
Population Trends by Race and Ethnicity: Findings from the 2020 Census

How diverse is Iowa? What role does diversity play in our state's population growth? These are important questions as new residents are essential for Iowa to have a thriving economy and quality of life. More people ensures an adequate labor force to provide goods and services in the private sector, and to maintain essential public services across the state. The U.S. Census Bureau released the congressional redistricting data (called P.L. 94-171) to the public in August 2021, giving us a first look at Census 2020 data. The purpose of this report is to present trends in race and Hispanic ethnicity between 2010 and 2020 across Iowa counties and communities.

The Census Bureau distinguishes between race and Hispanic ethnicity, so the following classifications are used in in this report: white non-Hispanic (including the Middle East); black or African American non-Hispanic; Native non-Hispanic (Native American, Alaskan, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander); Asian (including Indian sub-continent); some other race; two or more races; and Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (of any race).

National Trends

The Census counted 331,449,281 Americans in 2020. Of those, 42.2% were minorities, defined as a person self-reporting as Hispanic

or a race other than white. This is up 5.9 percentage points from the 2010 Census a decade earlier, indicating the nation is becoming more diverse. The Western U.S. was the most diverse region in 2020, with 52% identifying as part of a minority group, mostly Hispanic and Asian. The Southern U.S. was the next most diverse region at 46%, with large shares of Hispanics in Texas and Florida; and large shares of African Americans in other parts of the Deep South. The Midwest was the least diverse region in the nation, with only 27% being non-white or Hispanic. Refer to figure 1.

The nation's population grew by 7.4% over the past decade, driven mainly by gains in Hispanics, those of multiple races, and Asians. However, not all racial groups posted gains. The white non-Hispanic population shrank by -1.7% nationally; and growth in the Native population was flat during the 2010s. The South and West regions had the fastest growth rates overall, driven by minority gains. On the other hand, declines in the white residents slowed populations growth in the Midwest and Northeast. Midwest growth was also hampered by slower gains in minorities. National growth rates are presented in figure 2.

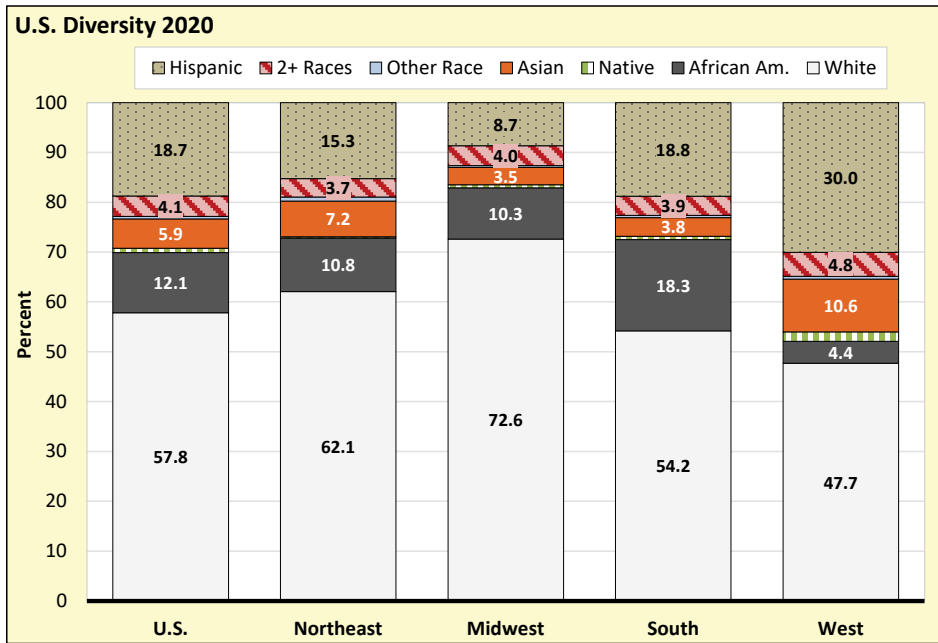


Figure 1. Percent population by race/ethnicity for U.S. and regions in 2020.

