

Issue Paper  
Number 37

September  
2014

# The Receding Metropolitan Perimeter

## A NEW POSTSUBURBAN DEMOGRAPHIC NORMAL?

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Published by

**RUTGERS**  
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**A** suburban-driven metropolitan demography defined most of the second half of the twentieth century. In the broad four-state metropolitan region centered on Manhattan, population decentralized—sometimes explosively—toward an ever-expanding periphery. The new postwar suburbs of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s were an escape from inner-city turmoil, crime, poverty, failing schools, deteriorating public transit, ever-higher taxes, and recurring fiscal crises. This was the unparalleled era of tract house suburban America. The emerging suburban ring achieved demographic critical mass during these decades (1950–1980), particularly for highly educated young adults, which eventually led to a suburban-centric postindustrial economy in the 1980s and '90s.

But the twenty-first century has heralded a new spatial pattern. In the post-2010 years (2010–2013), a “new demographic normal” started to unfold: Population growth in the suburban ring slowed dramatically and, for the first time in the post–World War II era, population growth in the historic center of the region surpassed that of the suburbs. The regional core became much more attractive to suburban-saturated young adults as rental housing achieved housing market dominance. Although the permanency of the change is still uncertain, the recent trend portends an increasingly postsuburban economic geography as the second decade of the twenty-first century advances. Powerful demographic, technological, and lifestyle dynamics all suggest that the emerging trend documented here will continue.

In an equally striking development, the metropolitan edge—the once rapidly growing outer perimeter counties of the region—actually suffered population declines in the years following 2010. The demographic periphery now appears to be receding rather than expanding. The locus of population losses in the early postwar decades (1950–1980) occurred in the urban heart of the region. The post-2010 losses are taking place in the region's outer suburban reaches. Thus, the current regional demographic trajectory consists of ebbing suburban population growth, population contraction on the outer metropolitan edge, and robust urban resurgence. Metropolitan overexpansion may have run its course; it may now be undergoing a correction.

## Summary of Findings

**A** comparison between the population growth that took place between 1950 and 1980—a period of intense residential suburbanization and urban flight—with that of 2010–2013, when a fundamentally new dynamic emerged—illustrates the transformation taking place in the four-state metropolitan region (tables 1 and 2 and figures 1 and 2).<sup>1,2</sup>

- Between 1950 and 1980, the suburban ring of 27 counties in four states experienced explosive growth, nearly doubling its total population; it gained more than 5.3 million people (+177,458 persons per year). At the same time, the regional core of eight urban counties in New York and New Jersey was contracting sharply, losing close to a million (-859,660) people (-28,655 persons per year).
- In the second period (2010–2013), the suburban ring continued to grow, but at a much reduced scale (+37,742 persons per year), barely 20 percent of the annual pace of the earlier period. In contrast, the regional core gained 85,284 persons per year, an annual increase more than double that of the suburban ring.<sup>3</sup> And the core accounted for

1. The 2010–2013 period was a time when the region was emerging from the Great Recession, which officially started in December 2007 and ended in June 2009. Although some of the recession's aftershocks were still present, especially in labor markets, this time frame (latest data available) captures the basic postrecession trend lines.

2. The decades between the two periods analyzed—the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s—represented an uneven transition impacted by fluctuating overall regional growth, age structure variation impacts, and surging and receding immigration levels (see appendix, tables A-2 and A-3). Moreover, the severity of the Great Recession greatly impacted the 2000–2010 trend line. But this report focuses on the suburban population growth and urban contraction of the 1950–1980 period since it represented, at the time, the “crest-of-the-wave” of America's great postwar suburbanization and underpinned the subsequent development of an advanced white-collar suburban economy in the 1980s and '90s. In contrast, the post-2010 patterns, while obviously much shorter in length, suggest the beginning of an equivalent “crest-of-the-wave” era of demographic centralization and perimeter contraction. Time will tell if it endures as the postwar suburbanization dynamic did for thirty years.

3. The population of the core started to grow again post-1980, bolstered by positive international migration. That was particularly the case in the 1990–2000 period (see appendix table A-3). However, its growth was always eclipsed by that of the suburban ring.

the great majority (69.3 percent) of the region's total population growth—the suburban ring just 30.7 percent. This is unparalleled in postwar annals.

- The regional core is now the locomotive of the region's demographic train. Brooklyn was the unquestioned growth leader in the post-2010 period; its total population increase of 82,426 people between 2010 and 2013 is a startling turnaround from its 1950–1980 performance, when it shed more than one-half million people.
- In the suburban ring, the highest growth totals were achieved by three inlying counties adjacent or close to the regional core: Bergen (New Jersey), Westchester (New York), and Fairfield (Connecticut). However, there were 12 suburban counties—out of a total of 27 suburban counties—that lost population between 2010 and 2013. Thus, over 44 percent of the counties in the suburban ring experienced demographic contraction.
- All of the population-losing counties, with the exception of Monmouth County in New Jersey, were located on the metropolitan outer rim (highlighted in table 1 and figure 2): Litchfield and New Haven in Connecticut; Dutchess, Putnam, Sullivan, and Ulster in New York; Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren in New Jersey; and Monroe and Pike in Pennsylvania. These counties, the demographic leaders of the second half of the twentieth century, have experienced a dramatic reversal of population dynamics.
- The extraordinary suburban population gains through 1980 provided the labor resources that underpinned the massive wave of postindustrial suburban office growth in the 1980s and 1990s. The new regional core population gains parallel new patterns of centralized job growth and may dictate a much more centralized economic geography in the future.
- Part of the new urban dynamic is being driven by young adults. The baby boom generation swelled the ranks of young adults (20 to 29 years of age) in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1980, the suburban ring accounted for virtually all of the growth (96.0 percent) in this age sector.

- The pattern was strikingly different in the 2000–2010 period when echo boomers/millennials filled the 20- to 29-year-old sector. During this time the regional core almost gained parity with the suburban ring. The suburban ring's share of total young-adult growth during the decade fell to 56.0 percent while that of the regional core increased to 44.0 percent.

Many factors underlie the major transformation that is taking place. These are fully elaborated in our new book, *New Jersey's Postsuburban Economy*.<sup>4</sup> The post-2010 period has been characterized by significant changes in many of the dynamics that formerly propelled massive regional suburbanization. Major gains in public safety and fiscal stability in New York City removed a crucial impetus to suburbanize. Changes in the structural composition of the national and regional economies accelerated during and after the Great Recession of 2007–2009, significantly changing workplace geography. New demographics began to reshape the workforce, workplace preferences, and housing markets. The baby boom, the most suburban-centric generation in history, now confronts retirement and represents the workforce of the past—and the suburban values spawned in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. In their stead, the baby boomers' children—echo boomers/millennials—are rapidly becoming today's critical workforce dynamic. Now in their twenties and early thirties, they are a tech-savvy collaborative generation wanting to live in higher-density, nonsuburban activity environments and do not, in general, find suburban employment and one-dimensional insular office campuses particularly attractive. The most talented and highly skilled of these are now known as the *digerati*—and because of their labor market skills, they have even stronger work, location, and lifestyle preferences and impacts. Their perspective on the world is quite different from that of their baby boom parents.

