

# New Hampshire Economic Conditions

May 2012

## Population change, 2010 to 2011

*Half of New Hampshire's counties lost population for the third year in a row*

Since 2000, there has been a slow down in population growth throughout New Hampshire. On July 1, 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that there were 1,318,194 residents in New Hampshire. The population change from 2010 to 2011 was 1,387, the third year in a row that net population gain for New Hampshire was minimal – a sign that the state's population growth has stalled. The low growth rate can be attributed largely to domestic out-migration (people who move out of New Hampshire and go to another state). Many economists imply that this lull in migration was in response to lackluster job opportunities and current residents' inability to sell their homes during the latest recession. However, even in the two years prior

to the recession, the state had gained very little population. In 2007 and 2008, the annual net population gain in New Hampshire was approximately 3,800. Since the mid 1950's, only once did the state's population expand with fewer than 4,000 persons over-the-year (from 1990 to 1991), and the average annual population gain for the 50-year period prior to 2007 was close to 15,000. Most of this growth was driven by a net in-migration from other states in the Northeast (especially Massachusetts and New York).

Resident population estimates for states and counties are produced by the Population Division of the U.S. Census Bureau. These estimates are generated annually and reflect

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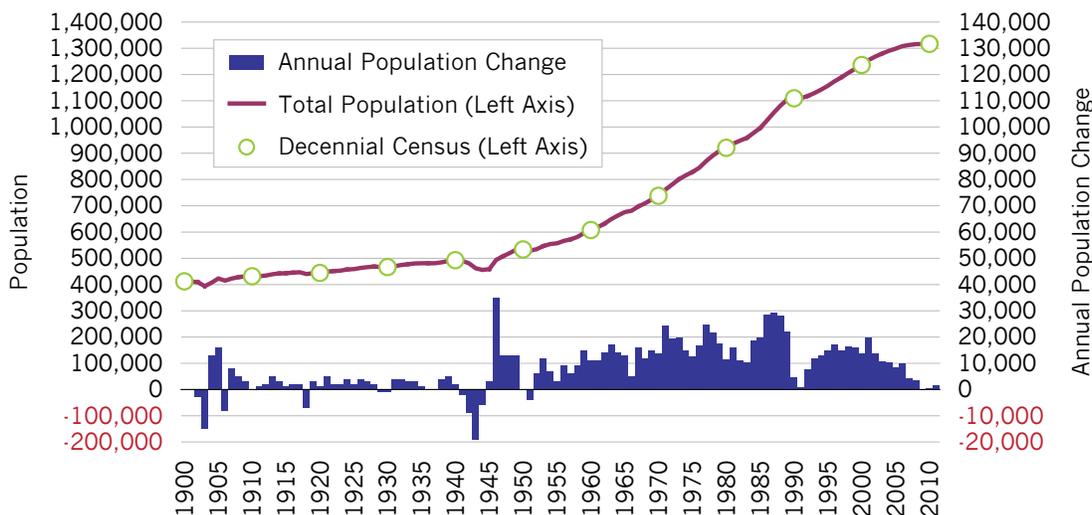
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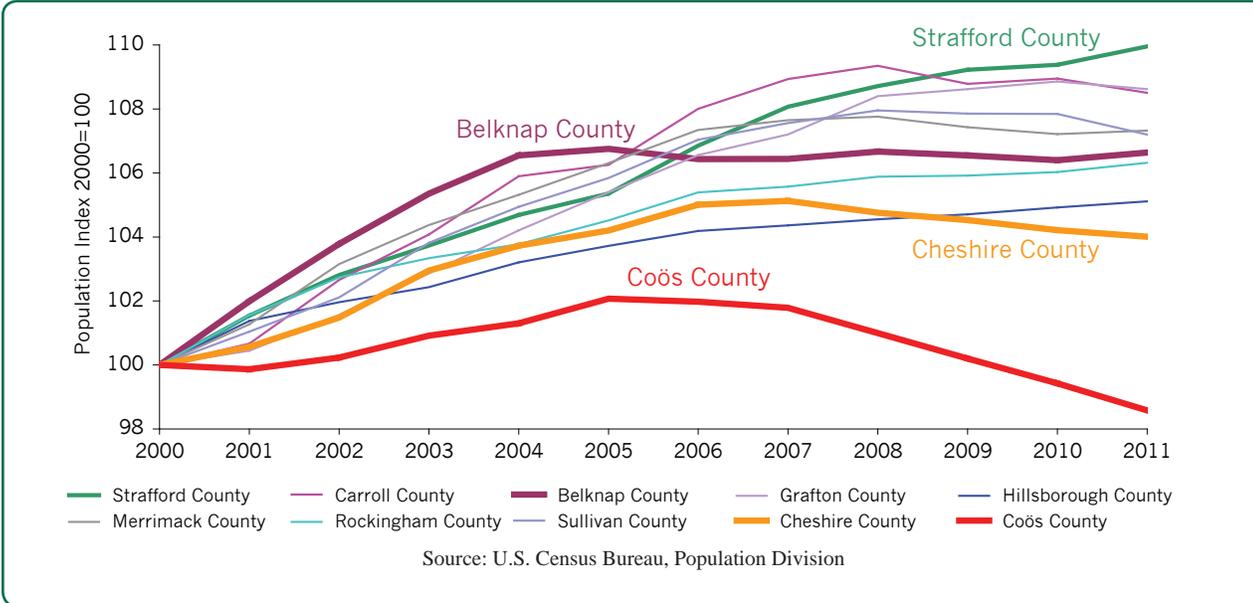
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The state's population growth has slowed significantly over the last five years



