

Age Distribution in the Great Plains

Shifting Age Distributions. The age distribution of a population has important consequences for the viability of an area. In addition, the age profile of an area provides context for understanding both current and future needs. Two important trends occurring within the Great Plains are dramatically altering the region's age structure. First, selective out-migration of young adults largely from rural areas has significantly reduced the number and proportion of youth, especially in non-metropolitan areas. Second, the proportion of elderly in the region has increased markedly. This is largely a result of the proportional losses among the youth population. Once again, these changes are much more pronounced in the rural areas of the Great Plains.

Highlights

- Figure 10-12. Between 1990 and 2000, 40% of the counties in the U.S. had losses in their youth population (i.e., ages 0-17); 43% of these counties were in the Great Plains. The greatest relative losses were among those under age 5. The highest concentration of losses among the school-age population (i.e., ages 5 to 19) also tended to be in the Great Plains.
- Tables 11-12. Ironically, the actual number of youth increased during this time period, even in the Great Plains. This contradiction is due to the fact that the largest youth population is in metropolitan counties, which have been growing. More than 1.6 million youth were added to the Great Plains between 1990 and 2000; 95% of the total net change in youth were in metropolitan counties. The youth population grew by 20% in the metropolitan counties of the region. In contrast, the rural counties in the region lost nearly 8,000 youth or 2% of its youth population during this time period.
- Figure 13. The entry-labor pool (i.e., ages 20 to 34) shrank most dramatically in the Great Plains. The greatest regional losses were in central and northern states.
- Figure 14. Change in the prime labor pool (i.e., ages 35 to 54) in the Great Plains differed little from the overall national trend.
- Figure 15. Losses among those in their pre-retirement ages (i.e., ages 55 to 64) were most pronounced in the Great Plains.
- Tables 13-14. The age distributions between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties within the Great Plains differs markedly, with the exception of the prime labor force.
- Figure 16. The proportion of elderly (i.e., ages 65 and older) in the Great Plains increased dramatically between 1990 and 2000. In 46% of the 1,009 counties in the region, the proportion of elderly exceeds 17%. The Great Plains accounts for 56% of all counties in the U.S. whose elderly exceeds 17%. The proportion of elderly in the U.S. in 2000 was only 12.4%.
- Figure 17-18. In contrast, the actual number of elderly declined in 42% of the counties in the Great Plains. Again, the contradiction rests in the disparities between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties. The metropolitan counties in the region gained 556,582 elderly in the last decade while the rural counties lost 547 elderly.
- Tables 15-16. The proportion of elderly in a county tends to increase inversely with the size of the county. Rural counties in the region had, on average, twice the proportion of seniors (i.e., ages 65 and older) than their metropolitan counterparts. This is in spite of the fact that the number of seniors in metropolitan counties in the Great Plains grew 22% between 1990 and 2000 while it actually declined in rural counties.

Figure 10. Percent Change in Persons Ages 0 to 17 for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

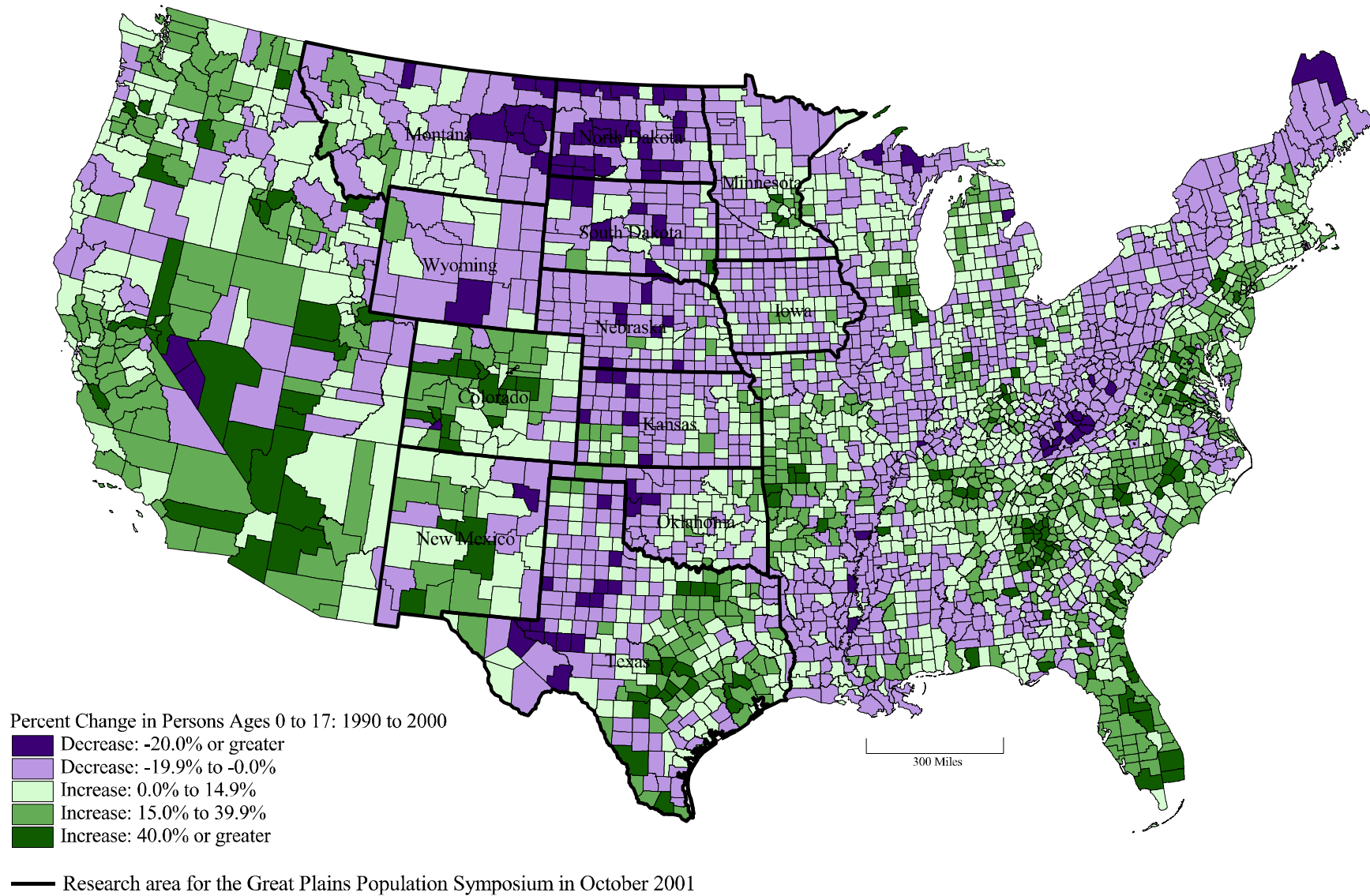


Figure 11. Percent Change in Persons Ages 0 to 4 for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

