
After increasing by over 50 percent between 1970 and 1983 and then decreasing by over 10 percent from 1983 to 1990, Wyoming population has returned to a more moderate growth rate since 1990. According to the 2000 Census, the state’s population increased by 8.9 percent between 1990 and 2000.

As shown in Figure 1, Wyoming’s population growth rate between 1990 and 2000 was substantially less than the neighboring states of Colorado (30.6%), Utah (29.6%), Idaho (28.5%), and Montana (12.9%). It was also lower than the national average (13.2%). On the other hand, the state’s growth rate was comparable to its eastern neighbors, South Dakota (8.5%) and Nebraska (8.4%) and substantially higher than North Dakota (0.5%). Overall, Wyoming ranked 32 in population growth between 1990 and 2000.

While Wyoming’s overall growth rate since 1990 has not been relatively large, population growth has not been evenly distributed throughout the state (Figure 2). For example, the three fastest growing counties were all located in the northwest corner of the state. Teton County had the highest growth rate at 63.3 percent, with the Town of Jackson almost doubling in size between 1990 and 2000 (93.4%). Although different in magnitude, Teton County’s population growth rate was comparable to Nevada’s, the fastest growing state in the nation (66.3%). (It should be noted that part of the increase in Teton County may be due to a significant undercount in 1990.)

Sublette County had the second highest growth rate at 22.2 percent. However, the population in rural (unincorporated) areas of the county increased by over 30 percent between 1990 and 2000. The rate of growth in rural areas of the county was comparable to Colorado’s, the third fastest growing state in the nation (30.6%).

Lincoln County had the third highest growth rate at 15.4 percent. However, the communities in the northern part of the county (Afton, Alpine, and Thayne) had a 45.6 percent growth rate. This exceeds the rate for the second fastest growing state in the nation, Arizona (40.0%). The rapid growth in the northern part of Lincoln County was partially offset by declines in communities in the southern part of the county (Diamondville, Kemmerer, and La Barge).

In addition to the three counties in the northwest, Johnson (15.1%), Campbell (14.7%), Sheridan (12.7%), Laramie (11.6%), Park (11.3%), and Crook (11.2%) Counties all had population growth rates exceeding the state average. On the other hand, four Wyoming counties lost population between 1990 and 2000, Carbon (-6.1%), Niobrara (-3.7%), Sweetwater (-3.1%), and Washakie (-1.2%).

Population growth is caused by two factors. One is a natural increase as a result of births exceeding deaths among current residents. The second is a net in-migration of individuals from outside the region. As shown in Figure 3, both factors are a source of population growth in Wyoming. At the state level 74.0 percent of the population growth between 1990 and 2000 was due to natural increase with 26.0 percent from in-migration.
However, the source varied substantially by county. In some counties like Teton, Sublette, Johnson, Sheridan, Park, Crook, Big Horn, and Platte most of the growth was due to in-migration. In other counties like Campbell, Laramie, Natrona, Converse, and Fremont most of the growth was due to natural increases. Eight counties (Uinta, Albany, Weston, Goshen, Washakie, Sweetwater, Niobrara, and Carbon) had a net out-migration between 1990 and 2000. In most cases these losses in population were at least partially offset by natural increases. However, Niobrara had both a decrease in natural growth and an out-migration.

The majority of the population growth in Wyoming from 1990 to 2000 occurred in rural areas outside incorporated cities and towns (55.2%). In some counties like Sublette, Lincoln, Crook, and Fremont almost all the growth was in rural areas. In other counties like Natrona County most of the growth was in urban (incorporated) areas. Only two counties had a decrease in rural population between 1990 and 2000, Goshen and Niobrara. Even among the four counties that lost total population between 1990 and 2000, three had an increase in their rural population, Washakie, Sweetwater, and Carbon.
Figure 1. Percent Change in Resident Population for the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico: 1990 to 2000

Figure 2. Wyoming Population Growth
By County, 1990-00
Figure 3. Wyoming Population Growth
By Source, 1990-00

Figure 4. Wyoming Population Growth
By Location, 1990-00