



# Thirty-Four Years of Population Data

What Does It Tell US?

Speakers:

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# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

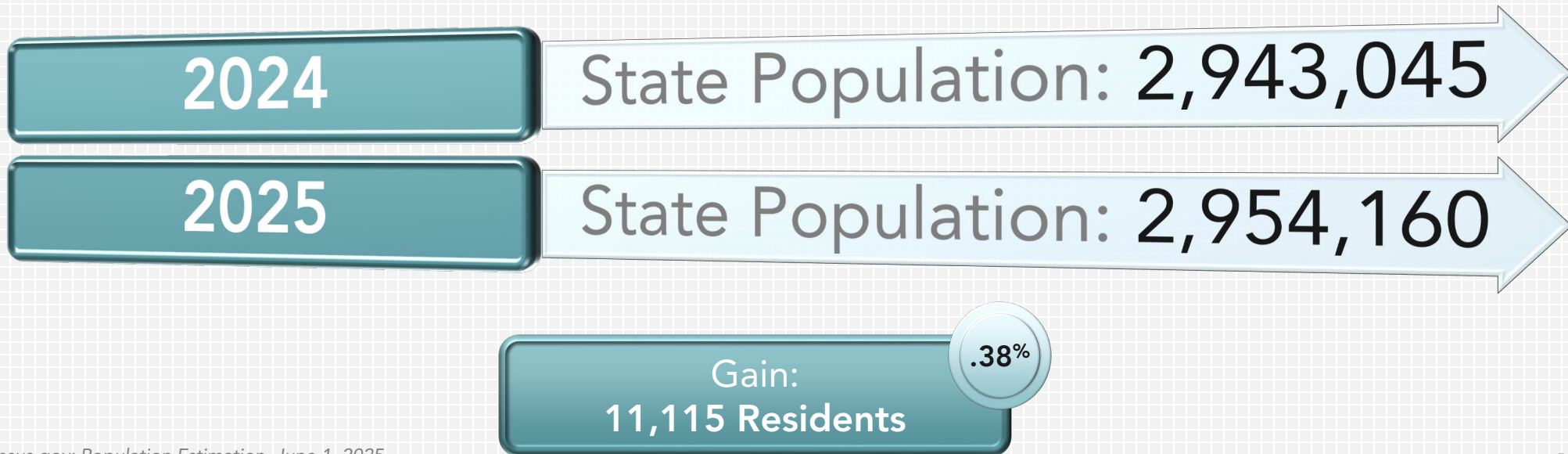
The 2024 Mississippi population threshold analysis demonstrates the substantial concentration of population within a relatively small number of counties and provides insight into the state's political and demographic geography. While Mississippi contains 82 counties, the analysis shows that only 12 of the largest counties are needed to account for slightly more than half of the state's total estimated 2024 population.



# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

Recent Census county population estimates indicate that Mississippi's population continued to grow between 2024 and 2025. The state's estimated population increased from approximately 2,943,045 residents in 2024 to 2,954,160 residents in 2025, representing a gain of 11,115 residents or approximately 0.38 percent. While modest, this increase suggests continued population stability at the statewide level and reinforces evidence that Mississippi's demographic trajectory is increasingly shaped by growth in a limited number of metropolitan and suburban counties.



Source: Census.gov: Population Estimation, June 1, 2025

# Mississippi Population Growth

Why 3 Million Matters



# Mississippi Population Growth

## Why 3 Million Matters

Mississippi is approaching 3 million residents, but future growth will depend increasingly on migration rather than natural population increase.

### Demographic Forces Shaping Mississippi's Population

- Birth rates are declining, resulting in fewer new residents each year.
- The population is aging, leading to higher numbers of deaths annually.
- Natural population growth (births minus deaths) has narrowed significantly compared to previous decades.
- Migration now plays a larger role in determining whether Mississippi grows or declines.

### What This Means

- Historically, Mississippi's population growth was driven primarily by births exceeding deaths.
- Today, population growth is increasingly dependent on attracting and retaining residents.
- Growth in counties such as Madison, Rankin, DeSoto, Harrison, and Lamar has helped offset losses in many rural counties.



# Mississippi Population Growth

## Why 3 Million Matters

### Looking Ahead

Mississippi's future population growth will be determined less by births and more by migration patterns. Reaching and sustaining a population above 3 million residents will depend largely on whether the state experiences net migration gains or losses in the coming years.

### Bottom Line:

Mississippi is not necessarily destined to remain below 3 million residents. However, unlike in previous decades, crossing that threshold will likely depend on attracting new residents and retaining young adults rather than on natural population growth alone.

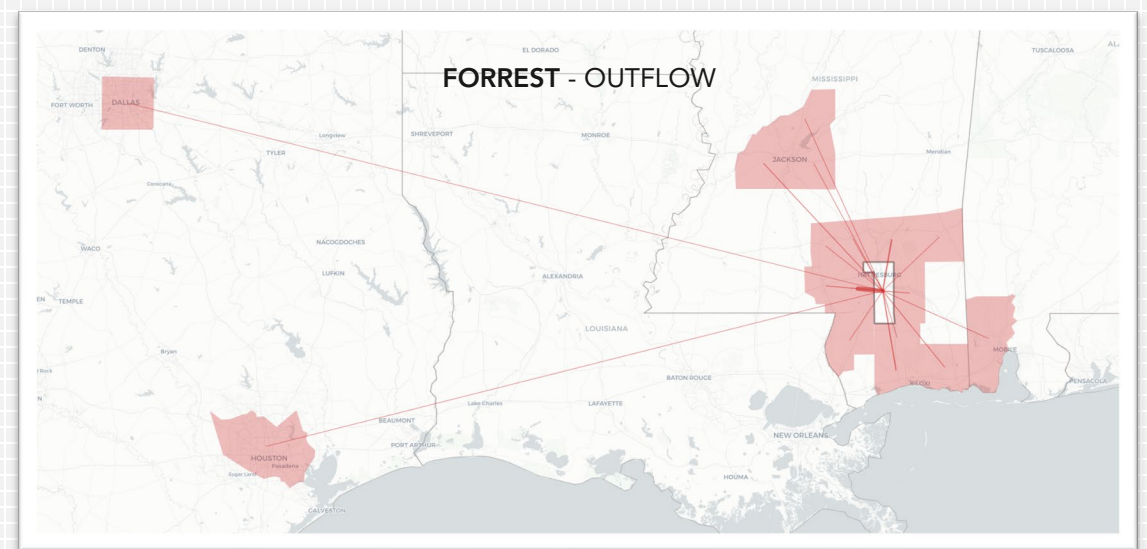
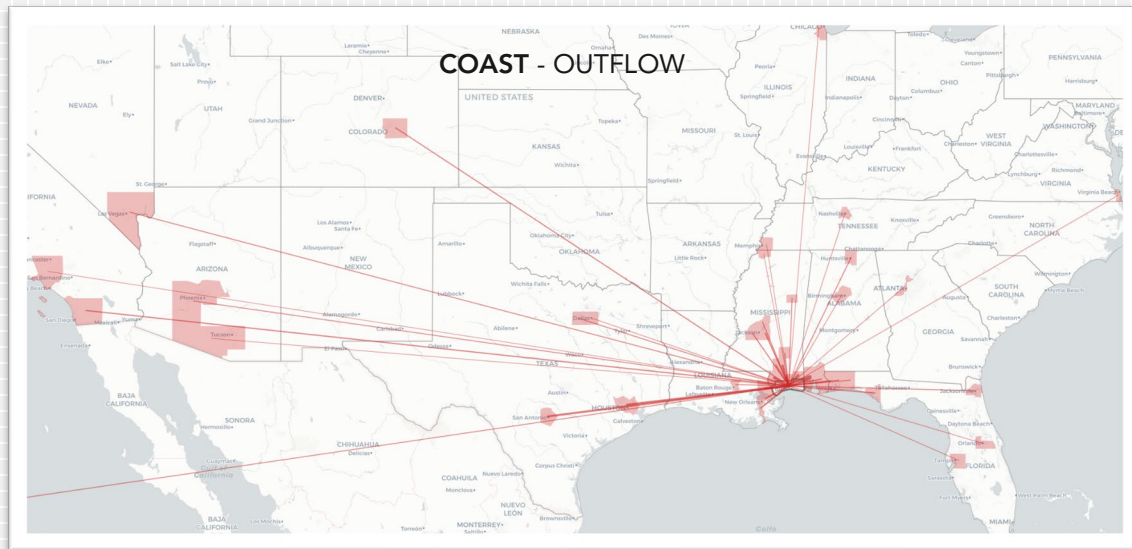
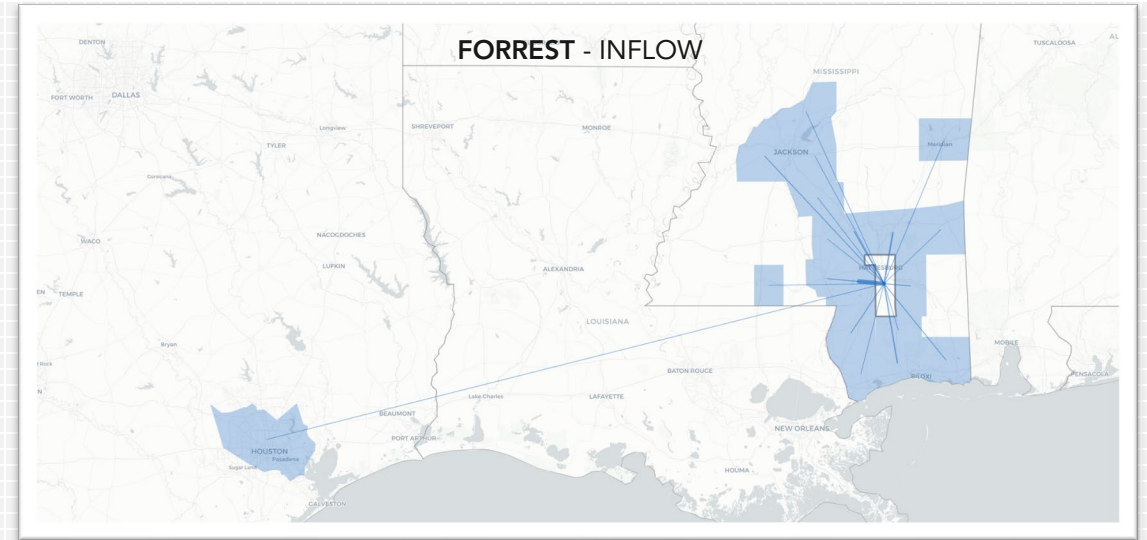
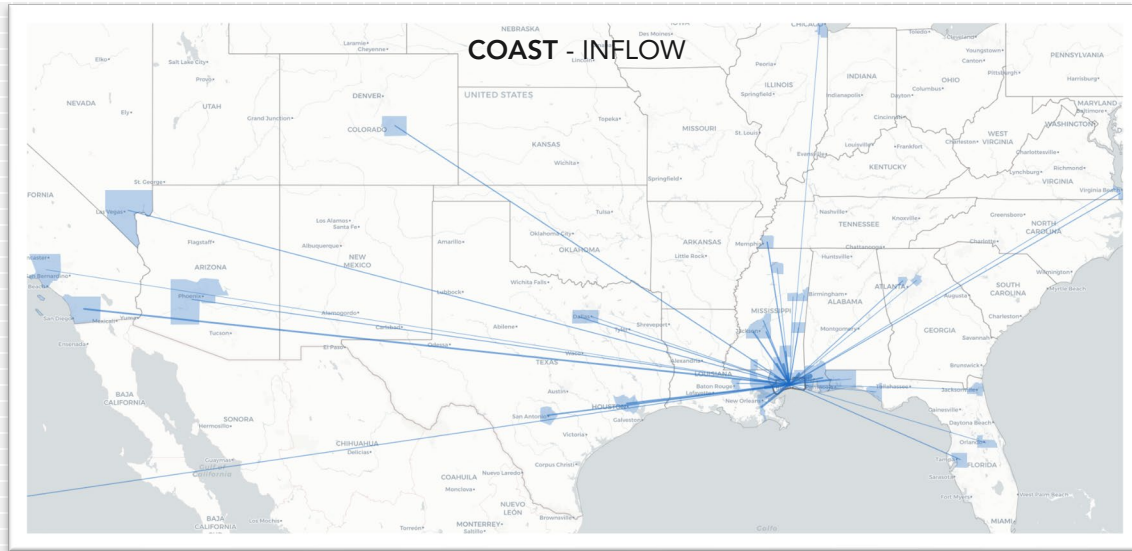
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (PEP), 2024 population estimates.