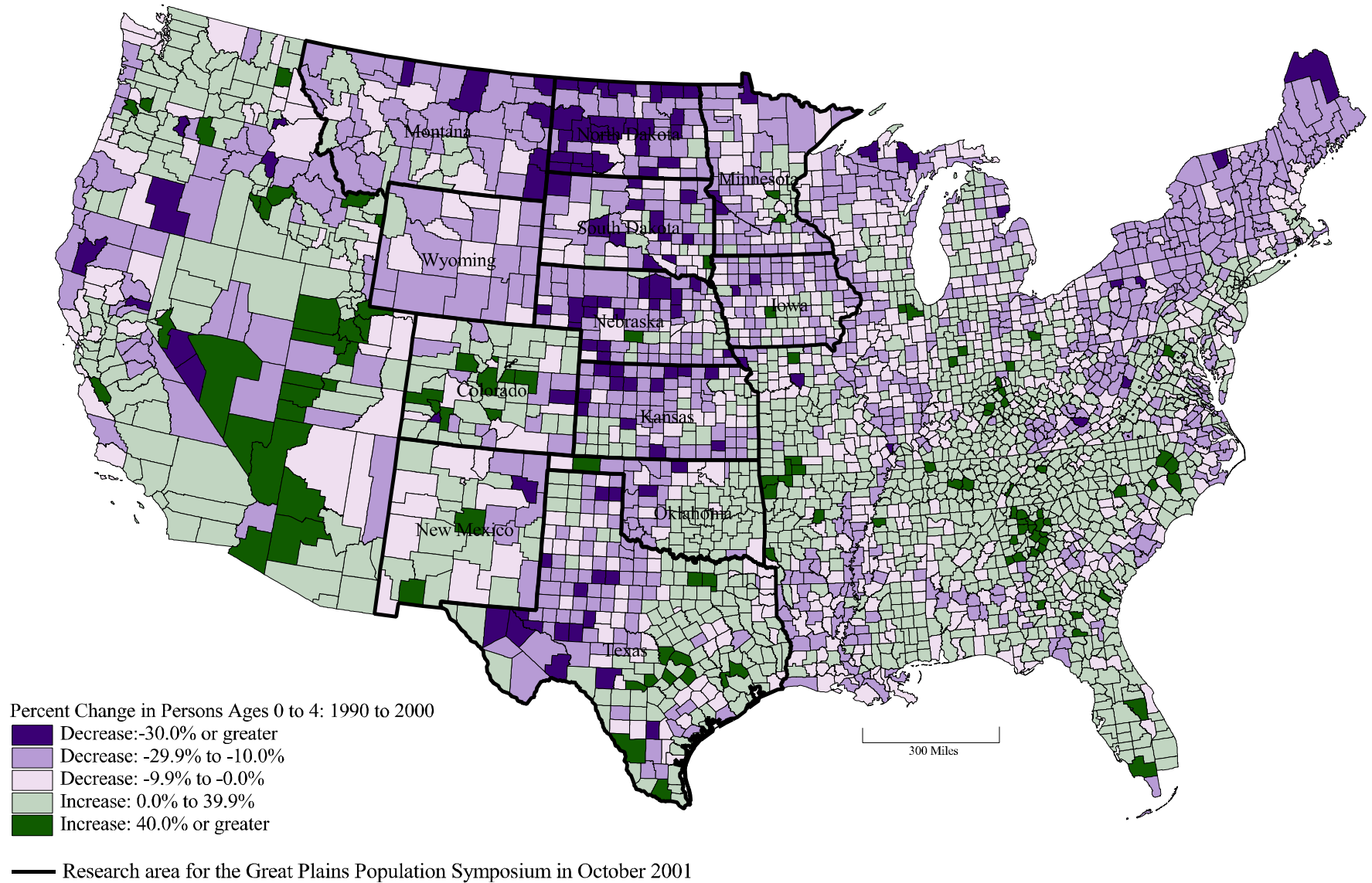


Figure 12. Percent Change in Persons Ages 5 to 19 for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

