

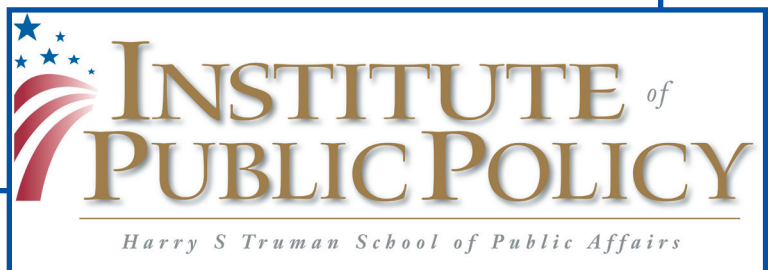
# **Missouri Micropolitan Areas: A Demographic Profile**

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# Missouri Micropolitan Areas: Demographic Profile

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## Introduction

This brief examines how Missouri's recently defined micropolitan counties compare to traditional metropolitan and rural areas of the state. This comparison is done by using several demographic categories including: population trends, racial and educational characteristics of the residents of each area, and indices of poverty.

## Core Based Statistical Areas

During the 1990s, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) refined the standards by which metropolitan areas are defined. Prior to this revision, metropolitan areas were defined by a core area that included a large city or urbanized area with 50,000 or more inhabitants and outlying counties that met specific requirements of commuting and metropolitan character. Any county not classified under these criteria was referred to as nonmetropolitan.

The new classification system, referred to as Core Based Statistical Areas, includes the metropolitan category, the nonmetropolitan category, now called a noncore area, and a new category, "micropolitan." Both metropolitan and micropolitan areas contain an urban area of at least 10,000 population and surrounding counties that are linked through commuting ties with the more urban county or counties. Urbanized areas of population 50,000 or more form the basis for metropolitan areas, and urban clusters of population 10,000 to 49,999 forms the basis for micropolitan areas. This revision provides greater coverage in terms of both the geography and population that are categorized. The figures below illustrate Missouri's micropolitan areas, and the

geographic distribution of metropolitan, micropolitan and noncore Missouri counties (Figure 1).

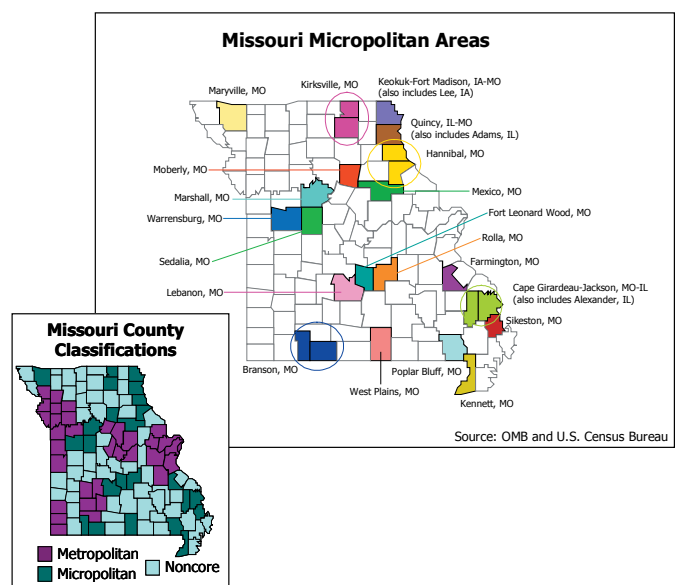


Figure 1. Missouri Micropolitan Areas

Based on the most recent classifications (November 2004), 24 Missouri counties are designated as micropolitan, 34 as metropolitan and 57 noncore. Several of the micropolitan areas include counties in surrounding states. For the purpose of this brief, only the Missouri portions of those micropolitan areas are discussed.

In this brief, the first of several on Missouri's micropolitan areas, we examine the demographic characteristics of micropolitan areas in Missouri. We compare micropolitan counties to metropolitan and noncore counties and assess implications of those differences for Missouri.



## Population Change

Statewide, Missouri's population increased 9.0 percent between 1994 and 2004 (United States Census Bureau). Rates of growth were highest in micropolitan counties (9.9%), followed closely by metropolitan counties (9.2%). Growth in noncore counties lagged behind at 6.8 percent (Figure 2).

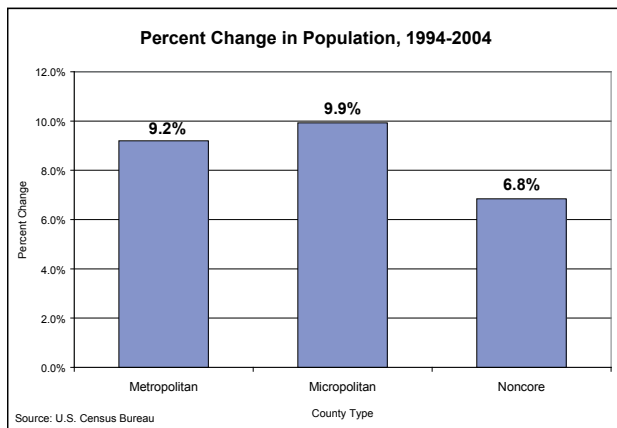


Figure 2. Population Change

Aggregate change can of course mask variation at the individual county level. High rates of growth were concentrated in just a few areas of the state, specifically the suburban areas of St. Louis, the Branson/Joplin/Southwestern portion of the state and the central counties of the state near Columbia, Jefferson City, and Lake of the Ozarks.

