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## Notes regarding Nebraska Population Change from the Tuesday December 22, 2015 U.S. Census Bureau release of State Population Estimates as of July 1, 2015

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## Notes regarding Nebraska Population Change from the Tuesday December 22, 2015 U.S. Census Bureau release of State Population Estimates as of July 1, 2015

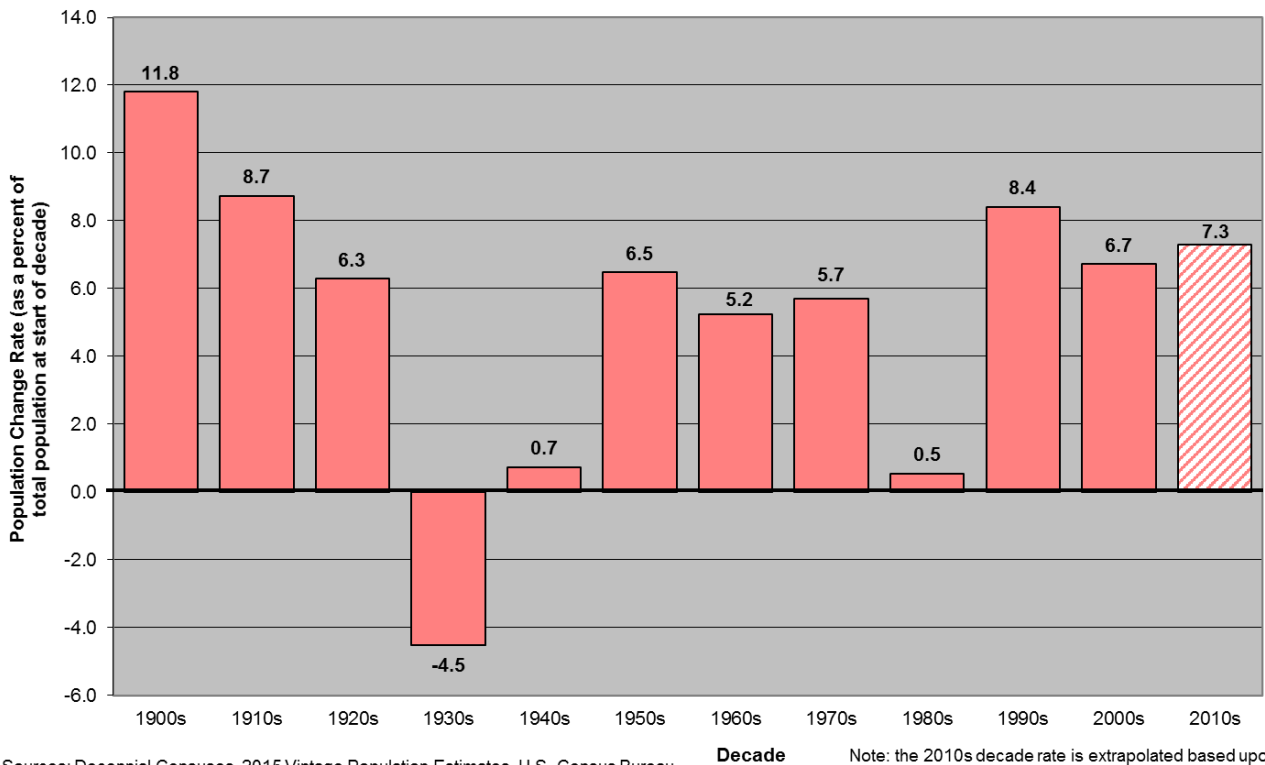
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1. The Census Bureau estimates the population of Nebraska as of July 1, 2015 to be 1,896,190, so the state nearly hit the 1.9 million mark (and it does so with rounding). This is an increase of 13,210 from the July 1, 2014 estimate, or an increase of 0.70 percent. Nebraska's most current annual growth is very similar to gains seen in the past several years – for example, the increase in the prior year from 2013-14 was 13,680 persons or 0.73 percent. **Nebraska has now gained population for 28 straight years**, with the last annual population loss occurring in 1987, amid the “farm crisis”. {Note: the national press release indicated that 7 states lost population from 2014 to 2015 – see here: <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-215.html>}
2. For comparison, Iowa increased by 14,418 or 0.46 percent in the last year to now stand at 3,123,899. Kansas increased by 9,134 or 0.31 percent to have 2,911,641 persons as of July 1, 2015. The U.S. now has 321 million people (321,418,820) as of July 1, 2015, an increase of 2.5 million since July 1, 2014, or 0.79 percent. **Thus, in the latest year, Nebraska exceeded the growth rates in our best comparison states of Iowa and Kansas, while trailing the U.S. growth rate slightly.**
3. Nebraska's percentage change in population in the latest year ranked 21<sup>st</sup> best among all states. Nebraska even achieved a rare feat (at least in recent years) of growing at a faster clip than neighboring South Dakota, who increased by 0.61 percent in the latest year, ranking 23<sup>rd</sup> highest. These improvements occurred even as Nebraska's annual growth rate declined slightly versus last year (see bullet point #1 – 0.70% currently vs. 0.73% in the prior year). Note: this 21<sup>st</sup> best growth rate ranking is the best one that I can remember in my over 10 years of working with such data – I can't verify quickly the last time our ranking would have been this high, but a **21<sup>st</sup> best growth rate is really good for Nebraska** – we are often in the low to mid 30s.)
4. Looking beyond just what has occurred in the latest year to compare all changes since the April 1, 2010 census, Nebraska has grown by 69,849 people or 3.8 percent. This percentage ranks 26<sup>th</sup> best among all states, trailing the U.S. growth rate since 2010

