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## Rural Life Census Data Center Newsletter: South Dakota Net Migration Estimates

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## South Dakota Net Migration Estimates

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Migration brings important changes for both migrants and communities. Migration into a community can mean a new community dynamic: individuals who migrate bring their views of the world with them, and sometimes these ideas, values, and beliefs breed conflict (Blau 1994). And migration out of a community also can bring change: rural counties with high out-migration rates may also experience long-term economic hardships (Johnson 2006). South Dakota is affected by both in-migration and out-migration.

### **DEFINING MIGRATION AND WHY PEOPLE MIGRATE**

Scholars usually define migration as crossing a defined border such as a county or state line (Weeks 2008). Explaining why people migrate is not easy. The push-pull model is one of the most common methods used to explain why people move (Ravenstein 1889). Individuals who are considering moving weigh the costs and benefits of both their current residence and their possible destination(s). Migration is a likely option if the benefits of a new location outweigh the costs of staying (Weeks 2008). Some factors work to push people from their place of origin; these factors might include boredom or lack of employment opportunities. Other factors, such as educational and work opportunities, pull people to a new destination (Ravenstein 1889). Pull factors are generally more influential than push factors (Ravenstein 1889).

Pull factors do not guarantee migration. Families and individuals may have the desire to move, but they may be constrained by obstacles that block migration paths (Lee 1966). These obstacles vary, but they may include lack of money, health concerns, and family attachment (Weeks 2008).

The push-pull model shows that migration is not random. Economic factors are among the most powerful and influential migration forces (Weeks 2008). Two

of these factors include moving to gain a better education and changing occupations. Many migrate to make economic gains (Massey et al. 1993).

### **WHO LEAVES RURAL COUNTIES?**

Age and marital status are among the strongest predictors for migration (Tobler 1995). Young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 migrate more than any other age group; this is not surprising, considering that career development is at its peak during that time frame and that migration is often necessary when attending college or starting a new career. In addition, single individuals migrate more than those who are married. Young, single adults typically do not have family ties to prevent them from migrating (Weeks 2008).

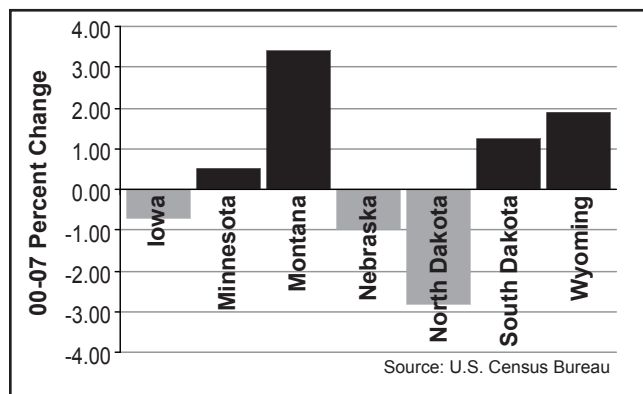
Rural individuals with higher educational and occupational goals generally migrate more than those who have lower goals (Reiger 1972; Foulkes and Newbold 2008). Many migrate because they see a lack of opportunity in their rural county (Foulkes and Newbold 2008). Certain professions, such as lawyers and doctors, may be limited or non-existent in some rural communities; a rural county may have one or two doctors serving the entire county. Rural youth wishing to become a doctor often recognize that their local doctor is not planning on retiring for several years, so to fulfill their goal the youth will have to relocate to another area. Additionally, positions in cities offer higher wages and health and other benefits compared with positions in rural counties (Dominia 2006).

### **NET MIGRATION IN SURROUNDING STATES**

Net migration is defined as the difference between the individuals moving into a given area and those moving away from the same area. The data below come from annually published population estimates produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. For a detailed discussion on

how these estimates are calculated, visit the U.S. Census website (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/migrate.html>). Even though estimates almost always include some element of error, estimates are still considered a reliable source of data.