4. James W. Hughes and Joseph J. Seneca, *New Jersey's Postsuburban Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014). And, in keeping with the technology trends we describe, the book is published in e-book as well as print editions! (<http://bit.ly/nj-postsuburban>)

Profound advances in information technology, particularly mobile information technology, and the forces of globalization have fundamentally altered the nature of knowledge-based work and its underlying business models. Already, this technology is providing ubiquitous connectivity, unshackling and untethering workers from fixed-in-place information technology systems. But such innovations have both centralizing and decentralizing effects and are fostering innovative, collaborative, and clustered live-work-play urban environments despite this new freedom.

Corporate America too has been transformed, with a new corporate urbanism supplanting the once obsessive desire for insulated and isolated suburban office campuses. New locational preferences centered on a different set of social and physical attributes have gained momentum. At the same time, the once glittering, spanking-new, leading-edge suburban office agglomerations of the 1980s are aging and, in many cases, have become obsolete.<sup>5</sup>

All of these changes suggest that the leading role of demographically driven suburban-centric regional economic growth now represents the twentieth century past. While the data are only now reflecting the impact of these changes, a consistent picture is emerging. Whether these trends will endure in the long run remains to be seen.

### The Context of the Report

In 1954, a landmark article, “The Tidal Wave of Metropolitan Expansion,” was published in the *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* by Hans Blumenfeld,<sup>6</sup> based on empirical data for the

Philadelphia region. It accurately forecast the pattern of large and rapid metropolitan growth for the balance of the twentieth century—an ever-expanding metropolitan periphery, with an unrelenting suburban development wave pushing further outward from the historic city center. This certainly depicted the secular post-World War II pattern of population growth in the 35-county, four-state region surrounding New York City. Demographic tidal waves swept westward (and southward) through New Jersey and crossed the Delaware River into Pennsylvania; flowed eastward across Long Island; and also moved northward, deeper into New York State and into Connecticut. But now, after more than a half-century, these waves appear to be receding.

This study examines population growth trends for the 1950–2013 period for the 35-county region centered on Manhattan. The region is based on the classic 31-county Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York region established by the Tri-State Regional Planning Commission, which we have used in previous reports.<sup>7</sup> We have expanded its boundaries by including four Pennsylvania counties along the Delaware River across from New Jersey. They represented the new westward growth frontier of the late twentieth century.<sup>8</sup>

The constituent counties are presented in the following tables and figures. The region is partitioned into the regional core and suburban ring. The core is further divided into New York and New Jersey sectors. The suburban ring is divided into Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania sectors.

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5. The 1980s’ office buildings in suburban growth corridors comprised one of the region’s core economic competencies. But the fashionability and attraction of automobile-dependent office corridors may have run its course. Their legacy in 2015, when they will be between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age, will be a far less competitive product.

6. Hans Blumenfeld, “The Tidal Wave of Metropolitan Expansion” (*Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Volume 20, Issue 1, 1954).

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7. The Tri-State Planning Commission, a planning organization for New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut, was created in 1961 to coordinate planning and public-investment strategies for the three states. It was disbanded in 1982.

8. It is noteworthy that all of these counties, with the exception of Bucks County in Pennsylvania, are now in the United States Census Bureau’s New York-Newark, NY-NJ-CT-PA Combined Statistical Area (CSA), as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. This CSA also includes Carbon and Lehigh Counties in Pennsylvania, an indication of just how far west that regional sprawl extended.

## The Big Picture: The Startling Reversal of Fortune

The beginnings of what may be a transformative reshaping of the region's geography are illustrated by a comparison of the population growth that took place between 1950 and 1980 with that which took place post-2010 (2010–2013). The first period (1950–1980) was driven by the classic post-World War II forces of intense tract house residential suburbanization and urban flight. During this time frame, suburban populations soared and urban populations contracted. It was the critical mass of the suburban population growth attained during this period that provided the labor pool for the robust postindustrial, knowledge-based suburban economy of the 1980s and 1990s.

Moreover, this 30-year period is when the suburban ring's population surpassed that of the regional core (appendix table A-1). In 1950, the core's population (9.8 million people) was over 70 percent greater than the suburban ring's (5.7 million people). By 1980, the suburban ring's 11.0 million people was over 20 percent greater than the core's 9.0 million people.

The second period (2010–2013)—the crest-of-the-wave demographic trajectory—exhibits what appears to be a fundamentally different postsuburban growth dynamic: a dramatic slowing of suburban population growth, population shrinkage on the outer metropolitan perimeter, and strong urban resurgence. The continuation of this pattern of population growth should presage the shape of economic growth to come. Table 1 provides the basic summary data that detail the phenomenon, further illustrated by figures 1 and 2.

The old and new loci of regional population decline are evident in table 1. The big picture is provided by the numbers presented in red, which highlight those counties and divisions (regional core and suburban ring) that lost population during