slightly (4.1 percent). Iowa has grown by 2.5 percent, ranking 30<sup>th</sup>, while Kansas has increased 2.1 percent, ranking 34<sup>th</sup> best.

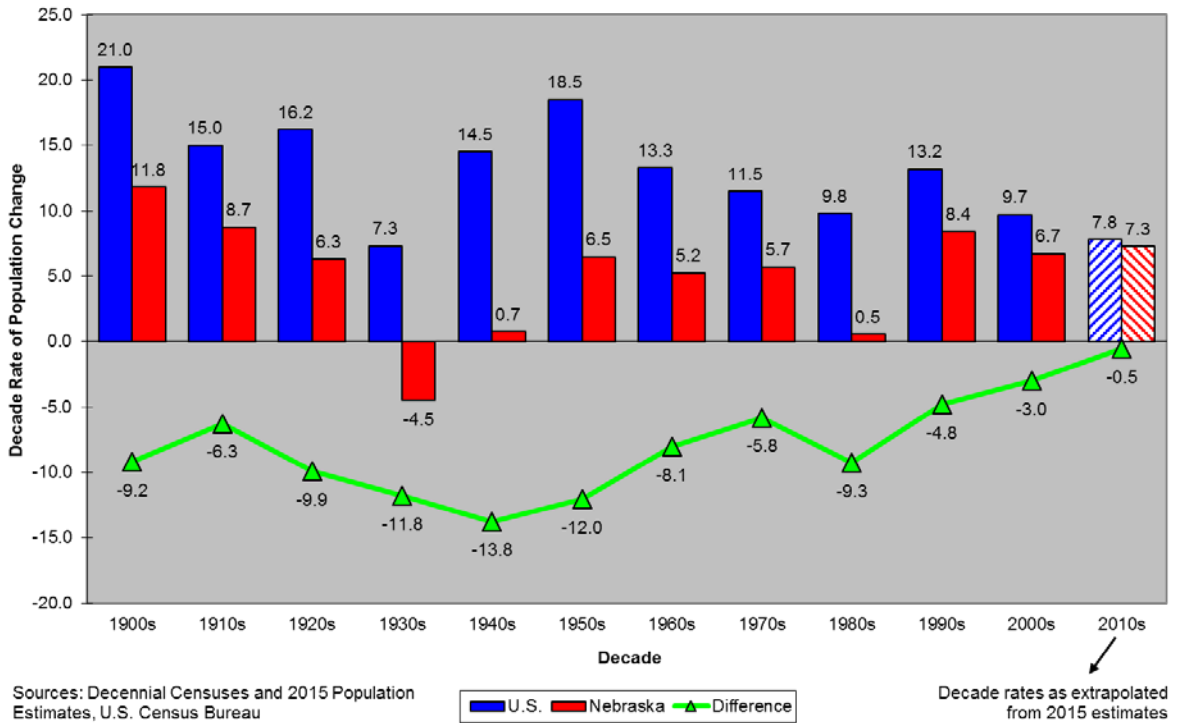
- Since these 2015 estimates are “halfway through” the 2010s decade, we can compare our current growth rate to other decades. Nebraska is on pace to increase by 7.3 percent during the 2010s, which would exceed the 6.7 percent growth rate during the 2000s. Besides the 1990s when the state experienced an especially high level of immigration, this rate for the 2010s would be the highest going back 100 years, to an 8.7 percent increase during the 1910s, when the state had a much smaller population. See graph below. Nebraska’s only decade with population loss was the 1930s during the Great Depression.