From 2000 to 2007, South Dakota gained 7,221 residents to net migration, which was a 0.96% increase in its total population (fig. 1). Of the surrounding states, only Montana and Wyoming gained a higher percentage of population due to net migration. Both these states are located in the Rocky Mountain region and are part of a large boom being experienced by western states (Nelson 2005).



**Figure 1.** 2000-2007 Net-migration percentages for South Dakota surrounding States

### COUNTY COMPARISONS

From 2000 to 2007, Campbell, Clark, Harding, Jones, and Sully Counties experienced high net migration losses (Table 1). In seven years, Campbell County lost over 20% of its population to out-migration. Overall, 54 of South Dakota’s 66 counties experienced negative net migration (see Appendix 1).

**Table 1.** Top 5 South Dakota counties with negative net migration, 2000-2007 (in terms of percent change)

RANK	COUNTY	2000-2007 NET MIGRATION (Individuals)	2000-2007 NET MIGRATION (Percent change)
1	Campbell	-365	-20.5
2	Harding	-217	-16.0
3	Sully	-244	-15.7
4	Clark	-646	-15.6
5	Jones	-181	-15.2

South Dakota counties with negative net migration have several common features. First, counties experiencing out-migration tend to be isolated from important resources, including employment opportunities. In 2000, about 30% of rural workers commuted 30 minutes or more to work (Census 2000). A scholar stated that “finding a decent wage often involves traveling long distances to work, yet retaining affordable housing, and

maintaining family ties, is easier in a small community” (Nitschke 2004; 1). Isolated residents may be vulnerable to rising gas prices. This may push residents, especially the young and educated, to migrate (Reiger 1972). Out-migration may doubly harm the county, as businesses and services cannot afford to operate on a limited threshold and are forced to close or move to another location (McCurry and Brooks 2007).

Counties with high out-migration also tend to have an aging population. The out-migration of youth leads to a higher percentage of elderly residents: “The fact that most out-migrants are of reproductive age compounds the problem, because it means that fewer babies are being born to replace the aging population” (Mather 2008; 1). Consequently, older residents may delay retirement because no one is available to replace them.

South Dakota counties with positive net migration are concentrated in the Black Hills and in the eastern region of the state (see Appendix 1). These counties have a variety of jobs, higher wages, and amenity factors (U.S. Census Bureau).

**Table 2.** South Dakota counties with positive net migration, 2000-2007 (in terms of percent change)

RANK	COUNTY	2000-2007 NET MIGRATION (Individuals)	2000-2007 NET MIGRATION (Percent change)
1	Lincoln	10698	44.3
2	Minnehaha	15916	10.7
3	Custer	577	7.9
4	Union	743	5.9
5	Hanson	186	5.9
6	Lawrence	1118	5.1
7	Fall River	148	2.0
8	Pennington	1316	1.5
9	Butte	229	1.4
10	Bon Homme	16	0.2

From 2000 to 2007, Lincoln County’s population increased by more than 44% due to in-migration (Table 2). Although South Dakota continues to gain migrants, only 10 of the 66 counties contributed to this gain. Most of the population gain occurred along the I-29 corridor. Few nonmetropolitan counties show positive net migration. Some exceptions are recreation counties (as defined by Johnson and Beale 2002), such as Custer and Fall River (Population Reference Bureau 2003). Both of these counties use environmental amenities to create jobs and attract workers.

Together, Lincoln and Minnehaha counties, which comprise the Sioux Falls metro area, gained an estimated 26,605 residents due to net migration. To see how important the Sioux Falls metro area is to the state, consider that South Dakota gained 7,221 migrants from 2000 to 2007; without Lincoln and Minnehaha counties,

South Dakota would have lost 19,387 residents to out-migration during this same time period.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are different policy implications for counties with either positive or negative net migration. Key policy issues for counties gaining migrants include “high housing costs, environmental damage, and crowded schools” (Mather 2008; 1); although cities offer better wages than rural areas, the cost of living also is higher in cities. Also, counties gaining Hispanic immigrants may need to address language and cultural differences between the immigrants and the current population (Mather 2008).

