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What Census Data tell us about demographic change in the US South

80th Annual Southern Legislative Conference | Lexington, KY | July 11, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

80th Southern Legislative Conference
Lexington, KY | July 11, 2026

Today

GOVERNMENT STAFF TRACK 1

Saturday, July 11 | 2:30-3:30 PM

What Census Data tell us about changes in the US South

Five years after the 2020 Census, new data continue to show how the South is changing. As planning for the 2030 Census begins, the American Community Survey and other Census Bureau data provide insight into demographic, economic, and geographic trends across Southern states. This session explores migration, aging populations, housing demand, workforce dynamics, and changing urban-rural relationships.

Tomorrow

GOVERNMENT STAFF TRACK 2

Sunday, July 12 | 9:30-10:30 AM

Finding and Evaluating Data to Inform the Policy Making Process

Legislative staff are often asked to find reliable data quickly to inform policy decisions. This session explores how to define policy questions, identify credible sources, assess methodology and limitations, and weigh tradeoffs among



Agenda

- Where were we in 2020?
- Trivia and Discussion
- What has changed since 2020?
- Components of Population Change
 - Births, Deaths, and Migration
 - Urban and rural population shifts
- Planning for the 2030 Census – what can states do?

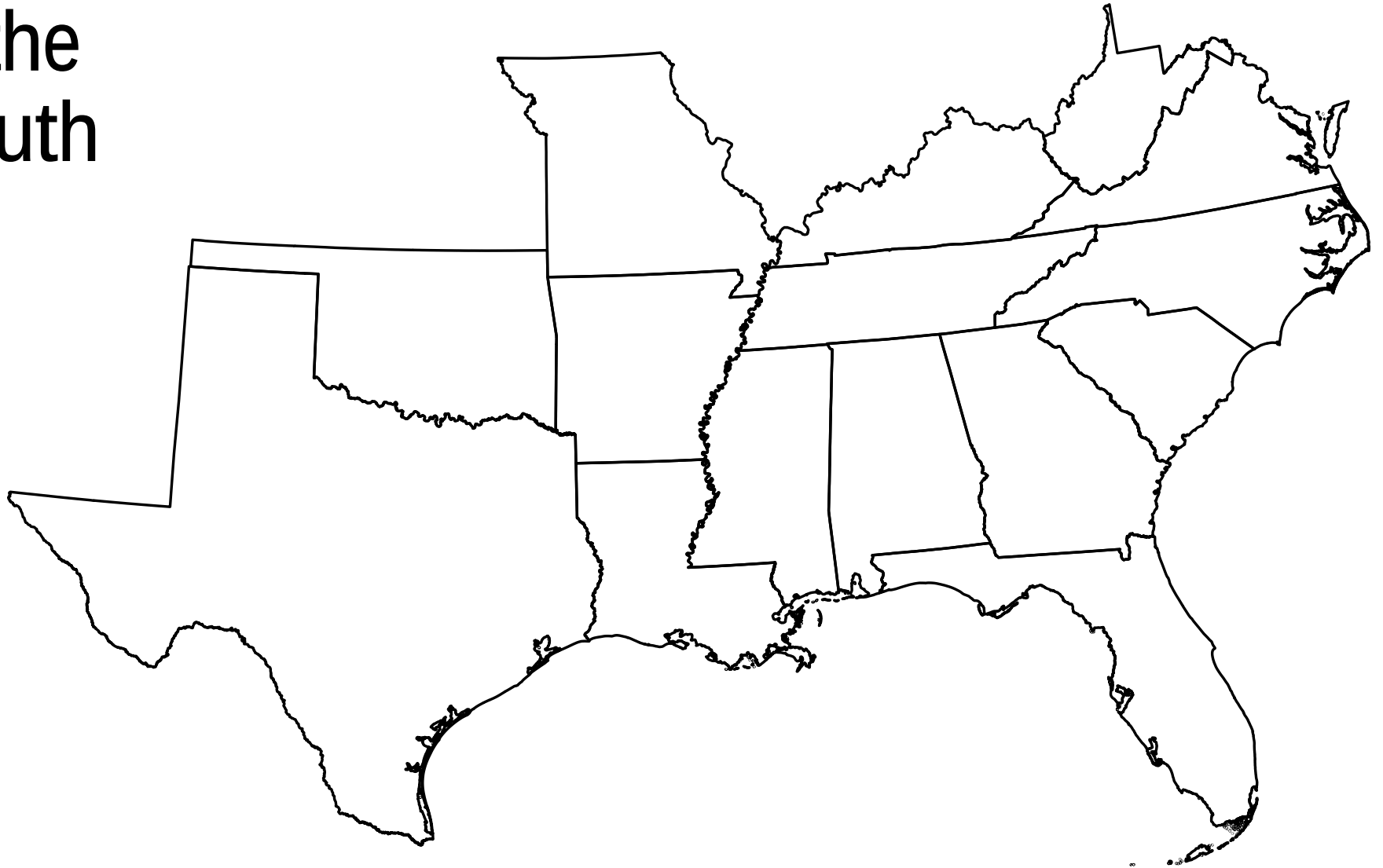


Where were we in 2020?





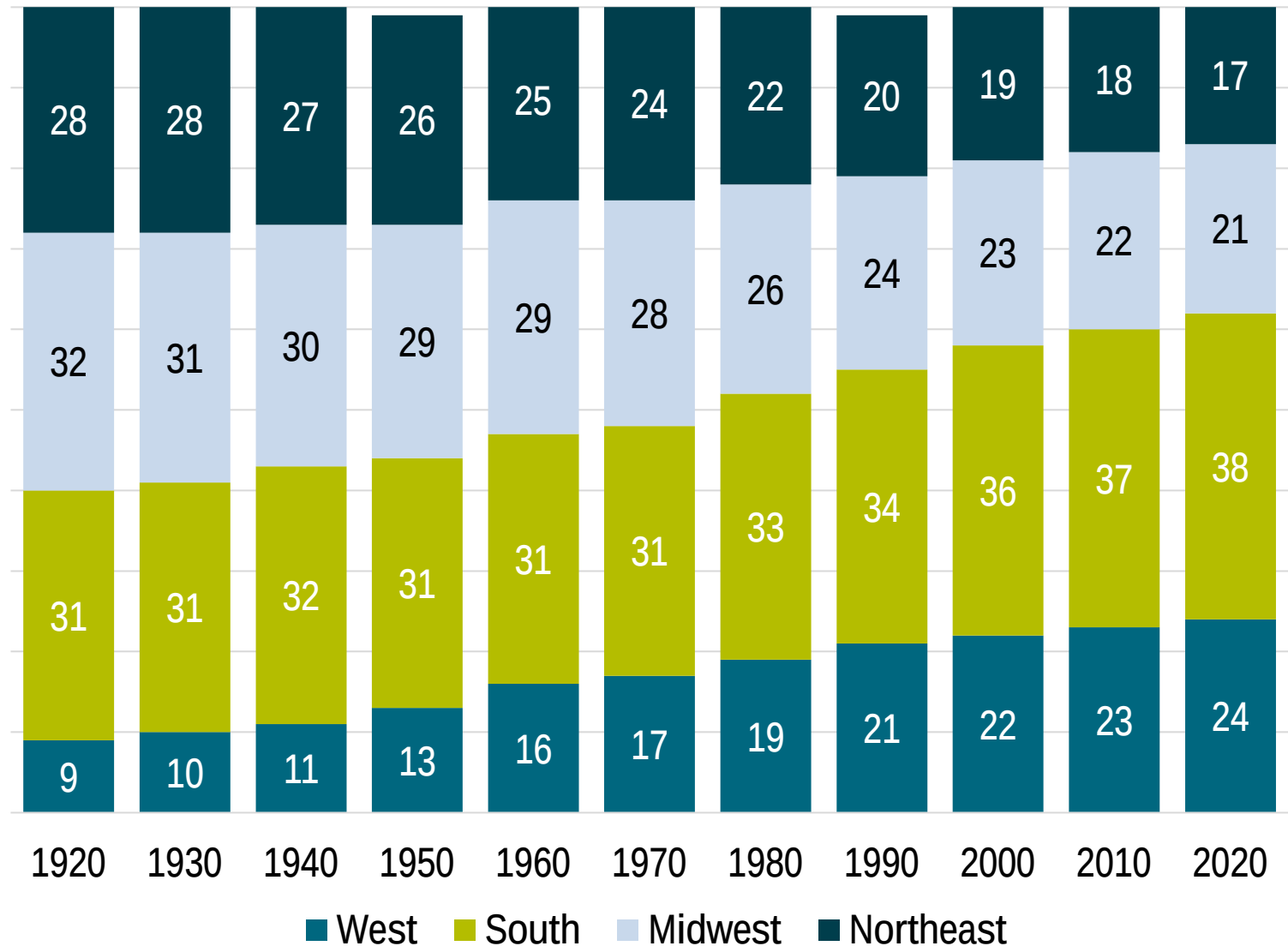
15 States in the (CSG) US South



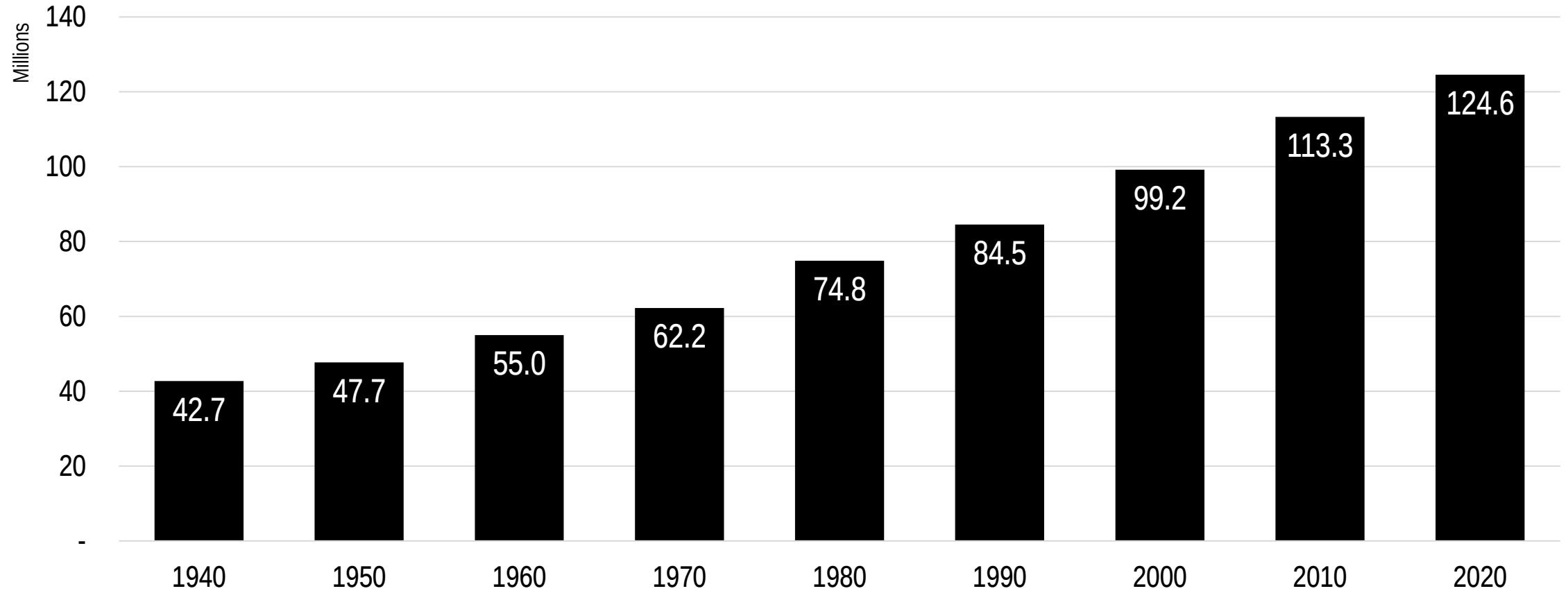
Significant shift to the South and West during the 20th Century

