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# Chicago's Next Mayor Inherits a Shrinking Population

By John McCormick - Feb 15, 2011 10:00 PMPT

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Chicago's population decline comes as condos have risen in the city, often filled by singles, resulting in smaller households. Photographer: Tim Boyle/Getty Images

Chicago Mayor [Richard M. Daley](#)'s successor will govern a smaller city with fewer black residents and ringed by suburbs that are outpacing its growth, 2010 census data shows.

The third-most-populous U.S. city, home to 2.7 million, lost 6.9 percent of its residents between 2000 and 2010, according to Illinois data released yesterday by the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). The loss means fewer federal dollars for Chicago as the next mayor confronts budget and city-worker pension deficits.

"The region is still gaining in terms of population, but it is varying in terms of where that population is centered," said [Matt Maloney](#), deputy chief of staff and a policy analyst at the [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#). "We see population continuing to drift outward."

The drop to 2,695,598 residents was unexpected because annual census estimates since 2006 had shown the population holding steady or even increasing slightly.

The decline came as new condominium towers have risen along [Chicago's](#) skyline. Those buildings often are filled by singles and retirement-age couples who no longer have children at home, resulting in smaller households than the families who have moved out of the city to find cheaper housing and jobs, Maloney said.



Chicago lost 6.9 percent of its population between 2000 and 2010, meaning fewer federal dollars for the city's next mayor. Photographer: Chris Sweda/Getty Images

Daley, 68, is retiring in May after 22 years in office. Voters go to the polls Feb. 22 and again on April 5 for a runoff of the top two candidates, if no one wins more than 50 percent.

## Two Daley Decades

The population loss during the second decade of Daley's tenure contrasted with his first, when the city grew 4 percent from 1990 to 2000. Hispanic population growth offset the loss of white residents during that period.

While any mayor would like to see growth to help buttress the property and sales taxes that boost city coffers, Maloney said, the young professionals and empty nesters who continue to move into the city demand fewer services and spend more.

"We are seeing a rise in terms of median [household income](#) in the city," he said. "The city is very attractive to professionals."

Daley yesterday announced plans by [Target Corp.](#) to open a new store in a historic building on State Street in the heart of Chicago's downtown Loop, the latest example of national retailers

investing in the city.

The growth hasn't been uniform. Chicago's black population decreased 17.2 percent during the decade, as tens of thousands of mostly black public housing families were relocated when the city demolished their buildings. In addition, middle-class black families have moved to the suburbs, like other demographic groups, census figures show.

### Black Mobility

"I would imagine birth rates aren't what they used to be, and it is an aging population, just like the white population," said John McCarron, an urban affairs writer and adjunct professor at DePaul University in Chicago. "There is a lot of mobility for blacks now."

Blacks constitute 32.4 percent of the population, down from 36.4 percent in 2000 though still the city's largest racial bloc. Non-Hispanic whites accounted for 31.7 percent of Chicago's population in 2010, making them the second-largest racial or ethnic group.

After increasing by 38.1 percent between 1990 and 2000, the city's Hispanic population growth moderated in the latest decade. The group, the third-largest in the city, grew by 3.3 percent and now accounts for 28.9 percent of the city's total population.

### Hispanic Growth

Hispanics now outnumber blacks in [Illinois](#), the 2010 census shows, reflecting a trend that earlier annual estimates had suggested.

Statewide, the group represents 15.8 percent of the population, compared with 63.7 percent for non-Hispanic whites and 14.3 percent for blacks. Blacks saw their first decline in total numbers in Illinois since the U.S. conducted [its first census](#) in 1790, according to an analysis of the new data by [William Frey](#), a demographer and senior fellow at the [Brookings Institution](#) in [Washington](#).

Cook County, the area that includes Chicago, lost 3.4 percent of its population between 2000 and 2010.

Chicago and Cook County's declines would have been bigger had it not been for the worst recession since the Great Depression, said Kenneth Johnson, a former professor at Loyola University Chicago who studies the region as a demographer at the [University of New Hampshire](#).

### Recession Effect

"The recession had the effect of freezing people in place due to their reluctance to try to sell homes or change jobs because of the difficult economic situation," he said.

The Chicago metropolitan area grew 4 percent during the decade and is now home to 9.7 million, Johnson said.

While Chicago's suburbs grew, Illinois's population increased just 3.3 percent, the ninth-lowest rate among states and less than any of its bordering states. Nationwide [population growth](#) was 9.7 percent during the decade.

In the Chicago mayoral race, frontrunner [Rahm Emanuel](#) and his rival candidates are each trying to build a racial and ethnic coalition in a city where there is no majority bloc.

Emanuel, 51, the former chief of staff to President [Barack Obama](#), is competing against rivals who include two Hispanics -- Gery Chico, a former Daley chief of staff, and City Clerk Miguel del Valle -- and Carol Moseley Braun, who was the first black woman elected to the Senate. Emanuel, who leads in all the polls, is white.

### Mayoral Headache

The census data confirms that the next mayor will not have recent population growth to help address what is forecast to be an annual budget deficit of more than \$600 million.

In November, [Standard & Poor's](#) downgraded Chicago's credit rating to A+, the fifth-highest investment grade, partly reflecting concern over the city's reliance on one-time revenue sources such as leasing 36,000 parking meters to a private contractor.

Chicago's population [peaked](#) in 1950 at 3.6 million, before declining in each 10-year census until the decade between 1990 and 2000. [Los Angeles](#) officially [overtook](#) Chicago as the nation's second-largest city following the 1990 census.

Some of the suburban counties that surround Chicago are likely to be among the fastest-growing in the nation, once data for all cities, counties and states is released by late March.

Kendall County, about 40 miles (60 kilometers) southwest of Chicago, was the nation's fastest-growing county between 2000 and 2009, according to census [estimates](#) released in [March 2010](#). The county grew 110.4 percent during the decade and now has 114,736 residents.

### Suburban Surge

Will County, home to 677,560 on the southern end of the Chicago metropolitan area, grew 34.9 percent during the decade. That made it the state's second-fastest county for growth.

While Chicago remains the center for the region's economy, corporate offices are more commonly found in the suburbs, Bloomberg data shows. About two-thirds of the area's publicly traded companies are located outside city limits.

[Boeing Co.](#), [Northern Trust Corp.](#) and [United Continental Holdings Inc.](#) are among those based in Chicago, while companies including [McDonald's Corp.](#), Motorola Solutions Inc. and [Abbott Laboratories](#) are headquartered in the suburbs.

Chicago and its inner-ring suburbs will probably continue to struggle to keep people as farther-out suburbs offer cheaper housing and better schools, Johnson said.

"A lot of the jobs are out there, too," he said.

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