MetroStats

Population estimates: Our approach

Each year, the Research team at Metropolitan Council estimates the population and households of each city and township in the Twin Cities region. We do this by tracking housing units in detail: we count newly built residential units, housing demolitions and housing units created from former commercial uses. We also track the number of people living in group quarters (such as nursing homes and college dorms).

Once we arrive at a number of housing units, we then use the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey to estimate 1) the likely occupancy rate of these housing units (households), and 2) the number of people living in them (population in households, or just population.) The final population estimate includes both people living in housing units and people living in group quarters.

Generally, a city or township's population increases if:

- new housing is added;
- housing vacancy decreases; and/or
- the number of people living in a typical household increases

Our population estimates are available on our website:
http://metrocouncil.org/populationestimates

About us

The Regional Policy and Research team at Metropolitan Council wrote this issue of *MetroStats*. We serve the Twin Cities region—and your community—by providing technical assistance, by offering data and reports about demographic trends and development patterns, and by exploring regional issues that matter.
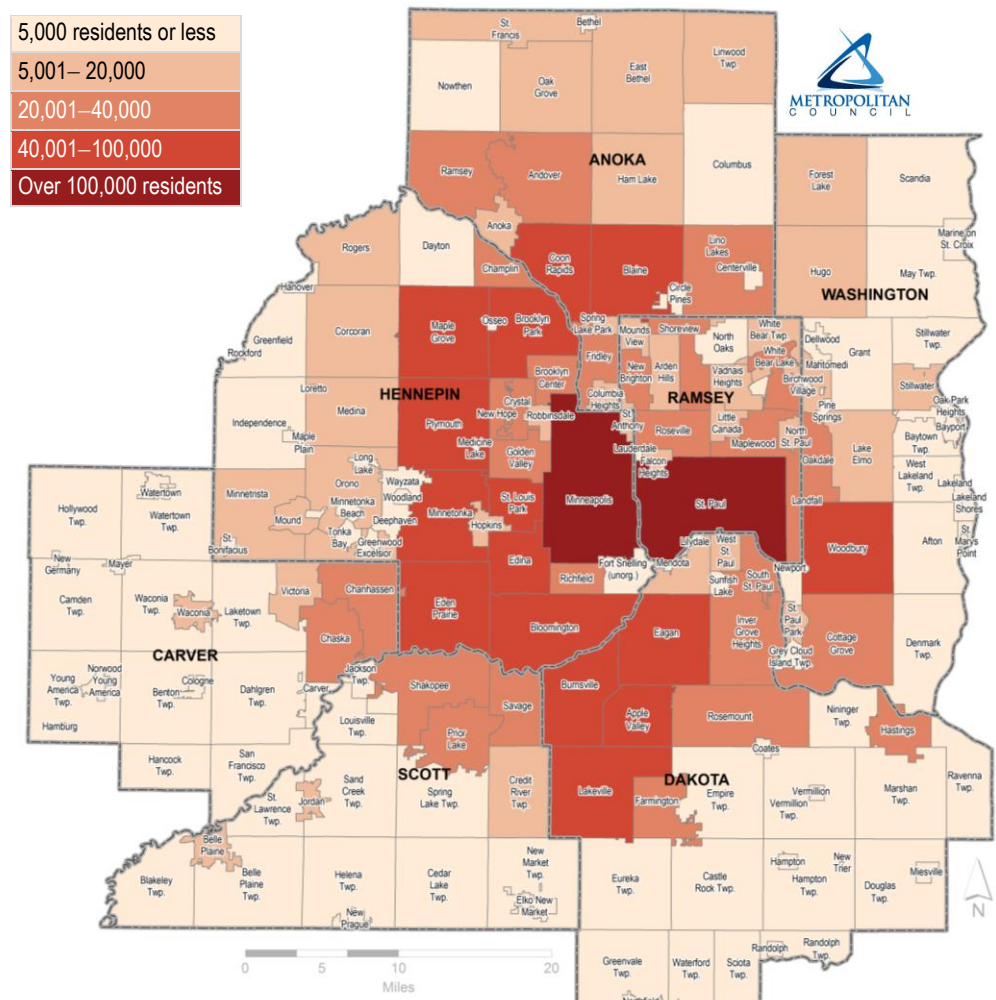
For more information about this summary, please email us:
research@metc.state.mn.us

Key Findings

- The Twin Cities region's population approached 2.98 million in 2014. The region added almost 130,000 people since 2010, a 4.6% increase.

- One-third of the region's overall population growth occurred in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Saint Paul's population reached nearly 300,000 in 2014.