- Nearly two out of five US residents live in the South today

Share of Population Across Four US Regions, 1920-2020

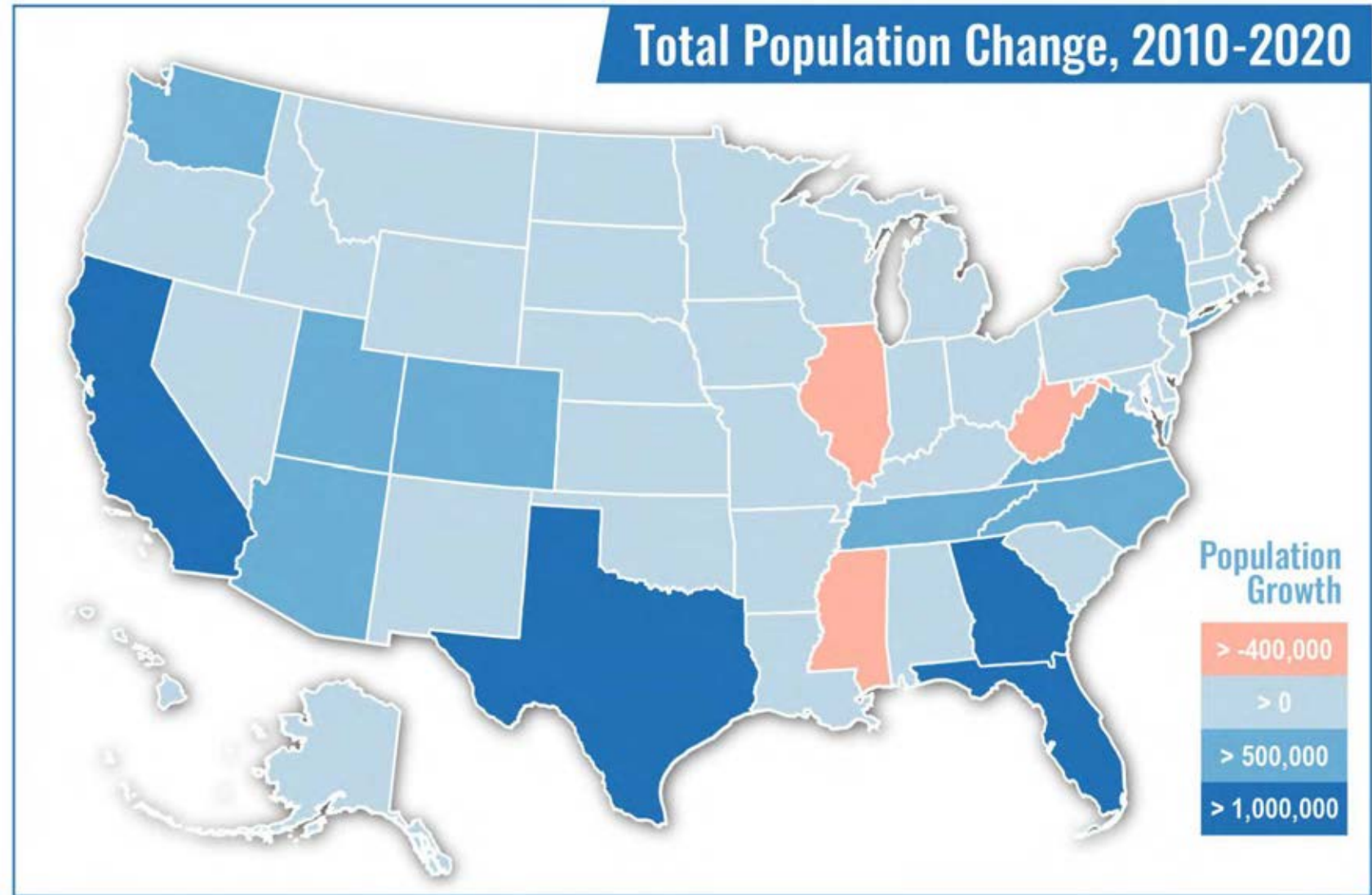


Population growth in the US South, 1940-2020

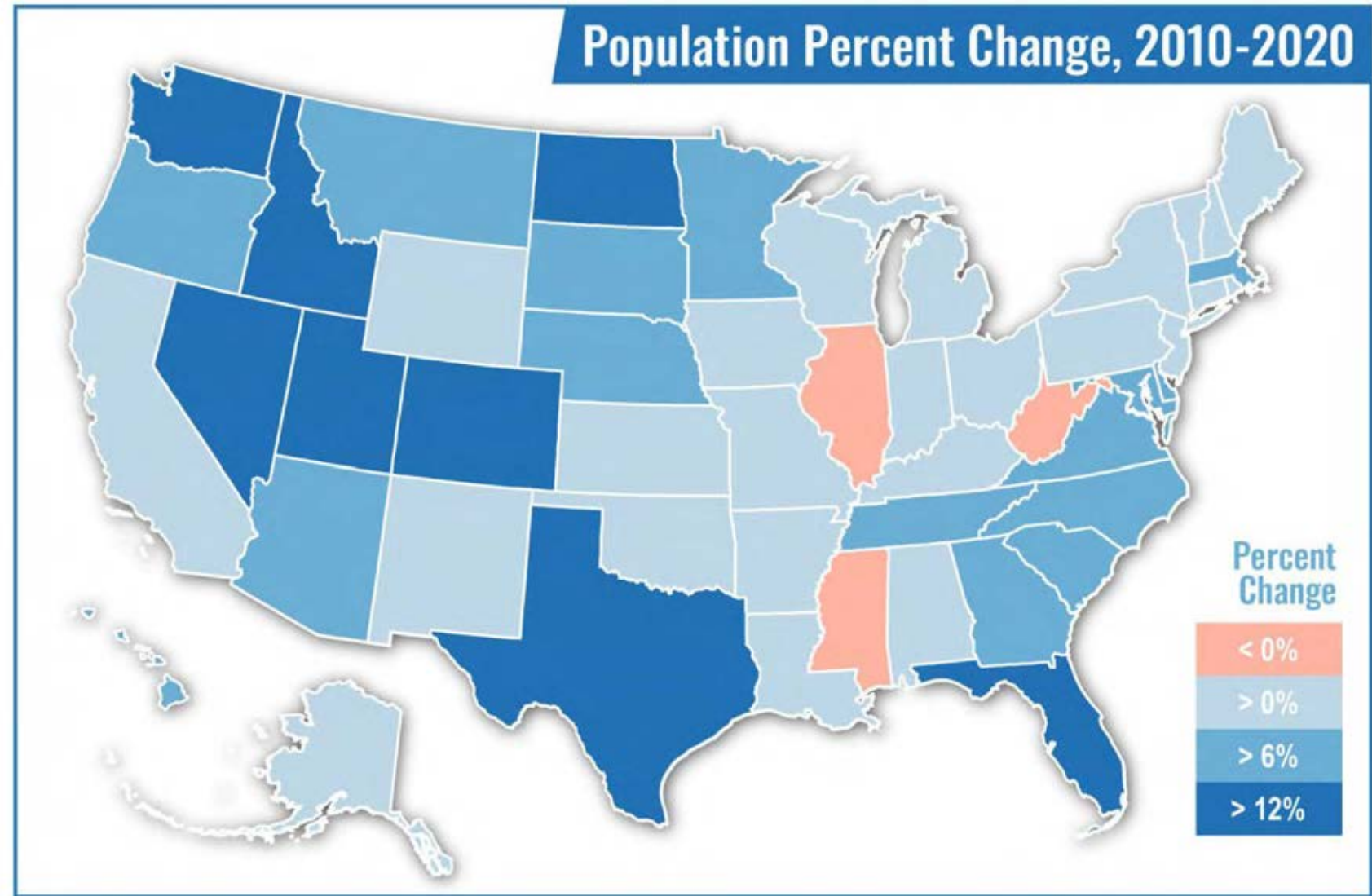


Three southern states grew by more than 1 million people in the 2010s.

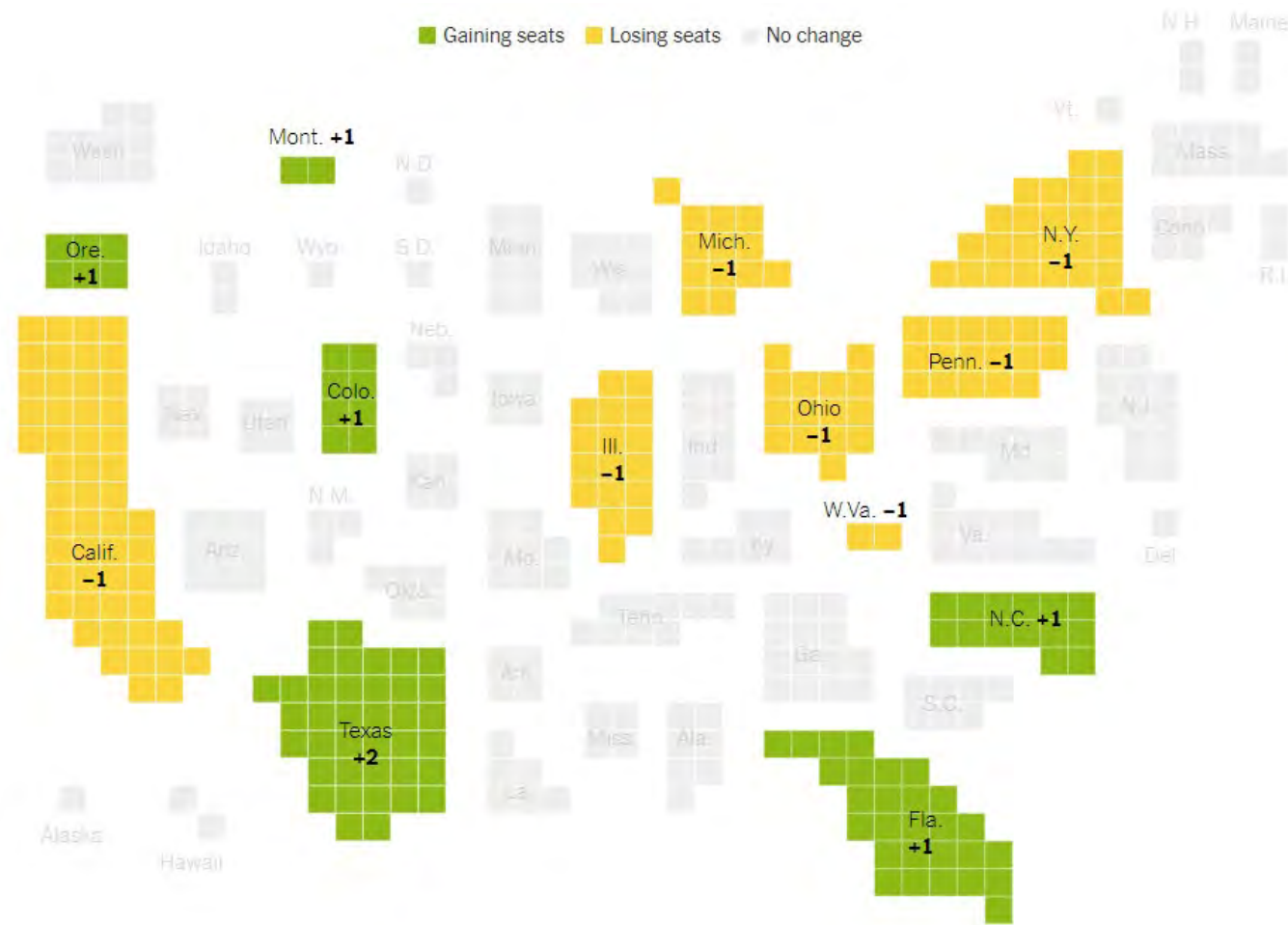
Meanwhile, two southern states lost population



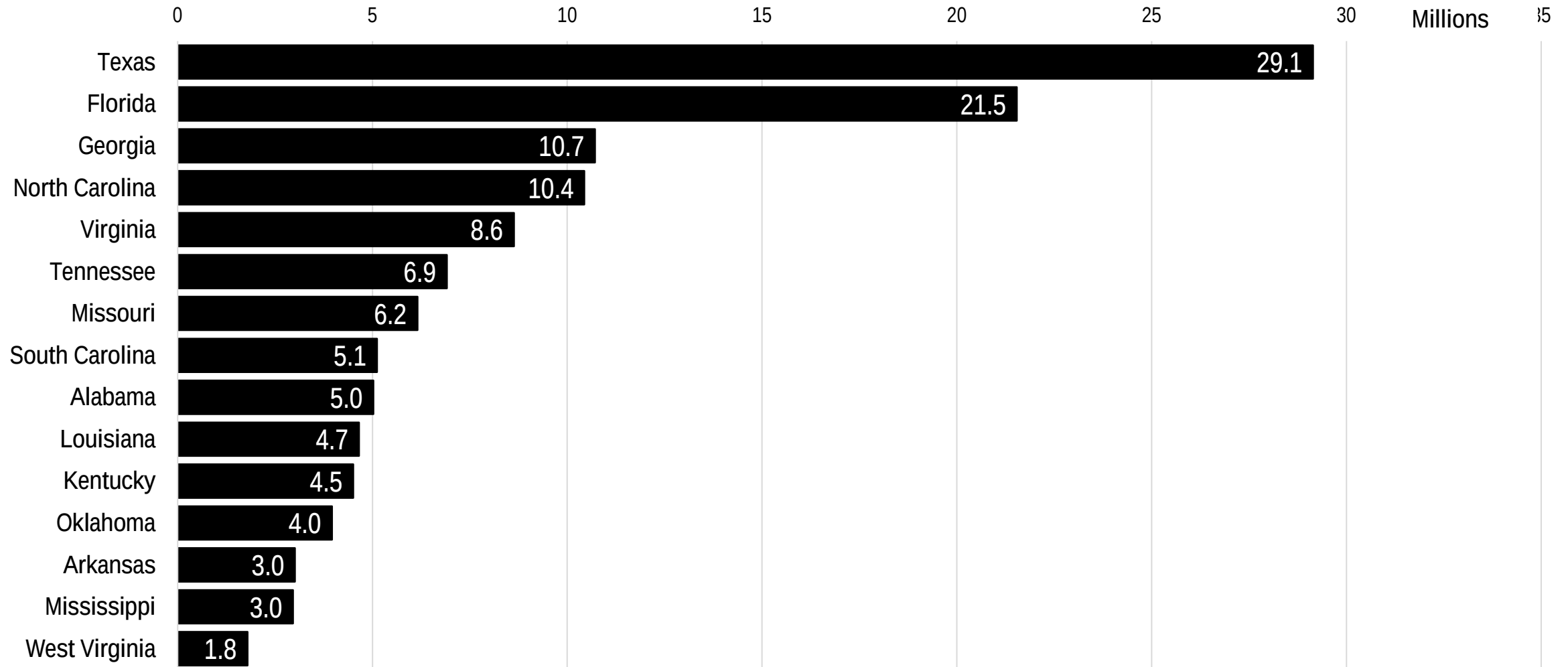
South Region
grew at 10%
compared to
national growth
rate of 7.4% in
2010s



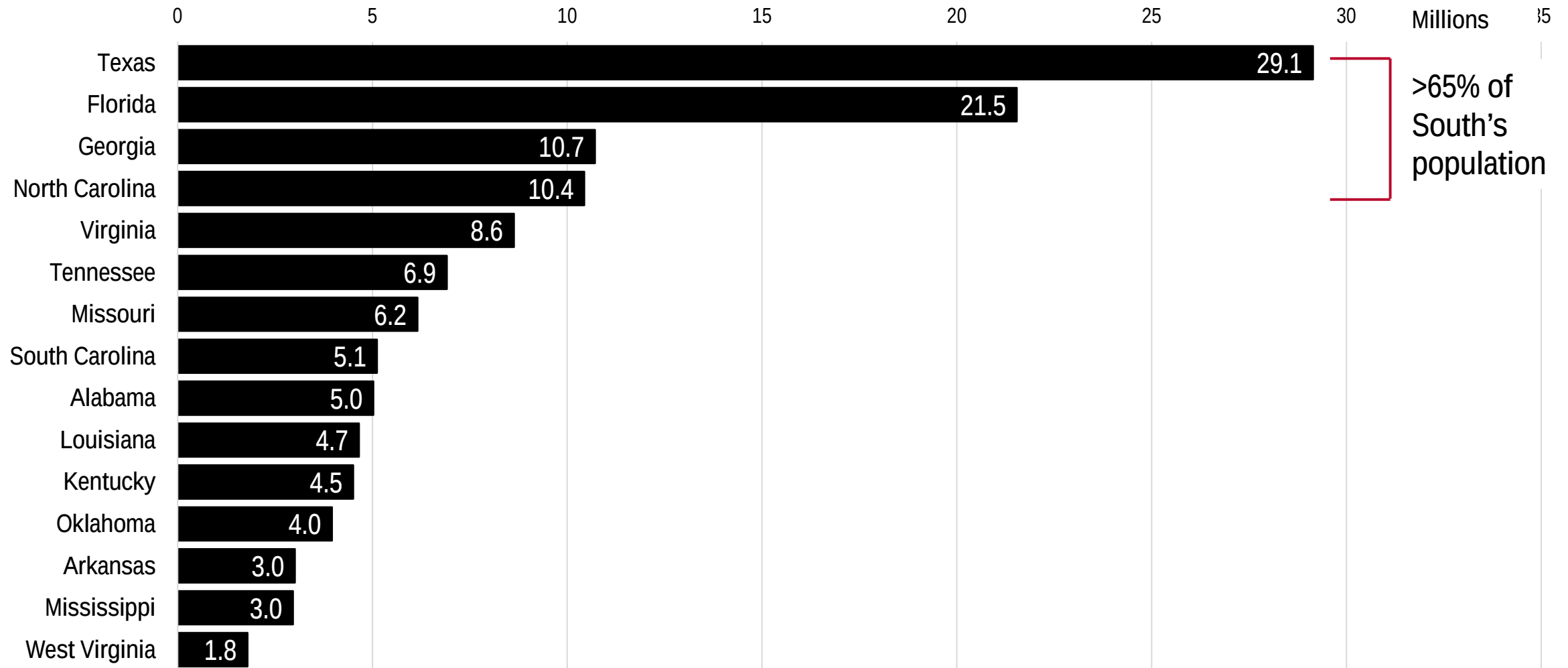
Three Southern states gained house seats



Population of Southern States, 2020 Census

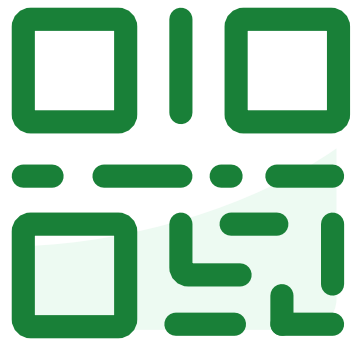


Population of Southern States, 2020 Census



Trivia





**Join at slido.com
#SLC-Census**



What best describes your role in government



**What do you hope to take away
from today's Census and
demographics presentation**



**How many CSG South states have
a population of less than 6 million
people**



How many CSG South states rank among the top 10 most populous in the US?