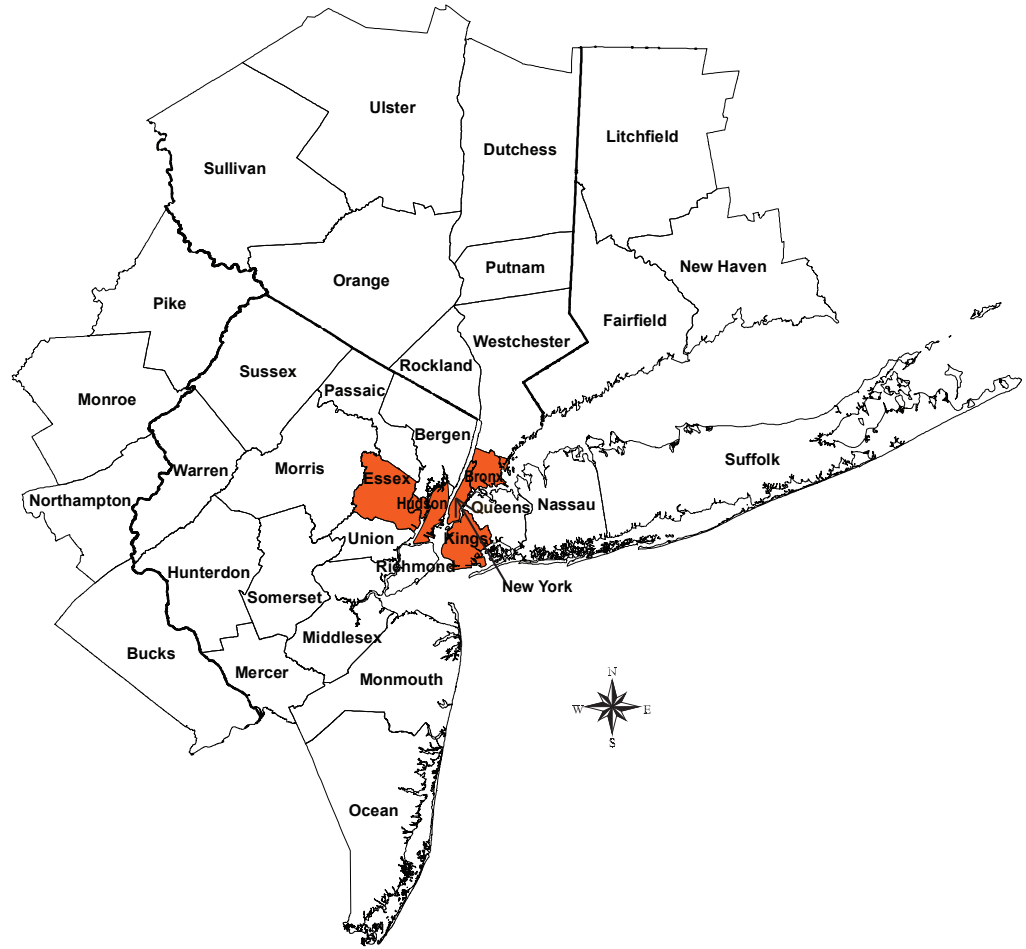
each of the two periods. During the first period (1950–1980), population decline was experienced by the regional core and most of its counties; this is also illustrated in figure 1. During the second period (2010–2013), population decline shifted to outer counties of the suburban ring; this is also illustrated in figure 2. Let's look at this major transformation in more detail.

Between 1950 and 1980, the region as a whole grew by 4,464,079 persons, or 28.8 percent (table 1). At the same time, the regional core contracted by 859,660 persons (-8.7 percent). But between 2010 and 2013, in a major reversal, the core gained 255,853 persons (+2.5 percent). In the three years post-2010, the regional core recaptured almost 30 percent of the losses it accrued over 30 years. On an annual average basis, in the earlier period (1950–1980), it lost 28,655 persons per year; in the latter period (2010–2013), it added 85,284 persons per year.

In contrast, between 1950 and 1980, while the core was shrinking, the suburban ring experienced an explosive population increase of more than 5.3 million people (+93.8 percent). While the core's population was declining by 28,655 persons per year, that of the suburban ring was growing by 177,458 persons per year. By 1980, this growth had completely reshaped the region's population geography. In the second period (2010–2013), the suburban ring still continued to grow, but at a much reduced scale: a total of just 113,227 persons (+0.9 percent). This was less than one-half the absolute increase of the regional core (+255,853 persons). The annualized suburban growth fell from 177,458 persons per year between 1950 and 1980 to just 37,742 persons per year between 2010 and 2013; the latter was far below the population expansion of the regional core (+85,284 persons per year).

The suburban ring's comparison with the nation is also illustrative of the sharp reversal of trend (table 1). Between 1950 and 1980, the suburban ring's rate of population increase (+93.8 percent) was nearly double that (+49.7 percent) of the United States. Between 2010 and 2013, the suburban ring's growth (+0.9 percent) was less than half that (+2.2 percent) of the nation.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Counties with Population Decline, 1950–1980**



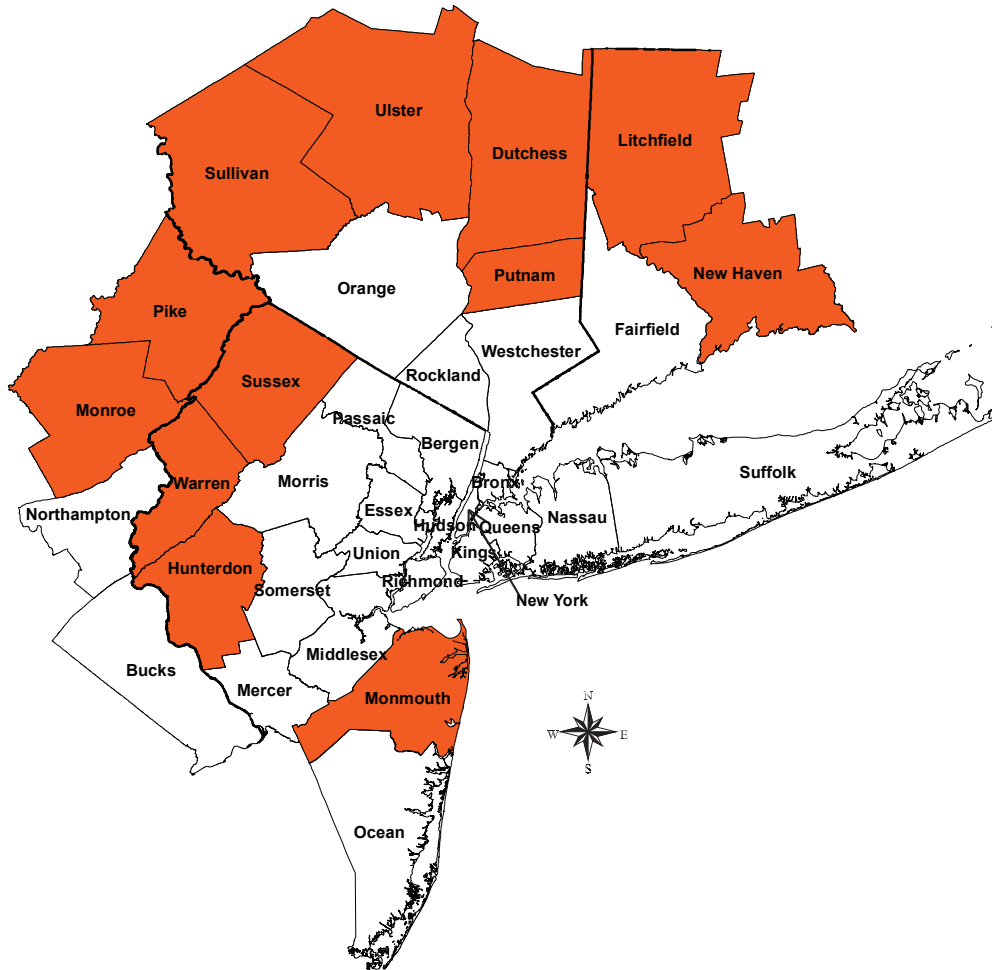
Source: Rutgers Regional Report, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, New Jersey Geographic Information Network, NYS GIS Clearinghouse, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