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

**Strafford County has been relatively immune/exempt from the general slow down in population expansion**



July 1 of each year. Every ten years, the Decennial Census is compiled, a more complete measure of population as of April 1 of each new decade. The annual intercensal population estimates use the most recent Decennial Census as a base.

**County population change, 2000 - 2011**

The slow down in population growth prior to the Great Recession is evident in the county population estimates. Since 2005, several of New Hampshire’s counties experienced weak population growth or even declines. The population in Coös County has been sliding downward continuously since 2005, and Cheshire County’s population has been declining since 2007. The population in Belknap County has been flat since 2005. Geographic mobility nearly halted during the

Great Recession. The state’s estimated population rose by just 196 persons from 2008 to 2009. Over this period, six of New Hampshire’s counties experienced population declines. From 2010 to 2011, this trend has continued with half of the counties showing a decline over-the-year. In contrast, Strafford County seems to be exempt from this slow down in population expansion, growing the fastest among New Hampshire counties over the period 2000-2011.

**Components of change, 2010-2011**

Estimates of the components of change in resident population are provided with the annual intercensal population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. These detailed estimates are available for both states and counties and display the underlying dynamic of population change. Population change

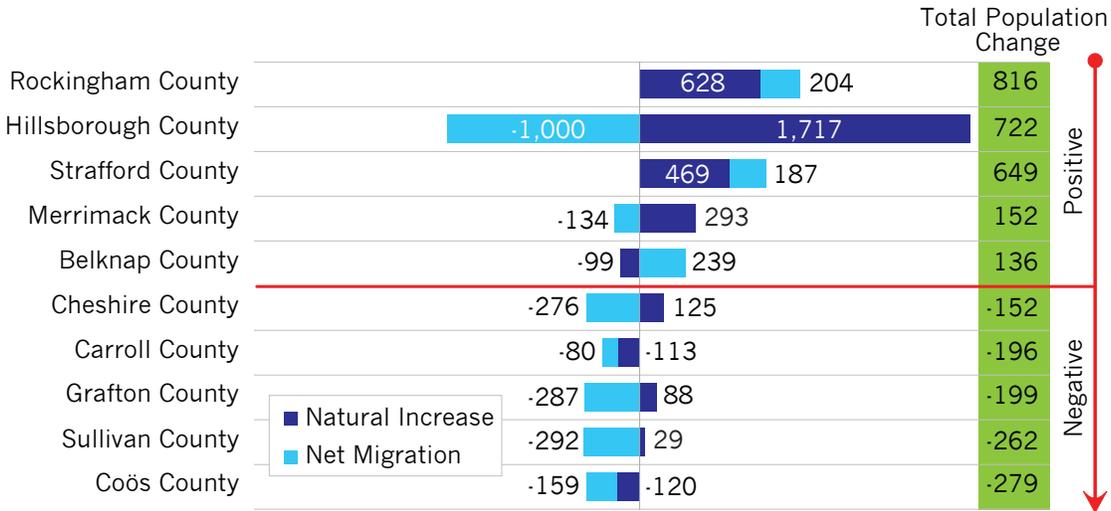
is the sum of two major components: Natural increase and Net migration. Natural increase is the net difference between births and deaths, and net migration is the sum of international<sup>1</sup> and domestic migration.