What County are we in currently?



What CSG South state has grown the fastest since 2020?



Which CSG South state grew the fastest between July 1, 2024 and July 1, 2025?

What has changed in the 2020s?



Vintage 2024 Estimates Release

The screenshot shows the United States Census Bureau website. The top navigation bar includes links for Partners, Researchers, Educators, Survey Respondents, News, NAICS Codes, Jobs, About Us, Contact Us, and Help. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with Topics, Data & Maps, Surveys & Programs, and Resource Library. A search bar is located on the right side of the secondary navigation bar. The main content area features a language selector set to English. Below the selector, a breadcrumb trail reads: [U.S. Census.gov](#) / [Newsroom](#) / [News Releases](#) / [Migration Drives Highest Population Growth in Decades](#). The headline for the press release is "Net International Migration Drives Highest U.S. Population Growth in Decades", dated Thursday, December 19, 2024. The press release number is CB24-213. On the left side of the page, there is a "Within Newsroom" sidebar with links to About, Facts for Features, News Releases, Press Kits, Stats for Stories, and Tip Sheets.

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English

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For Immediate Release: Thursday, December 19, 2024

Net International Migration Drives Highest U.S. Population Growth in Decades

December 19, 2024
Press Release Number: CB24-213

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Vintage 2025 Estimates Release

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English

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For Immediate Release: Tuesday, January 27, 2026

U.S. Population Growth Slows Due to Historic Decline in Net International Migration

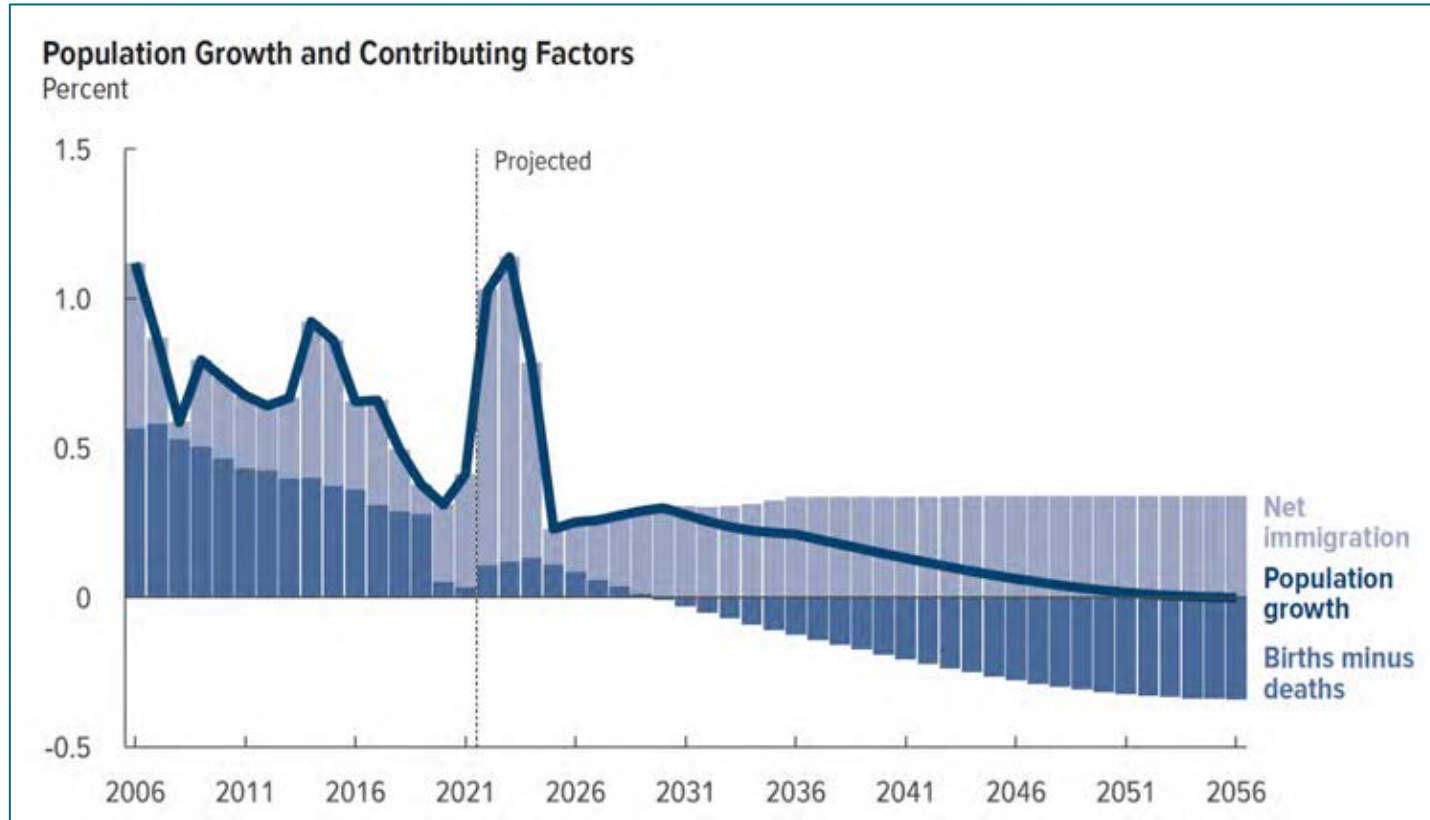
January 27, 2026
Press Release Number: CB26-20

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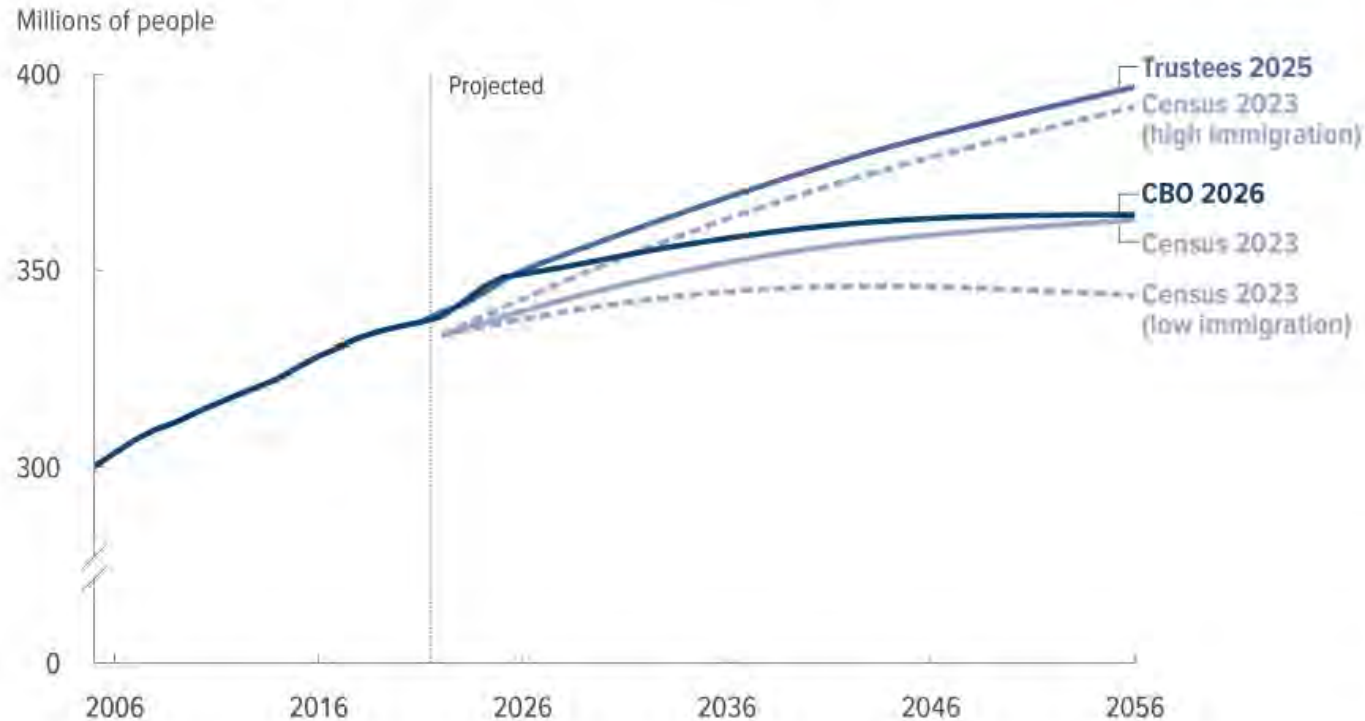
The Demographic Outlook: 2026 to 2056



CBO's 2026 Demographic Outlook projects US Population will grow from 349 million in 2026 to 364 million in 2055

Downward revision of 8 million people in 2055 projection from 2025 Demographic Outlook

CBO's and Other Forecasters' Projections of the Size of the Population



For the next few years, CBO's projections of the size of the population are similar to the Social Security trustees' and larger than the Census Bureau's. For later years, CBO's population projections are smaller than those of the trustees, mainly because of differences in projected fertility rates, and larger than those for the Census Bureau's central projection and low-immigration scenario.

The Census Bureau's projection is for the resident population (residents of the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia). CBO's and the Social Security trustees' projections are for the Social Security area population (the resident population plus U.S. citizens and others living abroad who are eligible for Social Security benefits). See Congressional Budget Office, *The Demographic Outlook: 2026 to 2056* (January 2026), www.cbo.gov/publication/61879.

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For Immediate Release: Thursday, November 09, 2023

U.S. Population Projected to Begin Declining in Second Half of Century

November 09, 2023

Press Release Number CB23-189

NOV. 9, 2023 — The U.S. population is projected to reach a high of nearly 370 million in 2080 before edging downward to 366 million in 2100. By 2100, the total U.S. resident population is projected to increase by only 9.7% from 2022, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau population projections released today. The projections provide possible scenarios of population change for the nation through the end of the century.

The 2023 National Population Projections is an update to the last series of projections, published in 2017, to account for the impact of COVID-19 and to reflect the results of the 2020 Census through its inclusion of [the Vintage 2022 National Population Estimates](#) as a base. It also extends the population projections to 2100, the first time since 2000 that the Census Bureau projections have stretched this far into [the future](#).

"In an ever-changing world, understanding population dynamics is crucial for shaping policies and planning resources," stated Sandra Johnson, a demographer at the Census Bureau.

"The U.S. has experienced notable shifts in the components of population change over the last five years," she explained. "Some of these, like the increases in mortality caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, are expected to be short term while

Share



Contact

Public Information Office
301-763-3030 or
877-861-2010 (U.S. and Canada only)
pio@census.gov

Related Information

 [Press kit](#)

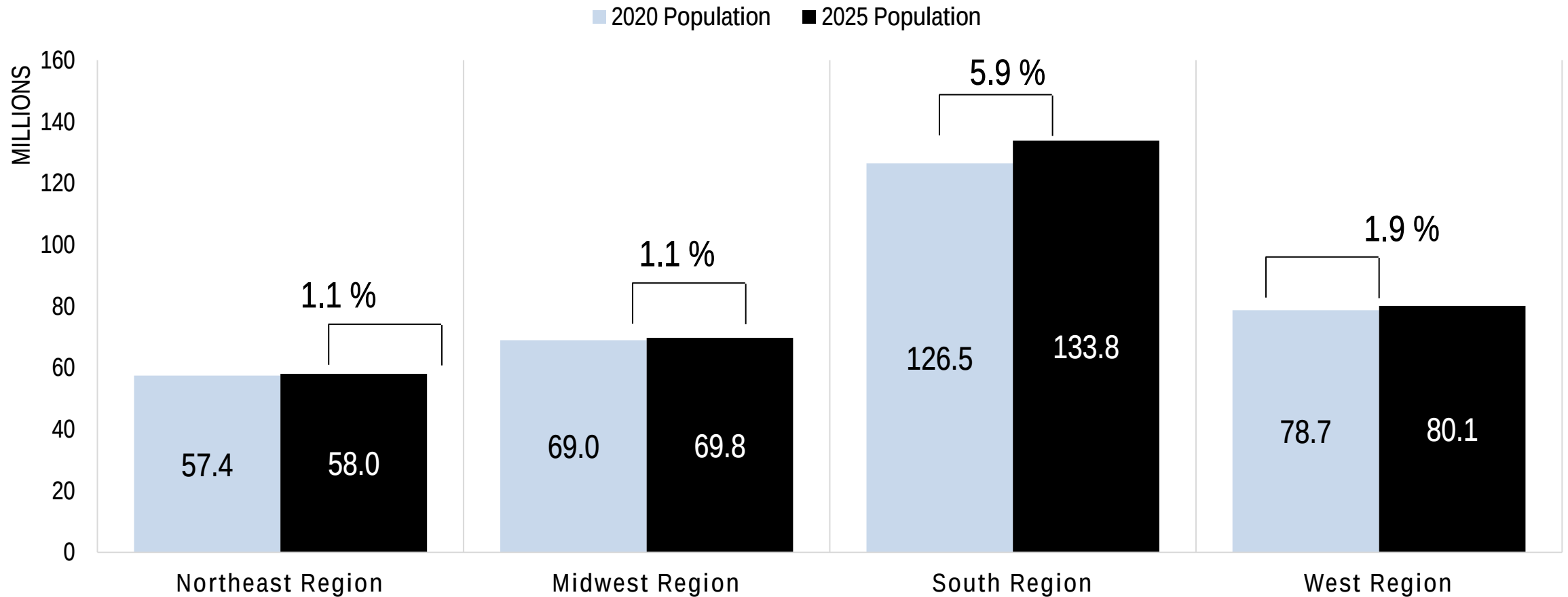
**Census Bureau to
Announce Plans for the
2026 Census Test**