### The Scale of Past Urban Decline

The highlighted counties in figure 1 suffered population declines in the 30-year period of urban contraction (1950–1980); it was three counties (boroughs) of New York City that accounted for the great bulk of the core's population losses. Between 1950 and 1980 (table 1), New York (Manhattan) lost 531,816 persons (-27.1 percent), Kings (Brooklyn) lost 507,239 persons (-18.5 percent), and the Bronx lost 282,305 persons (-19.5 percent). The three counties combined had an aggregate population decline of over 1.3 million people, a total greater than

the loss of the overall core (-859,660 persons). It was the city's own outer periphery that escaped this widespread decline. The boroughs of Queens, which gained 340,476 persons (+22.0 percent), and Richmond (Staten Island), which gained 160,566 persons (+83.8 percent), experienced suburban-like population growth during this period. This mitigated the scale of the overall regional core decline. So too in the New Jersey sector of the core. Essex and Hudson lost population, while Union experienced suburban-like growth in the lesser developed western portions of the county.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Counties with Population Decline, 2010–2013**



Source: Rutgers Regional Report, based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, New Jersey Geographic Information Network, NYS GIS Clearinghouse, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

### The New Growth Frontier

The region experienced an overall population increase of 369,080 people between 2010 and 2013 (table 1). For the first time, the core dominated. It accounted for 69.3 percent (255,853 persons) of this growth; the suburban ring, just 30.7 percent (113,227 persons). The regional core is now the growth locomotive of the region's demographic train; the suburban ring is the caboose. This is a startling turnaround from the 1950–1980 period, when the suburban ring's population expanded by over 5 million people, while the regional core was contracting by over 800,000 people.

Brooklyn was the unquestioned growth leader in the post-2010 period; its population increased by 82,426 people between 2010 and 2013. Brooklyn's current performance is also illustrated by a comparison to the 1950–1980 period, when it shed more than one-half million people. In the suburban ring, the highest growth totals post-2010 were achieved by the inlying counties of Fairfield in Connecticut (+21,090 persons), Bergen in New Jersey (+18,731 persons), and Westchester in New York (+18,126 persons). However, the growth of all three combined (+57,947 persons) falls far below that of Brooklyn. In fact, the

population increase in the Bronx (+31,061 persons) was greater than each of these suburban leaders, as was that of Hudson County in New Jersey (+24,600 persons).

### The Incredible Shrinking Perimeter

Twelve suburban counties—out of a total of 27 suburban counties—lost population between 2010 and 2013! Thus, fully 44.4 percent of the counties in the suburban ring experienced population declines. With the exception of Monmouth County in New Jersey—which was suffering the harsh aftereffects of Superstorm Sandy—all of the counties that lost population were on the metropolitan edge (table 1 and figure 2): Litchfield and New Haven in Connecticut; Dutchess, Putnam, Ulster, and Sullivan in New York; Hunterdon, Sussex, and Warren in New Jersey; and Monroe and Pike in Pennsylvania. The highest annual losses were experienced by Sussex (-1,076 persons per year) in New Jersey and Litchfield (-939 persons per year) in Connecticut. The former demographic highfliers of the second half of the twentieth century have returned to earth.

Monroe and Pike Counties in Pennsylvania in particular are noteworthy.<sup>9</sup> They are located immediately west of Warren and Sussex Counties in New Jersey, just across the Delaware River.<sup>10</sup> In the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, they were the fastest-growing counties in the region (appendix table A-3). For example, between 1990 and 2000, the population of the suburban ring grew by 8.6 percent. In sharp contrast, Pike's population grew by 65.6 percent and Monroe's by 44.9 percent. But between 2010 and 2013, both Monroe (-1.7 percent) and Pike (-1.3 percent) Counties experienced population declines.

9. Both counties are in the Pocono Mountains of northeastern Pennsylvania. Historically a popular tourist destination, the Pocono area became a source of affordable year-round housing for workers in northern New Jersey and New York City via Interstate 80.

10. The principal river crossing and linkage to the rest of the region is provided by Interstate 80, which spans New Jersey, leading to the George Washington Bridge.

### The Potency of Young Adults

Part of the new dynamic is being driven by young adults. The nation and region are now experiencing the most dramatic and significant age structure transformation in history. This transformation is defined by two demographic cohorts. The first comprises maturing “60-somethings,” who are aging baby boomers now pursuing empty-nester lifestyles, trying to adapt to cutting-edge technologies, confronting their exit from the labor force, and facing retirement. The second comprises “20-somethings” and young “30-somethings.” These are echo boomers or millennials who are driving a resurgent entry-level rental housing market, new lifestyle preferences, and new workplace protocols and values.<sup>11</sup> The baby boom was the most suburban-centric generation in history; echo boomers and millennials, in contrast to their parents, not so much. To illustrate the differences, table 2 presents the growth in young adults (20 to 29 years of age) for two periods. In the first period (1970–1980), baby boomers filled the 20- to 29-years-of-age bracket. In the second period (2000–2010), echo boomers/millennials filled it.

The baby boom cohort, the largest generation ever produced in U.S. history, swelled the ranks of young adults in the 1970s. Between 1970 and 1980, the four-state region added 378,755 “20-somethings.” Virtually all of the growth in such baby boom young adults took place in the suburban ring (363,595 persons), or 96.0 percent. The regional core added only 15,160 persons in this age bracket, or 4.0 percent. There would actually have been a shrinkage in young adults in the core if not for growth in Queens (+18,084 persons) and Richmond

11. The fabled postwar baby boom was born between 1946 and 1964. It was followed by the baby bust (Gen X), born between 1965 and 1976. Subsequently, the baby boom echo (echo boomers, or Gen Y) was born between 1977 and 1995. The partitions between the generations are largely based on changes in births and fertility rates. More generally, millennials generally correspond to echo boomers; definitions vary, but their delineation is based on “coming of age during the digital era,” i.e., born after 1980.