All metropolitan counties, however, experienced positive growth with the exception of St. Louis City. Several counties experienced substantial population growth, including Christian County in the Springfield area (59%) and Lincoln County in the St. Louis area (44%). Similarly, growth was almost universal among micropolitan counties (the two exceptions were Clark and Dunklin Counties). Among micropolitan counties, the largest percentage increase (35%) occurred in Taney County in the Branson area (Figure 3).

Missouri's noncore counties experienced much more variation in population change. Seventeen

noncore counties decreased in population, ranging from as little as a 0.4 percent decrease (Dade County) to as much as 12 percent (Atchison County). The remaining 40 rural counties increased in population, the increase ranging from a 0.4 percent increase (Carter County) to 27 percent (Camden County).

Missouri Core-Based Statistical Areas  
Hispanic Population Change, 1994-2004

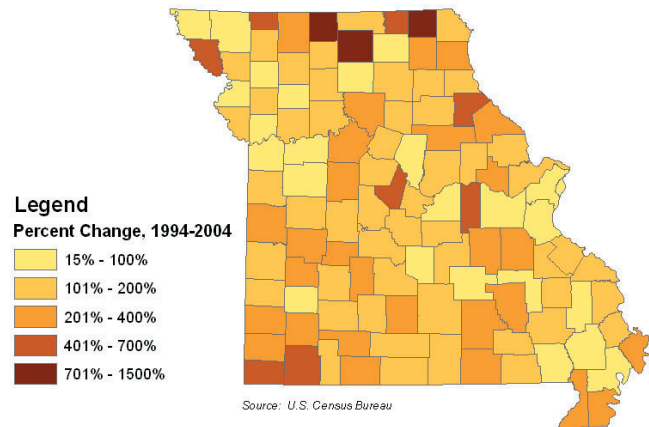


Figure 3. Population Change by county

Clearly, micropolitan counties represent the growth areas among all nonmetropolitan counties, and likely serve as growth centers for both population and economic development. Future research briefs will discuss the economic structure of micropolitan areas, and their important roles in the nonmetropolitan economies.

## Age

Residents of noncore counties tended to be slightly older than those residing in either micropolitan or metropolitan counties, as evidenced by the percent of residents 65 and over (Figure 4). Additionally, metropolitan counties had a larger proportion of working aged residents (20-64), although the difference is relatively small.

A higher percentage of older residents results in challenges to counties in terms of providing health care and other service provisions for this population.



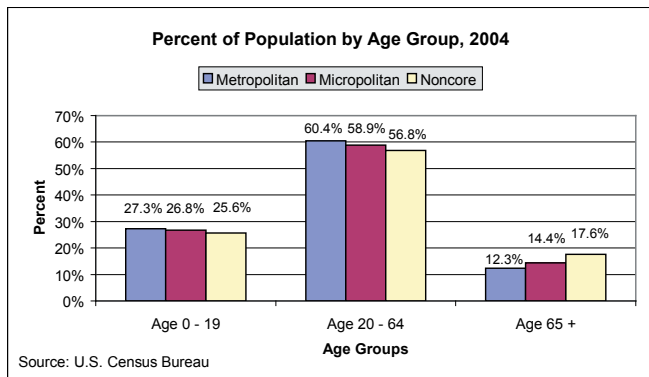


Figure 4. Population by Age

### Race/ethnicity

Micropolitan counties resemble noncore counties much more than metropolitan counties in terms of racial composition. The majority of the population in all areas within Missouri is white, followed by African American. The distribution of the population in the other category is very small among all three types of counties. There are clear racial differences between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties. Noncore counties are made up almost entirely of whites (95.9%) with only 2.4 percent of their population being black. Metropolitan counties, however, have only 82.1 percent of their population white and 14.5 percent black. Micropolitan counties fall in the middle, with 93.0 percent of the population white and only 4.4 percent black. See Figure 5.

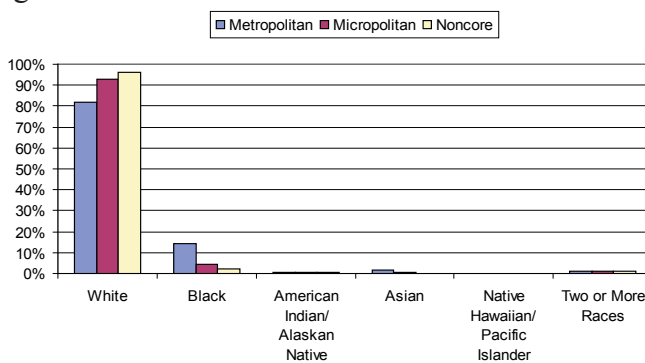


Figure 5. Racial Composition of the Population in Missouri, 2004

Individuals of Hispanic origin account for 2.6 percent of the total population in Missouri. People who report their ethnic origin to the census as Hispanic may also be classified as a different race (white, black, etc...). Similar to the black and Asian population, people of Hispanic ethnicity in metropolitan counties make up a larger portion of the population (2.8%) than they do micropolitan (2.2%) or noncore (1.5%) counties.

