

THE NATURAL CHANGE OF MINNESOTA'S POPULATION: 1950 TO 2020

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The natural change is a key demographic indicator of population growth. It is calculated simply as the total number of resident births minus the total number of resident deaths that occur in a particular geographic area. In other words, the natural change measures population growth or decline independently from migration.

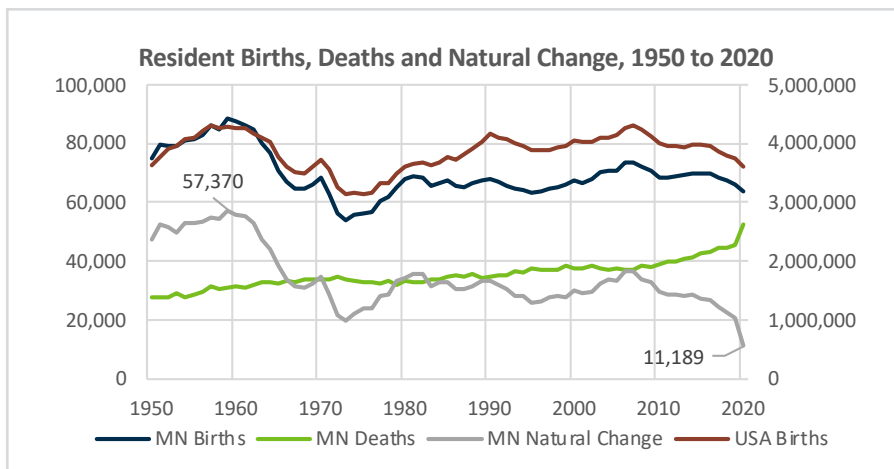
The peak of the post-World War II baby boom in Minnesota occurred

in 1959. That year, there were nearly 90,000 births, and overall births outnumbered deaths by more than 57,000 – a natural increase roughly equivalent to the entire population of today's Chisago County.

As the accompanying chart illustrates, Minnesota births reflect national trends. With the end of the baby boom in 1964, Minnesota births have declined – although there have been periods of in-

crease, such as during the late-1970s, and a more gradual increase from the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s. By 2020, fertility rates across the country reached a historic low, and Minnesota's natural increase had fallen to 11,189 – a decline of about 80% from the 1959 peak.

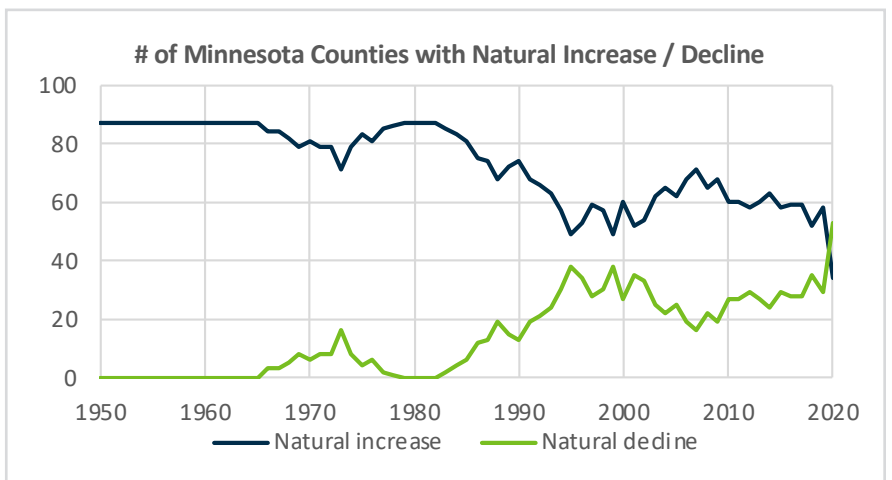
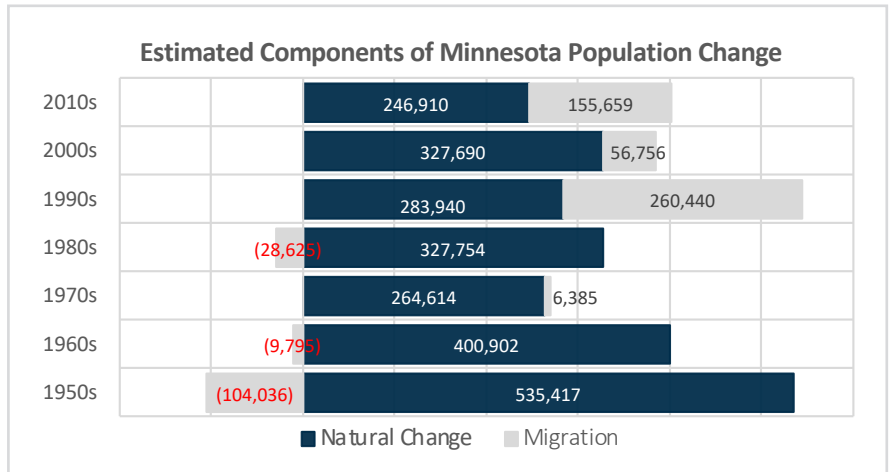
The natural change has been the historic driver of Minnesota's population growth. In the most recent decade, from 2010 to 2020, the natural increase accounted for more than one-and-a-half times the share of overall growth compared to migration. In the prior decade, the natural increase outnumbered migration by more than six-to-one. In Minnesota and across the United States, fertility rates are trending downward while deaths are rising because of the aging of the population and the increase in



mortality related to the Covid pandemic. As a result, there will most likely be continued downward pressure on the natural change.

Prior to 1966, births outnumbered deaths in every county in Minnesota. However, deaths have been gradually overtaking births in many local areas. 2020 was the first year in which Minnesota counties with a natural decline outnumbered those with a natural increase, 53-to-34.

In conclusion, the natural change is vital in understanding how our population has grown in the past, and in terms of what will be needed to maintain growth in the future. As the natural change continues its downward trend, maintaining robust migration from domestic and international sources will be vital to ensuring long-term population growth.



Note: All data in this brief are from the Minnesota Department of Health, the National Center for Health Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau, and may not match data from other sources.