**TABLE 1**  
**Decadal Population Change, 1950–2013**

	ABSOLUTE		PERCENTAGE		ANNUAL AVERAGE	
	1950–1980	2010–2013 <sup>a</sup>	1950–1980	2010–2013 <sup>a</sup>	1950–1980	2010–2013 <sup>a</sup>
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>75,220,007</b>	<b>6,802,614</b>	<b>49.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2,507,334</b>	<b>2,267,538</b>
<b>FOUR-STATE REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>4,464,079</b>	<b>369,080</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>148,803</b>	<b>123,027</b>
<b>REGIONAL CORE</b>	<b>-859,660</b>	<b>255,853</b>	<b>-8.7</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>-28,655</b>	<b>85,284</b>
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>-39,342</b>	<b>40,013</b>	<b>-2.0</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>-1,311</b>	<b>13,338</b>
Essex	<b>-54,833</b>	4,973	<b>-6.1</b>	0.6	<b>-1,828</b>	1,658
Hudson	<b>-90,465</b>	24,600	<b>-14.0</b>	3.9	<b>-3,016</b>	8,200
Union	105,956	10,440	26.6	1.9	3,532	3,480
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>-820,318</b>	<b>215,840</b>	<b>-10.4</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>-27,344</b>	<b>71,947</b>
Bronx	<b>-282,305</b>	31,061	<b>-19.5</b>	2.2	<b>-9,410</b>	10,354
Kings	<b>-507,239</b>	82,426	<b>-18.5</b>	3.3	<b>-16,908</b>	27,475
New York	<b>-531,816</b>	38,127	<b>-27.1</b>	2.4	<b>-17,727</b>	12,709
Queens	340,476	61,135	22.0	2.7	11,349	20,378
Richmond	160,566	3,091	83.8	0.7	5,352	1,030
<b>SUBURBAN RING</b>	<b>5,323,739</b>	<b>113,227</b>	<b>93.8</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>177,458</b>	<b>37,742</b>
<i>Connecticut Sector</i>	<b>576,251</b>	<b>17,857</b>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>19,208</b>	<b>5,952</b>
Fairfield	302,801	21,090	60.0	2.3	10,093	7,030
Litchfield	57,897	<b>-2,817</b>	58.6	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>1,930</b>	<b>-939</b>
New Haven	215,553	<b>-416</b>	39.5	<b>-0.0</b>	<b>7,185</b>	<b>-139</b>
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>1,896,815</b>	<b>54,464</b>	<b>92.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>63,227</b>	<b>1,815</b>
Bergen	306,246	18,731	56.8	2.1	10,208	6,244
Hunterdon	44,625	<b>-2,107</b>	104.4	<b>-1.6</b>	1,488	<b>-702</b>
Mercer	78,082	3,321	34.0	0.9	2,603	1,107
Middlesex	331,021	17,653	125.0	2.2	11,034	5,884
Monmouth	277,846	<b>-1,149</b>	123.3	<b>-0.2</b>	9,262	<b>-383</b>
Morris	243,259	6,498	148.0	1.3	8,109	2,166
Ocean	289,416	5,717	511.1	1.0	9,647	1,906
Passaic	110,492	3,876	32.8	0.8	3,683	1,292
Somerset	104,077	6,467	105.1	2.0	3,469	2,156
Sussex	81,696	<b>-3,229</b>	237.3	<b>-2.2</b>	2,723	<b>-1,076</b>
Warren	30,055	<b>-1,314</b>	55.3	<b>-1.2</b>	1,002	<b>-438</b>
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>2,430,425</b>	<b>41,262</b>	<b>115.4</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>81,014</b>	<b>1,375</b>
Dutchess	108,274	<b>-856</b>	79.2	<b>-0.3</b>	3,609	<b>-285</b>
Nassau	648,817	10,861	96.4	0.8	21,627	3,620
Orange	107,348	2,068	70.5	0.6	3,578	689
Putnam	56,886	<b>-139</b>	280.1	<b>-0.1</b>	1,896	<b>-46</b>
Rockland	170,254	8,386	190.7	2.7	5,675	2,795
Suffolk	1,008,102	4,975	365.1	0.3	33,603	1,658
Sullivan	24,424	<b>-762</b>	60.0	<b>-1.0</b>	814	<b>-254</b>
Ulster	65,537	<b>-1,397</b>	70.8	<b>-0.8</b>	2,185	<b>-466</b>
Westchester	240,783	18,126	38.5	1.9	8,026	6,042
<i>Pennsylvania Sector</i>	<b>420,248</b>	<b>-356</b>	<b>113.0</b>	<b>-0.0</b>	<b>14,008</b>	<b>-12</b>
Bucks	334,591	1,471	231.4	0.2	11,153	490
Monroe	35,636	<b>-2,833</b>	105.5	<b>-1.7</b>	1,188	<b>-944</b>
Northampton	40,175	1,726	21.7	0.6	1,339	575
Pike	9,846	<b>-720</b>	116.9	<b>-1.3</b>	328	<b>-240</b>

Note: a. 1950 to 1980 change represents the change between Decennial Census counts (April 1 count). 2010 to 2013 change represents the change between July 1 population estimates. 2010 population estimates are Vintage 2012.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**TABLE 2**  
**Population Change for 20- to 29-Year-Olds, 1970–1980 and 2000–2010**

	<u>ABSOLUTE</u>		<u>PERCENTAGE</u>	
	1970–1980	2000–2010	1970–1980	2000–2010
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>10,134,135</b>	<b>4,424,255</b>	<b>32.8</b>	<b>11.5</b>
<b>FOUR-STATE REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>378,755</b>	<b>245,220</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>8.3</b>
<b>REGIONAL CORE</b>	<b>15,160</b>	<b>107,872</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>6.9</b>
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>26,585</b>	<b>5,929</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>2.1</b>
Essex	7,153	-3,564	5.4	-3.3
Hudson	9,371	6,590	10.6	6.0
Union	10,061	2,903	14.7	4.6
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>-11,425</b>	<b>101,943</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>8.0</b>
Bronx	-36,973	16,957	-16.0	8.4
Kings	-17,432	38,523	-4.4	10.1
New York	11,323	39,172	4.1	13.6
Queens	18,084	2,159	6.1	0.6
Richmond	13,573	5,132	30.7	9.1
<b>SUBURBAN RING</b>	<b>363,595</b>	<b>137,348</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>9.8</b>
<i>Connecticut Sector</i>	<b>47,044</b>	<b>25,568</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>12.1</b>
Fairfield	20,526	8,753	20.5	9.3
Litchfield	5,160	2,128	28.2	13.8
New Haven	21,358	14,687	19.3	14.5
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>128,019</b>	<b>41,579</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Bergen	19,953	5,146	18.1	5.5
Hunterdon	3,469	1,029	40.0	9.8
Mercer	9,703	3,210	21.6	6.7
Middlesex	25,753	5,895	29.8	5.5
Monmouth	11,327	5,373	18.2	8.7
Morris	10,182	2,018	19.4	4.3
Ocean	19,567	13,161	76.7	26.7
Passaic	9,575	1,493	14.6	2.2
Somerset	7,569	1,521	31.1	5.0
Sussex	7,294	1,231	70.5	9.5
Warren	3,627	1,502	38.1	15.7
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>149,756</b>	<b>52,591</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>9.8</b>
Dutchess	7,788	5,195	24.1	16.0
Nassau	41,834	12,287	26.4	8.9
Orange	9,406	6,504	30.3	16.7
Putnam	3,914	864	56.7	9.6
Rockland	9,711	5,888	36.1	18.8
Suffolk	49,859	13,469	35.0	8.5
Sullivan	2,934	1,532	43.1	21.3
Ulster	6,104	2,022	29.9	9.8
Westchester	18,206	4,830	16.2	4.7
<i>Pennsylvania Sector</i>	<b>38,776</b>	<b>17,610</b>	<b>41.3</b>	<b>16.1</b>
Bucks	24,035	5,589	41.6	9.1
Monroe	5,252	5,144	85.4	36.1
Northampton	8,465	5,311	29.5	17.3
Pike	1,024	1,566	83.7	46.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