**Note:** Population change reflects the combined effects of births, deaths, and net migration. Declining fertility rates and an aging population have reduced natural population growth in Mississippi, increasing the importance of migration as a driver of future population change. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program; National Cancer Institute SEER Population Data; CDC National Center for Health Statistics.

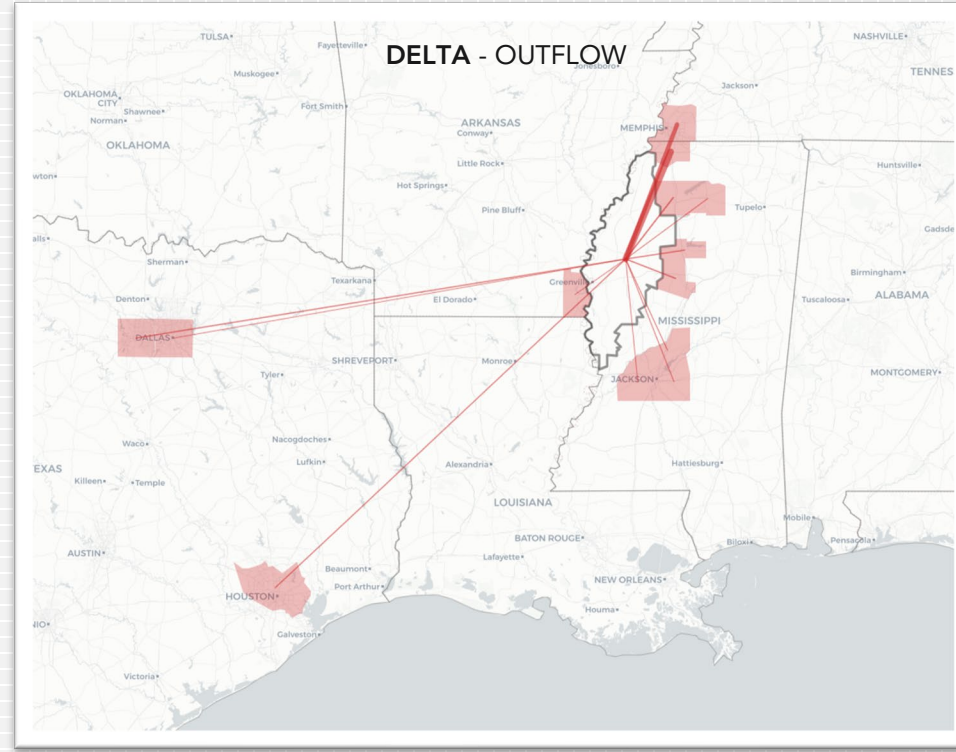
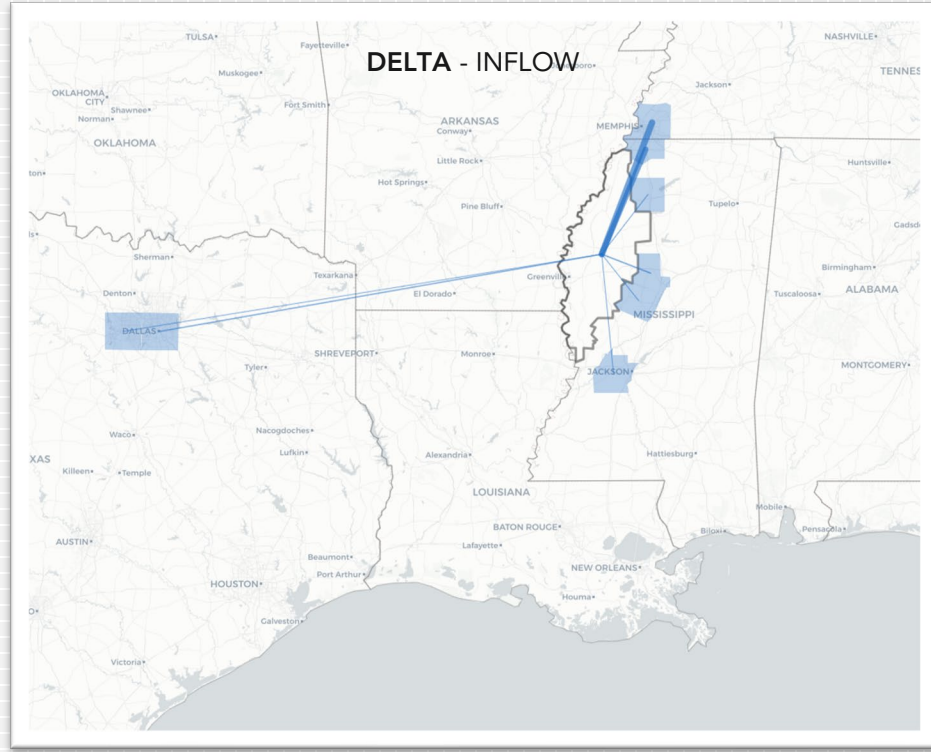