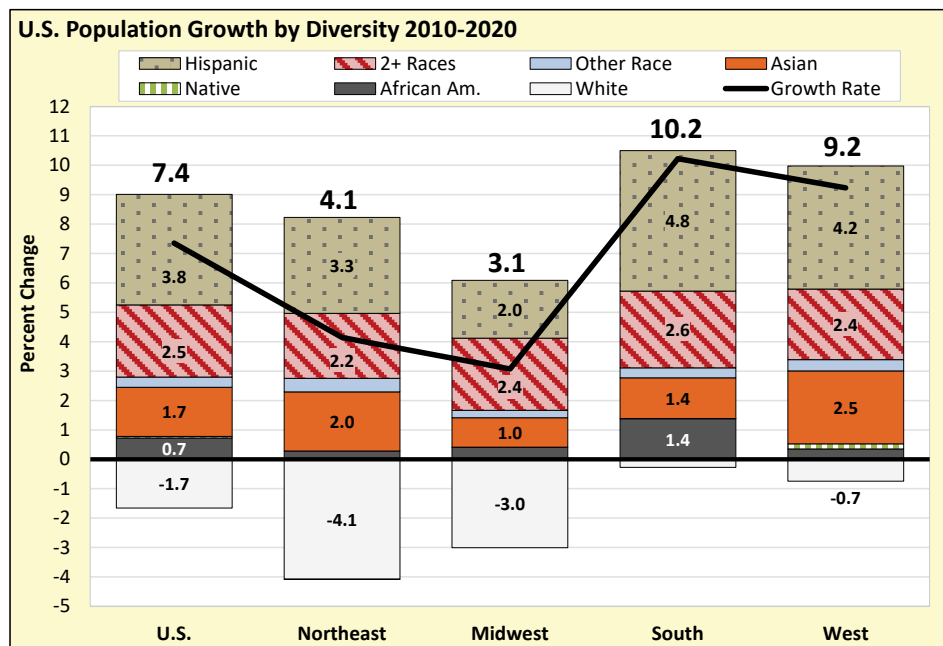


Figure 2. Percent change in population by race/ethnicity for U.S. and regions 2010-2020.

Regional Trends

Iowa's population stood at 3,190,369 people in 2020. Of this number, 82.7% were white non-Hispanics, making Iowa the least diverse among our surrounding states. Hispanics are the largest minority group in Iowa at 6.8%, followed by African Americans at 4.1%. Figure 3 presents race and ethnic breakouts by state.

Iowa's population grew by a middling rate of 4.7% during the 2010s, but growth would have been much lower if not for Iowans of color. The white population shrunk by -2.1% over the past decade. However, strong gains in Hispanics, people of multiple races, and African Americans offset these losses. In

short, without minority residents Iowa's population would have fallen by -2%.

Growth rates in Iowa were faster than in Illinois where the population fell (-0.1%), Missouri (2.8%), and Wisconsin (3.6%). On the other hand, Iowa lagged behind our neighbors to the north and west, where population gains in Minnesota, Nebraska, and South Dakota were well over 7%. The reasons why these states grew faster was their ability to retain white residents, but at the same time minority groups also grew, such as Hispanics and African Americans. Illinois is an instructive example, where sharp declines in whites led to population loss overall. Growth rates by state are presented in figure 4.