Counties losing migrants face different issues. Leaders may struggle with providing services to an aging population. These services can include transportation into the city for shopping trips and doctor visits. Other possible concerns include job loss, lower-paying jobs, and declining tax revenues (Mather 2008). Finally, counties with a declining population can struggle with the decision of whether to consolidate schools. Consolidation saves long-term money but can threaten community traditions that bond community members. Leaders in rural counties must weigh the costs and benefits of economic gains and community pride.

### **CONCLUSION**

South Dakota continues to gain residents due to in-migration. Economic factors are among the most influential migration forces. Most South Dakota counties have lost residents to out-migration due to a lack of educational and employment opportunities. Counties experiencing negative net migration tend to be isolated and have an aging population. The I-29 corridor and the Black Hills region have experienced South Dakota’s greatest positive net migration. These counties are located around a core city or a recreational hub. Having a nearby hub city or having a recreational service are two factors that attract migrants. Finally, migration creates concerns for counties that are either gaining or losing population.

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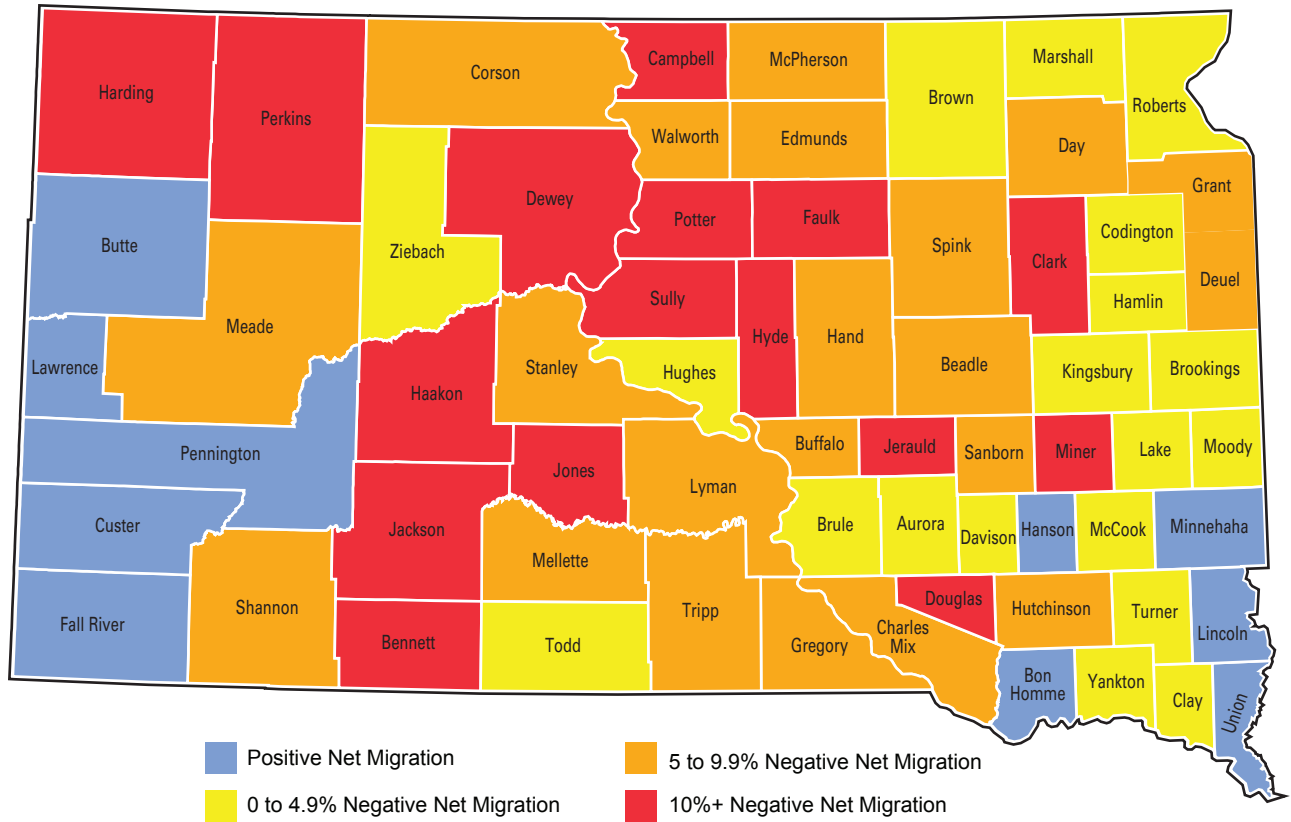
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**Appendix 1. 2000-2007 Net Migration Totals and Net Migration Percent Change for South Dakota and its Counties**