The rate of growth of the population with Hispanic ethnicity in the past 10 years (1994-2004) has been fairly dramatic. Statewide the Hispanic population has slightly more than doubled since 1994 (100.8% increase). The greatest percent change was in non-core areas (228% increase), followed by micropolitan (134% increase) and then metropolitan (90% increase). One noncore county in northern Missouri, Mercer County, had a 1,500 percent increase in its Hispanic population (1 in 1994 to 16 in 2004). The county with the largest increase in actual number of Hispanics was Jackson County whose Hispanic population has increased by nearly 20,000 (84 % increase) since 1994. Two micropolitan counties (Schuyler and Ralls counties) had increases in Hispanic population that exceeded 500 percent. Schuyler County’s Hispanic population increased 514.3 percent and Ralls County’s increased 687.5 percent. High growth areas of the state were also found in the Southwest corner, especially McDonald, Barry, Lawrence, Newton and Jasper counties (See Figure 6).

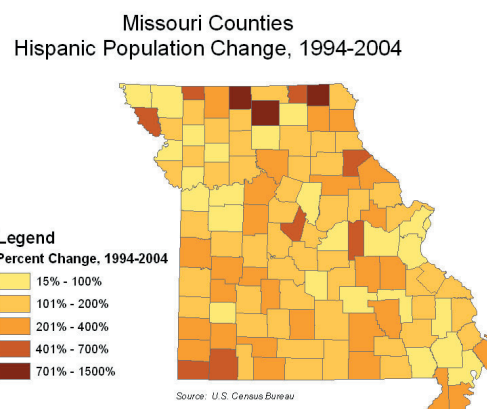


Figure 6. Percent Change in Hispanic Population



## Educational Attainment

Residents of metropolitan counties have the highest levels of educational attainment, followed by those in micropolitan counties. The lowest educational levels were found among residents of noncore counties. The differences were particularly striking when examining the highest levels of education, specifically a bachelor's degree or higher. Over 15 percent of metropolitan residents had earned at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 9.1 percent in micropolitan and only 6.8 percent in noncore.

These differences in educational attainment likely reflect the type of jobs currently available but also influence the development potential of the local economy. In today's economy, where a much larger percentage of jobs require higher skills and more education and training, a well trained workforce is a key component to economic development. Areas in which the workforce has lower levels of education and training will be at a disadvantage when they try to compete in today's economy.

## Poverty

In terms of poverty, clear distinctions exist between the three types of counties in Missouri, distinctions that virtually mirror the trends seen in other characteristics. According to the United States Census Bureau 2000 data, the poverty rate statewide is 11.7%. The rate in metropolitan counties (10.3%) is nearly 6 percentage points less than noncore counties (16.2%) as seen in figure Figure 7. Micropolitan counties are again in the middle with 14.9 percent of their population in poverty, but closer to the noncore county value than the metropolitan county value. It should be considered, however that the cost of living in many noncore areas may not be as high as the more urbanized metropolitan counties. The higher percentage of people earning income at or below the poverty level in noncore counties may not have as harsh of implications as a high poverty rate in a more urban area where costs of living are likely to be higher.

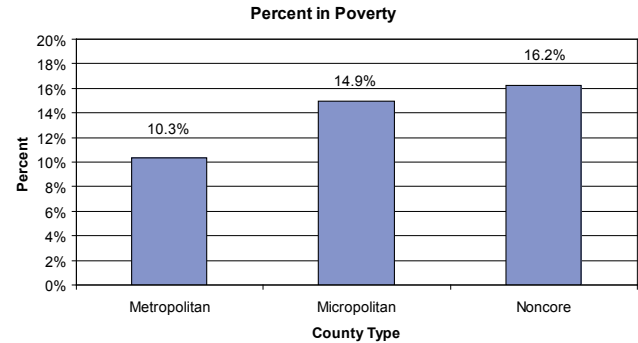


Figure 7. Percent of Population in Poverty, 2000

## Conclusion

Micropolitan is a new county classification that includes counties that were previously categorized as nonmetropolitan. Micropolitan counties have small cities of population 10,000 to 49,999 and surrounding counties that are linked through commuting ties. In many ways, these micropolitan counties are rural trade centers and are very important to the overall vitality of rural America.

In every category examined here, with the exception of population change, micropolitan county demographics fall between those of the metropolitan and noncore areas. Micropolitan counties represent a distinct type of county within Missouri, with opportunities for regional growth and prosperity to benefit all nonmetropolitan areas. In a following brief, economic indicators will be examined across the three types of counties to further characterize the uniqueness of these designated areas.

### Suggested Citation

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