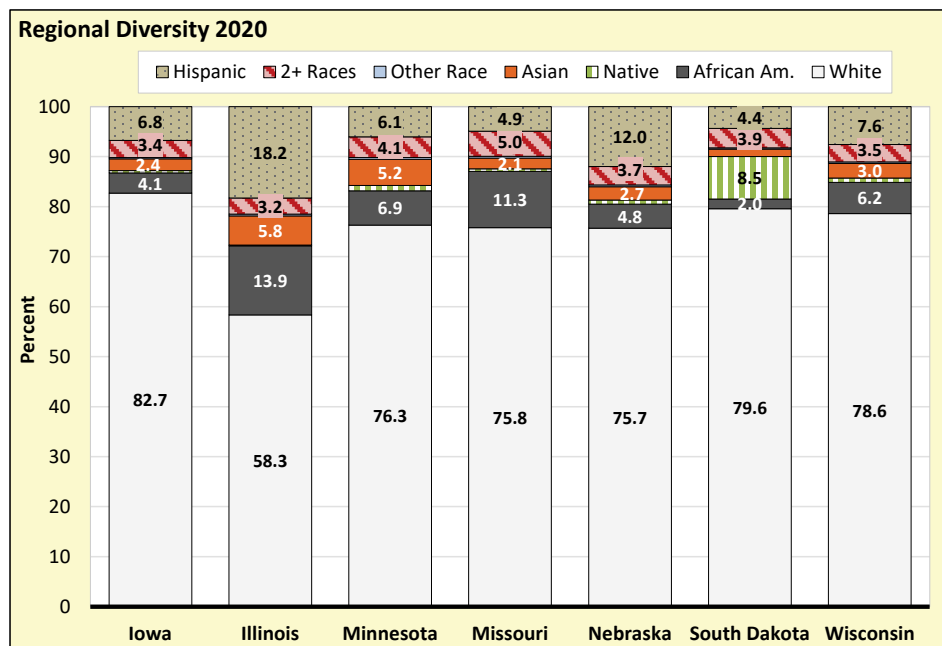


Figure 3. Percent population by race/ethnicity for Iowa and surrounding states in 2020.

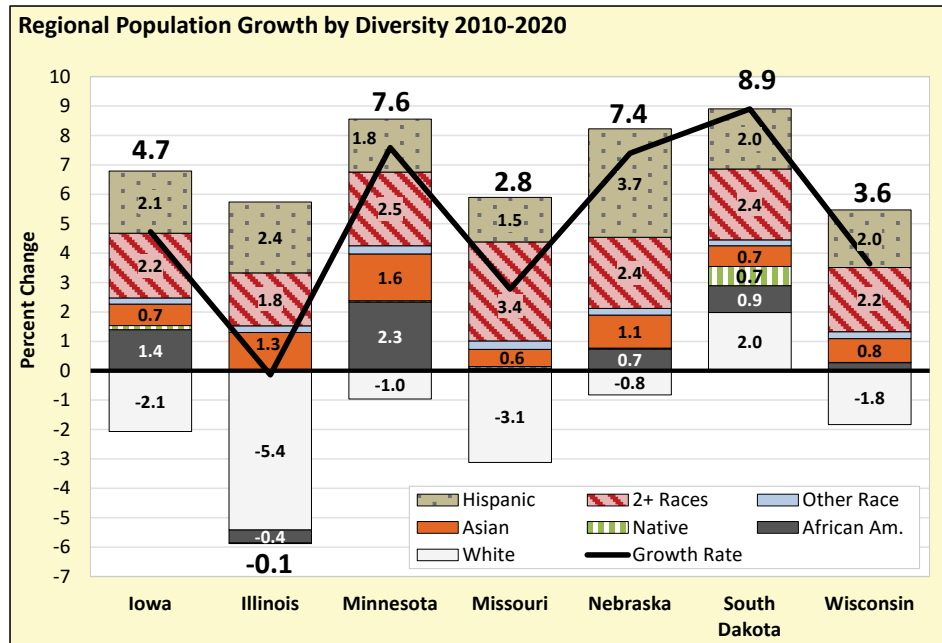


Figure 4. Percent change in population by race/ethnicity for Iowa and surrounding states 2010-2020.

Iowa Trends

The state's nine *core metropolitan* counties are home to 49.5% of the population. Core metros posted a growth rate of 9.1% over the past decade. Growth was driven by multiple races, Hispanics, African Americans, and to a lesser extent Asians. The white population remained stable. Core metros are the most diverse areas of the state, with a minority population of 23%.

The state's *suburban metropolitan* areas grew at a fast clip of 12.4%. Suburban counties are those surrounding core metros; and account for 11.9% of the population. Unlike core metros, white gains accounted for 6.1% of population growth in the suburbs, followed by multiple races and Hispanics. Suburban metros are 90% white.