SAVE THE DATE
Tuesday, April 30 at 2 p.m. EDT

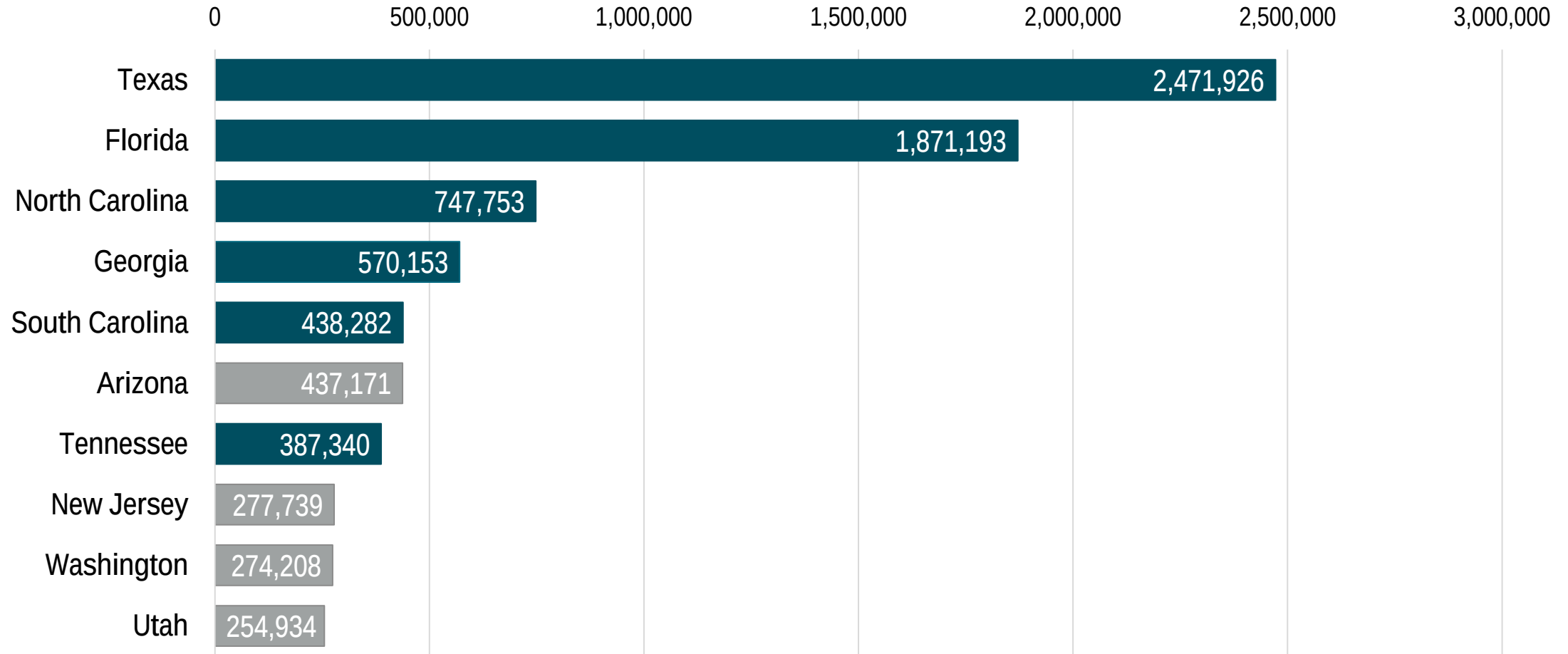
Population Change in the 2020s



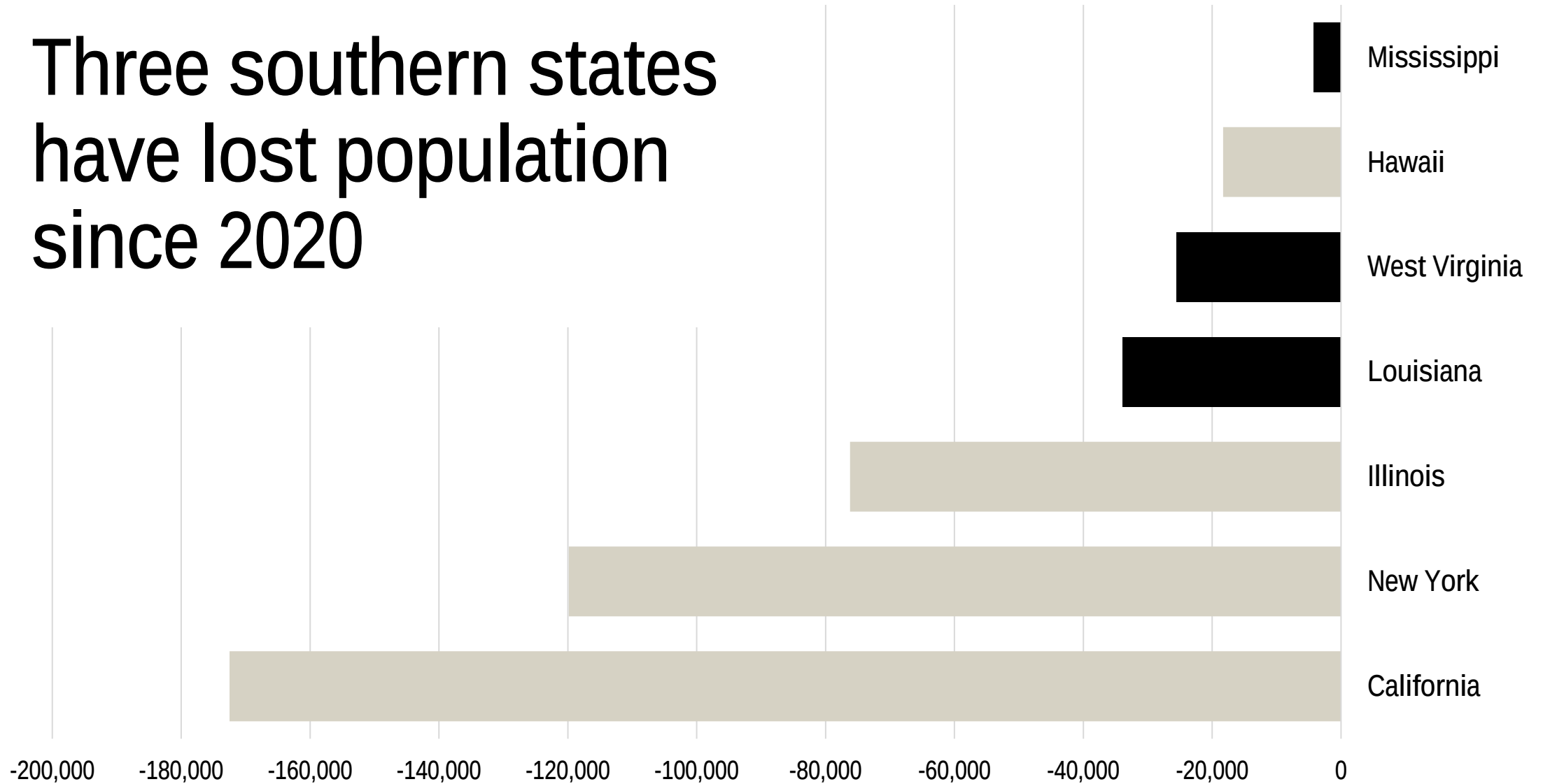
Population growth in US South continues to outpace rest of country in 2020s