# Mississippi Population Growth Migration Flow Maps



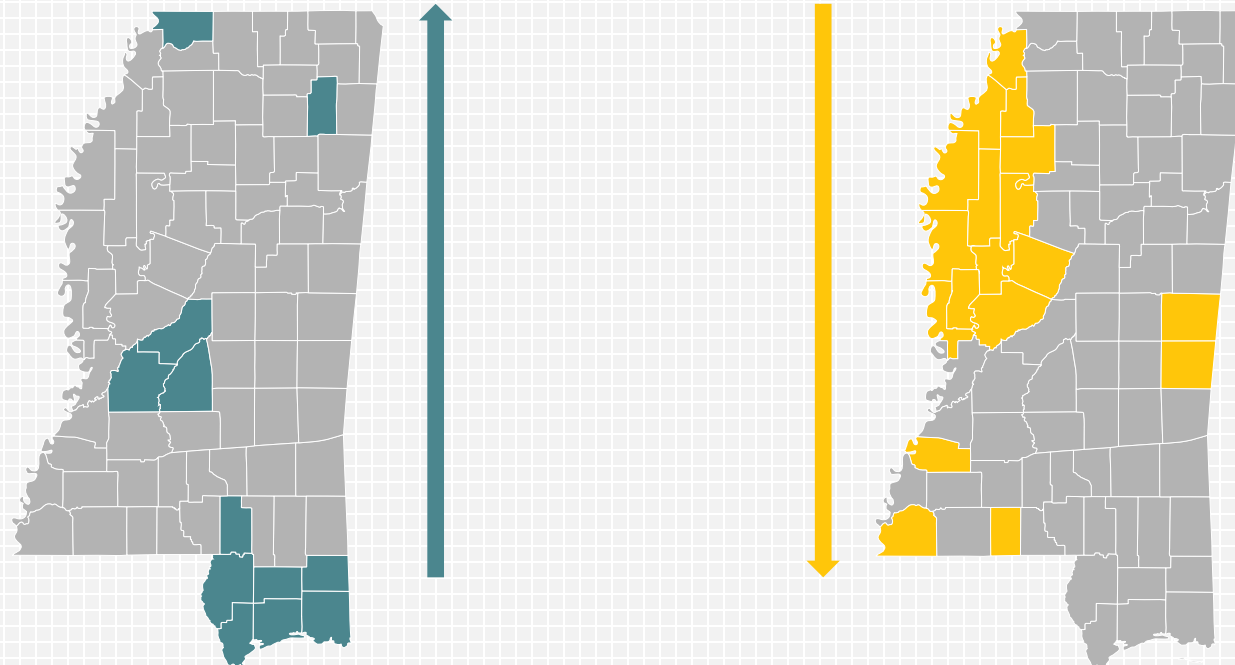
# Mississippi Population Growth Migration Flow Maps



# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

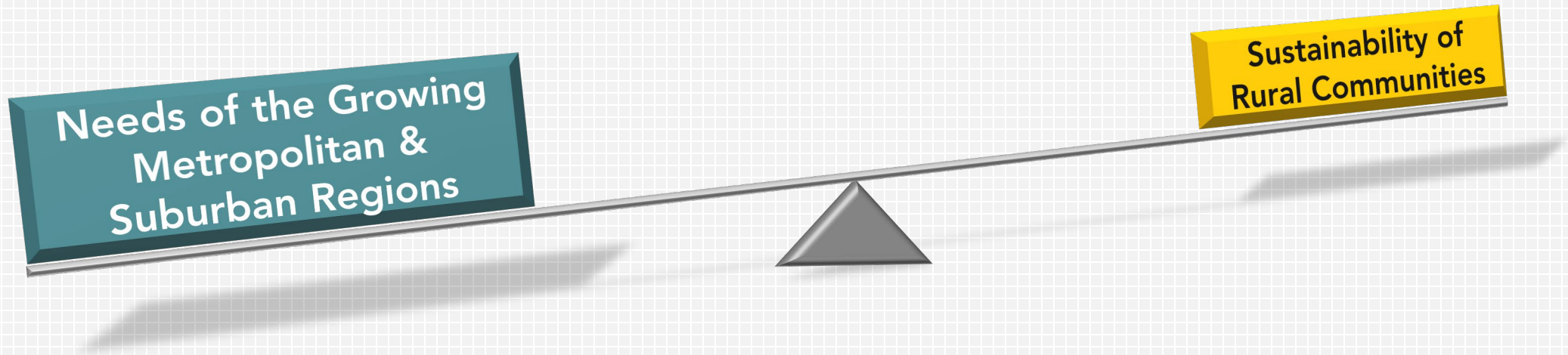
The statewide increase masks substantial variation across counties. Population growth continues to be concentrated within established growth corridors, including portions of the Jackson metropolitan area, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and selected counties in northern Mississippi. At the same time, many rural counties continue to experience population stagnation or decline. These patterns are consistent with the long-term demographic trends observed throughout the 1990–2024 study period and suggest that regional divergence remains a defining characteristic of Mississippi's population geography.



# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

The 2025 estimates strengthen the report's central conclusion that future policy planning will increasingly require balancing the needs of growing metropolitan and suburban regions with the continued sustainability of rural communities.



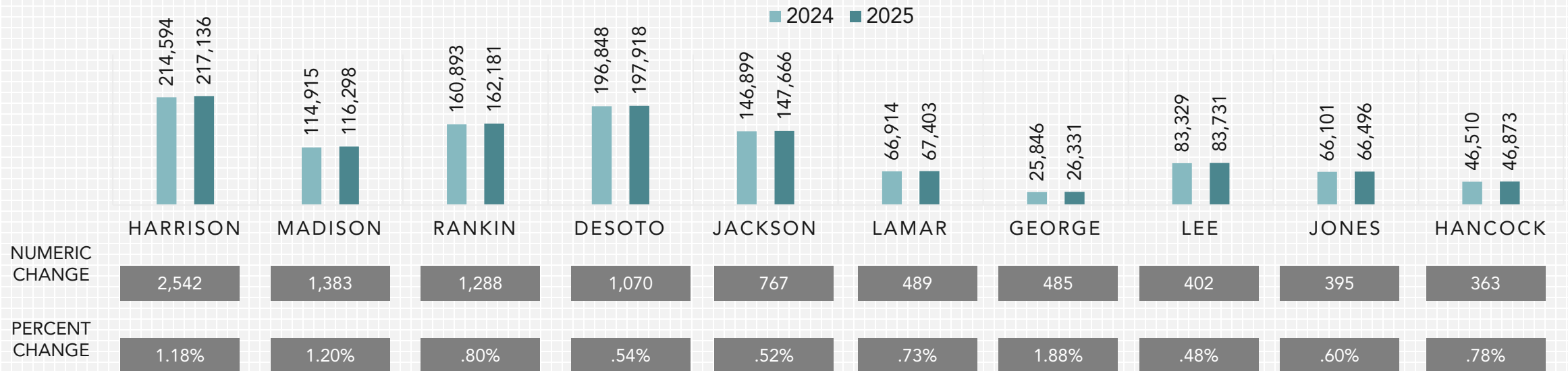
Population concentration within a limited number of counties has implications for healthcare infrastructure, educational planning, workforce development, transportation systems, housing demand, and economic development strategies across the state.

# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

This graph identifies the Mississippi counties experiencing the largest population gains between 2024 and 2025. These counties represent the leading edge of the state's recent demographic growth and are likely to experience increasing demand for healthcare services, educational capacity, transportation infrastructure, housing development, and workforce expansion.

Mississippi Counties With The Largest Population Growth, 2024-2025

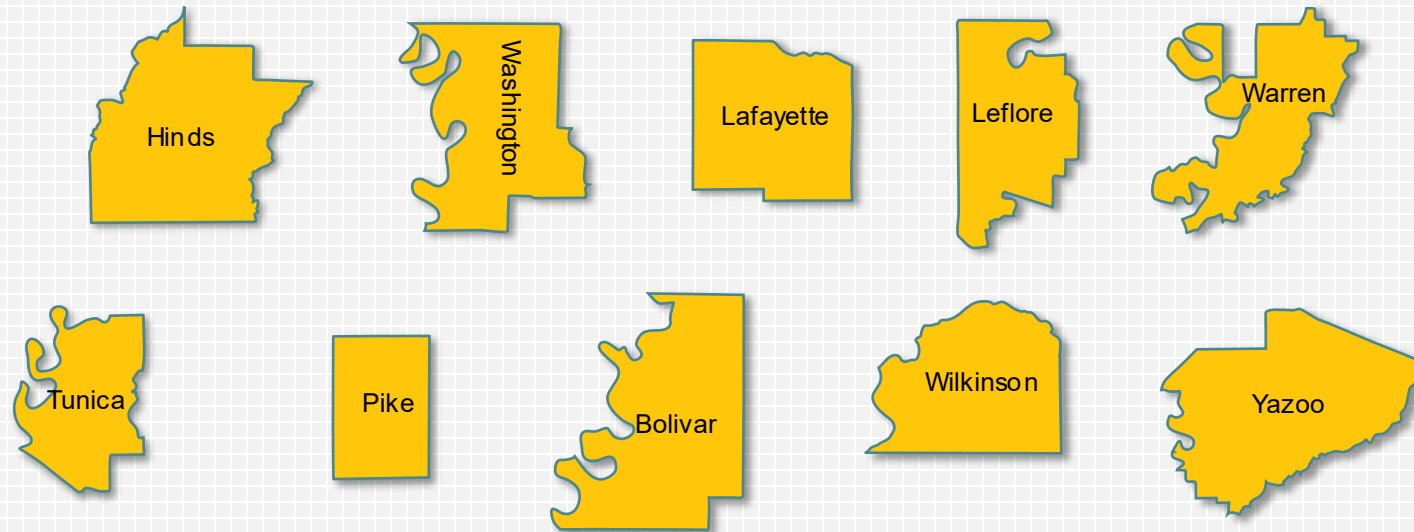


Source: U.S. Census Bureau County Population Estimates, 2025. Analysis by Center for Mississippi Health Policy

# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

While several metropolitan and suburban counties continued to gain population between 2024 and 2025, a number of rural counties experienced continued population decline. These declines generally reflect longer-term demographic trends involving population aging, lower birth rates, outmigration of younger adults, and economic restructuring. Counties experiencing continued population losses may face increasing challenges related to healthcare access, school enrollment, workforce availability, local tax revenues, and the sustainability of essential public services.