Micropolitan areas are home to 14.9% of Iowans who live in smaller cities between 10,000 to 49,999 people. Micropolitan areas shrank by -1.8% since 2010. However, the

white population dropped by nearly -7%. These sizable losses were offset by gains in minority residents, primarily people of multiple races and Hispanics. Micros are also diverse, with a minority rate of 17%.

Rural Iowa continues to be home to 23.8% of the state's population, but these counties were shrinking. The number of white residents fell by -6.4% in both semi-rural and rural areas (semi-rural has a town of 2,500 to 9,999 people, while rural does not). Gains from multiple races and Hispanics were large enough to offset some, but not all, of the losses. Rural Iowa is 90% white. Figure 5 has detailed results.

In short, without Iowans of color the state's micropolitan and rural areas would have shrunk by over -6%. The state's core metros would have had flat growth over the past decade, but for minority population gains. White out-migration is an issue for non-metro Iowa, as it drives population losses.

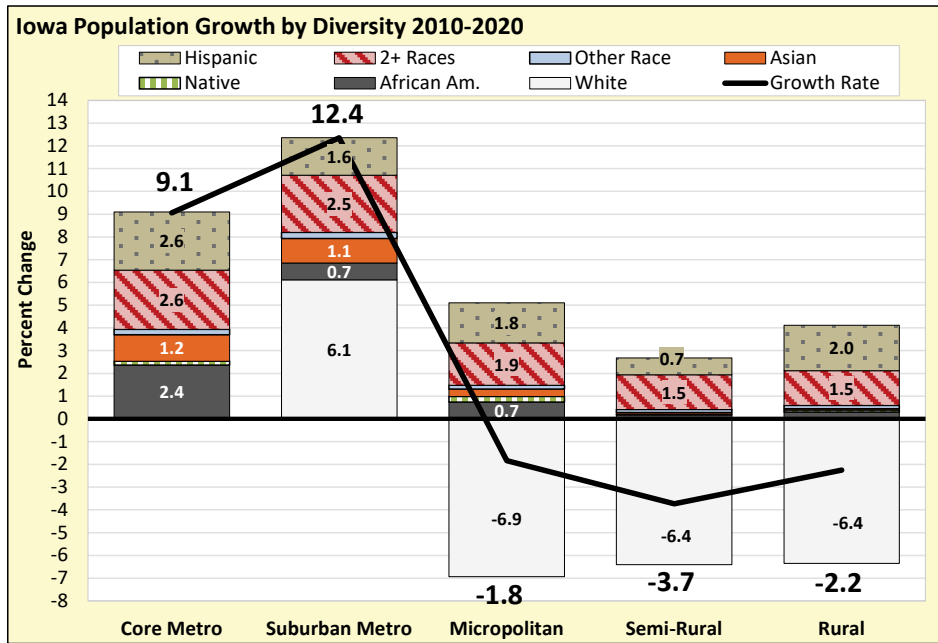


Figure 5. Percent change in population by race/ethnicity for Iowa 2010-2020.

County Trends

Buena Vista (Storm Lake) is the state’s most diverse county, posting a minority rate of 45.4% — making it close to being a “majority-minority” county. Other counties with shares of minorities over 25% include Crawford (Denison), Woodbury (Sioux City), Marshall (Marshalltown), Polk (Des Moines), Johnson (Iowa City), and Muscatine. The least diverse counties, where minorities account for less than 2% of the population, are located in the southern and west central parts of Iowa.

All counties in Iowa experienced gains in their minority residents. The largest percent changes occurred in the metro areas of Des

Moines, Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, and Sioux City. Strong gains were also reported in micropolitan and rural counties linked to meatpacking. Maps of minority rates by count are presented in figure 6.

Growth in minorities was generally linked to overall population growth, especially in the state’s metro counties. However, this was not always the case for non-metro counties, some of which had low or even negative growth rates as their white populations fell sharply. Declining minority counties included Wright, Marshall, and Wapello counties — all closely linked to the meatpacking industry. Table 1 presents county population growth rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity composition.

