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# Lone Star Population Surge

By Steve H. Murdock

**T**exas' population has increased more than any other state's during the 1990s, according to year-end estimates for 1996 from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. As a result, real estate markets may continue to grow, although some population components show signs of a slowdown. These bear watching.

Texas population was 19.1 million as of July 1, 1996. This represents a 2.1 million increase from 1990, slightly larger than the numerical change in California's population. Florida is the only other state increasing by more than a million persons. The Texas' share of national growth is disproportionate to its size—the increase translates to 12.6 percent of the nation's total growth during the decade.

The 1990-96 increase of 12.6 percent made it the tenth fastest growing state in the nation in percentage terms. Nevada grew fastest in percentage terms—33.4. Arizona increased 20.8 percent. Although nine states showed larger percentage increases than Texas, their numerical changes were comparatively small. Most other fast-growth states are relatively smaller than the Lone Star State.

Texas growth rates differ dramatically from the mid- to late 1980s. For example, Texas population increased by only 0.3 percent from 1987 to 1988, and during several years in the latter part of the 1980s, only a large number of births offset net outmigration. During that period, Texas population was growing about one-third as fast as the U.S. population. In the 1990s, Texas' growth rate has been more than 88 percent higher.

Many large states are growing slowly. New York population increased by only 1.1 percent, Pennsylvania by only 1.5 percent. Illinois, Ohio and New Jersey all showed 1990-96 increases of between 3 and 4 percent.

This decade, Texas has increased an average of 344,000 per year. Although Texas patterns show slowing growth

compared to the two preceding years, a continued 1995-96 growth rate of 1.7 percent would double the state's population in roughly 37 years.

These patterns bode well for real estate markets, and continued growth in such markets can be expected. At least one aspect of the most recent growth patterns, however, suggests that the 1990s growth may be slowing. Texas growth this decade has resulted primarily from natural increase with 1.2 million persons, or 55.2 percent of all growth resulting from natural increase.

International immigration accounted for 491,931 new residents or 23 percent of the growth (see table). Domestic immigration accounted for 466,970 or 21.8 percent. This growth shows a larger proportion of migration than occurred during the 1980s when roughly two-thirds of all growth resulted from natural increase.

Provisions of the 1990 Immigration Act, which substantially increased immigration during the first half of the 1990s, may produce slower immigration rates. More important for real estate

is the fact that domestic immigration may be slowing.

Although data for any single year must be viewed cautiously, data for the 1990s show that net domestic immigration was between 93,000 and 101,000 for each of the years from 1992 to 1995 but only 57,461 for 1995-96. Because immigrants from other states are a primary source of growth in real estate markets, continued slowdown could dampen demand for real estate. Additional data will be necessary to determine whether this is a short-term deviation from the pattern of extensive immigration or an indication of a pattern of slowing growth.

Overall, however, Texas' relatively extensive natural increase coupled with migration should lead to continued growth. In fact, the 1996 data suggest that Texas will likely enter the twenty-first century with more than 20 million people, even if growth slows. ■

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## Texas Population Growth 1990-96 and Projected Population in 2000

	Population	Births	Deaths	Natural Increase	International Immigration	Domestic Migration	Net Total Change
1990*	16,986,335	—	—	—	—	—	—
1991**	17,366,958	393,243	154,266	238,977	82,304	59,342	380,623
1992	17,697,419	321,162	128,566	192,596	79,409	58,456	330,461
1993	18,865,397	321,169	131,783	189,386	84,946	93,646	367,978
1994	18,433,735	322,596	136,888	185,708	81,545	101,085	368,338
1995	18,801,380	327,842	136,541	191,301	79,364	96,980	367,645
1996	19,128,261	323,376	138,319	185,057	84,363	57,461	326,881
2000***	20,387,396	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total Period,							
1990-96	—	2,009,388	826,363	1,183,025	491,931	466,970	2,141,926
1990-2000	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,400,926

\* Population value for 1990 is for April 1, 1990; all other values are for July 1 of the year indicated.

\*\* Changes in 1990-91 are for a 15-month period from April 1, 1990, to July 1, 1991; all other change values are for 12-month periods.

\*\*\* Projected assuming 1995-96 growth rate of 1.7 percent continues from July 1, 1996, to April 1, 2000.

Source: Derived from U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates by the Texas State Data Center, Department of Rural Sociology, Texas A&M University.

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