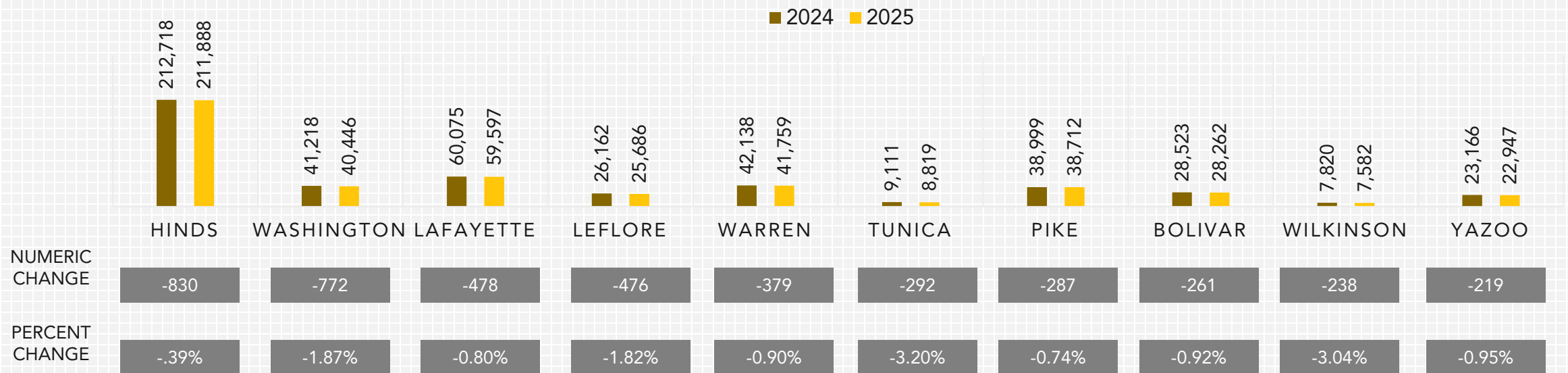


# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

This graph identifies the Mississippi counties with the largest population declines between 2024 and 2025. Although the statewide population increased overall, the distribution of growth and decline illustrates the uneven demographic patterns that continue to shape Mississippi's economic, educational, healthcare, and workforce development challenges.

Mississippi Counties With The Largest Population Decline, 2024-2025



Source: U.S. Census Bureau County Population Estimates, 2025. Analysis by Center for Mississippi Health Policy

# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

The 2025 county estimates provide an early indication that Mississippi's recent population growth remains concentrated within a relatively small number of counties. Counties experiencing growth are likely to face increasing demands for healthcare services, educational capacity, transportation infrastructure, housing development, and workforce recruitment. Conversely, counties experiencing continued population decline may encounter additional challenges related to maintaining healthcare access, sustaining school enrollment, supporting local tax bases, and preserving economic vitality.

From a healthcare perspective, the concentration of recent population growth within metropolitan and suburban counties may increase demand for hospital services, primary care access, specialty care, behavioral health services, and maternal and child health programs. At the same time, many rural counties may continue to experience declining patient volumes, workforce shortages, and increasing financial pressure on hospitals and healthcare providers. These dynamics reinforce the importance of regional healthcare planning, telehealth expansion, workforce development initiatives, and community-based approaches to improving healthcare access across Mississippi.



# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

The 2025 estimates therefore serve as an important bridge between the long-term demographic patterns documented in the 1990–2024 analysis and the near-term planning decisions facing state and local policymakers. Although the annual changes are relatively modest, the geographic distribution of growth and decline provides valuable insight into the future demand for healthcare, education, workforce development, infrastructure investment, and public services throughout Mississippi.

Specifically, the statewide population estimate was approximately 2.95 million residents. A simple majority threshold, defined as 50 percent of the statewide population, required approximately 1.47 million residents. When Mississippi counties were ranked from largest to smallest by total population, the cumulative population exceeded this threshold after only the first 12 counties. Together, these counties contained approximately 1.48 million residents, representing 50.1 percent of the state’s total population.

### MISSISSIPPI COUNTIES ACCOUNTING FOR A MAJORITY OF THE STATE POPULATION, 2025

The first 12 counties contain 1,479,665 residents, representing 50.09% of Mississippi’s 2025 population of 2,954,160.

Rank	County	2025 Population	County Share	Cumulative Population	Cumulative State Population Share
1	Harrison	217,136	7.35%	217,136	7.35%
2	Hinds	211,888	7.17%	429,024	14.52%
3	DeSoto	197,918	6.70%	626,942	21.22%
4	Rankin	162,181	5.49%	789,123	26.71%
5	Jackson	147,666	5.00%	936,789	31.71%
6	Madison	116,298	3.94%	1,053,087	35.65%
7	Lee	83,731	2.83%	1,136,818	38.48%
8	Forrest	79,034	2.68%	1,215,852	41.16%
9	Lauderdale	70,317	2.38%	1,286,169	43.54%
10	Lamar	67,403	2.28%	1,353,572	45.82%
11	Jones	66,496	2.25%	1,420,068	48.07%
12	Lafayette	55,597	2.02%	1,479,665	50.09%

Note: Cumulative State Population Share (%) represents the percentage of Mississippi’s total population accounted for after sequentially adding counties from largest to smallest population. It is not the individual county percentage.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau County Population Estimates, 2025. Analysis by Center for Mississippi Health Policy.

# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

**This finding highlights the uneven population distribution across Mississippi.**

Although most Mississippi counties are rural or sparsely populated, a relatively small number of urban and suburban counties contain a disproportionate share of the population. Counties likely included in this majority population set include highly populated areas such as Hinds, Harrison, DeSoto, Rankin, Madison, Jackson, Lee, Forrest, Lamar, and several other regional population centers.

From a political geography perspective, the analysis suggests that statewide electoral outcomes are heavily influenced by a limited number of larger counties and metropolitan regions. In practical terms, this means that population growth, demographic change, voter turnout, and migration patterns within these larger counties may have a disproportionately large influence on statewide political outcomes compared with smaller rural counties. While smaller counties collectively remain important culturally and geographically, many individually contribute only a modest share of the statewide population base.

The analysis also demonstrates the continued rural structure of Mississippi. Even though a majority of counties fall within smaller population categories, the combined population of these smaller counties does not equal the population concentration found in the state's largest counties. This imbalance reflects broader long-term demographic trends including urbanization, suburban expansion, regional economic concentration, and migration toward employment and educational centers.

**Importantly, this analysis should not be interpreted as a direct election forecast.**

Population size alone does not determine election outcomes. Actual statewide elections depend on many additional factors including voter registration, turnout rates, partisan alignment, demographic composition, campaign dynamics, and voting behavior. However, the analysis does provide a useful framework for understanding how Mississippi's population distribution shapes the broader political environment and illustrates how relatively few counties contain enough residents to form a numerical majority of the state population.

# Population Trends 1990-2024

## Political Implications

From a policy and planning standpoint, the results also suggest that demographic shifts occurring within Mississippi's largest counties may increasingly shape statewide trends related to healthcare demand, infrastructure needs, workforce development, education systems, economic growth, and political representation. As Mississippi's larger counties continue to evolve demographically, their influence on statewide social and political dynamics may become even more pronounced over time.

The 2024 Mississippi population threshold analysis has important implications not only for political geography, but also for healthcare infrastructure, educational planning, workforce development, and the long-term sustainability of rural communities. The finding that only 13 counties contain slightly more than half of Mississippi's total population demonstrates the growing concentration of residents within a relatively small number of urban and suburban population centers. This population concentration is likely to shape future demands for healthcare services, school capacity, transportation systems, housing development, and economic investment across the state.