**Nebraska Population Change Rate by Decade: 1900s to 2000s  
with 2010s Extrapolated from 2015**



- Nebraska is also achieving a relatively high level of population growth compared to the U.S. average. Nebraska has historically trailed the U.S. growth rate, and while these estimates still suggest it will in the 2010s as well, the gap between the U.S. growth rate and that in Nebraska of only 0.5 percentage points would be the smallest gap going all the way back to the 1900s. Nebraska trailed the U.S. growth rate by 3.0 percentage points in the 2000s. The figure below shows that the gap by which Nebraska has trailed the U.S. average has tended to decrease over time.

Comparison of Population Change Rates in Nebraska and the U.S.: 1900s to 2010s decades



7. The vast majority of Nebraska’s rises in population since 2010 stems from natural population change, where births exceed deaths. There have been approximately 136,000 births to Nebraska residents since 2010, compared to 80,000 deaths, a natural increase of about 56,000.
8. The other population change factor, net migration, has also been positive. Nebraska’s net migration since 2010 is estimated to be about 14,200 persons. Nebraska does lose people to other U.S. states (about -7,700 since 2010) but this is offset by increases of residents from foreign countries (about 21,900 since 2010).
9. In an analysis to evaluate the likelihood for Nebraska to hold or lose one of its current 3 congressional seats, it appears Nebraska is in relatively good position to keep all 3 in the 2020 census. I applied 6 different sets of growth rates to the 2015 population estimates to come up with populations in 2020 for all states. I then ran these figures through the “apportionment calculator” which replicates the way the apportionment has been done the last several decades. {This calculation is subject to Congressional oversight and approval and could be changed.}

In none of these 6 scenarios does Nebraska’s 3<sup>rd</sup> seat rank worse than the 431<sup>st</sup> position, with the last seat overall being number 435 (and the seat “first out” or missing the cutoff being number 436). So Nebraska likely has some room to spare for population

growth to slow before it would lose a seat in the 2020 calculation. A summary of the growth rates applied and Nebraska's seat number and distance to seat number 436 is provided below.

Note that these are simply applications of various growth rates and are not actual population projections. True projections would factor in items such as the baby-boomer population cohort aging into age groups that have higher mortality. Thus, these growth rate applications are simpler than the dynamic nature of how the population actually changes. In addition, local, national, and world events could lead to various population changes and impact the figures. For example, Hurricane Katrina had a great impact on Louisiana's population and contributed greatly to its loss of a congressional seat in the 2010 apportionment. Domestic and international migration are always wildcards and there has been much discussion of the impact of the recent level of immigration, including refugees. Further changes regarding the immigration issue will continue to impact the total populations in each state, and no one can predict the full impact of the recent and other possible future changes.

**The bottomline is that based upon these 2015 population estimates and various growth assumptions going forward to 2020, Nebraska has some concerns but is not in extreme danger of losing a Congressional seat.** However, it would be foolish to get lulled into a false sense of security and think there is no danger, as the possibility to lose a seat definitely exists. This year's relatively good population growth near the U.S. average keeps Nebraska in a good position to keep all 3 seats, and moves us a step closer to 2020, reducing the amount of time over which large shifts in population trends might occur. It is likely that Nebraska's growth relative to the U.S. average will weaken as the economy continues to recover and domestic migration normalizes to typical past trends, especially as impacted by the location decisions of large firms and their employees.

Summary of growth rates applied to the 2015 estimated state populations:

1. Annual growth rate between 2010 and 2015 applied to 2015 population: seat #416, 19 seats to spare
2. 2014-15 growth rate applied to 2015 population: seat #417, 18 seats to spare
3. 2014-15 growth rate averaged with 2010-15 and 2000s growth rates: seat #418, 17 to spare
4. 2014-15 growth rate averaged with 2010-15, 2000s, and 1990s growth rates: seat #422, 13 to spare

5. Growth rates of 1990s, 2000s and 2010s (per 2010 to 2015) averaged: seat #425, 10 to spare
6. 1990s growth rate applied (high immigration timeframe): seat #431, 4 to spare

{Note: per #6 above, the 1990s growth rate, if applied to the 2010 Census counts, would have Nebraska's 3<sup>rd</sup> seat as being the "second one out" or number 437. However, since time has passed between 2010 and 2015, this shortens the timeframe of the applied growth rate (where NE was trailing the U.S. growth rate during the 1990s) and thus would suggest ranking as seat 431. This example illustrates why Nebraska is considered to be close to the cut line, or in possible danger of losing a Congressional seat in 2020.}