Six of top 10 states in numeric growth since 2020 are in the US south



Three southern states have lost population since 2020

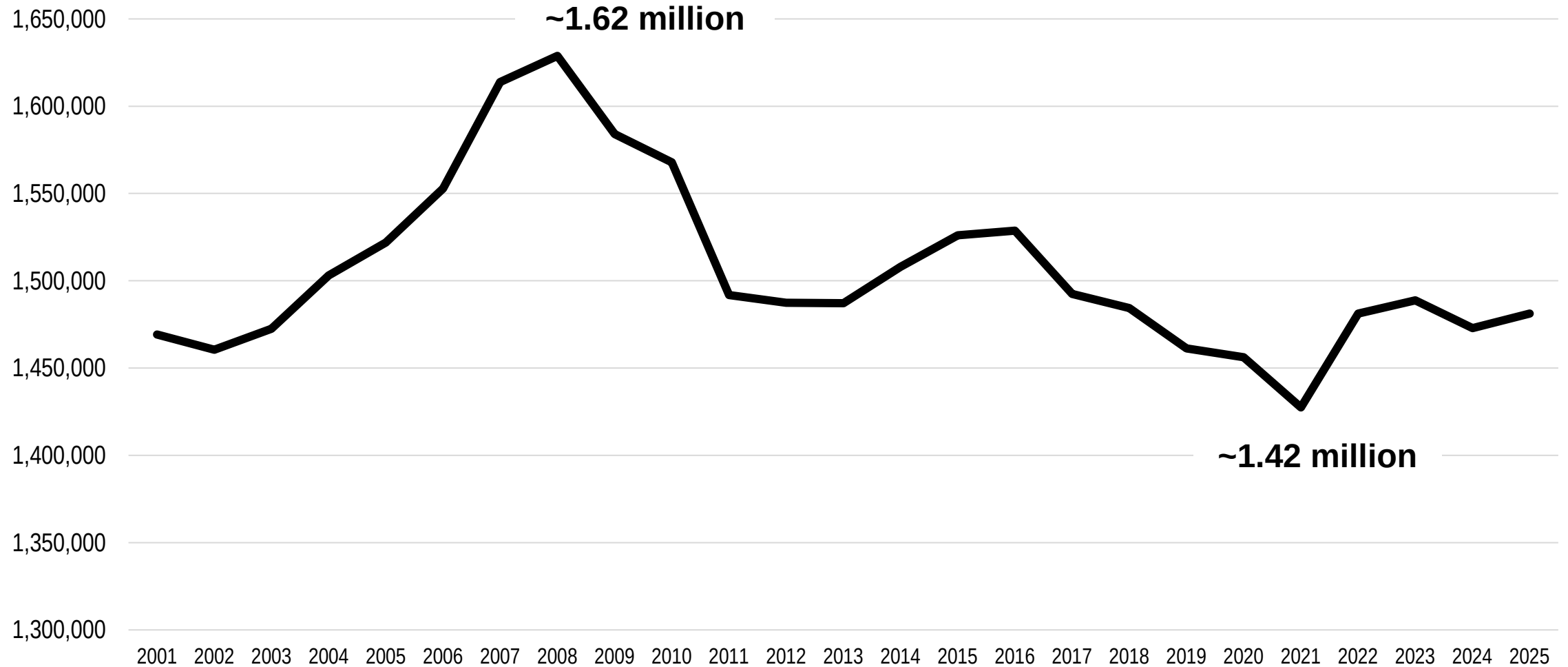


Three Components of Population Change

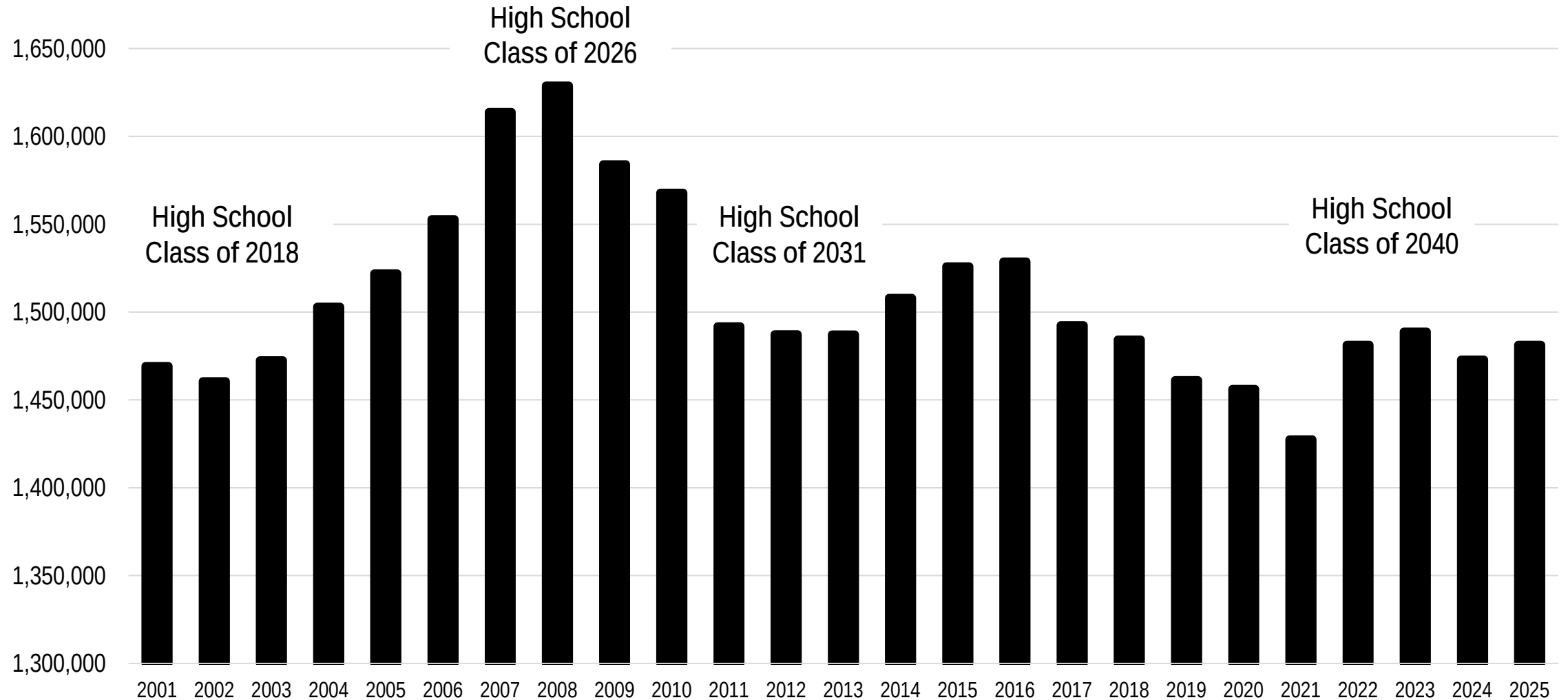
1. Births
2. Deaths
3. Migration



Births Decline in wake of Great Recession



Births Decline in wake of Great Recession



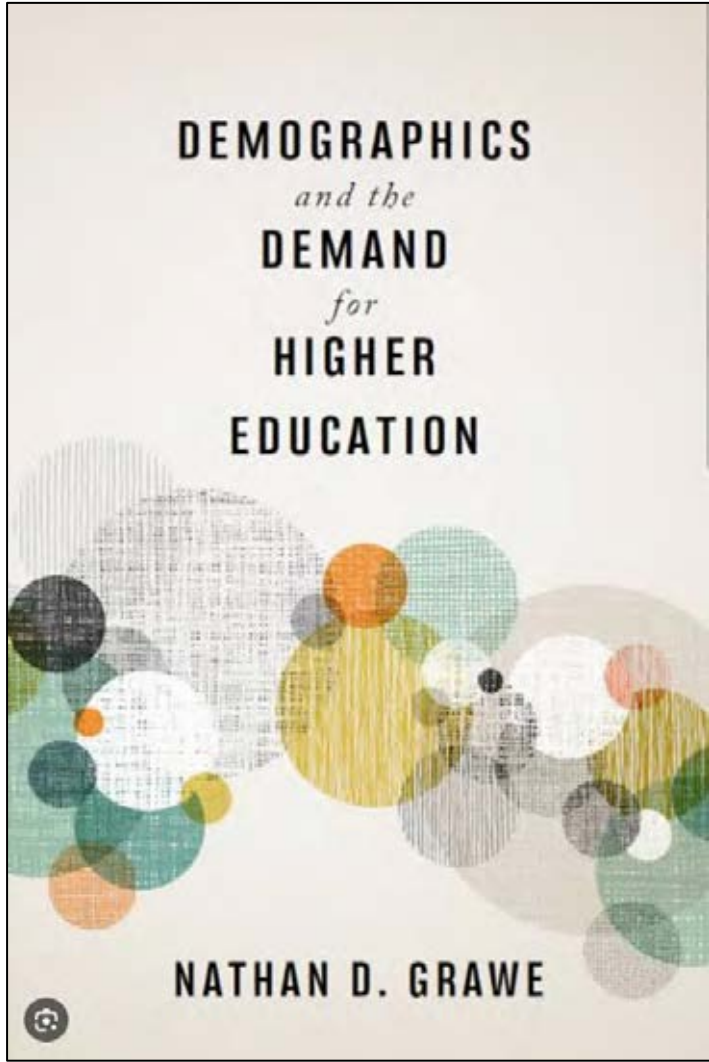
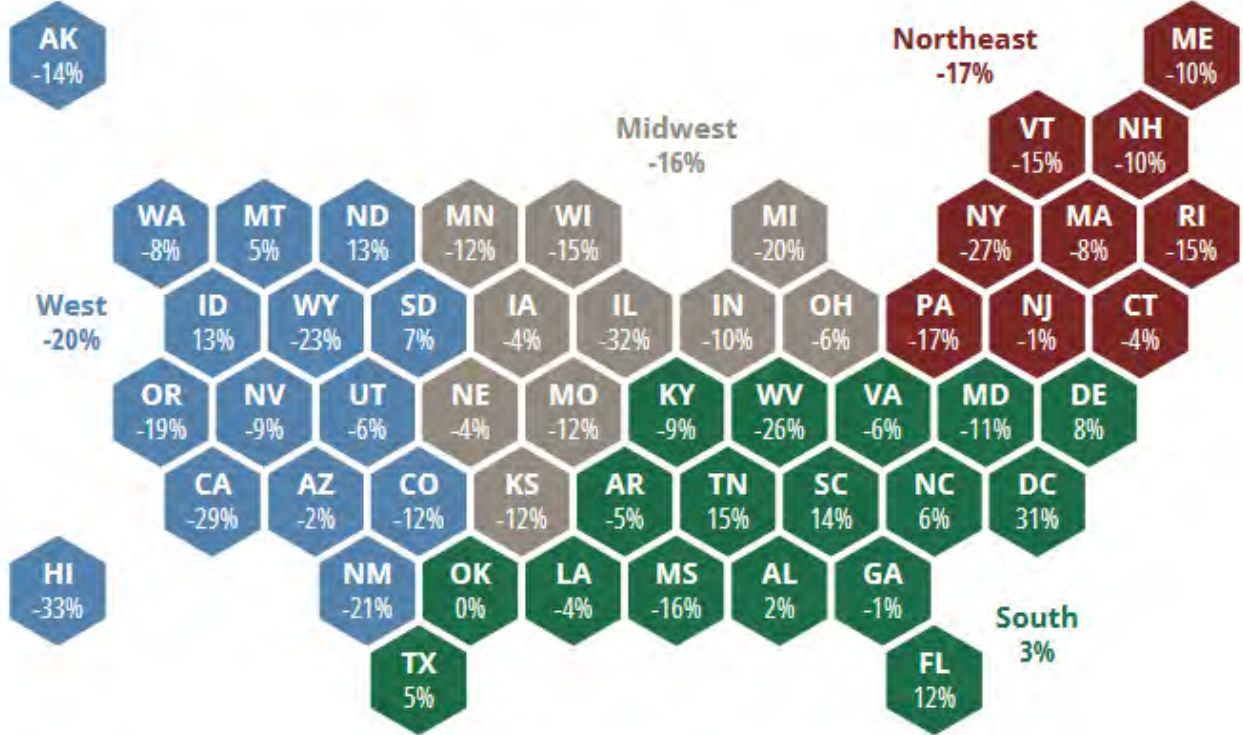


Figure 3. Projected percent change in high school graduates, 2023 to 2041

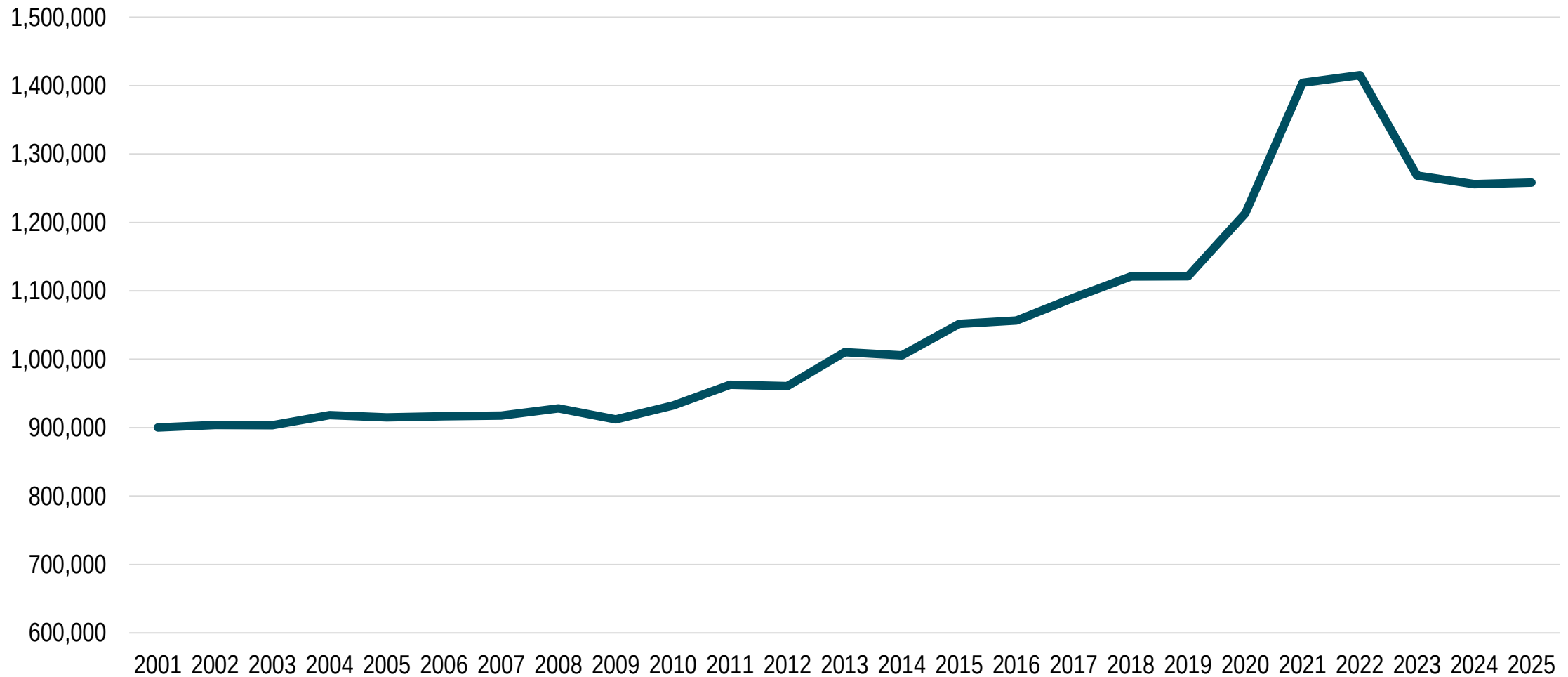


Three Components of Population Change

1. Births
2. Deaths
3. Migration



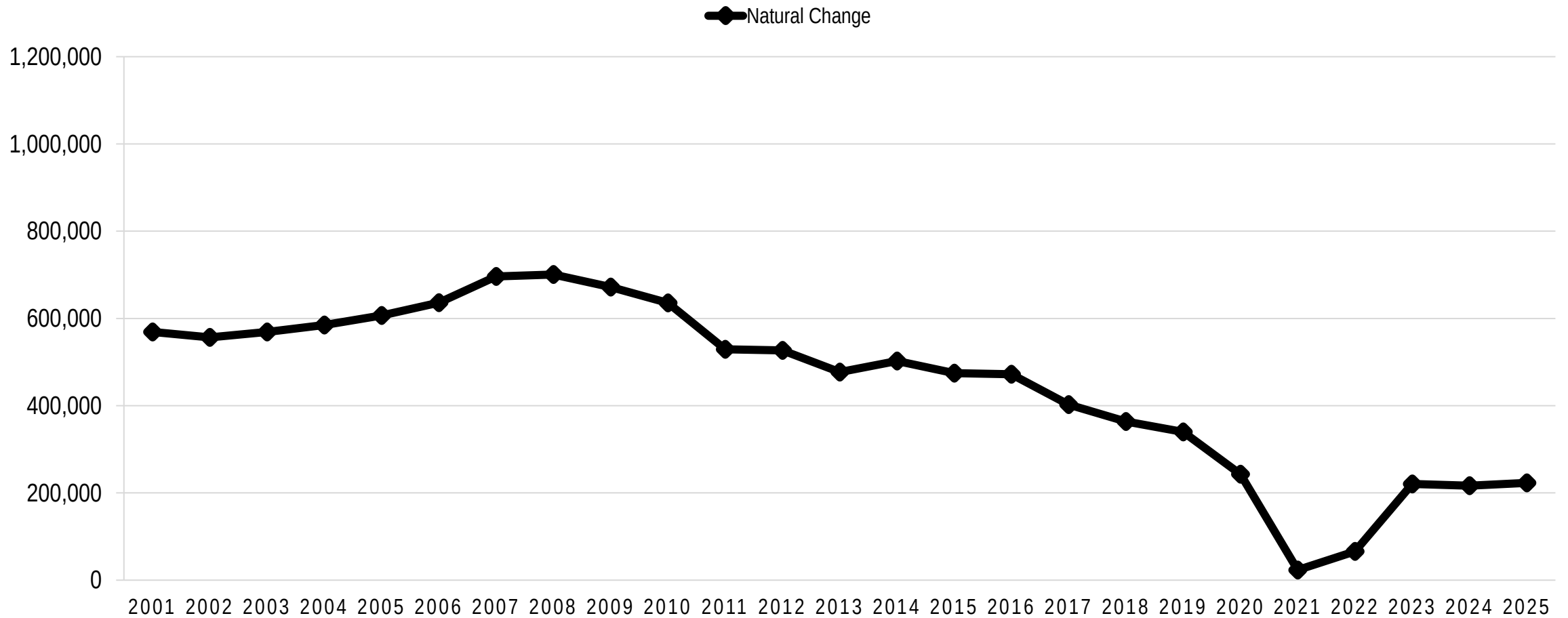
Number of Deaths increase over past decade



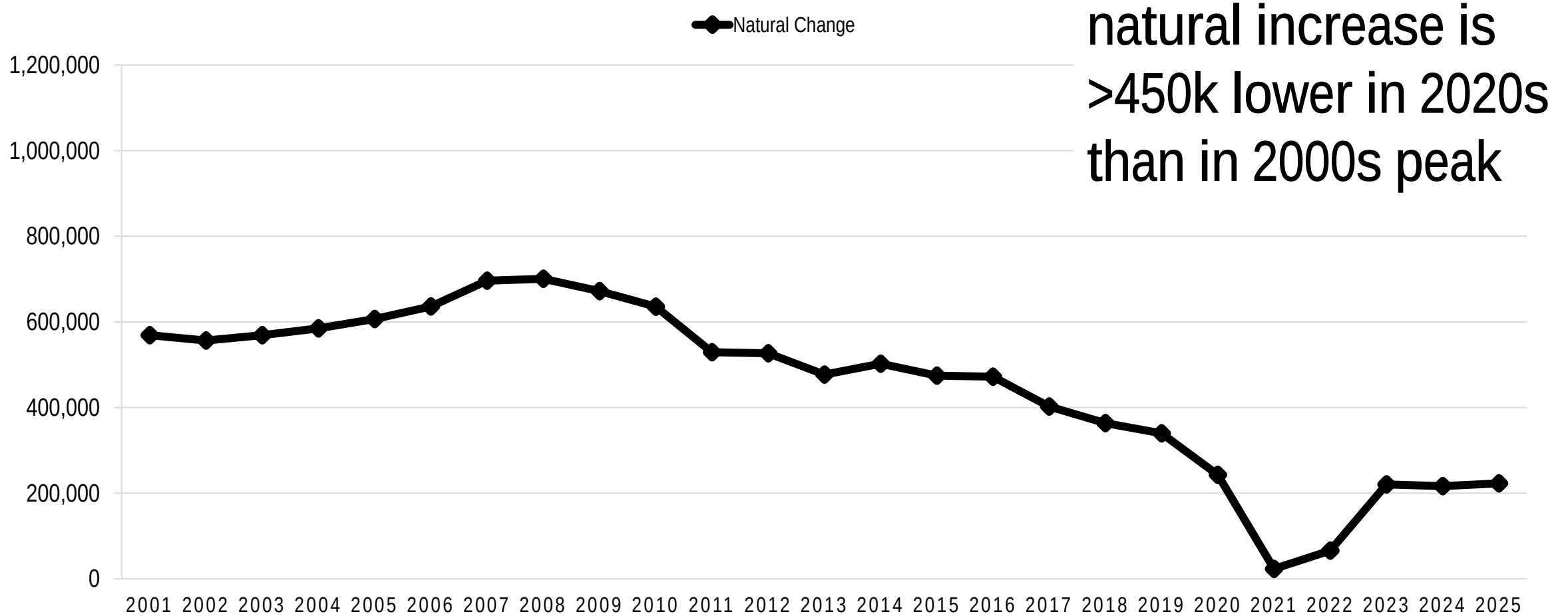
Components of Population Change in the US South



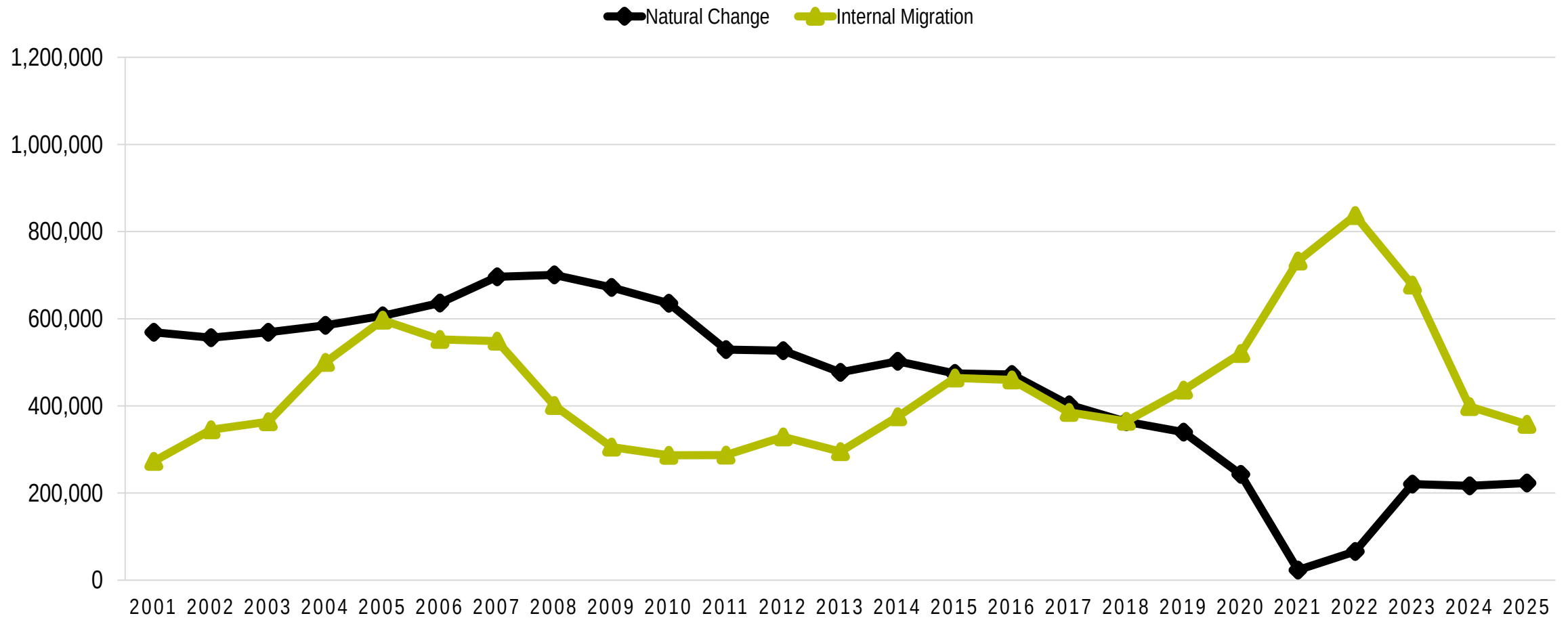
Natural Increase declines in the US South