# Population Change Implications

Healthcare, Education, Workforce Development

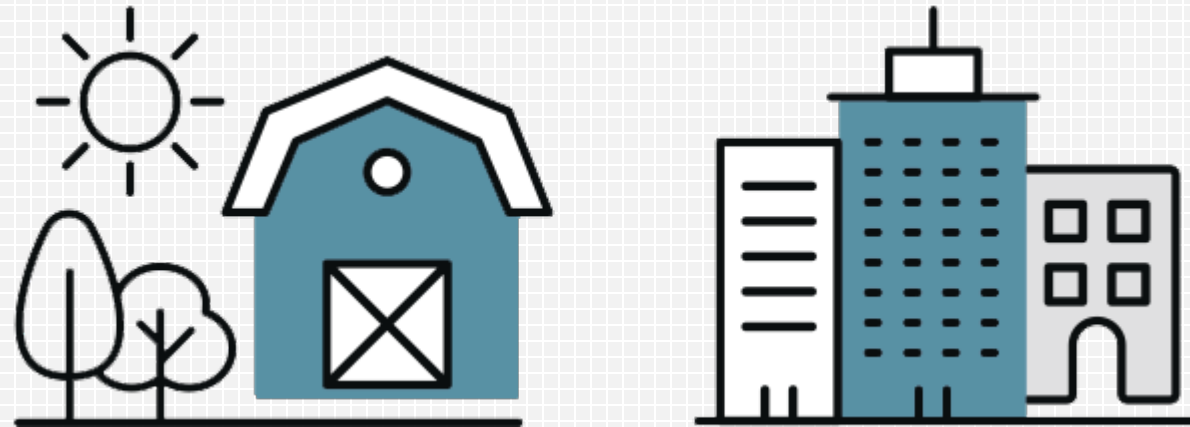


# Population Change Implications

## Healthcare, Education, Workforce Development

From a healthcare perspective, the concentration of population within a limited number of counties suggests that healthcare demand will increasingly intensify within larger regional centers such as the Jackson metropolitan area, the Gulf Coast, DeSoto County, and other growing suburban and regional hub counties. These areas may experience increasing pressure on hospitals, emergency departments, primary care networks, specialty services, behavioral health systems, and maternal and pediatric healthcare infrastructure. Population growth in these counties may require expansion of hospital facilities, recruitment of healthcare workforce personnel, construction of additional outpatient clinics, and investments in transportation and emergency medical systems.

At the same time, many smaller rural counties continue to experience stagnant or declining populations, particularly among younger and working-age adults. This demographic pattern creates serious long-term concerns for the sustainability of rural healthcare systems. Rural hospitals in counties with declining populations may face increasing financial instability due to shrinking patient volumes, workforce shortages, aging populations with higher healthcare needs, and a continued dependence on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement. As younger populations migrate toward larger counties for employment and educational opportunities, rural communities may lose critical economic support necessary to maintain local hospitals, physician practices, pharmacies, and emergency care systems.



# Population Change Implications

## Healthcare, Education, Workforce Development

The analysis also suggests that aging trends may further intensify healthcare demands in many rural counties. Counties with increasing proportions of residents aged 65 and older may require expanded geriatric services, chronic disease management, long-term care capacity, rehabilitation services, home health programs, and transportation assistance. In many rural areas, the remaining population base may increasingly consist of older adults while younger families and workforce-age residents decline. This demographic imbalance could place additional strain on already fragile rural healthcare systems.

Educational infrastructure may also be significantly affected by these population shifts. Growing counties and suburban regions may experience increased enrollment pressure requiring new schools, classroom expansion, teacher recruitment, transportation investments, and infrastructure development. School districts in rapidly growing counties such as DeSoto, Rankin, Madison, and Lamar may need to plan for continued enrollment growth and associated capital improvements.



# Population Change Implications

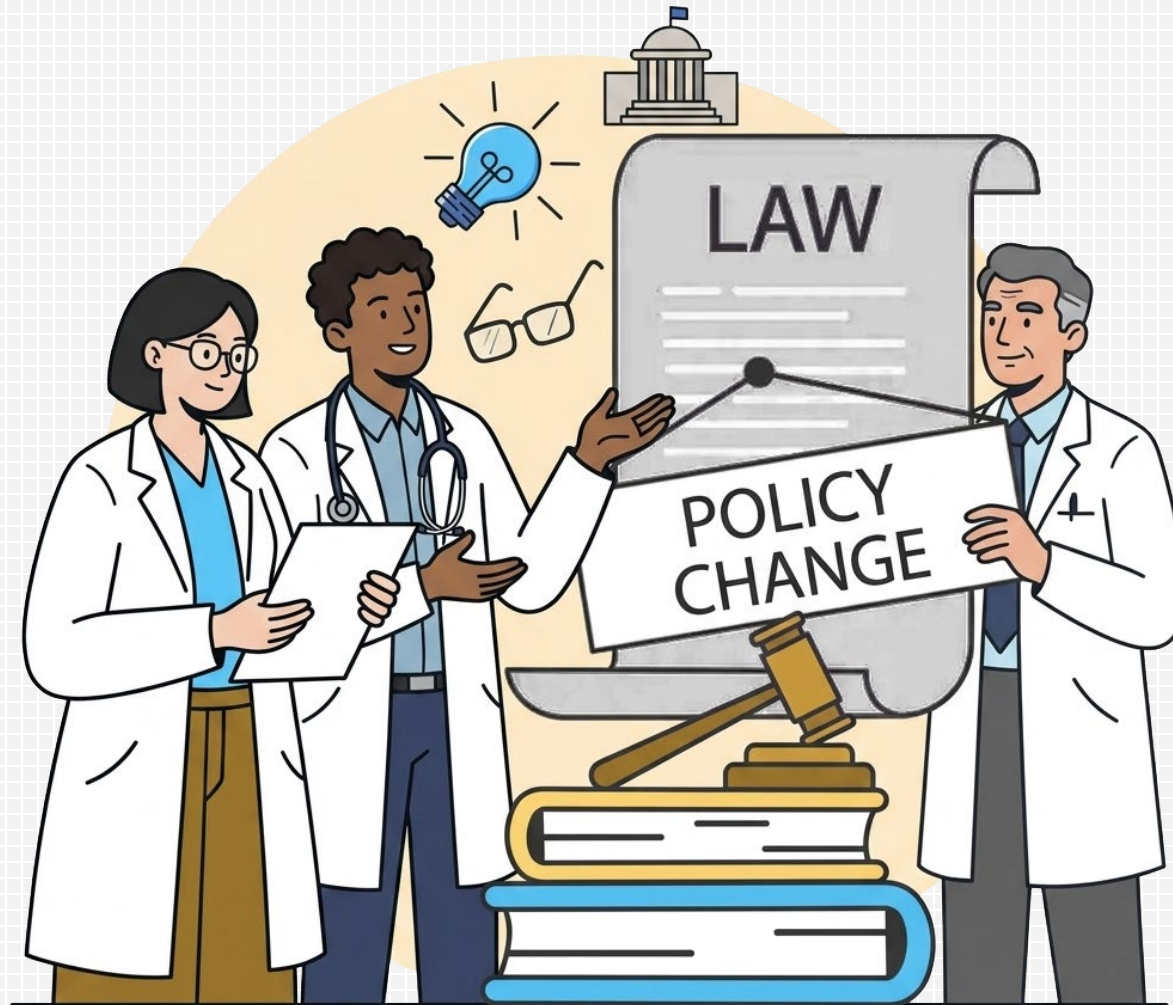
## Healthcare, Education, Workforce Development

At the statewide level, the analysis illustrates a growing divergence between Mississippi's larger population centers and its smaller rural counties. While urban and suburban counties may continue to expand economically and demographically, many rural counties may face continued population decline, aging populations, shrinking workforce pools, and increasing fiscal stress. These patterns have important implications for long-term planning related to healthcare access, educational equity, transportation systems, broadband expansion, economic development, and regional service delivery.

Importantly, the analysis does not suggest that smaller rural counties are unimportant. Rather, it demonstrates that Mississippi's future policy challenges may increasingly involve balancing the needs of rapidly growing population centers with the continued viability and stability of rural communities. Maintaining access to healthcare, education, emergency services, and economic opportunity in rural Mississippi will likely remain one of the state's most significant long-term policy challenges.



# Future Health System Challenges and Policy Opportunities



# Future Health System Challenges and Policy Opportunities

Mississippi's long-term population trends have important implications for the future structure and sustainability of the state's healthcare system. The demographic shifts identified in this analysis suggest that Mississippi may face increasing challenges related to healthcare access, rural hospital sustainability, primary care shortages, emergency department utilization, chronic disease burden, and healthcare workforce availability over the coming decade.

One of the most significant concerns involves the growing vulnerability of rural healthcare systems. Many Mississippi rural hospitals already operate under substantial financial pressure due to declining patient volumes, workforce shortages, aging infrastructure, and heavy dependence on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement. Population decline in many rural counties may further weaken the financial stability of these facilities by reducing commercially insured patient populations while increasing the proportion of elderly residents with complex healthcare needs. Continued demographic decline in some rural regions may increase the likelihood of service reductions, hospital consolidations, or facility closures unless new regional care delivery strategies are developed.