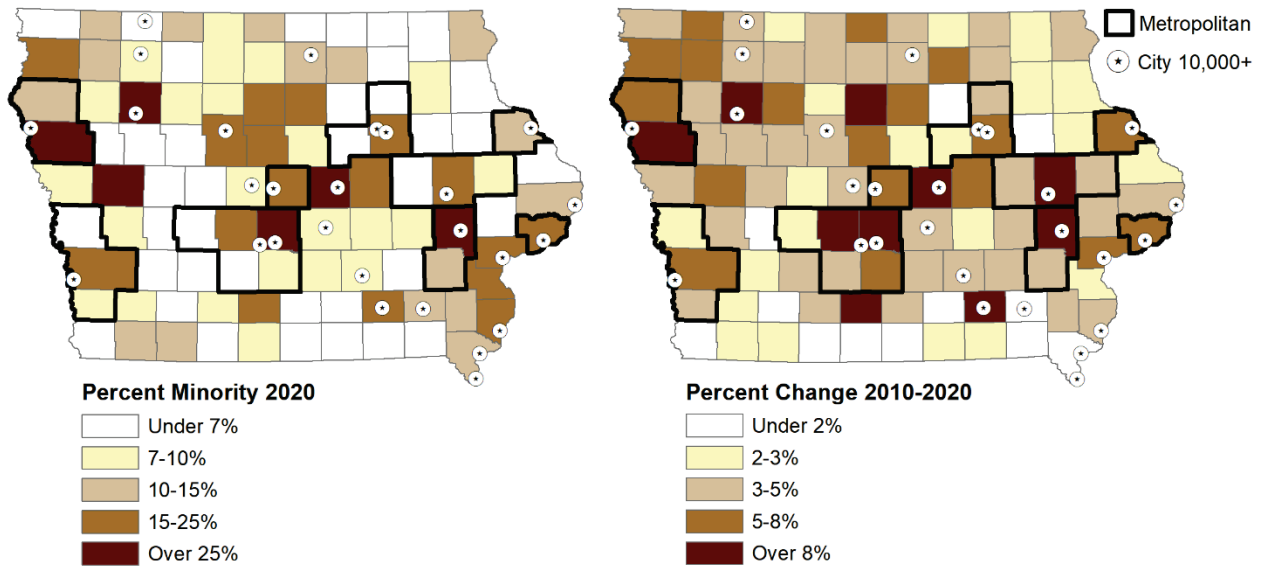


Figure 6. Percent and percent change in minority population.

Table 1. Fastest minority growth rates for Iowa counties 2010-2020

COUNTY (PRINCIPAL CITY)	Population Growth Rate	White	African Amer.	Native	Asian	Other Races	2 or More Races	Hispanic
Dallas (Des Moines)	50.72	34.90	2.67	0.06	5.04	0.44	3.90	3.71
Buena Vista (Storm Lake)	2.78	-11.74	0.31	2.62	3.80	0.33	0.96	6.50
Johnson (Iowa City)	16.79	4.37	4.95	-0.03	1.36	0.23	2.85	3.05
Polk (Des Moines)	14.34	3.38	2.24	0.06	2.14	0.26	2.70	3.58
Woodbury (Sioux City)	3.69	-6.90	2.63	0.64	0.55	0.29	1.82	4.65
Wapello (Ottumwa)	-0.53	-10.84	2.80	1.27	1.04	0.22	1.90	3.08
Wright (Eagle Grove)	-2.16	-12.33	0.25	0.00	0.26	0.08	1.12	8.47
Marshall (Marshalltown)	-1.34	-10.75	0.38	0.11	2.43	0.06	1.21	5.22
Linn (Cedar Rapids)	9.03	-0.32	3.81	0.12	0.74	0.24	2.85	1.60
Clarke (Osceola)	4.98	-4.00	0.05	0.30	0.53	0.29	1.26	6.54

City and Town Trends

Iowa has nine “majority-minority” communities, where the non-white or Hispanic population is 50% or more of the population. These include Storm Lake and the nearby community of Lakeside. A cluster of communities in eastern Iowa includes West Liberty, Columbus Junction, Conesville, Columbus City, and Fredonia. Other

minority-majority towns include Denison in the west, and Postville in the northeast.