Looking at the annual components of change in population for each of the counties in New Hampshire, no distinct pattern is evident. Only three counties are experiencing growth driven by net in-migration: Rockingham, Strafford and Belknap counties. Hillsborough County experienced the largest net out-migration (-1,000); however, it still added the most in terms of international migration, with a net gain of 675 persons (returning U.S. natives from overseas and foreign born migrants). Hillsborough was also the county experiencing the most natural increase with a net gain of 1,717; nearly triple the net gain from

1. Net international migration includes the international migration of both native and foreign-born populations. Specifically, it includes: (a) the net international migration of the foreign born, (b) the net migration between the United States and Puerto Rico, (c) the net migration of natives to and from the United States, and (d) the net movement of the Armed Forces population between the United States and overseas.

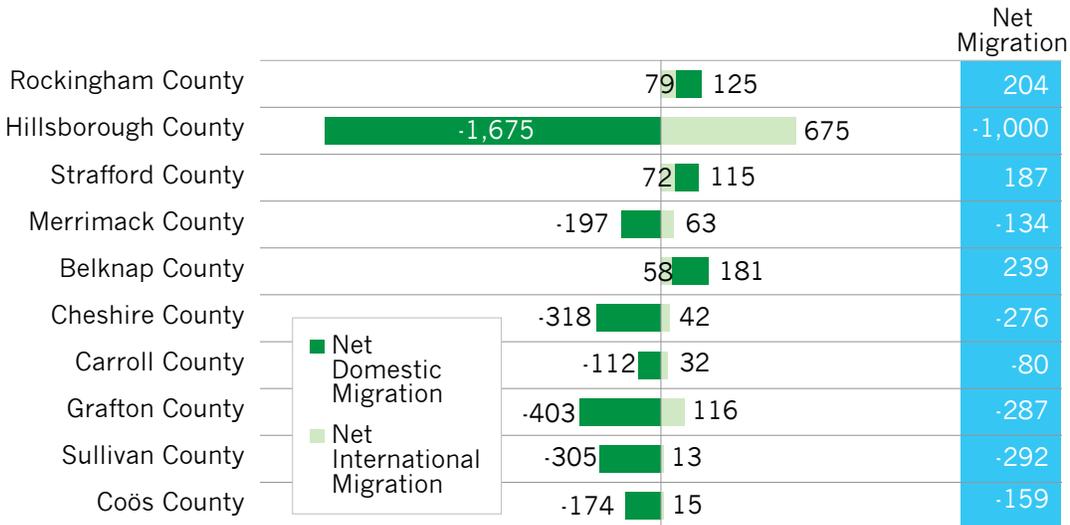
**Hillsborough County lost the most population due to out-migration from 2010 to 2011, but also gained the most population from Natural Increase**

Total Population Change is the sum of Natural Increase and *Net Migration*



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

**Despite losing the most population to Net (out-) Migration, Hillsborough County gained the most population from International Migration.**



*Net Migration* is the sum of International Migration and Domestic Migration

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division

natural increase of any other county. These components affect each other, as age is the main factor determining natural increase, and international migrants tend to be younger than the current resident population. All counties showed a positive gain in net international migration, but were negligible in Coös, Sullivan, Carroll and Cheshire counties, each with net gains of less than 50.

What is clear is the state's five most southeastern counties are currently experiencing growth. When looking at the most recent over-the-year population change by county, the pattern of rural counties in New Hampshire losing population versus the urban counties gaining

population is no different from regional and national trends.<sup>2</sup>

### **Population growth and the impact on the economy – Availability of labor**

Population and employment growth are strongly interrelated, as each feeds off the other. Availability of jobs attracts workers from outside a region, giving a boost to the number of residents. The increase in population generates new jobs, as local demand for goods and services is created, such as housing, health care, educational services, and retail trade. In New Hampshire, job opportunities have been limited over the last couple of years. There has been an ample supply of workers available in-state, and employers

usually have not had to look far for applicants. Fewer new workers — and their families — have been attracted to the state, reducing population growth. Limited population growth dampens demand for local goods and services, creating even fewer employment opportunities in the area.

One of the best methods of attracting population is with the creation or relocation of companies with good-paying jobs and career opportunities. But New Hampshire is not the only state looking to attract those companies, so economic developers will have their hands full in achieving that goal.

*Annette Nielsen*

2. For more detail, see the map of Change in Population for all counties in the US between April 1, 2010 and April 1, 2011 at [www.census.gov/popest/data/maps/2011/Num\\_chng10\\_11.pdf](http://www.census.gov/popest/data/maps/2011/Num_chng10_11.pdf).