# Future Health System Challenges and Policy Opportunities

The analysis also highlights concerns regarding primary care access gaps across many parts of the state. Counties experiencing long-term declines in working-age adults may face increasing difficulty recruiting and retaining physicians, nurse practitioners, behavioral health providers, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals. Existing shortages in primary care access may contribute to delayed preventive care, poorer chronic disease management, and increased reliance on emergency departments for non-emergent healthcare needs.

Emergency department overuse remains an important healthcare systems concern in Mississippi and is closely connected to broader issues involving healthcare access, poverty, transportation barriers, insurance coverage instability, and limited primary care availability. In many communities, emergency departments increasingly function as the default healthcare access point for individuals unable to obtain timely outpatient care. This pattern may contribute to higher healthcare costs, fragmented continuity of care, overcrowding within emergency departments, and avoidable hospital utilization.



# Future Health System Challenges and Policy Opportunities

Over the next decade, several policy improvements may substantially influence healthcare access and health outcomes across Mississippi.

Expanded investment in primary care infrastructure, rural workforce recruitment programs, telehealth systems, community health worker programs, maternal and behavioral health services, and regional healthcare coordination initiatives may help strengthen healthcare access in both rural and urban communities. Greater integration of public health systems, hospitals, primary care networks, and social service organizations may also improve care coordination and population health management.

The demographic trends identified in this report also suggest an increasing need for prevention-focused healthcare strategies.

Mississippi continues to experience a high burden of chronic diseases including diabetes, hypertension, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and preventable hospitalizations. As the population ages and healthcare demands increase, prevention and early intervention strategies may become increasingly important for controlling healthcare costs and improving long-term health outcomes. Investments in preventive care, chronic disease management, maternal and child health services, nutrition programs, behavioral health access, and community-based health initiatives may help reduce avoidable healthcare utilization over time.

# Future Health System Challenges and Policy Opportunities

Community-engaged healthcare models may also become increasingly important in addressing Mississippi's regional health disparities. Local partnerships involving hospitals, public health agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, community clinics, and nonprofit organizations may help improve outreach, preventive screening, health education, transportation coordination, and care navigation in underserved communities. Because healthcare challenges vary substantially between rapidly growing metropolitan regions and declining rural counties, future healthcare policy strategies may need to become increasingly regionalized and community-specific rather than relying solely on uniform statewide approaches.

Ultimately, the demographic patterns identified in this analysis suggest that Mississippi's healthcare system is entering a period of significant structural transition. Population concentration within a limited number of metropolitan and suburban counties may increase demand for expanded healthcare infrastructure in growth regions, while many rural areas may face ongoing challenges maintaining access to essential healthcare services. Long-term planning efforts focused on prevention, workforce sustainability, coordinated care delivery, and community-based health systems may play a critical role in determining healthcare access and outcomes across Mississippi during the coming decades.



# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

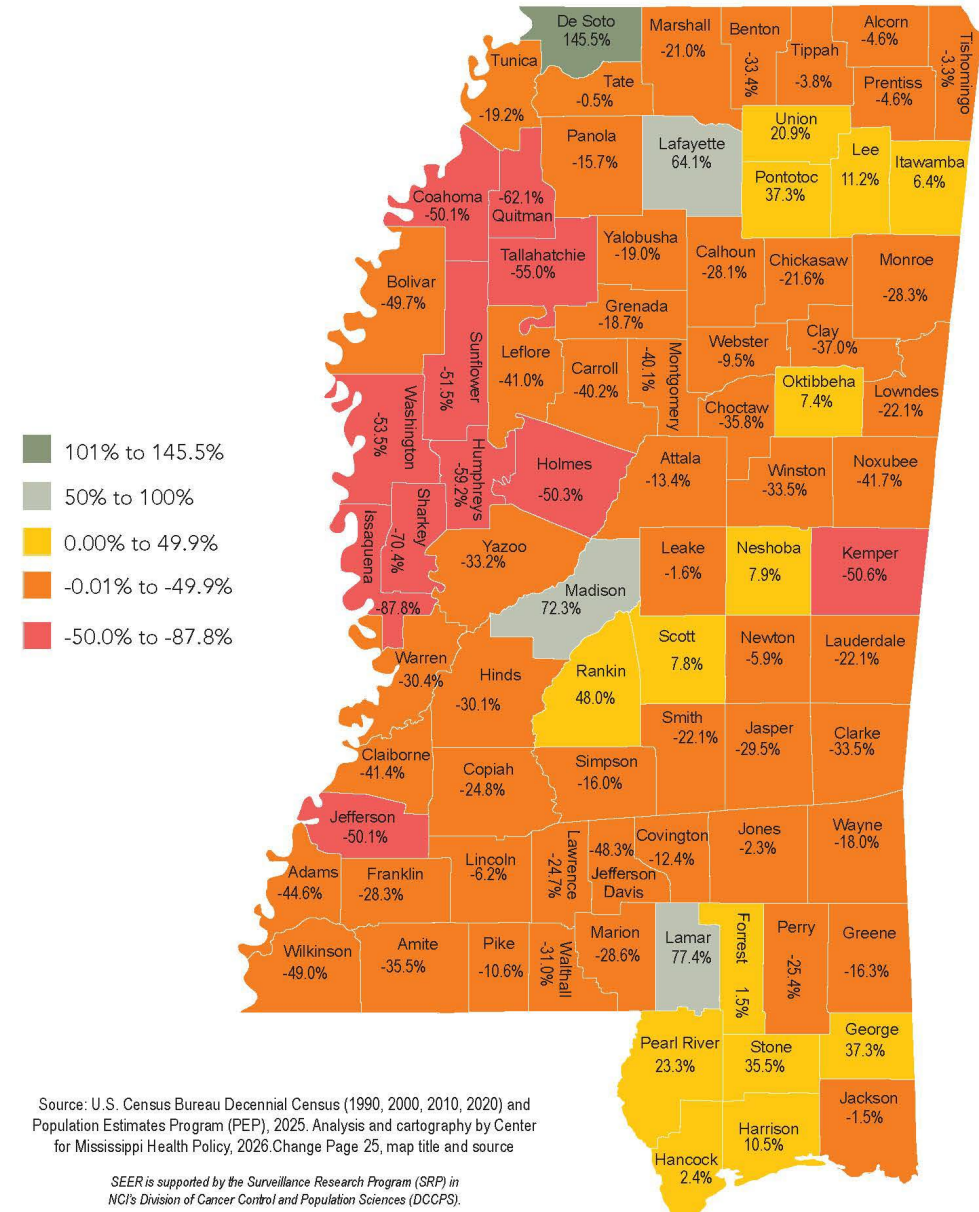


# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

Mississippi's population trends from 1990 through 2024 reveal substantial demographic shifts across counties and age groups, with important implications for healthcare systems, educational infrastructure, workforce development, economic growth, and long-term community sustainability. Analysis of county-level percentage population change for children ages 0–17, working adults ages 18–64, and older adults over age 65 demonstrates that Mississippi is experiencing increasingly divergent demographic patterns between growing metropolitan and suburban regions and many rural counties facing long-term population decline and aging.

The analysis of children ages 0–17 indicates that many Mississippi counties experienced declining child populations between 1990 and 2024. These declines were especially pronounced in numerous rural counties, Delta counties, and economically distressed regions where younger families and working-age adults have increasingly migrated toward metropolitan areas and regional employment centers. Declining child populations often reflect broader demographic and economic challenges including lower birth rates, outmigration of younger adults, limited employment opportunities, and long-term population stagnation.

Mississippi 1990-2024, Population Percentage Change by County, Children Ages 0-17 Years