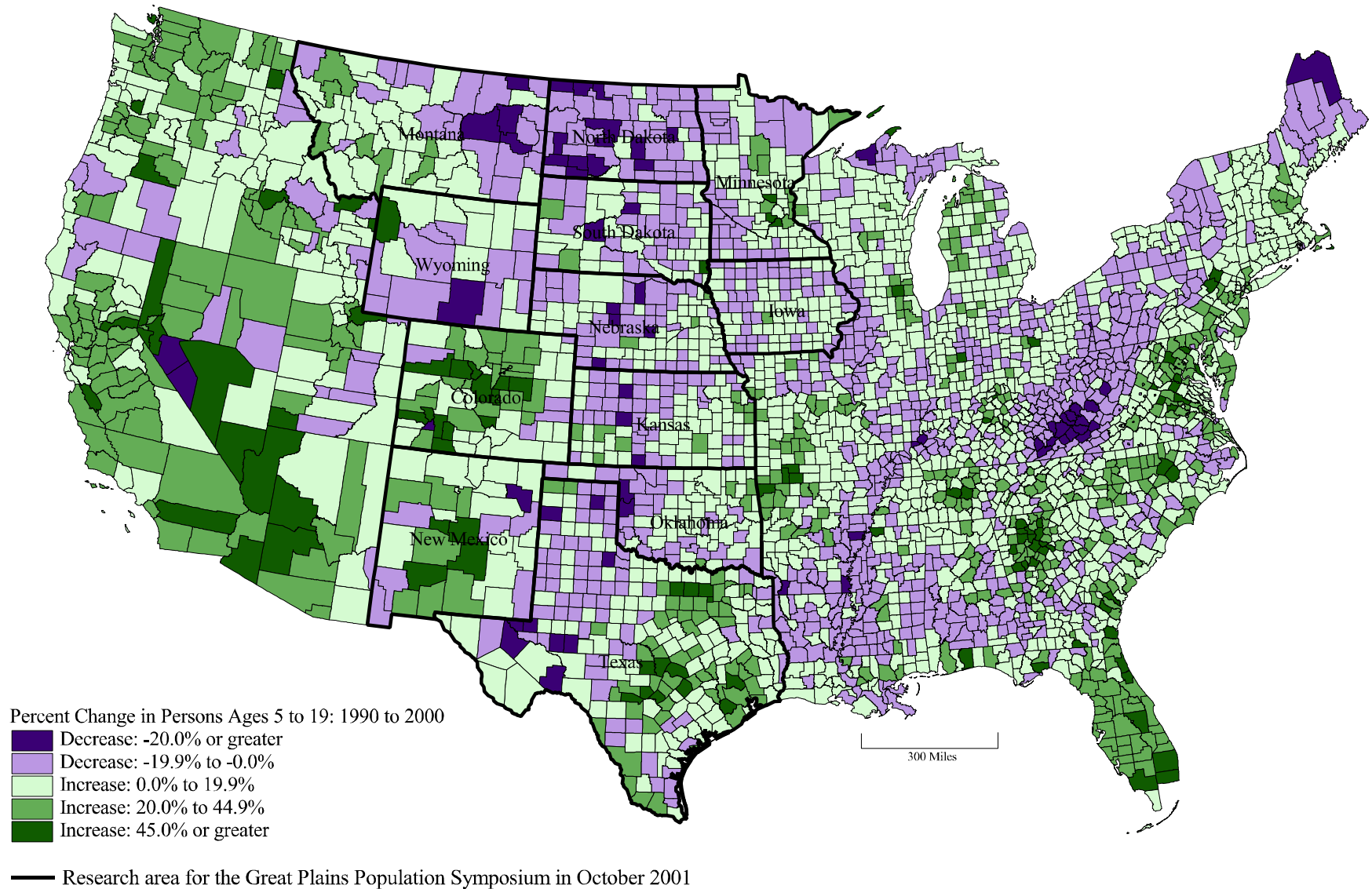


Table 11. Youth Population in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1980 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses

Age Cohort and Year	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Non-Metropolitan Counties							
					Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Ages												
1980	34,970,078	100.0	22,839,309	100.0	12,130,769	100.0	2,983,069	100.0	7,254,362	100.0	1,893,338	100.0
1990	38,736,776	100.0	26,698,025	100.0	12,038,751	100.0	3,044,336	100.0	7,226,040	100.0	1,768,375	100.0
2000	45,461,286	100.0	32,429,884	100.0	13,031,402	100.0	3,305,226	100.0	7,875,080	100.0	1,851,096	100.0
Pre-School (Ages 0 to 4)												
1980	2,788,780	8.0	1,823,262	8.0	965,518	8.0	243,552	8.2	574,167	7.9	147,799	7.8
1990	3,029,728	7.8	2,158,271	8.1	871,457	7.2	229,863	7.6	518,786	7.2	122,808	6.9
2000	3,289,155	7.2	2,456,745	7.6	832,410	6.4	225,035	6.8	499,346	6.3	108,029	5.8
School Age (Ages 5 to 19)												
1980	8,859,811	25.3	5,838,998	25.6	3,020,813	24.9	755,880	25.3	1,806,962	24.9	457,971	24.2
1990	8,869,140	22.9	6,059,777	22.7	2,809,363	23.3	719,133	23.6	1,689,055	23.4	401,175	22.7
2000	10,428,201	22.9	7,451,744	23.0	2,976,457	22.8	767,967	23.2	1,792,676	22.8	415,814	22.5
All Persons Ages 0 to 19												
1980	11,648,591	33.3	7,662,260	33.5	3,986,331	32.9	999,432	33.5	2,381,129	32.8	605,770	32.0
1990	11,898,868	30.7	8,218,048	30.8	3,680,820	30.6	948,996	31.2	2,207,841	30.6	523,983	29.6
2000	13,717,356	30.2	9,908,489	30.6	3,808,867	29.2	993,002	30.0	2,292,022	29.1	523,843	28.3
All Persons Ages 0 to 17												
1980	10,255,580	29.3	6,734,476	29.5	3,521,104	29.0	858,295	28.8	2,112,829	29.1	549,980	29.0
1990	10,688,608	27.6	7,367,615	27.6	3,320,993	27.6	834,209	27.4	2,000,076	27.7	486,708	27.5
2000	12,294,688	27.0	8,899,146	27.4	3,395,542	26.1	863,872	26.1	2,052,920	26.1	478,750	25.9

Table 12. Change in Youth Population in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1980 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming..

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses

Change in Population by Age Cohort and Year	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Non-Metropolitan Counties							
					Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Ages												
1980 to 1990	3,766,698	10.8	3,858,716	16.9	-92,018	-0.8	61,267	2.1	-28,322	-0.4	-124,963	-6.6
1990 to 2000	6,724,510	17.4	5,731,859	21.5	992,651	8.2	260,890	8.6	649,040	9.0	82,721	4.7
1980 to 2000	10,491,208	30.0	9,590,575	42.0	900,633	7.4	322,157	10.8	620,718	8.6	-42,242	-2.2
Pre-School (Ages 0 to 4)												
1980 to 1990	240,948	8.6	335,009	18.4	-94,061	-9.7	-13,689	-5.6	-55,381	-9.6	-24,991	-16.9
1990 to 2000	259,427	8.6	298,474	13.8	-39,047	-4.5	-4,828	-2.1	-19,440	-3.7	-14,779	-12.0
1980 to 2000	500,375	17.9	633,483	34.7	-133,108	-13.8	-18,517	-7.6	-74,821	-13.0	-39,770	-26.9
School Age (Ages 5 to 19)												
1980 to 1990	9,329	0.1	220,779	3.8	-211,450	-7.0	-36,747	-4.9	-117,907	-6.5	-56,796	-12.4
1990 to 2000	1,559,061	17.6	1,391,967	23.0	167,094	5.9	48,834	6.8	103,621	6.1	14,639	3.6
1980 to 2000	1,568,390	17.7	1,612,746	27.6	-44,356	-1.5	12,087	1.6	-14,286	-0.8	-42,157	-9.2
All Persons Ages 0 to 19												
1980 to 1990	250,277	2.1	555,788	7.3	-305,511	-7.7	-50,436	-5.0	-173,288	-7.3	-81,787	-13.5
1990 to 2000	1,818,488	15.3	1,690,441	20.6	128,047	3.5	44,006	4.6	84,181	3.8	-140	-0.0
1980 to 2000	2,068,765	17.8	2,246,229	29.3	-177,464	-4.5	-6,430	-0.6	-89,107	-3.7	-81,927	-13.5
All Persons Ages 0 to 17												
1980 to 1990	433,028	4.2	633,139	9.4	-200,111	-5.7	-24,086	-2.8	-112,753	-5.3	-63,272	-11.5
1990 to 2000	1,606,080	15.0	1,531,531	20.8	74,549	2.2	29,663	3.6	52,844	2.6	-7,958	-1.6
1980 to 2000	2,039,108	19.9	2,164,670	32.1	-125,562	-3.6	5,577	0.6	-59,909	-2.8	-71,230	-13.0

