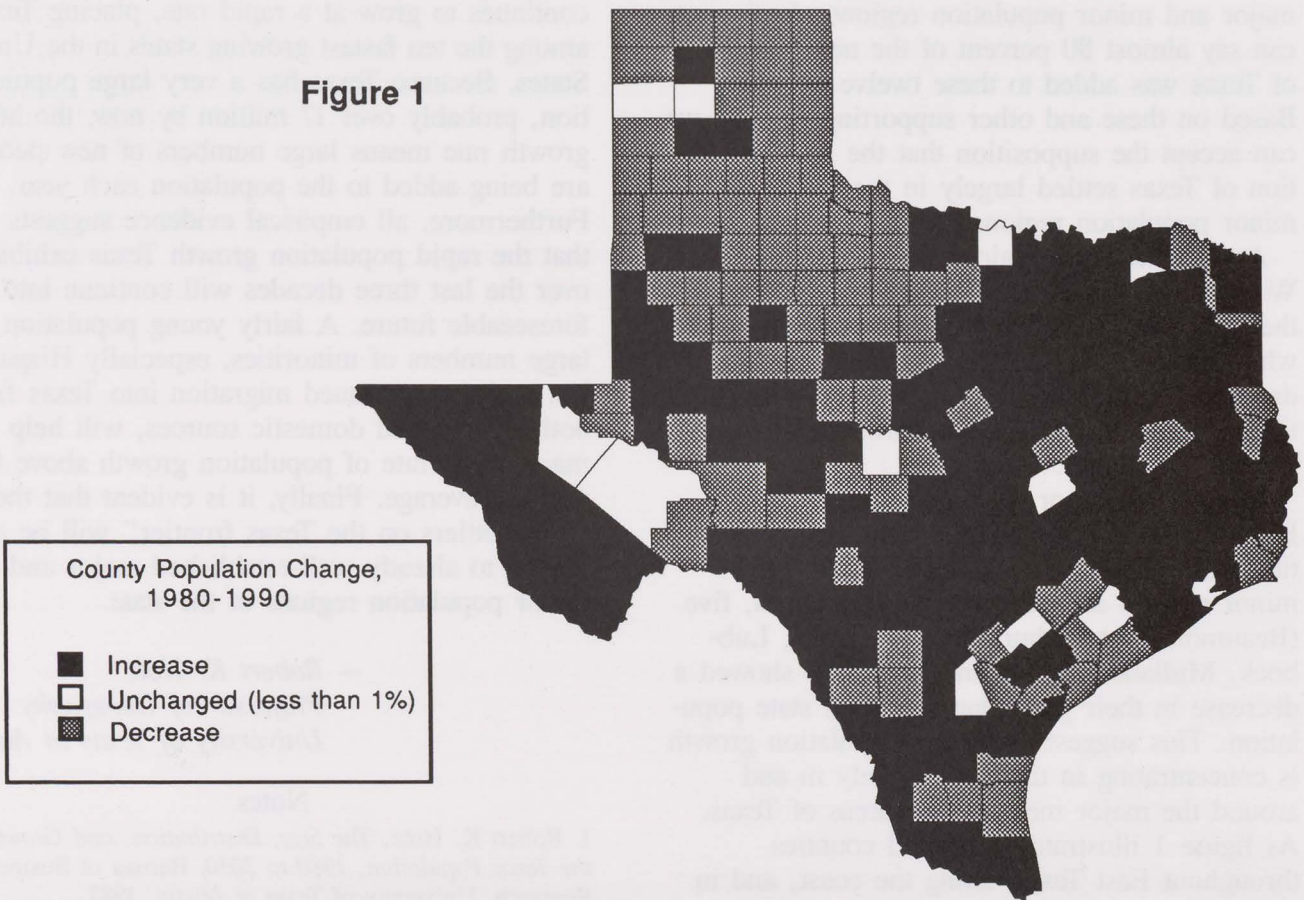
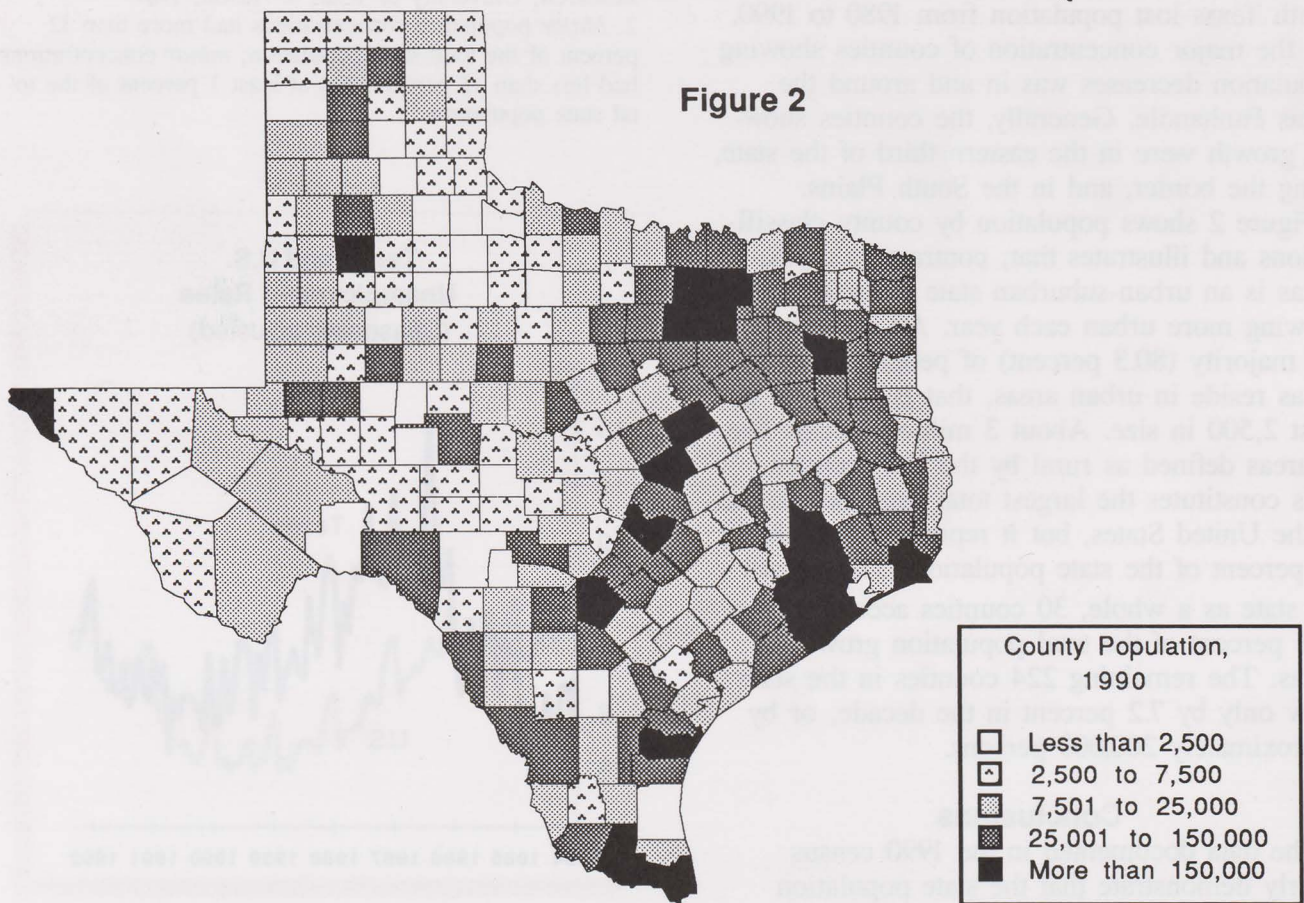


Figure 2





## Announcements

Editor: Lois Glenn Shroul  
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The Bureau of Business Research serves as a primary source for economic and demographic data on the state of Texas. An integral part of UT Austin's Graduate School of Business, the Bureau is located on the sixth floor of the College of Business Administration building.

The Bureau's 1992 **Directory of Texas Wholesalers** is scheduled for release in August. With information on 14,000 firms engaged in wholesaling in Texas, the directory is organized by company name, by location, and by standard industrial classification for the major products. For the first time, this directory will include product descriptions. The price is \$70 plus tax for Texas residents. For more information, call (512) 471-5179.

During June the Bureau—along with the Graduate School of Business and Center for International Business Education and Research and the Mexico City Campus of Monterrey Tech—sponsored three presentations on the North American free trade agreement by speakers from the United States and Mexico. Papers from the sessions plus several invited papers will be published by the Bureau in the fall. If you wish to be notified when the book is available, please let us know by phone (512) 471-5179 or fax (512) 471-1063.

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