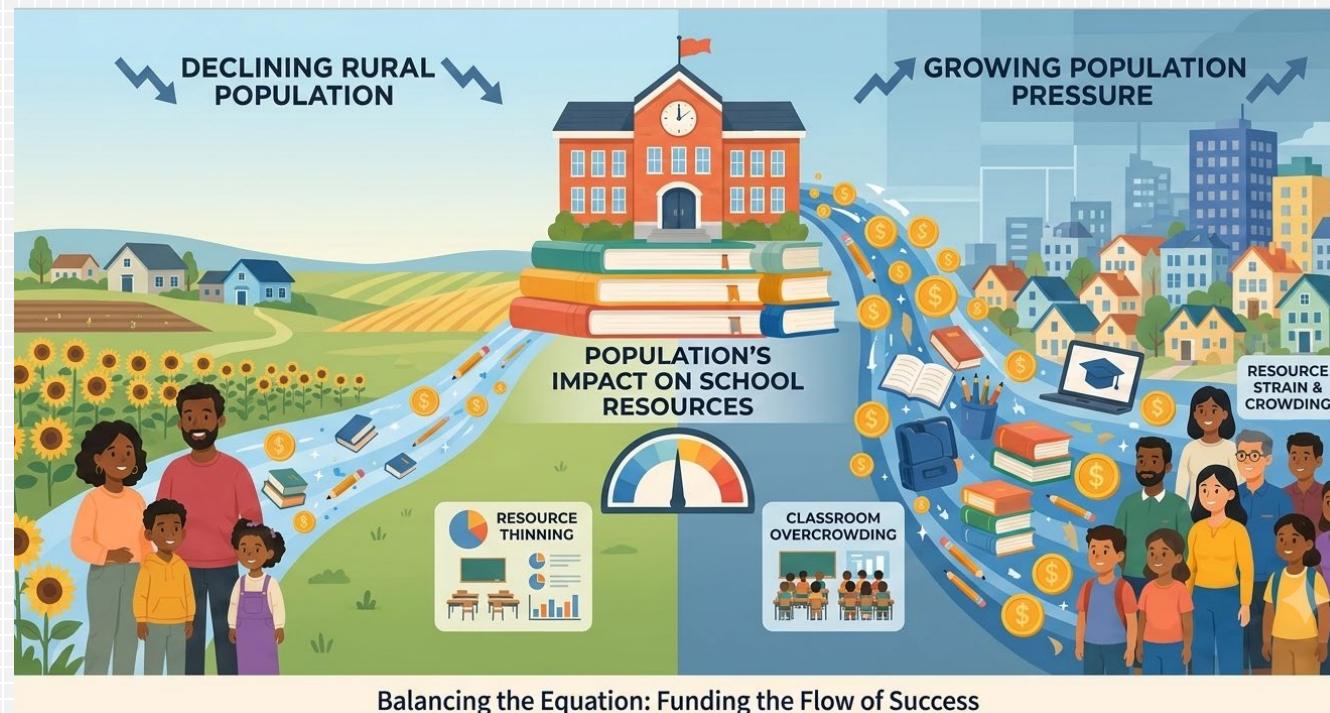
Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020) and Population Estimates Program (PEP), 2025. Analysis and cartography by Center for Mississippi Health Policy, 2026. Change Page 25, map title and source

SEER is supported by the Surveillance Research Program (SRP) in NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS).

# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

The reduction in child populations has important implications for educational planning throughout the state. Many rural school districts may face continued enrollment declines, which can reduce state funding allocations and create financial pressures related to staffing, transportation, facility maintenance, and academic programming. In some communities, declining enrollment may increase the likelihood of school consolidation, grade restructuring, or school closures. These changes can have significant social and economic consequences because schools frequently serve as major employers, community centers, and anchors of local identity in smaller counties.

At the same time, several suburban and metropolitan counties experienced substantial growth in child populations during the study period. Counties surrounding the Jackson metropolitan area, portions of the Gulf Coast, and rapidly growing suburban counties in northern Mississippi may require continued expansion of educational infrastructure, including construction of new schools, classroom additions, transportation capacity, and recruitment of teachers and support staff. These population increases may also place pressure on pediatric healthcare systems, childcare services, recreational infrastructure, and housing development.



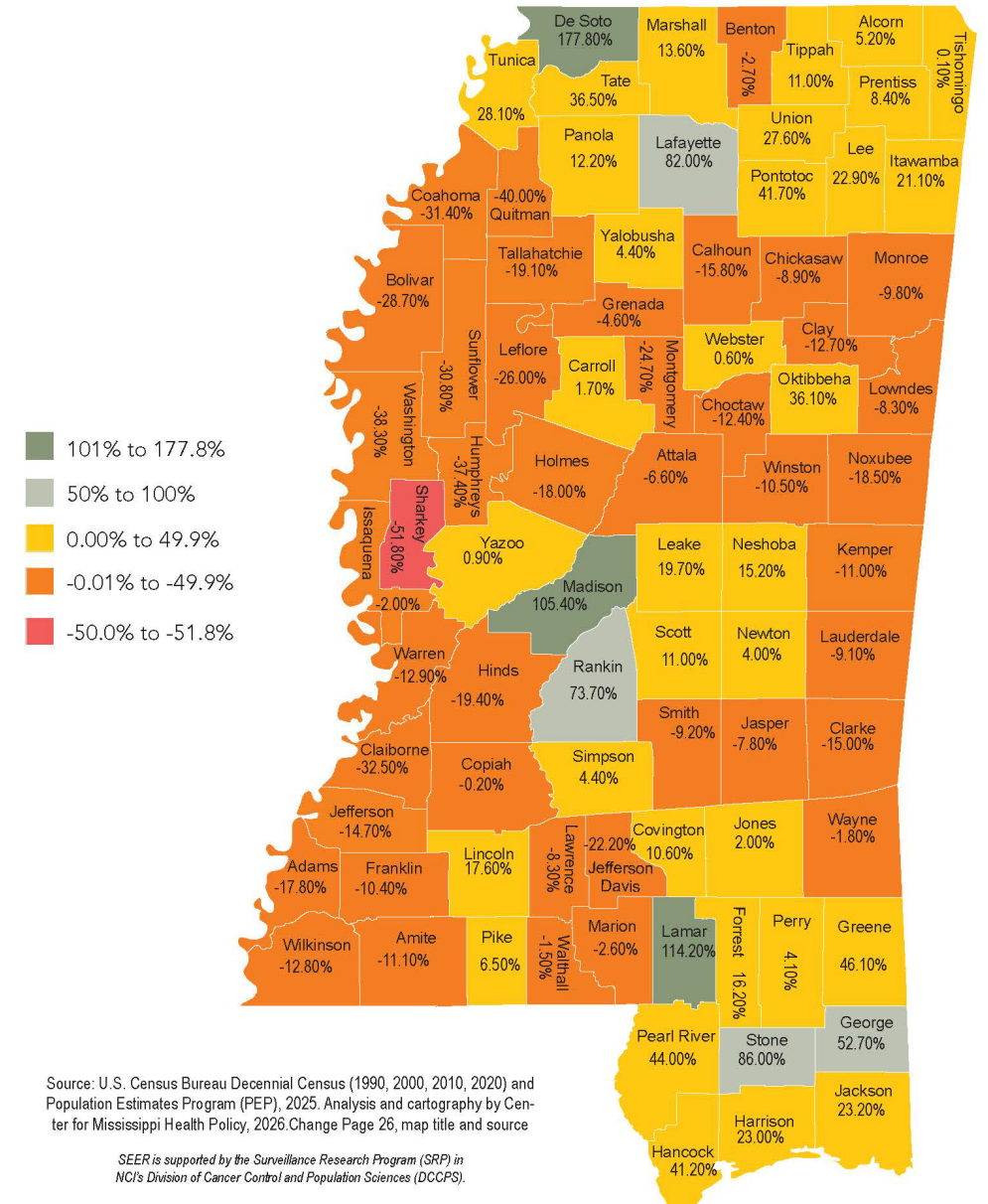
Balancing the Equation: Funding the Flow of Success

# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

The analysis of working-age adults ages 18–64 reveals similarly important regional differences. Many rural counties experienced long-term declines in working-age population, while suburban and economically expanding counties generally experienced growth. Declining working-age populations create significant challenges for local economies because this age group represents the core labor force supporting businesses, healthcare systems, schools, public services, and local tax bases.

Counties experiencing working-age population decline may face increasing difficulty recruiting healthcare professionals, teachers, skilled labor, and public safety personnel. Workforce shortages can also limit economic development opportunities and reduce the ability of rural communities to sustain essential services. In healthcare specifically, declining working-age populations may contribute to shortages of physicians, nurses, pharmacists, behavioral health providers, and allied health professionals in many rural regions.