Figure 13. Percent Change in Persons Ages 20 to 34 for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

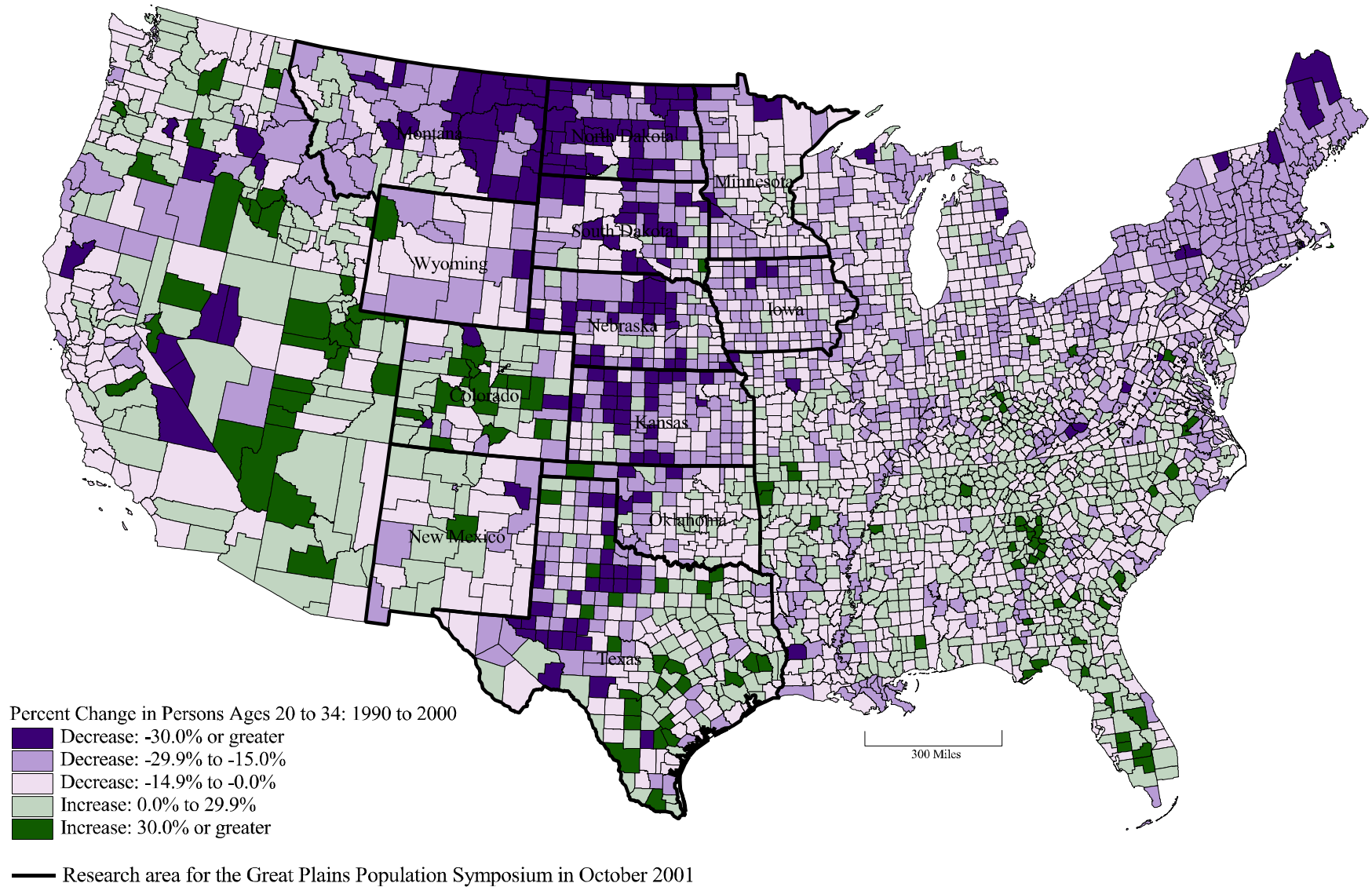


Figure 14. Percent Change in Persons Ages 35 to 54 for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