COUNTY	NET MIGRATION (Individuals)	NET MIGRATION (in percent change)
Aurora	-156	-5.10
Beadle	-1,262	-7.41
Bennett	-446	-12.48
Bon Homme	16	0.22
Brookings	-228	-0.81
Brown	-1,219	-3.44
Brule	-247	-4.60
Buffalo	-192	-9.45
Butte	126	1.39
Campbell	-365	-20.48
Charles Mix	-856	-9.16
Clark	-646	-15.59
Clay	-668	-4.93
Codington	-763	-2.95
Corson	-424	-10.16
Custer	577	7.93
Davison	-403	-2.15
Day	-396	-6.32
Deuel	-256	-5.69
Dewey	-778	-13.03
Douglas	-393	-11.36
Edmunds	-267	-6.11
Fall River	148	1.99
Faulk	-336	-12.73
Grant	-562	-7.16
Gregory	-432	-9.02
Haakon	-306	-13.93
Hamlin	-115	-2.08
Hand	-350	-9.36
Hanson	186	5.93
Harding	-217	-16.04
Hughes	-107	-0.65
Hutchinson	-466	-5.77

COUNTY	NET MIGRATION (Individuals)	NET MIGRATION (in percent change)
Hyde	-184	-11.01
Jackson	-414	-14.13
Jerauld	-268	-11.68
Jones	-181	-15.17
Kingsbury	-100	-1.72
Lake	-48	-0.43
Lawrence	1,118	5.13
Lincoln	10,689	44.27
Lyman	-340	-8.73
Marshall	-135	-2.31
McCook	-304	-10.47
McPherson	-220	-4.81
Meade	-1,671	-6.89
Mellette	-180	-8.64
Miner	-341	-11.82
Minnehaha	15,916	10.73
Moody	-320	-4.85
Pennington	1,316	1.49
Perkins	-371	-11.01
Potter	-389	-14.44
Roberts	-519	-5.18
Sanborn	-218	-8.15
Shannon	-859	-6.89
Spink	-773	-10.37
Stanley	-178	-6.42
Sully	-244	-15.68
Todd	-433	-4.78
Tripp	-579	-9.00
Turner	-322	-3.64
Union	743	5.90
Walworth	-562	-9.41
Yankton	-454	-2.10
Ziebach	-151	-5.99
<b>SOUTH DAKOTA</b>	<b>7,221</b>	<b>0.96</b>

**Appendix 2. South Dakota Counties: 2000-2007 Net Migration**



A visual inspection of this map may be misleading. Because the counties in western South Dakota are larger in terms of land area, the map may make it appear that most of the state's in-migration is located in the west. While it is true that several western South Dakota counties experienced positive net migration, it is important to note that these gains were minimal. For example, Pennington County had only an estimated 1.5% increase in its total population due to in-migration (Table 2 and Appendix 1). When the positive net migration figures for the five West River counties that have positive net migration are totaled, the result is 3,338; that figure is less than half of the migrants gained in Lincoln County.

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