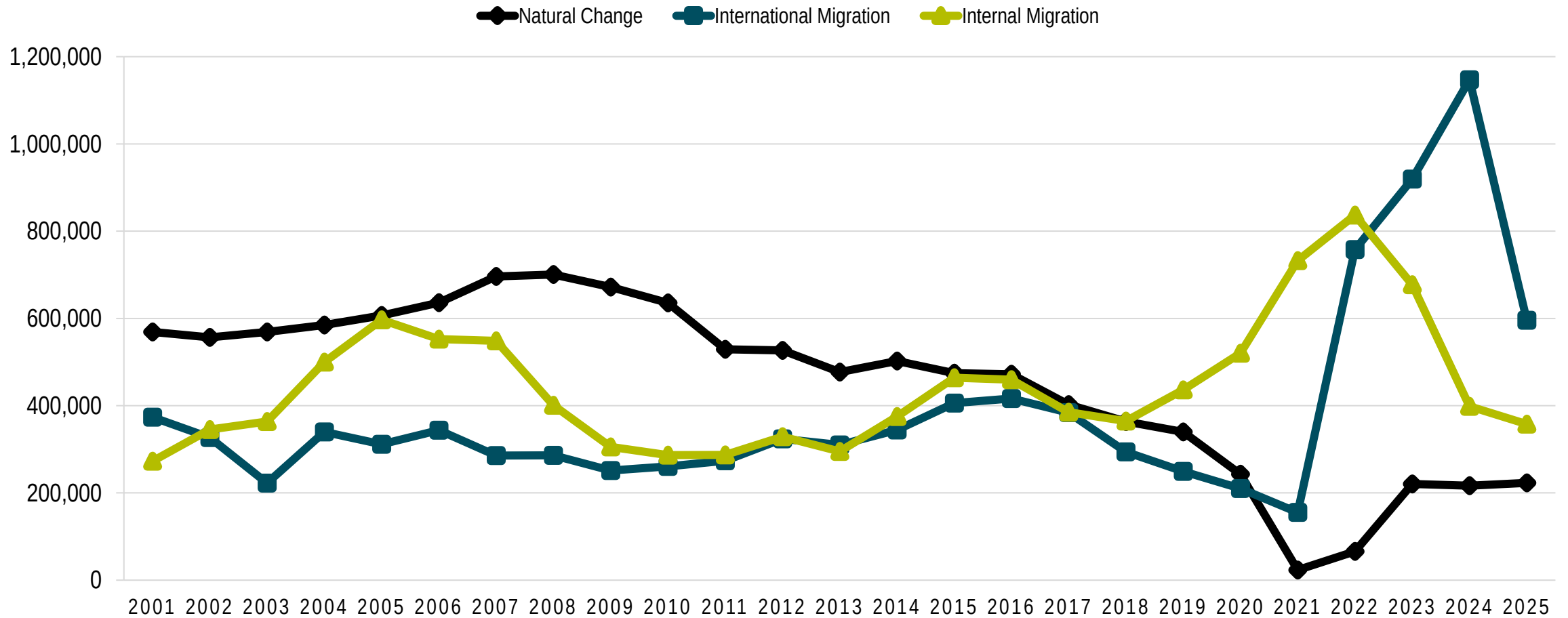
Natural Increase declines in the US South



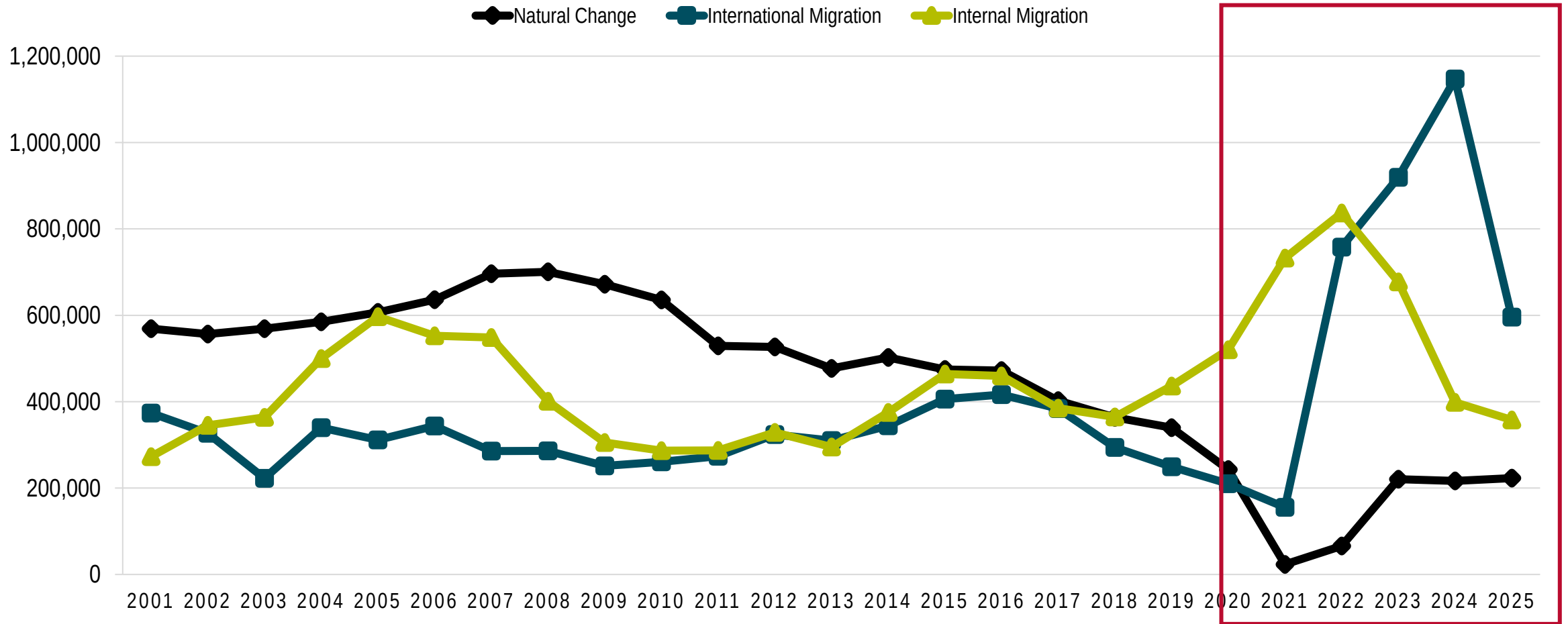
Domestic Migration consistently exceeds 200k; peaks at ~800k in 2022



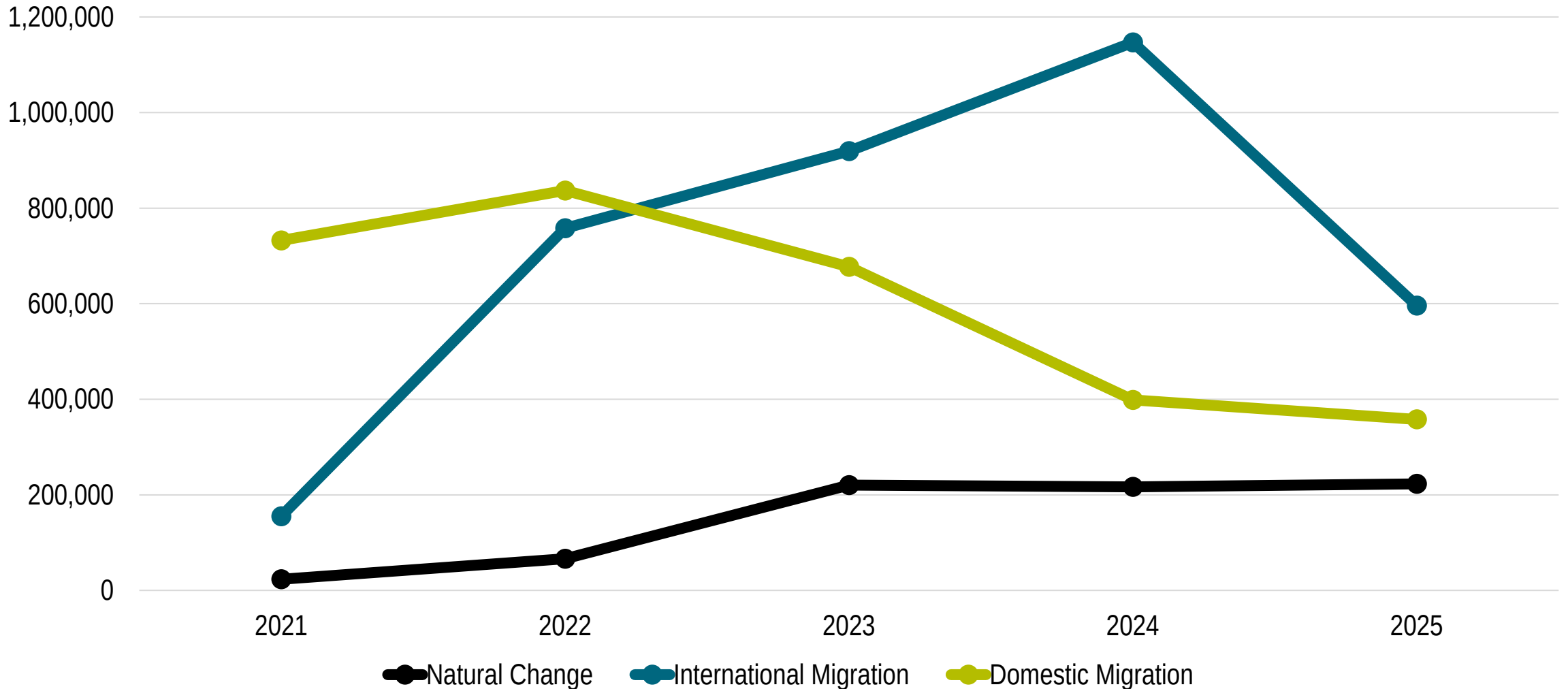
International Migration Leads Population Growth in 2020s