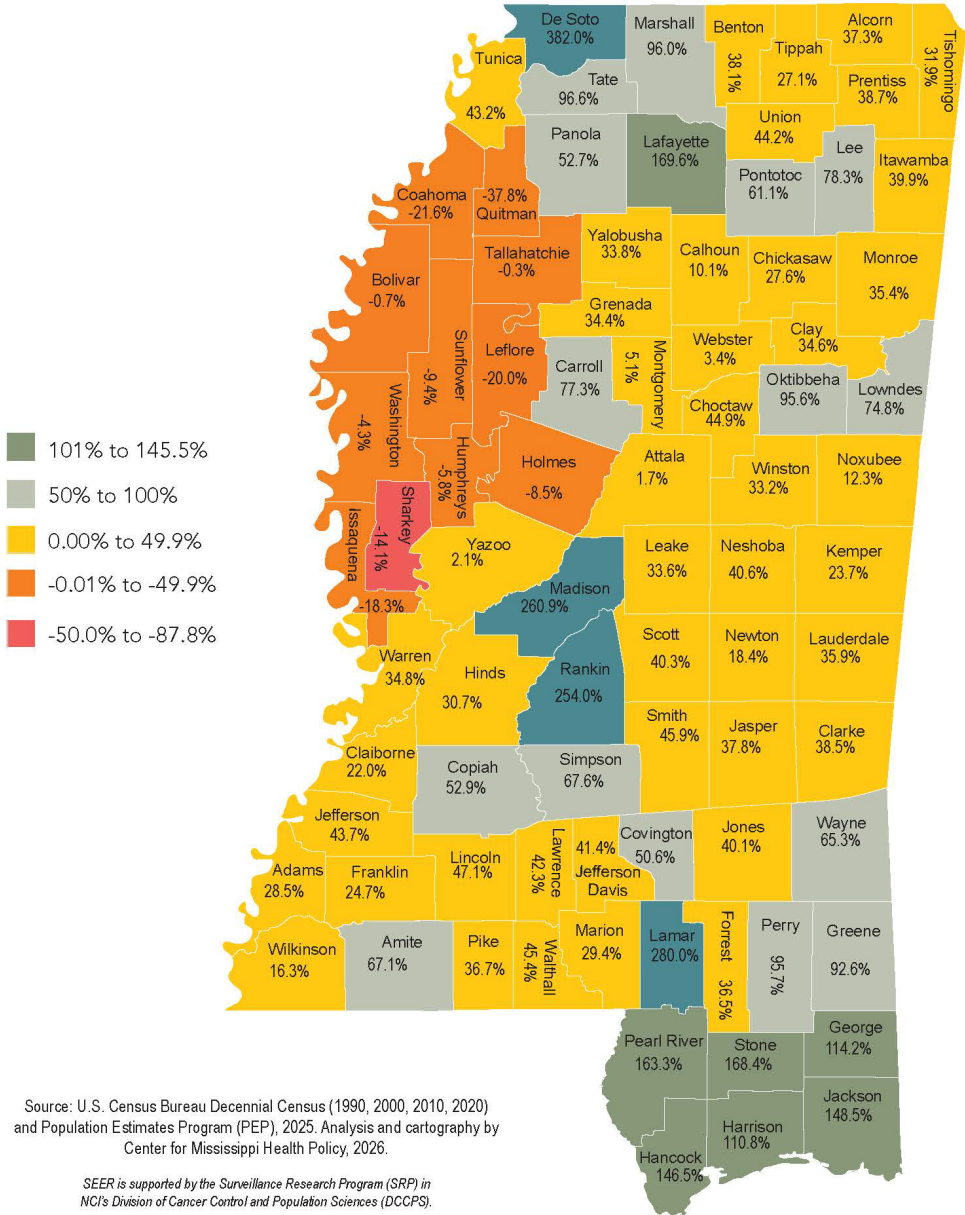
Mississippi 1990-2024, Population Percentage Change by County, Working Adults Ages 18-64 Years



# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

At the same time, working-age population growth in suburban counties may increase demands for transportation infrastructure, workforce housing, commercial development, and healthcare capacity. Growth corridors near metropolitan areas may continue attracting younger workers and families due to employment opportunities, educational access, and economic expansion.

The most consistent statewide demographic trend identified in the analysis is the growth of the older adult population over age 65. Many Mississippi counties experienced substantial increases in senior populations between 1990 and 2024, including some counties that simultaneously experienced declines in children and working-age adults. This pattern reflects broader national aging trends driven by increased life expectancy, declining birth rates, and the aging of the Baby Boom generation.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census (1990, 2000, 2010, 2020) and Population Estimates Program (PEP), 2025. Analysis and cartography by Center for Mississippi Health Policy, 2026.

SEER is supported by the Surveillance Research Program (SRP) in NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS).

# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

Growth in older adult populations has major implications for Mississippi's healthcare system. Counties with rapidly aging populations will likely require expanded geriatric care, chronic disease management, rehabilitation services, long-term care facilities, home health programs, transportation assistance, and caregiver support systems. Rural counties with aging populations may face particularly difficult challenges if healthcare infrastructure continues to decline while demand for senior healthcare services increases.

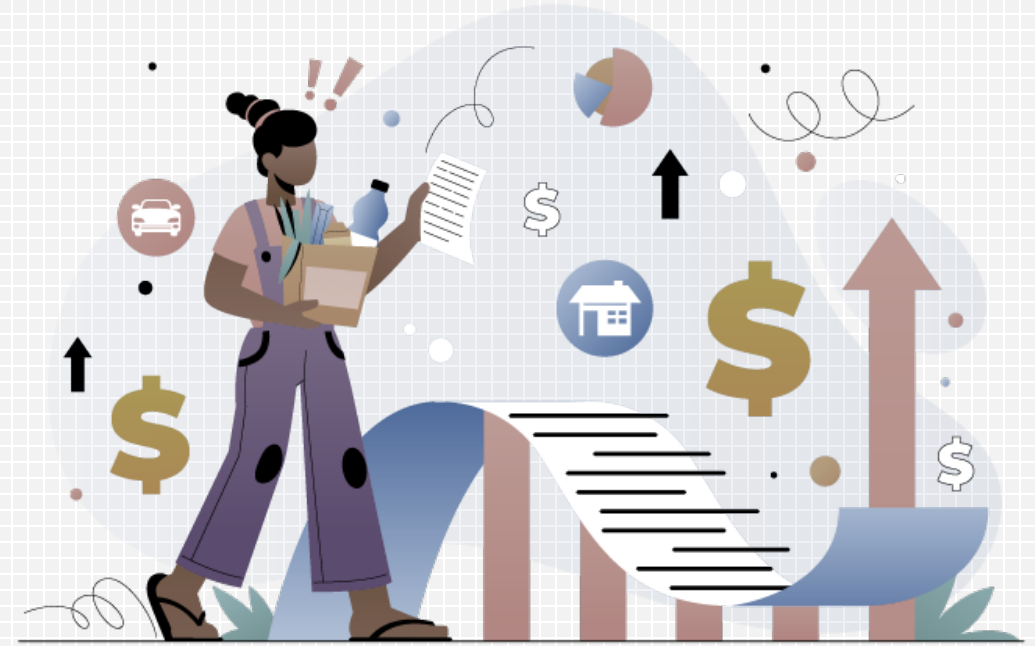
The aging trend also raises important concerns regarding the future viability of rural hospitals. Many rural hospitals depend heavily on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement and already operate under significant financial pressure. Counties with declining overall populations but growing elderly populations may experience increasing healthcare utilization alongside shrinking workforce and tax bases. This combination may further strain hospital finances and increase the risk of service reductions, hospital closures, or consolidation into regional healthcare systems.



# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

The demographic trends identified in the analysis also have important implications for economic development and long-term regional sustainability. Counties experiencing simultaneous declines in children and working-age adults may face long-term economic contraction, reduced labor force participation, declining retail activity, shrinking tax revenues, and challenges maintaining public infrastructure. Conversely, counties experiencing population growth across multiple age groups may continue to attract investment, healthcare expansion, housing development, and educational growth.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Mississippi's demographic future is increasingly characterized by regional divergence. A relatively small number of metropolitan and suburban counties appear to be capturing much of the state's population growth, while many rural counties continue experiencing long-term demographic decline and aging. These patterns suggest that future state policy discussions related to healthcare access, school funding, economic development, transportation, workforce recruitment, and infrastructure investment may increasingly require regionally targeted approaches rather than uniform statewide strategies.



# Age Group Population Changes 1990-2024 and their Implications

Importantly, the findings also highlight the interconnected relationship between population change and community sustainability. Changes in population age structure affect not only healthcare demand and school enrollment, but also labor markets, tax bases, housing needs, transportation systems, and the ability of local governments to sustain essential services. As Mississippi continues to experience demographic change over the coming decades, understanding these county-level population patterns will remain critical for long-term planning and policy development.

Source: U.S Census Bureau County Population Estimates, 2025, Analysis by Center for Mississippi Health Policy

Note: This report uses county-level SEER population estimates from 1990 through 2024 provided by the National Cancer Institute Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program. The analysis includes county-level summaries by age group and race categories for Mississippi counties. Population estimates were converted into Apache Parquet format and analyzed using R, DuckDB, and Quarto. Race categories were grouped into White, Black, and Other classifications for analytical consistency across reporting sections.



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## AGE-SPECIFIC POPULATION DATA

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Center for Mississippi Health Policy.  
<https://mshealthpolicy.com>

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).  
Rural Health Information.  
<https://www.cms.gov>

Rural Health Information Hub.  
Mississippi Rural Health Resources.  
<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/states/mississippi>

## ANALYTICAL TOOLS

R Statistical Software  
<https://www.r-project.org>

DuckDB  
<https://duckdb.org>

Quarto  
<https://quarto.org>

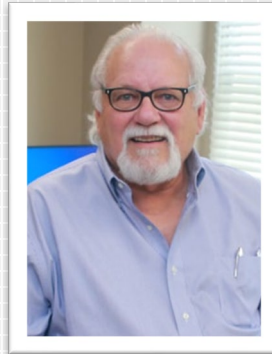
QGIS  
<https://qgis.org>



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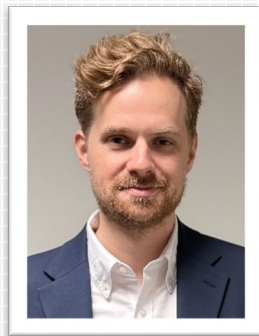
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