(+13,573 persons), which contain some of the more “suburban-type” areas of the core. The generation born and reared in the suburbs largely settled there as young household-forming adults. And in the two decades that followed (1980–2000), the suburbs dominated the region’s economic-growth ledgers.

The pattern is strikingly different in the 2000–2010 period, when echo boomers/millennials filled the 20- to 29-year-old sector. The four-state region in total gained 245,220 young adults. This time, however, the regional core almost gained parity with the suburban ring. The suburban ring’s share of total regional growth during the decade fell to 56.0 percent (137,348 persons out of 245,220 persons), while that of the regional core increased to 44.0 percent (107,872 persons out of 245,220 persons).<sup>12</sup> Based upon the data for total population, the regional core probably secured the majority of young adult growth in the post-2010 period. This demographic is now exerting profound influence on the current and future geography of the regional economy.

## Conclusion

An old adage might be paraphrased to say: **A** Three years does not a trend make. Thus, it is hazardous to generalize on such a short timeline. Moreover, it is equally hazardous to compare a three-year period to a 30-year period. Nonetheless, if—and we stress *if*—both time frames represent two fundamentally different eras—unbridled suburbanization/urban decline versus recentralization/perimeter contraction—then a transformative regional change may be under way that is only just now beginning to reveal itself. The 2010–2013 period suggests that for the first time in the post–World War II era the tidal wave of metropolitan expansion has begun to ebb, with the regional core outperforming the suburban ring.<sup>13</sup>

Parsing the various causes of what may lie behind a fundamental shift in the growth dynamics and distribution of the population within the region is difficult. We have identified several powerful factors that are responsible: the relentless demography of baby boom and baby boom-echo generations, rapid and sweeping technology changes, favorable quality-of-life improvements in the region’s urban core, and new cultural and locational preferences of millennials. In addition to these, the high costs in time and dollars of long commutes, the decline in job opportunities in the outer rim, the higher density and lower maintenance needs of core-area housing, all contribute to making the large home on the large lot, with a long commute on congested roads to an isolated office complex off the interstate, less and less attractive. Also, the generally higher-density location preferences of foreign-born residents of the region reinforce the attractiveness of the urban core counties.

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12. The latter years of this period were dominated by the bursting of the housing/credit bubbles, the Great Recession, and their immediate aftereffects. These events may have severely inhibited the mobility of young adults and household formation, i.e., deeply constrained economically, they remained in the parental hearth, inhibiting moves to the regional core during this time.

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13. It is important to note that we are not saying that there is a coming era of widespread economic decline of the suburban ring. Many sections of the suburban ring will continue to house very large numbers of people and jobs with significant amounts of total property value and economic activity. What we are suggesting is that the relative population growth patterns of core and outer ring are shifting.

Alternatively, Americans' stubborn love affair with large vehicles, cheap gas, and free roads is still a powerful force working to maintain population dispersal. It seems to be impervious to repeated oil crises, \$4-per-gallon gas (perhaps because \$4 gas seems never to stick around long), and the possibility of higher energy costs in the long run for both transportation and residential heating. Also, although the powerful desire for homeownership may have been deeply dented by the Great Recession, it may recover and dominate housing markets once again. Whether that will translate into a resurgent demand for single-family homes on large lots remains to be seen. And the quality of urban core public education will continue to hover over millennials' decisions on long-term locational preferences, with family formation and child rearing entering (perhaps) the reality of their lives.

We do not know the outcome of these dynamics that are pulling in different directions in the region. This report is our effort to point to early and limited evidence that the net outcome of all these forces is shifting in such a way as to end what had been a very long-lasting and dominant pattern of population growth and its distribution in the region.

## Appendix

The baseline data of this report are presented in appendix table A-1, the decade-by-decade absolute population change in table A-2, and the decade-by-decade rate of population change in table A-3. ■

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The authors thank Will Irving for research assistance, Arlene Pashman for editorial review and production, Ioanna Tsoulou for data assistance, and Marcia Hannigan for distribution assistance.