- Suburban Edge communities such as Blaine and Woodbury grew considerably since 2010, with population growth rates over 6%.

- In the past four years, the Twin Cities region grew more quickly than New York and Chicago but less quickly than peer regions like Denver, Portland and Seattle.

Figure 1. Total population based on 2014 estimates for cities and townships

Source: Metropolitan Council's 2014 Population Estimates.

Population growth outpaced housing development

We estimate the Twin Cities region's total population was about 2,979,000 on April 1, 2014. This is an increase of almost 130,000 people since 2010 (Figure 2). About two-thirds of this population increase was "natural growth," that is, the number of people born was greater than the number of people who died. Another third of our region's population growth between 2010 and 2014 was from net migration (people moving to the region than leaving), mostly people from outside the United States.

Figure 2. Population, household and housing unit change in Twin Cities region, 2010-2014

	Census April 1, 2010	Estimated April 1, 2014	Change 2010–2014	Percent Change 2010–2014
Population	2,849,567	2,979,343	129,776	4.6%
Households	1,117,749	1,165,657	47,908	4.3%
Housing units	1,186,986	1,221,886	34,900	2.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2010 and Metropolitan Council's 2014 Population Estimates.

In 2014, the Twin Cities region had 1,165,600 households, up almost 48,000 since 2010. During the same four years, however, new residential development added housing units for just 35,000 new households. The remaining 13,000 new households occupied existing housing, drawing down vacancy rates of the existing housing supply.
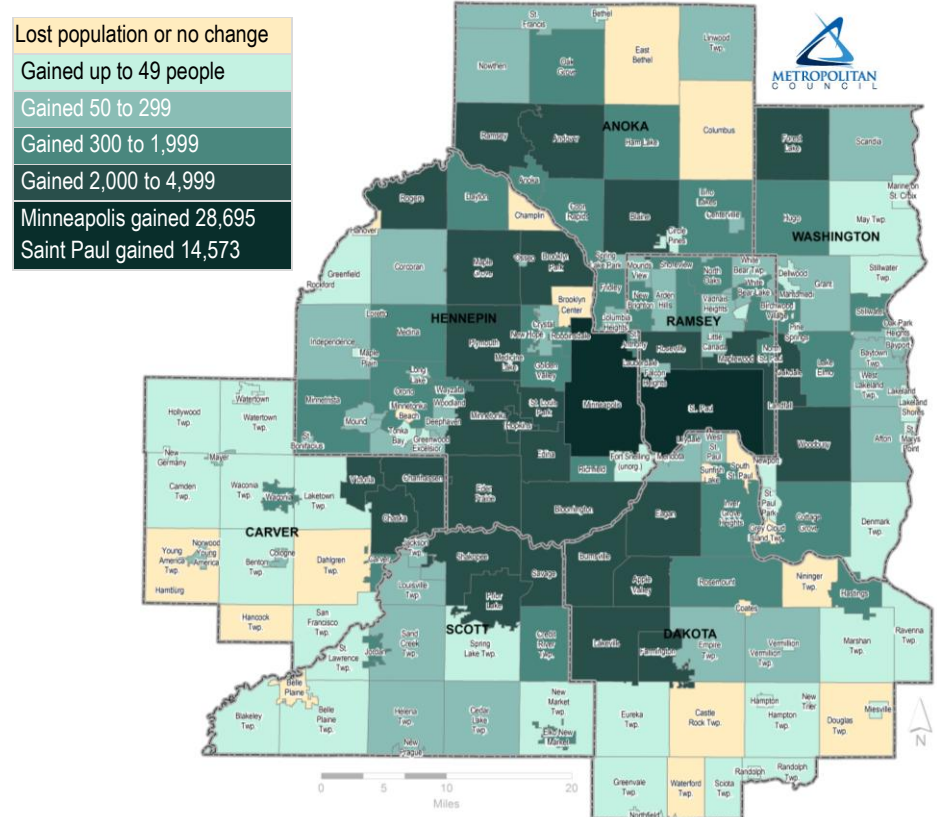
This increased demand for new and existing housing is good news for those selling homes and for the real estate industry. On the other hand, low vacancy and few available homes mean higher housing costs for homebuyers and renters. The region's estimated vacancy rate for all housing types in 2014 was 4.6%, down from 5.8% in 2010. Among cities and townships with at least 10,000 housing units, vacancy rates are lowest—and housing markets are tightest—in Andover (2.3%), Shoreview (2.5%) and Inver Grove Heights (2.7%).