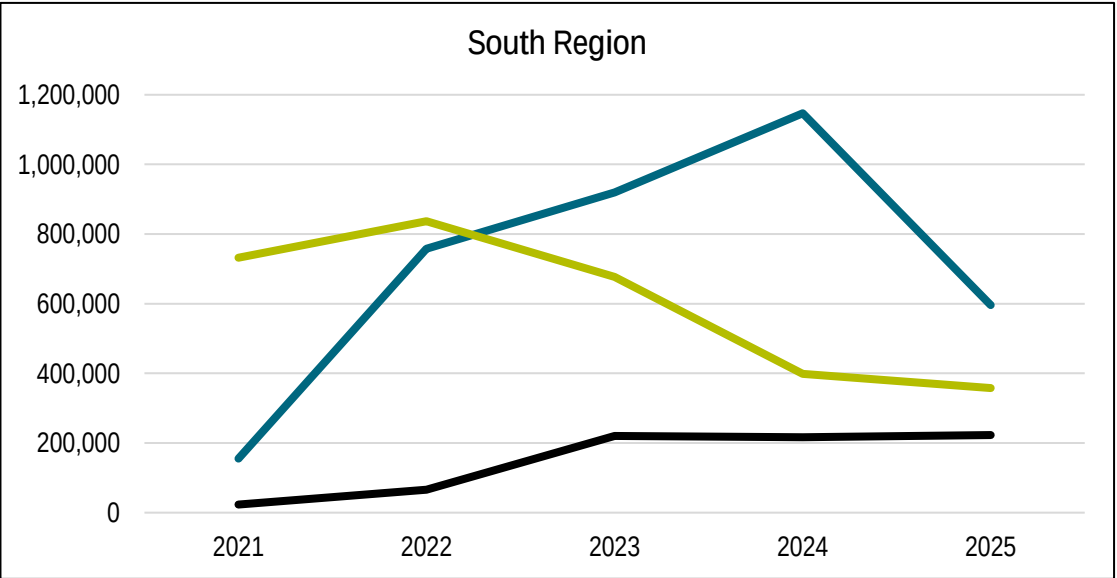
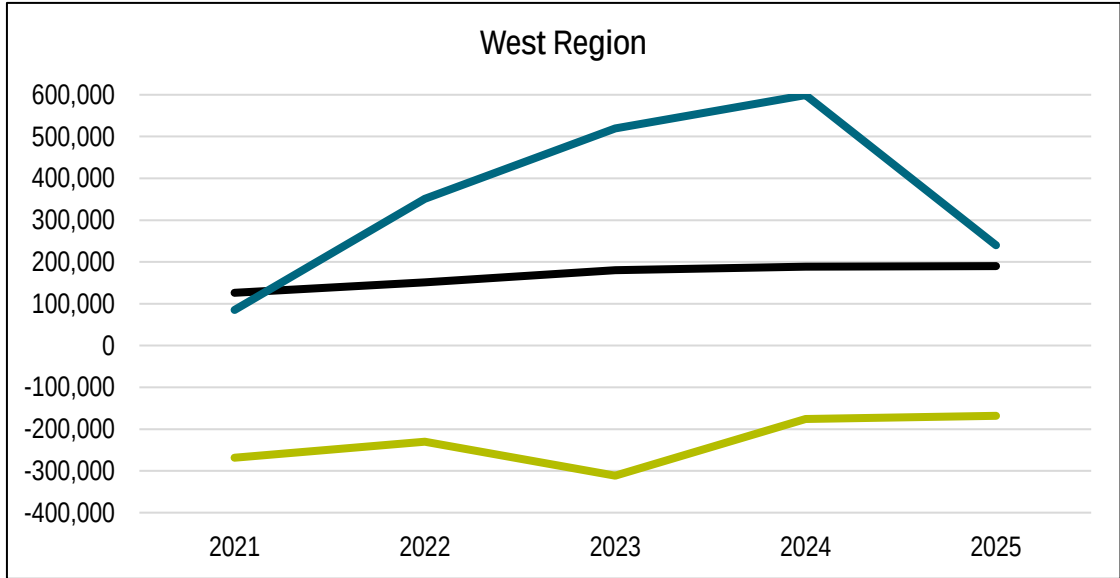
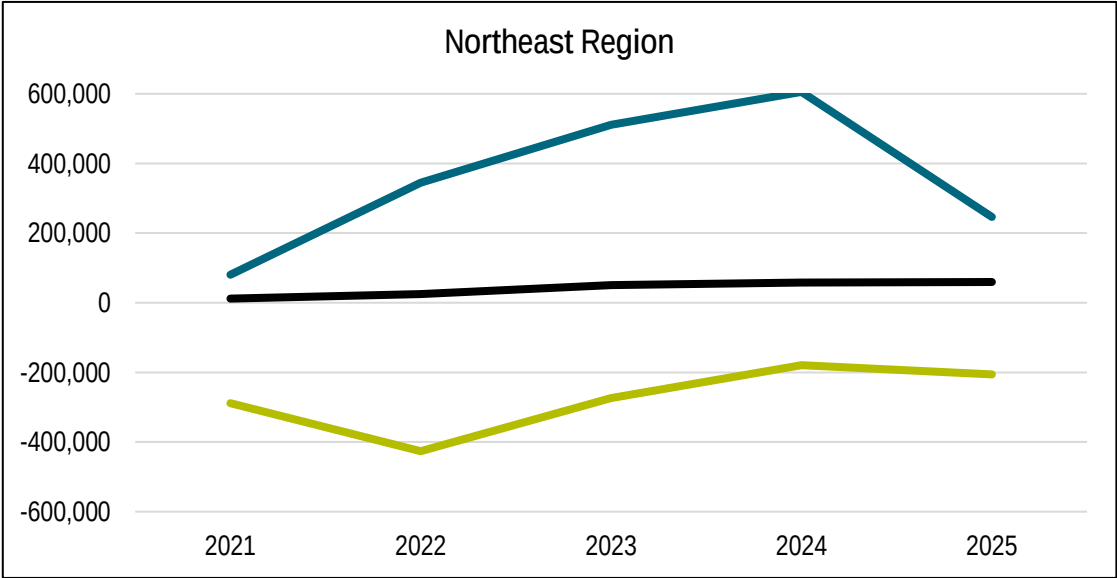
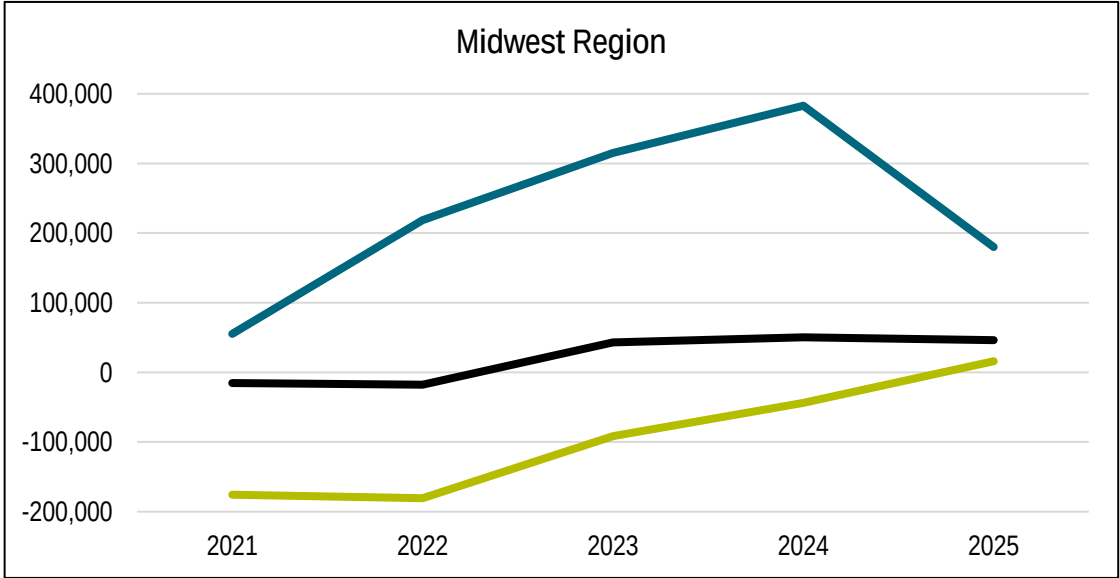
International Migration Leads Population Growth in 2020s



Population Change in the 2020s



Source: US Census Bureau, Vintage 2025 Population Estimates



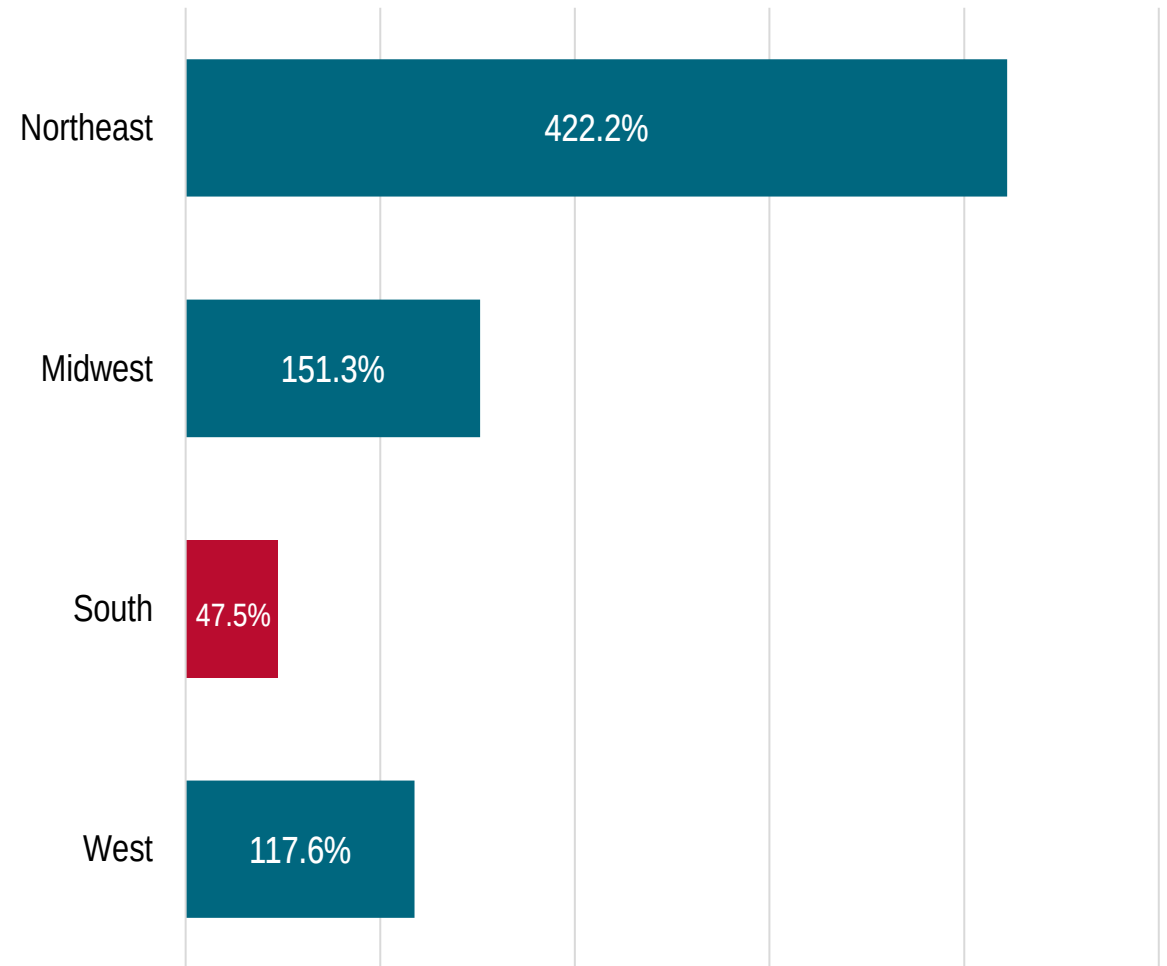
— Natural Change — International Migration — Domestic Migration

Source: US Census Bureau, Vintage 2025 Population Estimates

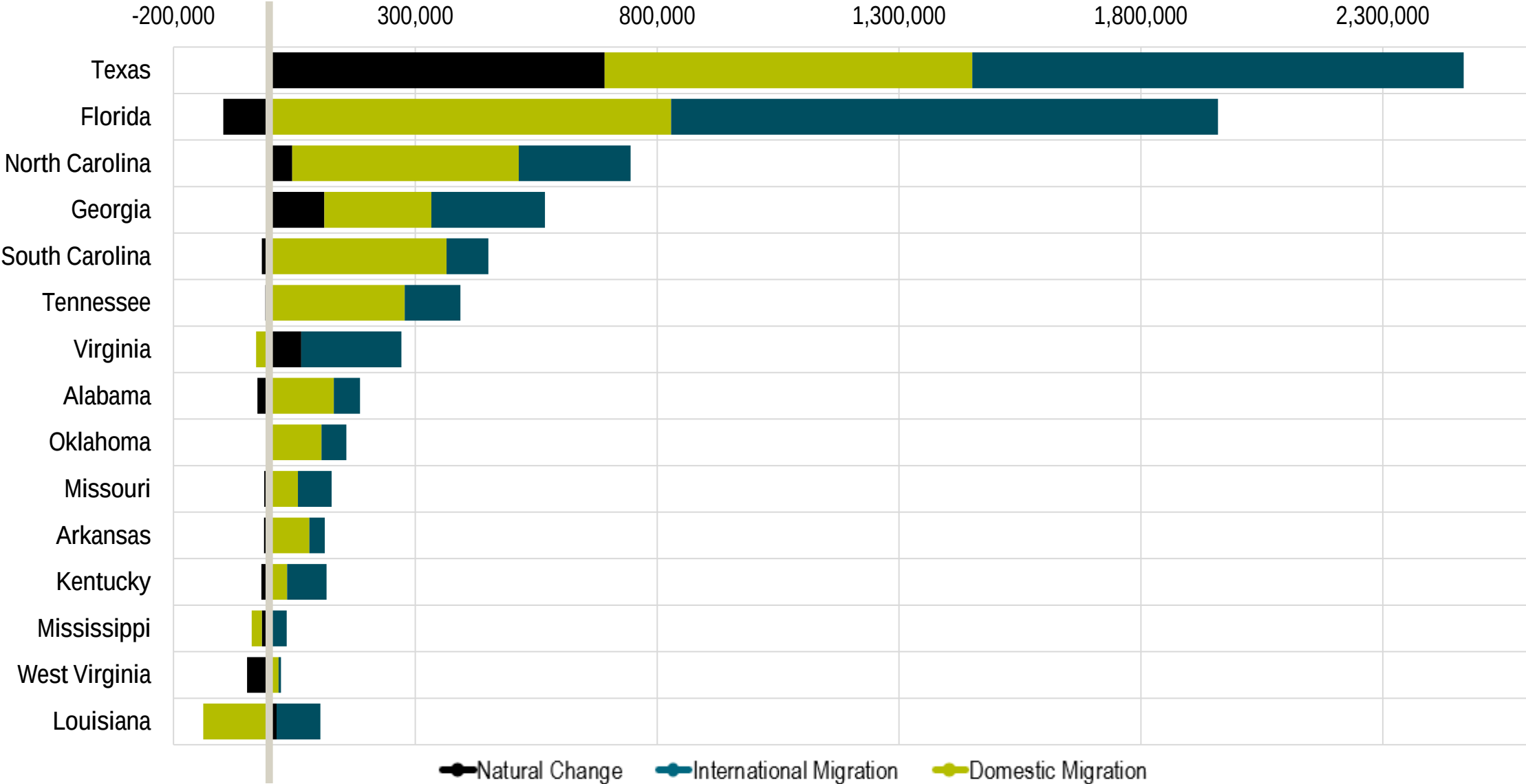
International Migration accounts for 47% of total population growth in US South during 2020s

- Higher Natural Increase and Positive Domestic Migration in US South
- Negative Domestic Migration in other regions

