

Illinois Sees Nation's Worst Population Decline of the Decade

December 31 2019 10:25 AM

CHICAGO – Illinois closes the decade experiencing the worst population decline of any state in the nation with a total loss of 168,700 residents. According to data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau, Illinois shrank by 51,250 residents from July 2018 to July 2019, bringing the state to six consecutive years of population decline.

The drop in state population over the decade was driven primarily by nearly 853,000 residents moving on the net from Illinois to other states. A new [analysis from the Illinois Policy Institute](#) reveals that the state shrank by 1.3%, second in the nation behind West Virginia for loss as a share of the population.

Meanwhile, researchers found if the state had kept pace with national population trends, instead of shrinking, Illinois would have 1.14 million additional residents and \$78 billion more in economic activity.

U.S. Census data reveal the following highlights:

- In 2019, Illinois lost 105,000 residents to other states. That means one resident moved away every 5 minutes.
- Only two states, California and New York lost more people to other states over the year.
- Illinois saw the worst population loss of any state over the decade, in raw terms. The state's population declined by 168,700 people from 2010-2019, which is more than the population of Naperville, Illinois' third-largest city.
- None of the five fastest-growing states of the decade – Utah, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, and Florida – have progressive income tax rate structures. Meanwhile, four of the five slowest-growing states of the decade – West Virginia, Illinois, Connecticut, Vermont, and Mississippi – have progressive income tax rate structures. Illinois voters will be asked if they want to scrap a constitutionally-mandated flat income tax structure on the Nov. 3, 2020, ballot.

- If the state had simply grown at the same rate as the national average since 2007, Illinois' population would be 1.14 million residents, or 9%, larger than it is today. This population growth would bring \$78 billion in additional economic activity to the state, equivalent to the entire state economy of Delaware.

Orphe Divounguy, the chief economist for the nonpartisan Illinois Policy Institute, offered the following statement:

“For the past decade, people have questioned their ability to plant or maintain roots in Illinois. This uncertainty has manifested itself in year after year of laggard economic performance and population loss leading to Illinois’ worst decade on record.

“A shrinking state means those who stay are left picking up the tab for government spending. If Illinois’ population growth had simply kept pace with the national average, its economy would have been significantly larger. In 2019, that larger economy could have generated as much as \$3.45 billion in additional state tax revenues – more than Gov. J.B. Pritzker hopes to generate with a progressive income tax hike. Compounded, it might have been enough to avoid many of the state’s recent tax hikes which have likely spurred more people to leave.

“In order to reverse this trend of population loss during the coming decade, Illinois lawmakers need to look at policies that attract and retain residents. Pro-growth solutions that will encourage private investment and give businesses and residents a reason to stay include reining in the cost of government, managing budget instability and protecting against corruption.”