Although Hispanics dominate the non-white ethnic makeup of almost all places, some communities are more diverse (see table 2). Storm Lake is the most diverse city in Iowa at nearly 70% minority, having large shares of Hispanics, Asians, African Americans, and Native populations (including Native

Americans and Pacific Islanders). Hispanics and Asians predominate in Columbus Junction and Postville; and Tama has the largest share of Native Americans. Larger cities tend to have

more African Americans and those of multiple races, including Des Moines, Sioux City, Waterloo, and Coralville.

Table 2. Largest minority populations for Iowa cities and towns 2020

CITY OR TOWN	Population	White	African Amer.	Native	Asian	Other Races	2 or More Races	Hispanic
Storm Lake	11,269	32.7	4.4	4.4	15.8	0.6	1.4	40.8
Conesville	352	35.8	4.3	0.0	3.1	0.6	2.3	54.0
West Liberty	3,858	37.7	0.4	0.1	1.8	0.2	1.6	58.3
Columbus City	392	39.0	1.0	0.5	1.8	0.8	0.8	56.1
Denison	8,373	41.3	4.1	0.3	3.2	0.2	1.4	49.6
Columbus Junction	1,830	41.4	1.4	0.0	10.2	0.2	1.4	45.4
Postville	2,503	45.7	8.7	0.1	0.6	0.2	1.6	43.0
Fredonia	222	46.8	1.8	0.5	14.0	0.0	0.9	36.0
Lakeside	700	48.0	2.3	3.7	6.7	0.0	1.1	38.1
Perry	7,836	55.5	3.3	0.2	1.1	0.3	2.7	37.0
Marshalltown	27,591	57.6	2.6	0.6	5.3	0.2	2.5	31.3
Tama	3,130	57.7	1.5	5.0	0.5	0.1	3.9	31.3
Des Moines	214,133	61.0	11.5	0.3	6.7	0.4	4.5	15.6
Latimer	477	62.1	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	1.5	35.8
Sioux City	85,797	62.9	5.7	2.8	3.2	0.4	4.0	20.9
Chelsea	229	64.6	0.0	0.4	0.4	0.0	3.1	31.4
Waterloo	67,314	65.8	17.9	1.3	3.0	0.3	4.6	7.1
Coralville	22,318	65.9	13.8	0.2	8.7	0.3	4.1	7.0

Table 3 presents the fastest minority population growth rates over the past decade by city and town. Several suburban communities had fast growth in both minority and white populations. These include suburbs in the Iowa City – Cedar Rapids metro (Tiffin and North Liberty) and the Des Moines metro (Waukee, Grimes, Johnston, and Bondurant). In addition, communities with large state institutions (like correctional or social services facilities) had growth in both whites and African Americans. This drove growth in Rockwell City and Woodward, and to a lesser extent in Coralville.

However, most rural and micropolitan communities experienced gains in minorities at the expense of fewer whites. The effect was slower, and sometime falling, population growth overall. These demographic shifts were primarily driven by the presence of livestock production and meatpacking. For example, Storm Lake and many of its surround towns (including Alta, Fonda, and Schaller) had double-digit losses in whites. While Storm Lake grew by 6.3%, other towns posted losses or had negligible gains.