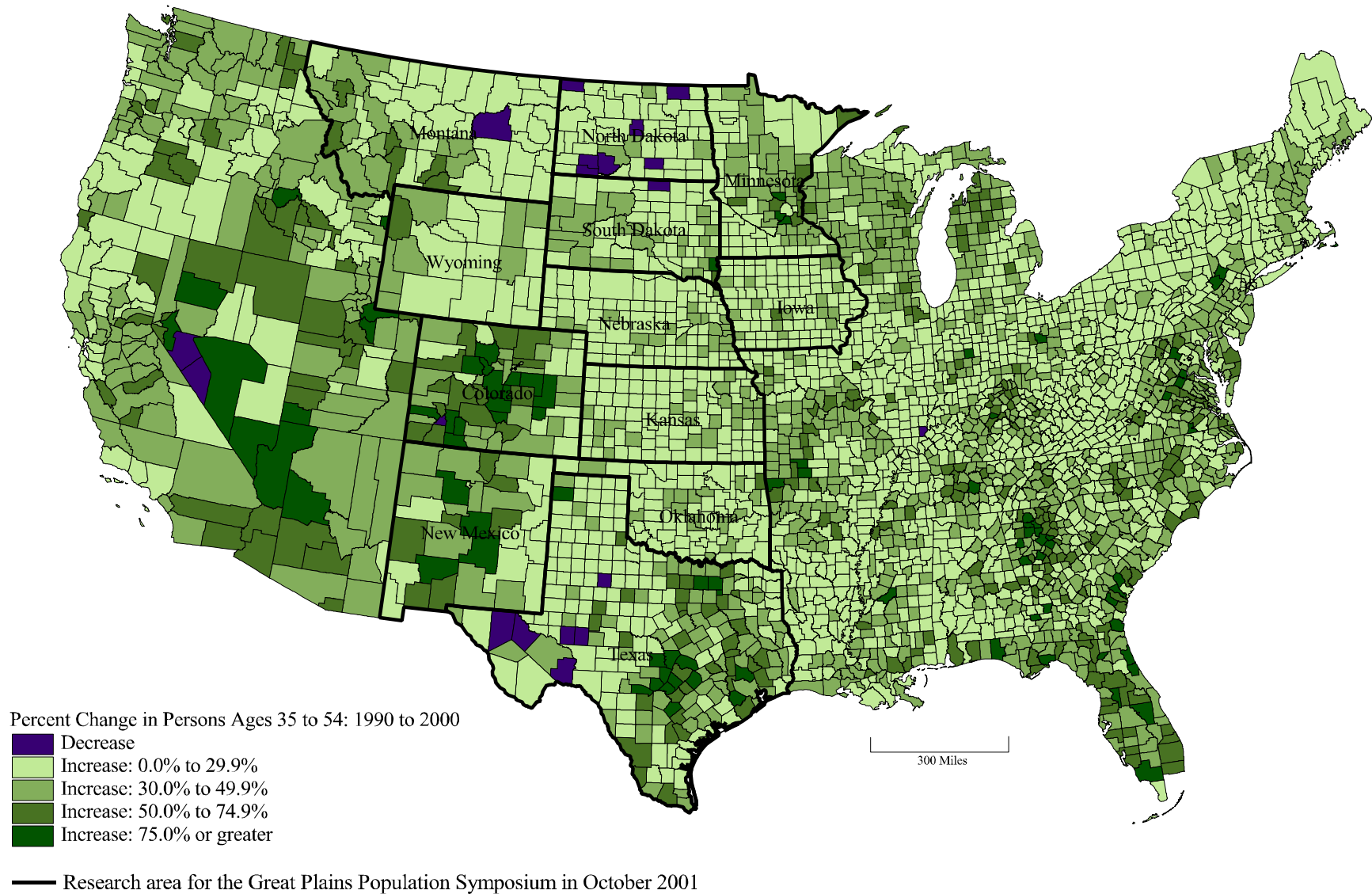


Figure 15. Percent Change in Persons Ages 55 to 64 for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

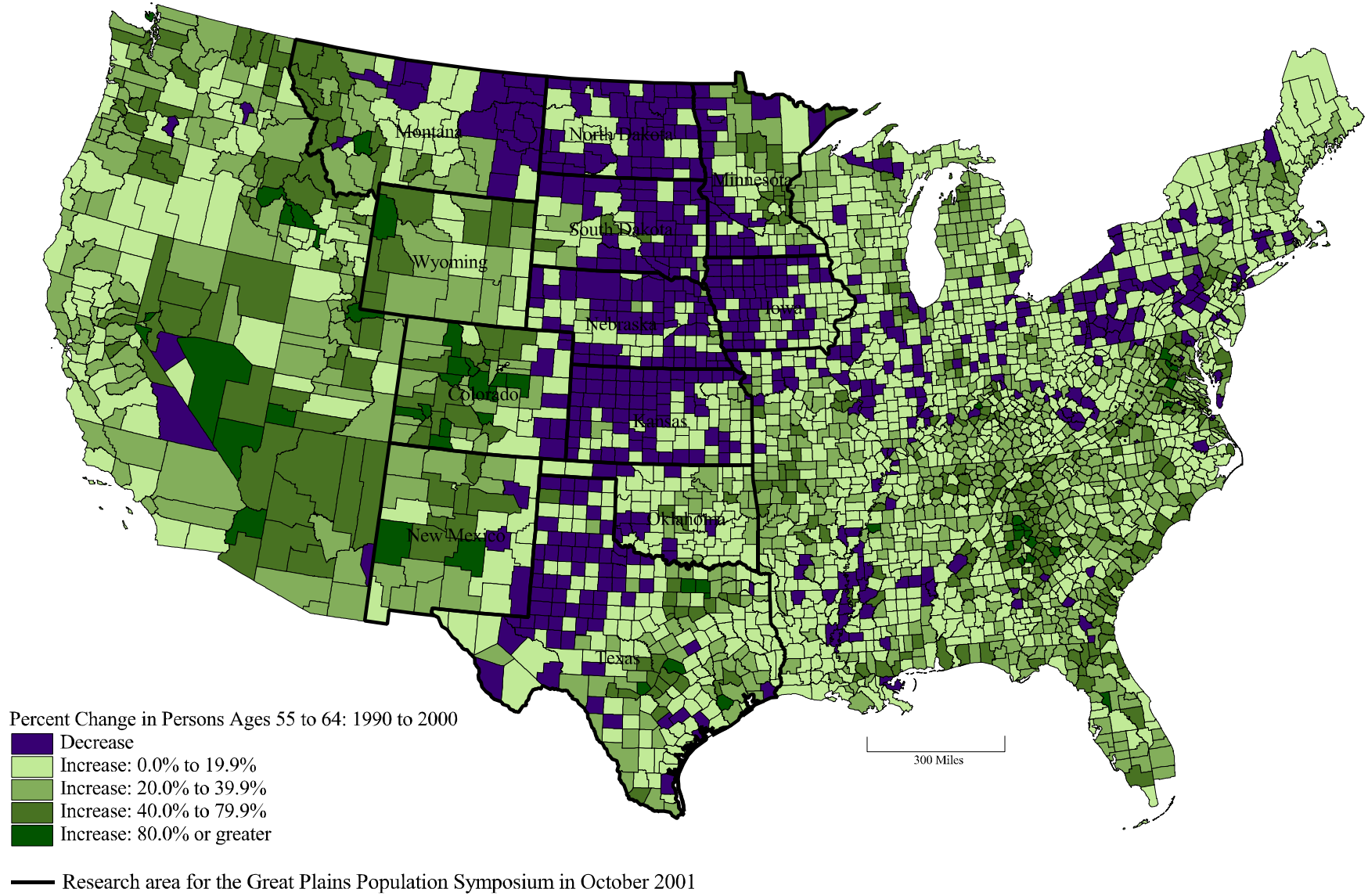


Table 13. Labor Pool Population in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1980 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses

Age Cohort and Year	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Non-Metropolitan Counties							
					Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Ages												
1980	34,970,078	100.0	22,839,309	100.0	12,130,769	100.0	2,983,069	100.0	7,254,362	100.0	1,893,338	100.0
1990	38,736,776	100.0	26,698,025	100.0	12,038,751	100.0	3,044,336	100.0	7,226,040	100.0	1,768,375	100.0
2000	45,461,286	100.0	32,429,884	100.0	13,031,402	100.0	3,305,226	100.0	7,875,080	100.0	1,851,096	100.0
Entry Labor Pool (Ages 20-34)												
1980	9,306,741	26.6	6,515,568	28.5	2,791,173	23.0	803,989	27.0	1,610,186	22.2	376,998	19.9
1990	9,627,201	24.9	7,123,956	26.7	2,503,245	20.8	739,514	24.3	1,452,275	20.1	311,456	17.6
2000	9,697,086	21.3	7,372,932	22.7	2,324,154	17.8	697,199	21.1	1,362,602	17.3	264,353	14.3
Prime Labor Pool (Ages 35-54)												
1980	7,205,531	20.6	4,807,017	21.0	2,398,514	19.8	577,313	19.4	1,441,020	19.9	380,181	20.1
1990	9,595,738	24.8	6,775,731	25.4	2,820,007	23.4	707,818	23.3	1,697,509	23.5	414,680	23.5
2000	13,207,767	29.1	9,539,161	29.4	3,668,606	28.2	907,439	27.5	2,225,473	28.3	535,694	28.9
Pre-Retirement (Ages 55-64)												
1980	3,026,425	8.7	1,836,276	8.0	1,190,149	9.8	256,403	8.6	726,373	10.0	207,373	11.0
1990	3,095,919	8.0	1,987,679	7.4	1,108,240	9.2	248,713	8.2	677,143	9.4	182,384	10.3
2000	3,682,143	8.1	2,460,109	7.6	1,222,034	9.4	275,833	8.3	754,320	9.6	191,881	10.4
All Persons Ages 20 to 64												
1980	19,538,697	55.9	13,158,861	57.6	6,379,836	52.6	1,637,705	54.9	3,777,579	52.1	964,552	50.9
1990	22,318,858	57.6	15,887,366	59.5	6,431,492	53.4	1,696,045	55.7	3,826,927	53.0	908,520	51.4
2000	26,586,996	58.5	19,372,202	59.7	7,214,794	55.4	1,880,471	56.9	4,342,395	55.1	991,928	53.6

Table 14. Change in the Labor Pool Population in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1980 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses

Change in Population by Age Cohort and Year	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Non-Metropolitan Counties							
					Total		Urban population 20,000 or more		Urban population 2,500 to 19,999		Rural population less than 2,500	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
All Ages												
1980 to 1990	3,766,698	10.8	3,858,716	16.9	-92,018	-0.8	61,267	2.1	-28,322	-0.4	-124,963	-6.6
1990 to 2000	6,724,510	17.4	5,731,859	21.5	992,651	8.2	260,890	8.6	649,040	9.0	82,721	4.7
1980 to 2000	10,491,208	30.0	9,590,575	42.0	900,633	7.4	322,157	10.8	620,718	8.6	-42,242	-2.2
Entry Labor Pool (Ages 20-34)												
1980 to 1990	320,460	3.4	608,388	9.3	-287,928	-10.3	-64,475	-8.0	-157,911	-9.8	-65,542	-17.4
1990 to 2000	69,885	0.7	248,976	3.5	-179,091	-7.2	-42,315	-5.7	-89,673	-6.2	-47,103	-15.1
1980 to 2000	390,345	4.2	857,364	13.2	-467,019	-16.7	-106,790	-13.3	-247,584	-15.4	-112,645	-29.9
Prime Labor Pool (Ages 35-54)												
1980 to 1990	2,390,207	33.2	1,968,714	41.0	421,493	17.6	130,505	22.6	256,489	17.8	34,499	9.1
1990 to 2000	3,612,029	37.6	2,763,430	40.8	848,599	30.1	199,621	28.2	527,964	31.1	121,014	29.2
1980 to 2000	6,002,236	83.3	4,732,144	98.4	1,270,092	53.0	330,126	57.2	784,453	54.4	155,513	40.9
Pre-Retirement (Ages 55-64)												
1980 to 1990	69,494	2.3	151,403	8.2	-81,909	-6.9	-7,690	-3.0	-49,230	-6.8	-24,989	-12.1
1990 to 2000	586,224	18.9	472,430	23.8	113,794	10.3	27,120	10.9	77,177	11.4	9,497	5.2
1980 to 2000	655,718	21.7	623,833	34.0	31,885	2.7	19,430	7.6	27,947	3.8	-15,492	-7.5
All Persons Ages 20 to 64												
1980 to 1990	2,780,161	14.2	2,728,505	20.7	51,656	0.8	58,340	3.6	49,348	1.3	-56,032	-5.8
1990 to 2000	4,268,138	19.1	3,484,836	21.9	783,302	12.2	184,426	10.9	515,468	13.5	83,408	9.2
1980 to 2000	7,048,299	36.1	6,213,341	47.2	834,958	13.1	242,766	14.8	564,816	15.0	27,376	2.8

Figure 16. Persons 65 Years and Older as a Percent of Total Population in the U.S. by County: 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census