## Appendix

**TABLE A-1**  
**Total Population, 1950–2010**

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>151,325,798</b>	<b>179,323,175</b>	<b>203,211,926</b>	<b>226,545,805</b>	<b>248,709,873</b>	<b>281,421,906</b>	<b>308,745,538</b>
<b>FOUR-STATE REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>15,519,011</b>	<b>18,183,019</b>	<b>20,434,628</b>	<b>19,983,090</b>	<b>20,755,111</b>	<b>22,541,588</b>	<b>23,364,714</b>
	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)	(100%)
<b>REGIONAL CORE</b>	<b>9,843,481</b>	<b>9,820,518</b>	<b>9,977,230</b>	<b>8,983,821</b>	<b>9,147,688</b>	<b>9,933,427</b>	<b>10,129,867</b>
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>1,951,524</b>	<b>2,038,534</b>	<b>2,082,368</b>	<b>1,912,182</b>	<b>1,825,124</b>	<b>1,925,149</b>	<b>1,954,734</b>
Essex	905,949	923,545	929,986	851,116	778,206	793,633	783,969
Hudson	647,437	610,734	609,266	556,972	553,099	608,975	634,266
Union	398,138	504,255	543,116	504,094	493,819	522,541	536,499
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>7,891,957</b>	<b>7,781,984</b>	<b>7,894,862</b>	<b>7,071,639</b>	<b>7,322,564</b>	<b>8,008,278</b>	<b>8,175,133</b>
Bronx	1,451,277	1,424,815	1,471,701	1,168,972	1,203,789	1,332,650	1,385,108
Kings	2,738,175	2,627,319	2,602,012	2,230,936	2,300,664	2,465,326	2,504,700
New York	1,960,101	1,698,281	1,539,233	1,428,285	1,487,536	1,537,195	1,585,873
Queens	1,550,849	1,809,578	1,986,473	1,891,325	1,951,598	2,229,379	2,230,722
Richmond	191,555	221,991	295,443	352,121	378,977	443,728	468,730
<b>SUBURBAN RING</b>	<b>5,675,530</b>	<b>8,362,501</b>	<b>10,457,398</b>	<b>10,999,269</b>	<b>11,607,423</b>	<b>12,608,161</b>	<b>13,234,847</b>
<i>Connecticut Sector</i>	<b>1,148,998</b>	<b>1,433,760</b>	<b>1,681,853</b>	<b>1,725,249</b>	<b>1,805,956</b>	<b>1,888,768</b>	<b>1,969,233</b>
Fairfield	504,342	653,589	792,814	807,143	827,645	882,567	916,829
Litchfield	98,872	119,856	144,091	156,769	174,092	182,193	189,927
New Haven	545,784	660,315	744,948	761,337	804,219	824,008	862,477
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>2,047,790</b>	<b>2,901,848</b>	<b>3,717,375</b>	<b>3,944,605</b>	<b>4,254,329</b>	<b>4,736,601</b>	<b>4,991,686</b>
Bergen	539,139	780,225	898,012	845,385	825,380	884,118	905,116
Hunterdon	42,736	54,107	69,718	87,361	107,776	121,989	128,349
Mercer	229,781	266,392	303,968	307,863	325,824	350,761	366,513
Middlesex	264,872	433,856	583,813	595,893	671,780	750,162	809,858
Monmouth	225,327	334,401	459,379	503,173	553,124	615,301	630,380
Morris	164,371	261,620	383,454	407,630	421,353	470,212	492,276
Ocean	56,622	108,241	208,470	346,038	433,203	510,916	576,567
Passaic	337,093	406,618	460,782	447,585	453,060	489,049	501,226
Somerset	99,052	143,913	198,372	203,129	240,279	297,490	323,444
Sussex	34,423	49,255	77,528	116,119	130,943	144,166	149,265
Warren	54,374	63,220	73,879	84,429	91,607	102,437	108,692
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>2,106,681</b>	<b>3,468,189</b>	<b>4,371,506</b>	<b>4,537,106</b>	<b>4,635,184</b>	<b>4,933,102</b>	<b>5,123,733</b>
Dutchess	136,781	176,008	222,295	245,055	259,462	280,150	297,488
Nassau	672,765	1,300,171	1,428,080	1,321,582	1,287,348	1,334,544	1,339,532
Orange	152,255	183,734	221,657	259,603	307,647	341,367	372,813
Putnam	20,307	31,722	56,696	77,193	83,941	95,745	99,710
Rockland	89,276	136,803	229,903	259,530	265,475	286,753	311,687
Suffolk	276,129	666,784	1,124,950	1,284,231	1,321,864	1,419,369	1,493,350
Sullivan	40,731	45,272	52,580	65,155	69,277	73,966	77,547
Ulster	92,621	118,804	141,241	158,158	165,304	177,749	182,493
Westchester	625,816	808,891	894,104	866,599	874,866	923,459	949,113
<i>Pennsylvania Sector</i>	<b>372,061</b>	<b>558,704</b>	<b>686,664</b>	<b>792,309</b>	<b>911,954</b>	<b>1,049,690</b>	<b>1,150,195</b>
Bucks	144,620	308,567	415,056	479,211	541,174	597,635	625,249
Monroe	33,773	39,567	45,422	69,409	95,709	138,687	169,842
Northampton	185,243	201,412	214,368	225,418	247,105	267,066	297,735
Pike	8,425	9,158	11,818	18,271	27,966	46,302	57,369

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial (April 1) counts.

**TABLE A-2**  
**Decadal Absolute Population Change, 1950–2013**

	1950–1960	1960–1970	1970–1980	1980–1990	1990–2000	2000–2010	2010–2013 <sup>a</sup>
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>27,997,377</b>	<b>23,888,751</b>	<b>23,333,879</b>	<b>22,164,068</b>	<b>32,712,033</b>	<b>27,323,632</b>	<b>6,802,614</b>
<b>FOUR-STATE REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>2,664,008</b>	<b>2,251,609</b>	<b>-451,538</b>	<b>772,021</b>	<b>1,786,477</b>	<b>823,126</b>	<b>369,080</b>
<b>REGIONAL CORE</b>	<b>-22,963</b>	<b>156,712</b>	<b>-993,409</b>	<b>163,867</b>	<b>785,739</b>	<b>196,440</b>	<b>255,853</b>
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>87,010</b>	<b>43,834</b>	<b>-170,186</b>	<b>-87,058</b>	<b>100,025</b>	<b>29,585</b>	<b>40,013</b>
Essex	17,596	6,441	-78,870	-72,910	15,427	-9,664	4,973
Hudson	-36,703	-1,468	-52,294	-3,873	55,876	25,291	24,600
Union	106,117	38,861	-39,022	-10,275	28,722	13,958	10,440
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>-109,973</b>	<b>112,878</b>	<b>-823,223</b>	<b>250,925</b>	<b>685,714</b>	<b>166,855</b>	<b>215,840</b>
Bronx	-26,462	46,886	-302,729	34,817	128,861	52,458	31,061
Kings	-110,856	-25,307	-371,076	69,728	164,662	39,374	82,426
New York	-261,820	-159,048	-110,948	59,251	49,659	48,678	38,127
Queens	258,729	176,895	-95,148	60,273	277,781	1,343	61,135
Richmond	30,436	73,452	56,678	26,856	64,751	25,002	3,091
<b>SUBURBAN RING</b>	<b>2,686,971</b>	<b>2,094,897</b>	<b>541,871</b>	<b>608,154</b>	<b>1,000,738</b>	<b>626,686</b>	<b>113,227</b>
<i>Connecticut Sector</i>	<b>284,762</b>	<b>248,093</b>	<b>43,396</b>	<b>80,707</b>	<b>82,812</b>	<b>80,465</b>	<b>17,857</b>
Fairfield	149,247	139,225	14,329	20,502	54,922	34,262	21,090
Litchfield	20,984	24,235	12,678	17,323	8,101	7,734	-2,817
New Haven	114,531	84,633	16,389	42,882	19,789	38,469	-416
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>854,058</b>	<b>815,527</b>	<b>227,230</b>	<b>309,724</b>	<b>482,272</b>	<b>255,085</b>	<b>54,464</b>
Bergen	241,086	117,787	-52,627	-20,005	58,738	20,998	18,731
Hunterdon	11,371	15,611	17,643	20,415	14,213	6,360	-2,107
Mercer	36,611	37,576	3,895	17,961	24,937	15,752	3,321
Middlesex	168,984	149,957	12,080	75,887	78,382	59,696	17,653
Monmouth	109,074	124,978	43,794	49,951	62,177	15,079	-1,149
Morris	97,249	121,834	24,176	13,723	48,859	22,064	6,498
Ocean	51,619	100,229	137,568	87,165	77,713	65,651	5,717
Passaic	69,525	54,164	-13,197	5,475	35,989	12,177	3,876
Somerset	44,861	54,459	4,757	37,150	57,211	25,954	6,467
Sussex	14,832	28,273	38,591	14,824	13,223	5,099	-3,229
Warren	8,846	10,659	10,550	7,178	10,830	6,255	-1,314
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>1,361,508</b>	<b>903,317</b>	<b>165,600</b>	<b>98,078</b>	<b>297,918</b>	<b>190,631</b>	<b>41,262</b>
Dutchess	39,227	46,287	22,760	14,407	20,688	17,338	-856
Nassau	627,406	127,909	-106,498	-34,234	47,196	4,988	10,861
Orange	31,479	37,923	37,946	48,044	33,720	31,446	2,068
Putnam	11,415	24,974	20,497	6,748	11,804	3,965	-139
Rockland	47,527	93,100	29,627	5,945	21,278	24,934	8,386
Suffolk	390,655	458,166	159,281	37,633	97,505	73,981	4,975
Sullivan	4,541	7,308	12,575	4,122	4,689	3,581	-762
Ulster	26,183	22,437	16,917	7,146	12,445	4,744	-1,397
Westchester	183,075	85,213	-27,505	8,267	48,593	25,654	18,126
<i>Pennsylvania Sector</i>	<b>186,643</b>	<b>127,960</b>	<b>105,645</b>	<b>119,645</b>	<b>137,736</b>	<b>100,505</b>	<b>-356</b>
Bucks	163,947	106,489	64,155	61,963	56,461	27,614	1,471
Monroe	5,794	5,855	23,987	26,300	42,978	31,155	-2,833
Northampton	16,169	12,956	11,050	21,687	19,961	30,669	1,726
Pike	733	2,660	6,453	9,695	18,336	11,067	-720