Table 3. Fastest minority growth rates for Iowa cities and towns 2010-2020

CITY OR TOWN	Population Growth Rate	White	African Amer.	Native	Asian	Other Races	2 or More Races	Hispanic
Tiffin	131.7	99.1	8.9	0.5	4.1	0.9	9.1	9.1
Waukeke	73.6	49.8	5.2	0.2	6.5	0.5	5.2	6.1
Postville	12.4	-9.4	5.5	-0.8	-0.3	0.2	0.9	16.3
Storm Lake	6.3	-13.5	0.5	3.7	7.1	0.5	0.6	7.3
Lakeside	17.4	-1.8	0.7	4.2	2.2	-0.2	-0.3	12.8
North Liberty	53.1	34.0	5.1	0.1	2.7	0.3	5.3	5.7
Grimes	86.7	68.0	4.3	0.2	2.7	0.4	5.4	5.8
Eagle Grove	0.5	-17.6	0.5	0.1	0.1	-0.1	1.5	16.0
Coralville	18.0	1.3	8.5	-0.1	2.6	0.1	2.5	3.2
Woodward	31.4	14.7	6.9	0.3	0.0	0.4	3.2	5.9
Johnston	39.3	22.7	5.9	0.2	4.1	0.1	2.9	3.4
Fonda	0.8	-15.1	0.2	3.3	-0.2	0.0	1.6	10.9
Alta	10.8	-4.7	0.6	3.4	0.4	0.1	1.1	10.0
Bondurant	90.8	75.6	2.6	0.3	1.9	0.1	4.6	5.8
Rockwell City	31.1	16.0	6.8	0.2	0.0	0.5	1.6	5.9
Columbus City	0.3	-14.8	1.0	0.5	-1.3	0.3	0.3	14.3
Latimer	-5.9	-20.9	-0.2	0.4	-0.2	0.0	1.4	13.6
Osceola	9.9	-4.7	0.2	0.6	0.8	0.2	1.8	11.1
Rock Valley	21.0	6.6	0.2	-0.1	-0.1	0.1	0.7	13.7
Tama	8.8	-5.7	1.1	0.9	0.2	-0.1	1.8	10.5
Schaller	-5.6	-19.4	0.4	0.3	1.4	0.3	1.3	10.2
Ottumwa	2.0	-11.7	3.6	1.8	1.4	0.2	2.0	4.7

Summary and Implications

The 2020 Census confirms long established population trends that Iowa is becoming a more suburban state — suburbs are booming, core cities are flat or have slow declines, and rural Iowa is fast shrinking. Population growth across Iowa is driven by gains in people of color. Without minority growth, Iowa’s population would have fallen by -2% instead of growing by nearly 5%. Rural-urban differences are more stark.

Without gains in minorities:

- *rural* Iowa would have shrunk by -6% instead of only -3%;
- *micropolitan* Iowa would have contracted by -7% instead of only -2%; and
- *metro* Iowa would have grown by only 1% instead of nearly 10%.

Minority gains in metro areas are largely driven by a thriving professional services sector in these large cities and suburbs. In rural Iowa, minority gains are largely driven by meatpacking and related agricultural

production. The rural labor force depends heavily on minority workers.

These findings only reinforce the importance of making Iowa a more welcoming place for

people of color. Not only does it enrich the cultural fabric of our state, but Iowa's economy depends on a diverse and growing labor force. Without minorities, Iowa will become a less prosperous and less thriving state.

Contributors

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Appendix – Data and Methods

Population numbers for 2020 are taken from PL 94-171 Redistricting Data produced by the U.S. Census Bureau, available at https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/data/01-Redistricting_File-PL_94-171/. The following race/ethnicity definitions are used:

- Non-Hispanic – white race alone
- Non-Hispanic – black or African American race alone
- Non-Hispanic – American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander alone
- Non-Hispanic – some other race alone
- Non-Hispanic – two or more races above
- Hispanic – can be of any race above

Population growth rates are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, with each component measuring the contribution to the overall growth rate. For example, a county may have a growth rate of 3.7%, disaggregated by -6.3% white, 7.0% Hispanic, and 1.0% Asian. The sum of race/ethnicity rates equals the overall growth rate. Simple percent change by race/ethnicity is not used because: (1) the sum of percent changes does not overall percent change; and (2) small base numbers result in very large values.

Rural-urban breakouts were defining using 2015 Core-Based Statistical Areas from U.S. Census, and 2013 Rural-Urban Continuum Codes from U.S. Department of Agriculture.