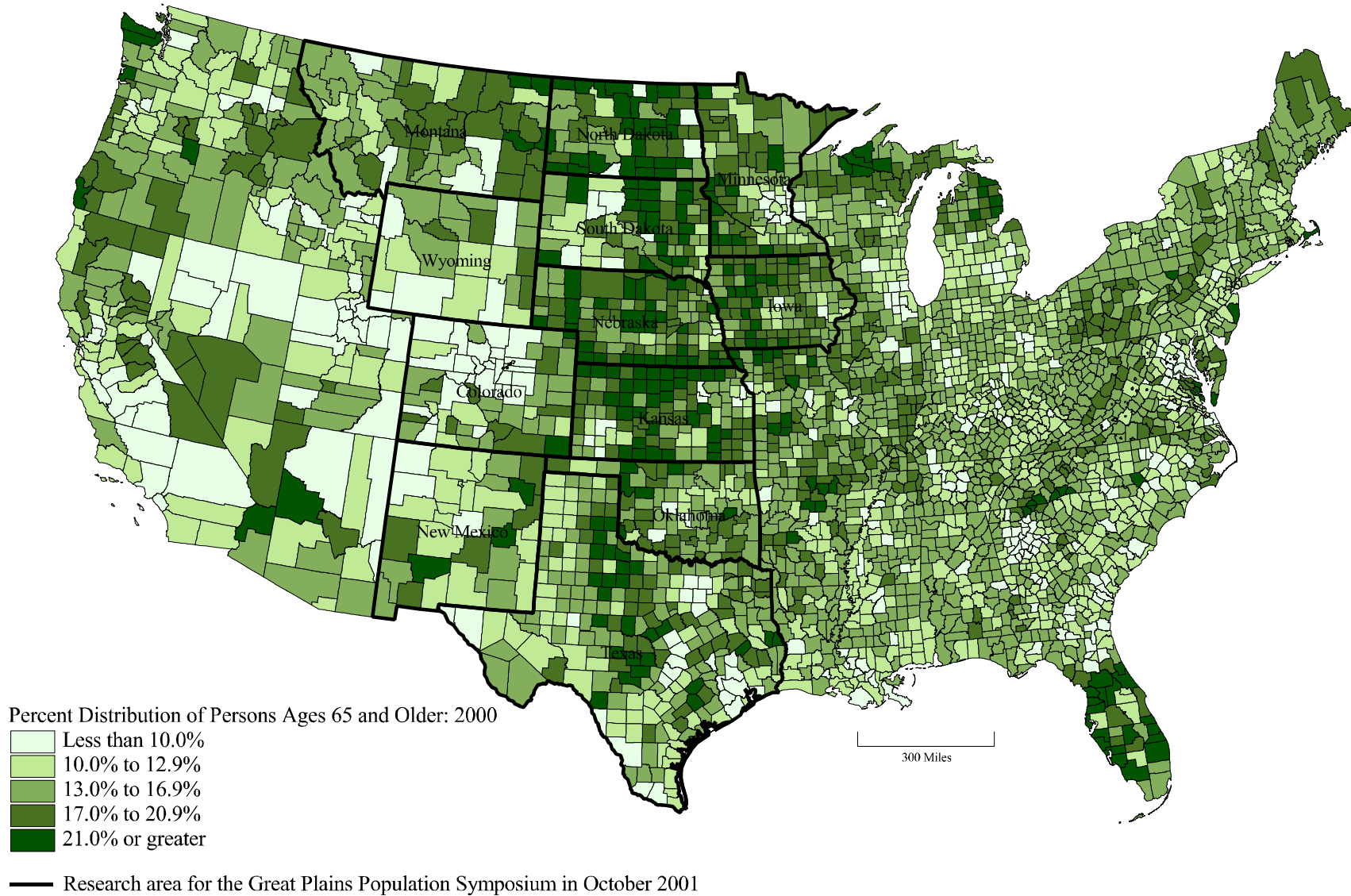


Figure 17. Percent Change in Persons Ages 65 Years and Older for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

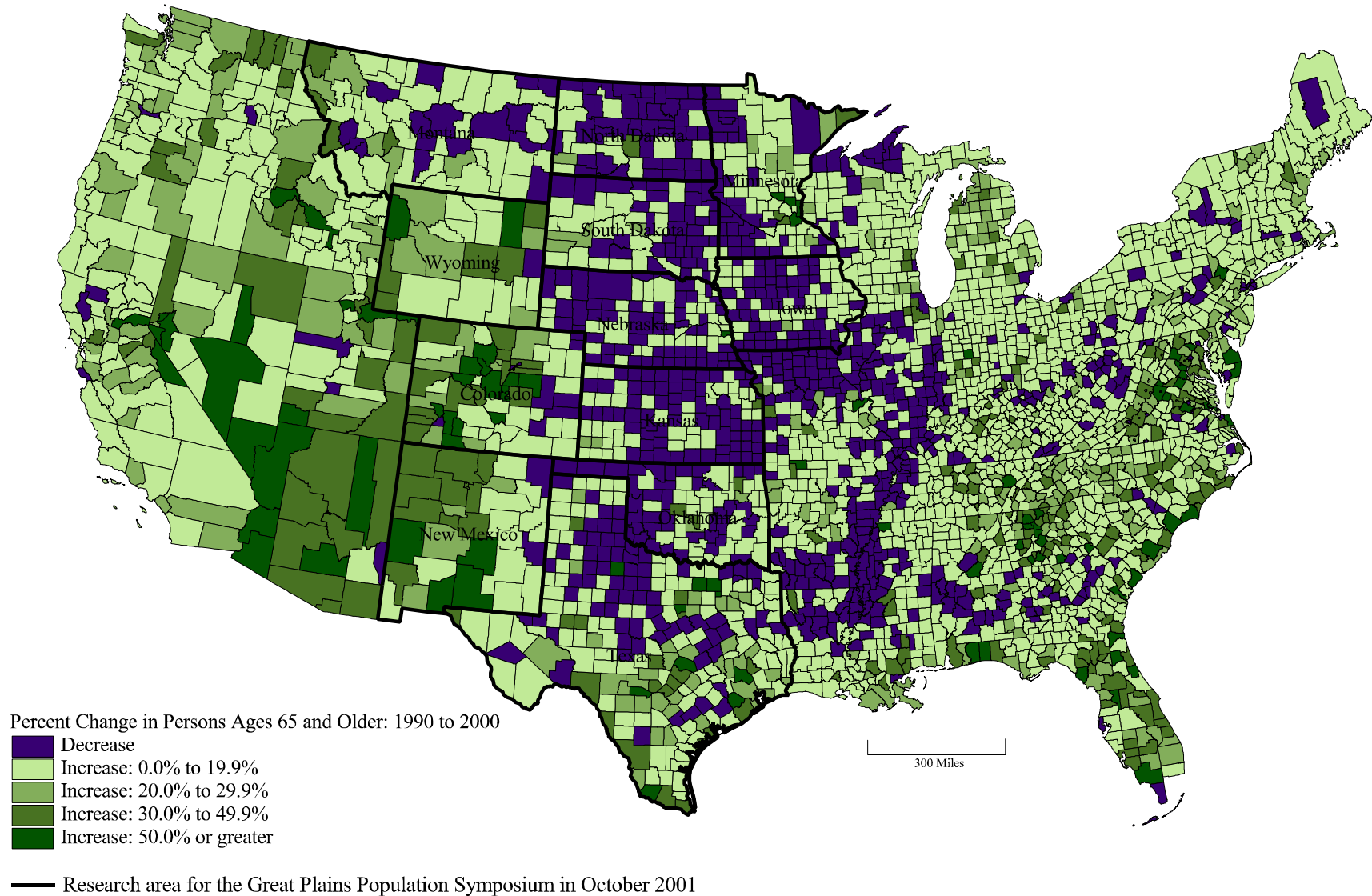


Figure 18. Percent Change in Persons Ages 85 Years and Older for the U.S. by County: 1990 to 2000