Note: a. 2010 to 2013 change represents the change between July 1 population estimates. 2010 population estimates are Vintage 2012. All other changes represent the change between Decennial Census counts (April 1 count).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

**TABLE A-3**  
**Decadal Rate of Population Change, 1950–2013 (Percentage)**

	1950–1960	1960–1970	1970–1980	1980–1990	1990–2000	2000–2010	2010–2013 <sup>a</sup>
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>FOUR-STATE REGIONAL TOTAL</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>-2.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>REGIONAL CORE</b>	<b>-0.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>-10.0</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>-8.2</b>	<b>-4.6</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Essex	1.9	0.7	-8.5	-8.6	2.0	-1.2	0.6
Hudson	-5.7	-0.2	-8.6	-0.7	10.1	4.2	3.9
Union	26.7	7.7	-7.2	-2.0	5.8	2.7	1.9
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>-10.4</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>
Bronx	-1.8	3.3	-20.6	3.0	10.7	3.9	2.2
Kings	-4.0	-1.0	-14.3	3.1	7.2	1.6	3.3
New York	-13.4	-9.4	-7.2	4.1	3.3	3.2	2.4
Queens	16.7	9.8	-4.8	3.2	14.2	0.1	2.7
Richmond	15.9	33.1	19.2	7.6	17.1	5.6	0.7
<b>SUBURBAN RING</b>	<b>47.3</b>	<b>25.1</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<i>Connecticut Sector</i>	<b>24.8</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>0.9</b>
Fairfield	29.6	21.3	1.8	2.5	6.6	3.9	2.3
Litchfield	21.2	20.2	8.8	11.1	4.7	4.2	-1.5
New Haven	21.0	12.8	2.2	5.6	2.5	4.7	0.0
<i>New Jersey Sector</i>	<b>41.7</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>1.1</b>
Bergen	44.7	15.1	-5.9	-2.4	7.1	2.4	2.1
Hunterdon	26.6	28.9	25.3	23.4	13.2	5.2	-1.6
Mercer	15.9	14.1	1.3	5.8	7.7	4.5	0.9
Middlesex	63.8	34.6	2.1	12.7	11.7	8.0	2.2
Monmouth	48.4	37.4	9.5	9.9	11.2	2.5	-0.2
Morris	59.2	46.6	6.3	3.4	11.6	4.7	1.3
Ocean	91.2	92.6	66.0	25.2	17.9	12.8	1.0
Passaic	20.6	13.3	-2.9	1.2	7.9	2.5	0.8
Somerset	45.3	37.8	2.4	18.3	23.8	8.7	2.0
Sussex	43.1	57.4	49.8	12.8	10.1	3.5	-2.2
Warren	16.3	16.9	14.3	8.5	11.8	6.1	-1.2
<i>New York Sector</i>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>0.8</b>
Dutchess	28.7	26.3	10.2	5.9	8.0	6.2	-0.3
Nassau	93.3	9.8	-7.5	-2.6	3.7	0.4	0.8
Orange	20.7	20.6	17.1	18.5	11.0	9.2	0.6
Putnam	56.2	78.7	36.2	8.7	14.1	4.1	-0.1
Rockland	53.2	68.1	12.9	2.3	8.0	8.7	2.7
Suffolk	141.5	68.7	14.2	2.9	7.4	5.2	0.3
Sullivan	11.1	16.1	23.9	6.3	6.8	4.8	-1.0
Ulster	28.3	18.9	12.0	4.5	7.5	2.7	-0.8
Westchester	29.3	10.5	-3.1	1.0	5.6	2.8	1.9
<i>Pennsylvania Sector</i>	<b>50.2</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>
Bucks	113.4	34.5	15.5	12.9	10.4	4.6	0.2
Monroe	17.2	14.8	52.8	37.9	44.9	22.5	-1.7
Northampton	8.7	6.4	5.2	9.6	8.1	11.5	0.6
Pike	8.7	29.0	54.6	53.1	65.6	23.9	-1.3

Note: a. 2010 to 2013 change represents the change between July 1 population estimates. 2010 population estimates are Vintage 2012. All other changes represent the change between Decennial Census counts (April 1 count).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

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**The RUTGERS REGIONAL REPORT is a publication of the  
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy**  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
33 Livingston Avenue  
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901-1981

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