International Migration's share of total population growth, 2020-2025



State Level Components of Change



Urban and Rural Trends in the US South



The population is concentrated in metropolitan areas throughout the region

617 Metro Counties

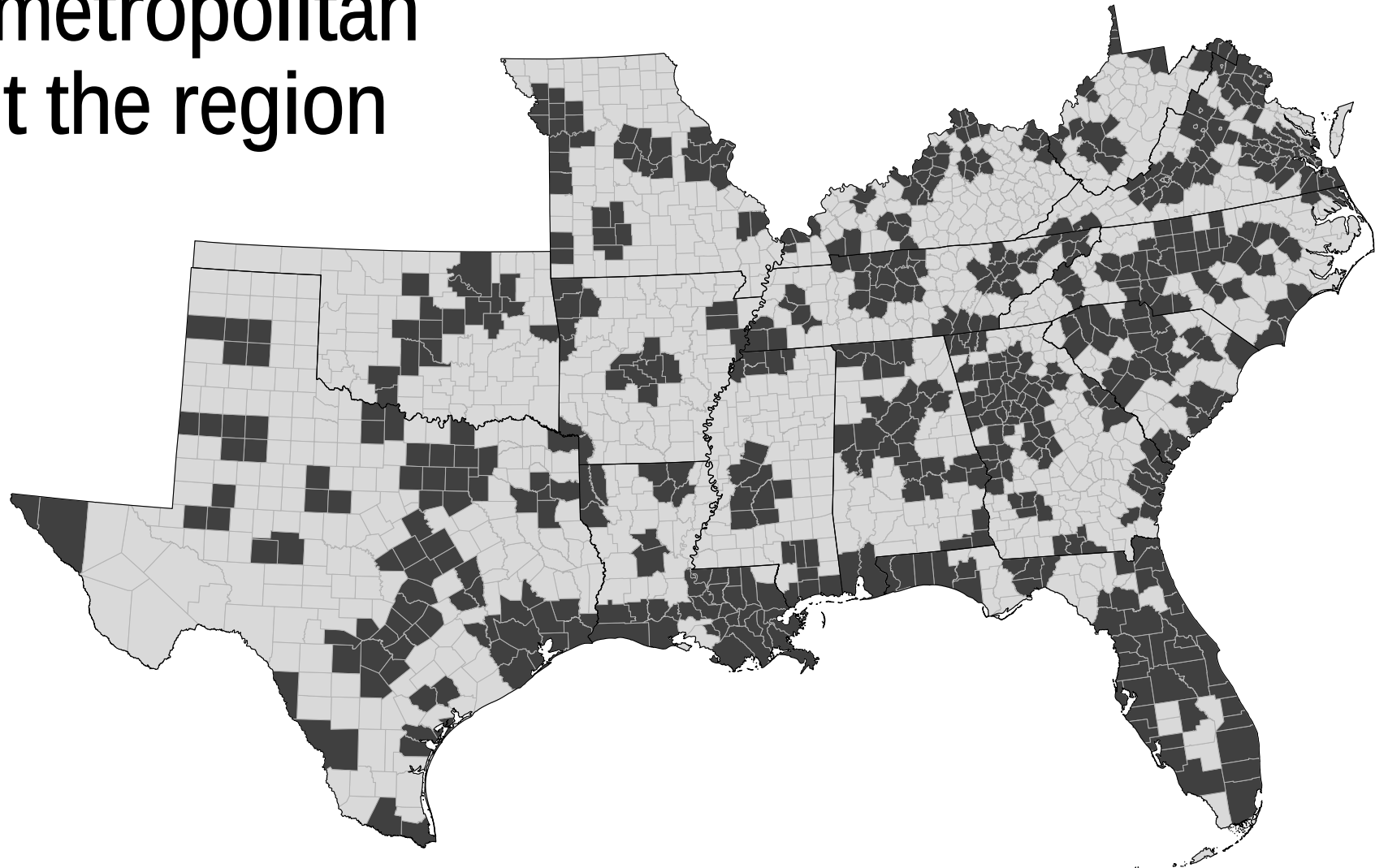
111,143,509

84% of Population

892 Non-Metro Counties

20,942,071

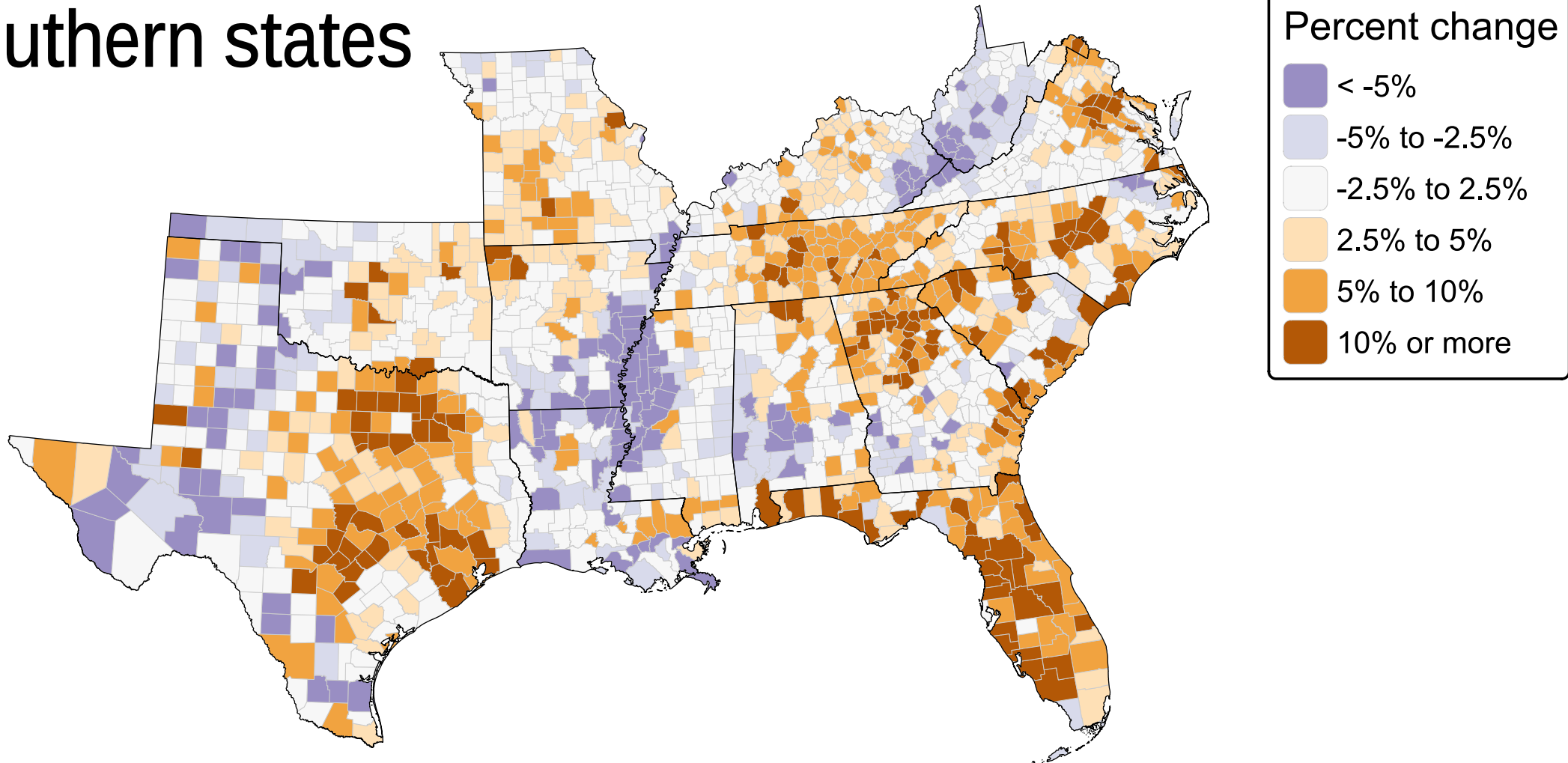
16% of Population



Note: Year ends July 1 55

Source: Vintage 2025 US Census Bureau Population Estimates

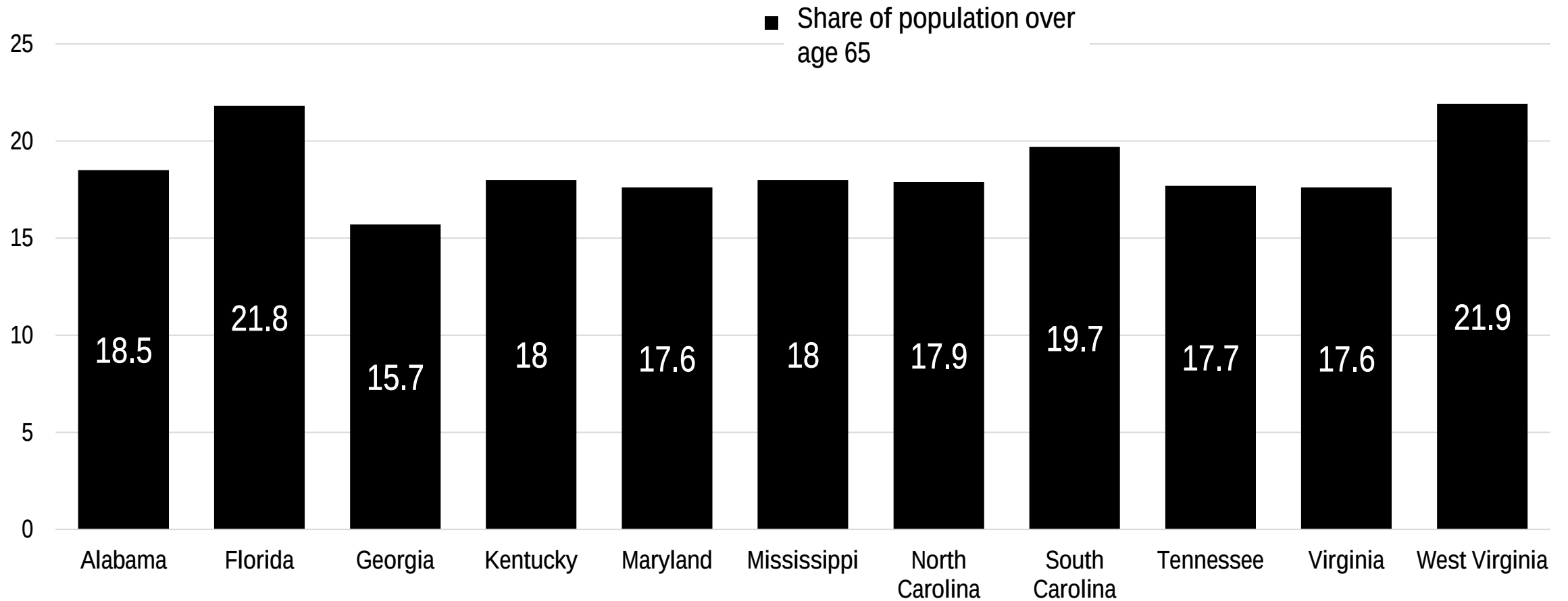
Populations are growing fastest in counties on the coast and on the metropolitan fringe across most southern states



Top 10 Fastest Growing Counties in US South

county	state	2020 Population	2025 Population	Percent Change, 2020-2025
Kaufman County	TX	147,165	209,235	42%
Long County	GA	16,256	21,557	33%
Jasper County	SC	29,158	38,533	32%
Liberty County	TX	92,471	121,364	31%
Dawson County	GA	27,062	35,365	31%
Jackson County	GA	76,765	99,265	29%
Rockwall County	TX	109,199	140,738	29%
Comal County	TX	163,608	209,166	28%
Brunswick County	NC	138,135	174,702	26%
St. Johns County	FL	277,119	346,328	25%

An aging population creates workforce and budget headwinds for southern states



South Region's Demographics, In Summary

- South continues to be the largest and fastest-growing region in the US
 - Not a monolith: multiple states and areas across all states throughout the South are experiencing population loss
- Population growth is concentrated in suburban and exurban areas
- The South has been a magnet for domestic *and* international migrants
- All age groups in South are growing. However, the older population is growing faster than the youth population

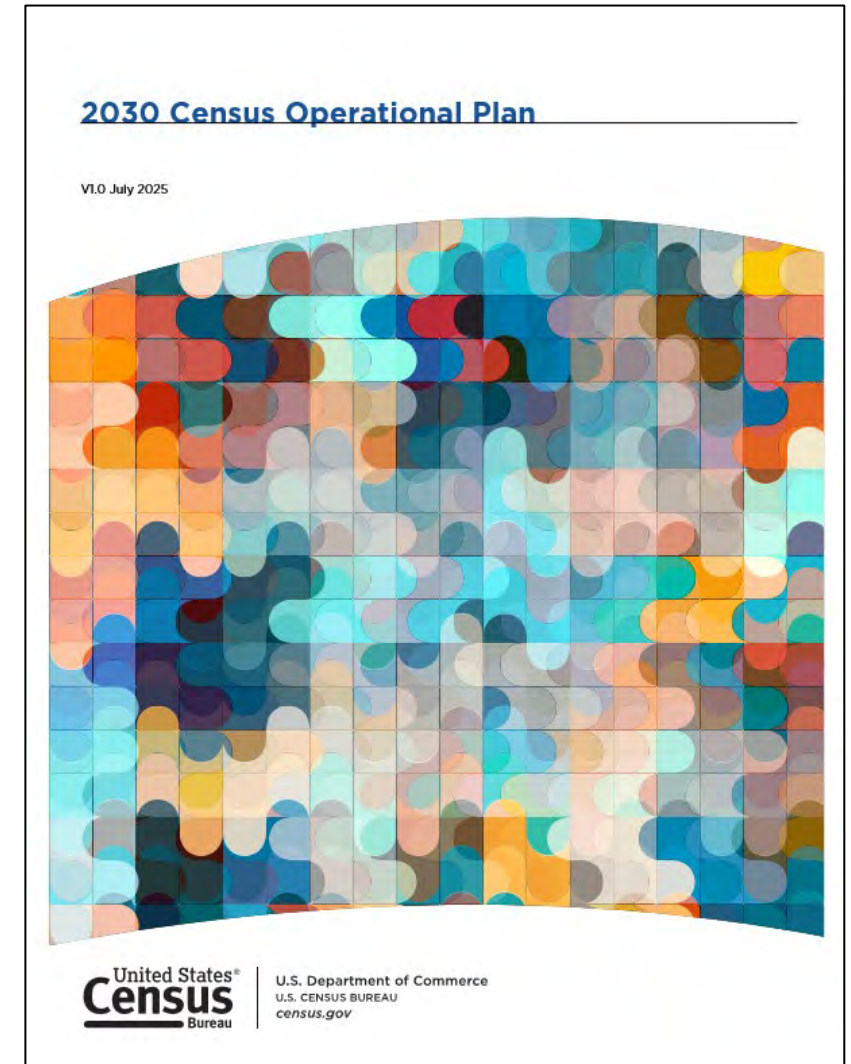


Looking ahead to the 2030 Census



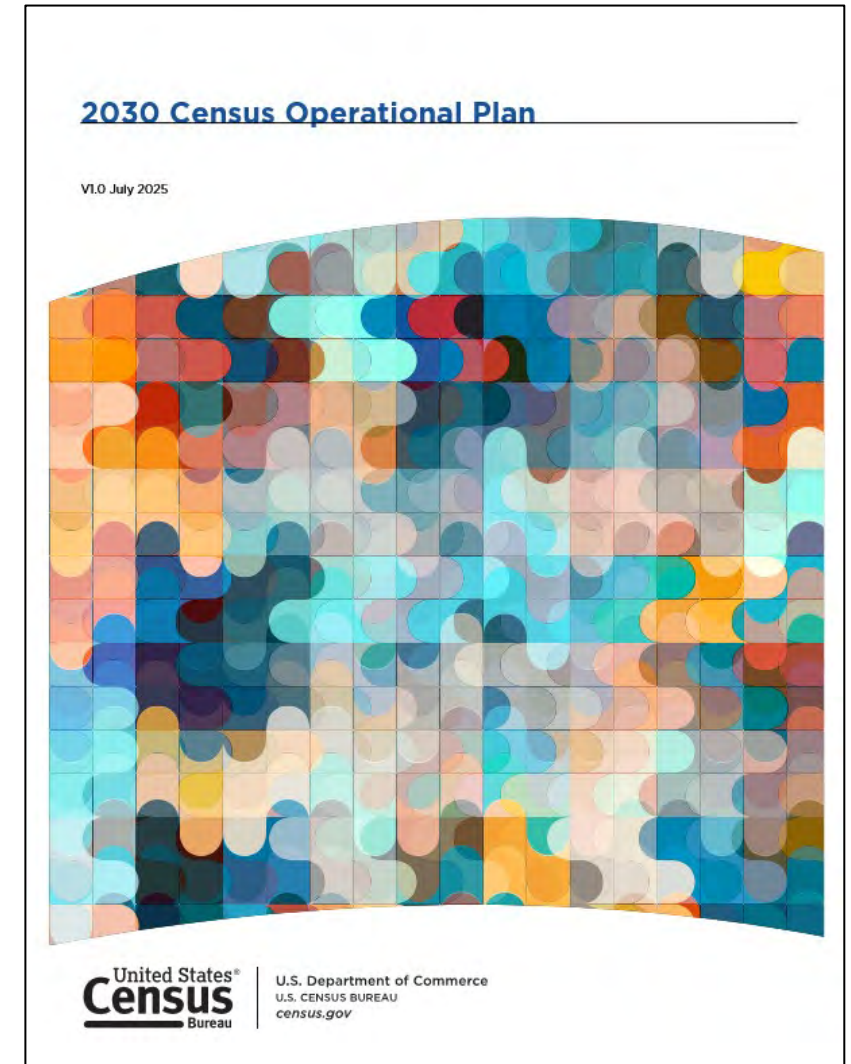
Why is the Census Important?

- 2030 is the 25th Decennial count in US history
- Political Power
 - Census is constitutionally mandated for reapportionment of Congress
 - Census results are used for national, state, and local redistricting.
- Money/Economic Impact
 - Over \$675 billion/year is distributed to state and local governments using Census numbers.



Why think about 2030 in 2026?

- Planning for a successful count can take many years. There are action steps each year until 2030
- Consider some of these factors:
 - Administrative undertaking (State and local efforts)
 - Hard-to-count populations
 - Group Quarters
 - Address Update Process (Starts in Spring 2027)



Questions, Discussion, or Reactions?