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census

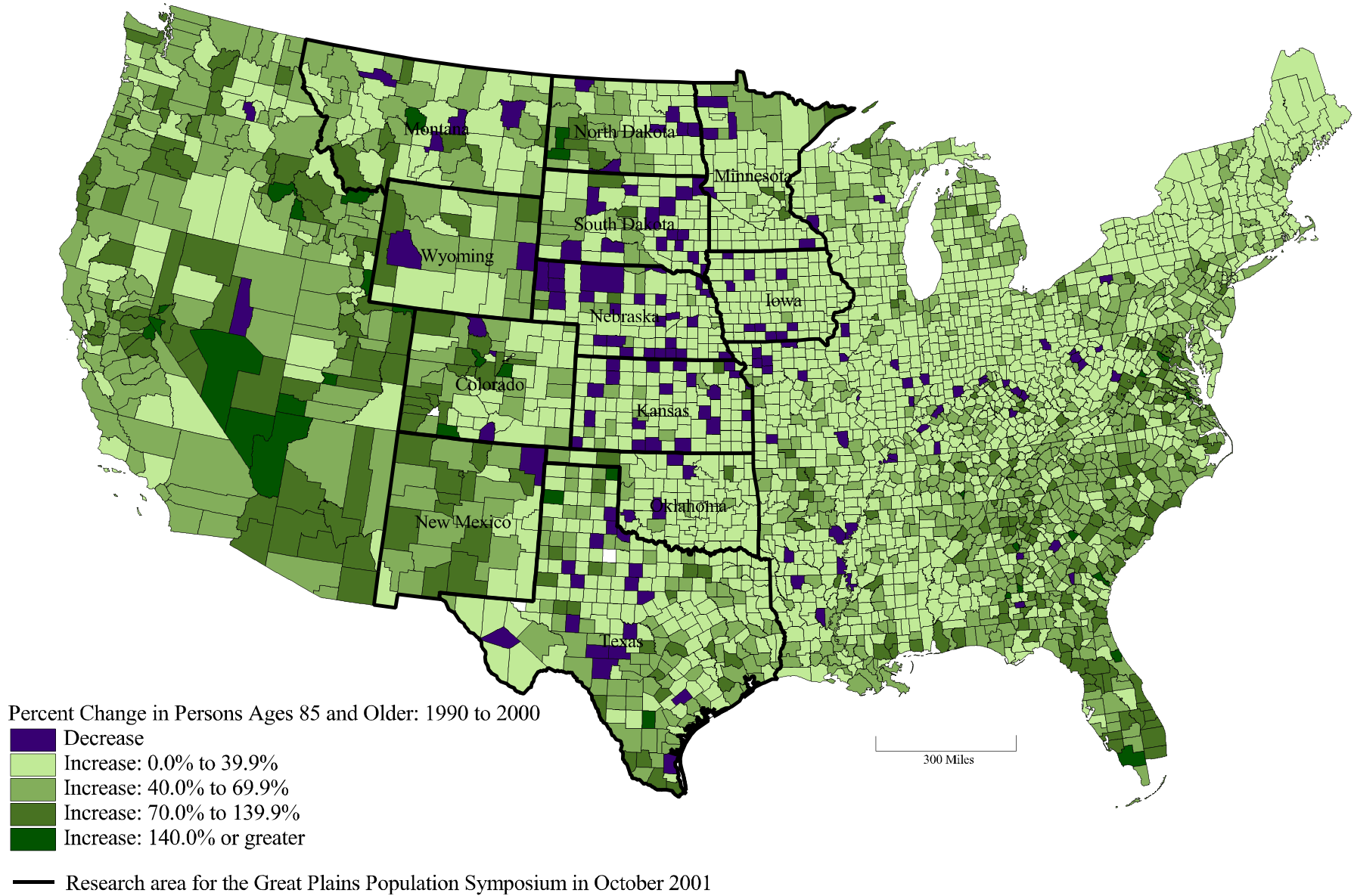


Table 15. Elderly Population in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1980 to 2000

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All Ages												
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1990	38,736,776	100.0	26,698,025	100.0	12,038,751	100.0	3,044,336	100.0	7,226,040	100.0	1,768,375	100.0
2000	45,461,286	100.0	32,429,884	100.0	13,031,402	100.0	3,305,226	100.0	7,875,080	100.0	1,851,096	100.0
Persons 65 Years and Older												
1980	3,782,790	10.8	2,018,188	8.8	1,764,602	14.5	345,932	11.6	1,095,654	15.1	323,016	17.1
1990	4,519,050	11.7	2,592,611	9.7	1,926,439	16.0	399,295	13.1	1,191,272	16.5	335,872	19.0
2000	5,156,934	11.3	3,149,193	9.7	2,007,741	15.4	431,753	13.1	1,240,663	15.8	335,325	18.1
Persons 85 Years and Older												
1980	364,952	1.0	183,207	0.8	181,745	1.5	35,051	1.2	111,904	1.5	34,790	1.8
1990	494,980	1.3	262,567	1.0	232,413	1.9	46,067	1.5	143,627	2.0	42,719	2.4
2000	655,963	1.4	369,489	1.1	286,474	2.2	59,174	1.8	176,944	2.2	50,356	2.7

Table 16. Change in the Elderly Population in the Great Plains by Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Status: 1980 to 2000

Note: Metropolitan Status was determined using the 1993 Beale Codes provided by the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. For purposes of this study, the Great Plains is defined as all counties in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

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Change in Population by Age Cohort and Year	All Counties		Metropolitan Counties		Non-Metropolitan Counties							
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All Ages												
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1990 to 2000	6,724,510	17.4	5,731,859	21.5	992,651	8.2	260,890	8.6	649,040	9.0	82,721	4.7
1980 to 2000	10,491,208	30.0	9,590,575	42.0	900,633	7.4	322,157	10.8	620,718	8.6	-42,242	-2.2
Persons 65 Years and Older												
1980 to 1990	736,260	19.5	574,423	28.5	161,837	9.2	53,363	15.4	95,618	8.7	12,856	4.0
1990 to 2000	637,884	14.1	556,582	21.5	81,302	4.2	32,458	8.1	49,391	4.1	-547	-0.2
1980 to 2000	1,374,144	36.3	1,131,005	56.0	243,139	13.8	85,821	24.8	145,009	13.2	12,309	3.8
Persons 85 Years and Older												
1980 to 1990	130,028	35.6	79,360	43.3	50,668	27.9	11,016	31.4	31,723	28.3	7,929	22.8
1990 to 2000	160,983	32.5	106,922	40.7	54,061	23.3	13,107	28.5	33,317	23.2	7,637	17.9
1980 to 2000	291,011	79.7	186,282	101.7	104,729	57.6	24,123	68.8	65,040	58.1	15,566	44.7