Over a third of overall population growth occurred in and around the region's two central cities

Minneapolis and Saint Paul have led the region in population growth since 2010 (Figure 4). In four years, Minneapolis's population increased by almost 29,000, bringing their total population to 411,000— the highest it has been since the 1970s. Saint Paul added just over 14,500 people between 2010 and 2014, bringing its population to 299,500—also the highest since the 1970s. The growing population in the two central cities reflects both an increased preference for walkable, amenity-rich neighborhoods and the new residential construction along the METRO Green Line (the recently opened light rail route connecting Minneapolis and Saint Paul).

In percentage terms, other cities had a larger increase. For example, Blaine's population increased by 8.5% between 2010 and 2014, while Woodbury's population increased by 6.7%.

Figure 3. Population change between 2010 and 2014 for cities and townships

Source: Metropolitan Council's 2014 Population Estimates.

Figure 4. Cities with the largest population growth between 2010 and 2040

	Population April 1, 2010	Population April 1, 2014	Change 2010–2014	Percent Change 2010–2014
Minneapolis	382,578	411,273	28,695	7.5%
Saint Paul	285,068	299,641	14,573	5.1%
Blaine	57,186	62,066	4,880	8.5%
Woodbury	61,961	66,119	4,158	6.7%
Bloomington	82,893	86,652	3,759	4.5%
Lakeville	55,954	59,361	3,407	6.1%
Plymouth	70,576	73,633	3,057	4.3%
Maple Grove	61,567	64,448	2,881	4.7%
St. Louis Park	45,250	47,933	2,683	5.9%
Eagan	64,206	66,810	2,604	4.1%
Subtotal, 10 cities	1,167,239	1,237,936	70,697	6.1%
Region total	**2,849,567**	**2,979,343**	**129,776**	**4.6%**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2010 and Metropolitan Council's 2014 Population Estimates.

Together, Minneapolis and Saint Paul accounted for 33% of the region's population growth since 2010 (Figure 5). Other Urban Center communities (generally older suburbs that are mostly developed) accounted for 5% of the region's population growth since 2010. Leading growth in the other Urban Center cities is St. Louis Park with an increase of 2,683. Among Urban communities, which saw 9% of the region's growth, Bloomington (+3,759) and Edina (+2,320) added the most new residents.
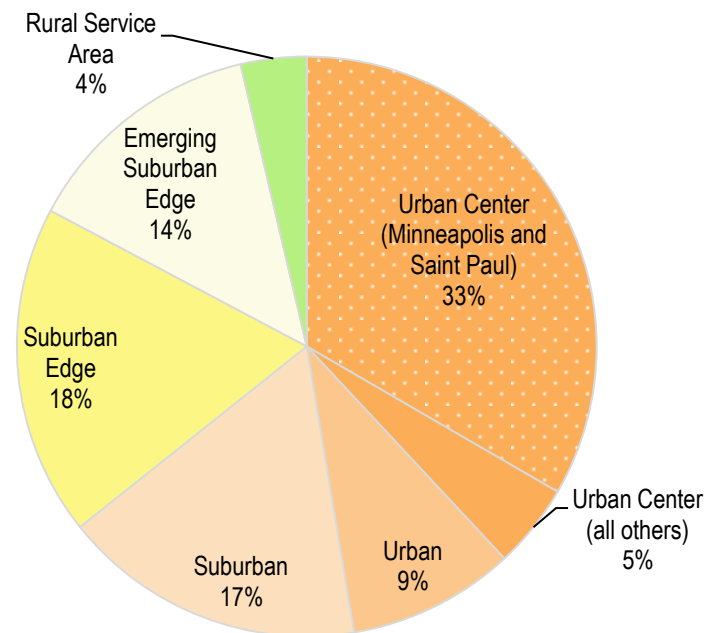
Suburban cities—generally suburbs that saw their peak development years in the 1980s and early 1990s—constituted 17% of the region's growth. Growth leaders in this category are Eagan (+2,604), Brooklyn Park (+2,581) and Savage (+2,136).

Suburban Edge communities—those with more developable land—accounted for 18% of the region's population increase. Cities in this category include Blaine (+4,880), Woodbury (+4,158) and Lakeville (+3,407). Among Emerging Suburban Edge communities, which captured 14% of the region's growth, growth leaders were Prior Lake (+2,115), Chanhassen (+1,551) and Farmington (+1,300).

As a group, communities in the Rural Service Area, including Rural Centers, accounted for 4% of the region's growth since 2010. Jordan (+678), Ham Lake (+370), Credit River Township (+363) and Elko New Market (+362) added the most new residents.

Figure 5. Share of the region's population growth between 2010 and 2014 by *Thrive MSP 2040* **Community Designations**
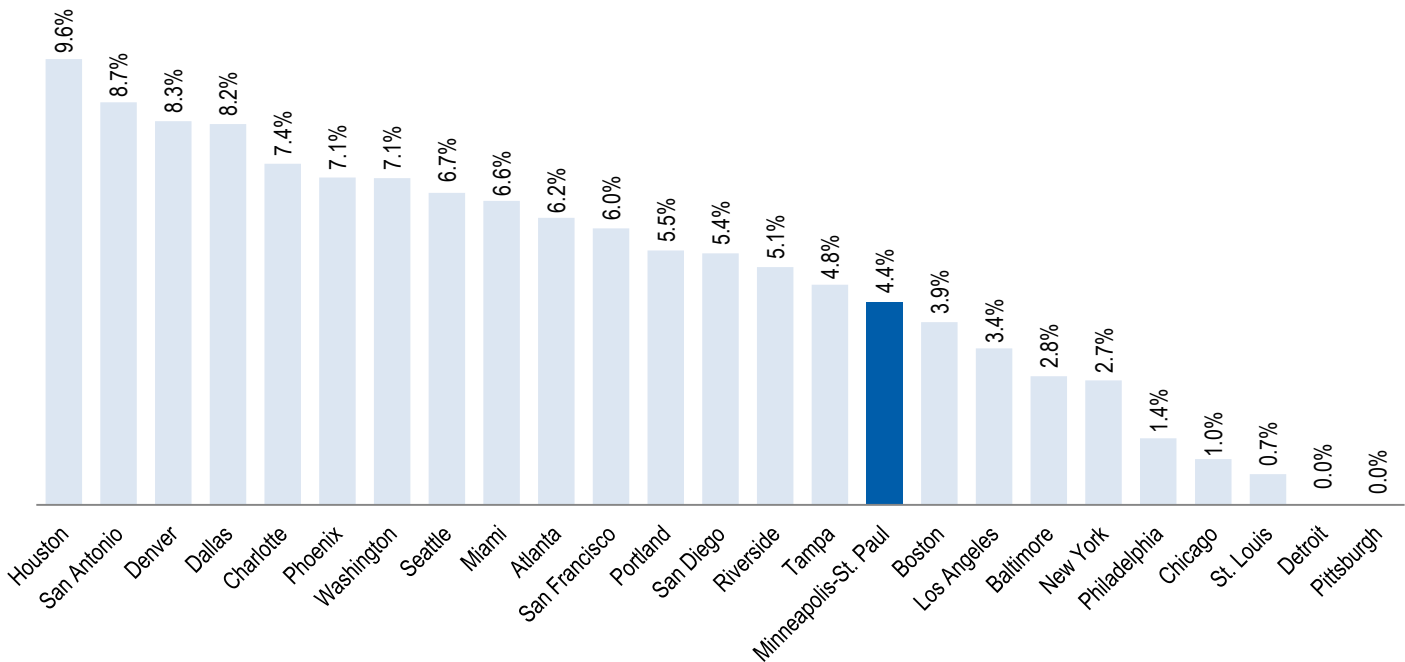

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census, 2010 and Metropolitan Council's 2014 Population Estimates. The region's Rural Service Area consists of Rural Centers, Diversified Rural, Rural Residential and Agricultural communities. Click here for a detailed description of Thrive MSP Community Designations.

Population growth in the Twin Cities is on par with other major metro areas

While the Metropolitan Council calculates estimates for the seven-county Twin Cities region alone, the U.S. Census Bureau provides estimates for all counties and metropolitan statistical areas in the country. According to Census Bureau estimates:

- The United States as a whole added 10.1 million people between 2010 and 2014 (3.3% growth).
- The majority of this population increase was located in the nation's largest 25 metropolitan areas, which added 5.7 million people (4.5% growth) between 2010 and 2014.
- The Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington metropolitan statistical area added 146,000 people between 2010 and 2014, an increase of 4.4%.[1] This growth rate is higher than the national rate but about average for the nation's 25 largest metropolitan areas (Figure 6).
- Our metropolitan area grew more quickly than some older, more established metropolitan areas like Boston, New York, and Chicago, but slower than peer regions like Denver, Seattle and Portland.

Figure 6. Population growth between 2010 and 2014 in large metropolitan areas

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, 2014.

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[1] As defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget, the 16-county Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington metropolitan statistical area adds nine counties to the seven counties of the Twin Cities region: Chisago, Isanti, Le Sueur, Mille Lacs, Sherburne, Sibley, and Wright Counties in Minnesota and Pierce and St. Croix Counties in Wisconsin. According to 2014 Census Bureau estimates, the seven counties of the Twin Cities region make up 85.4% of the population of the 16-county metropolitan area.