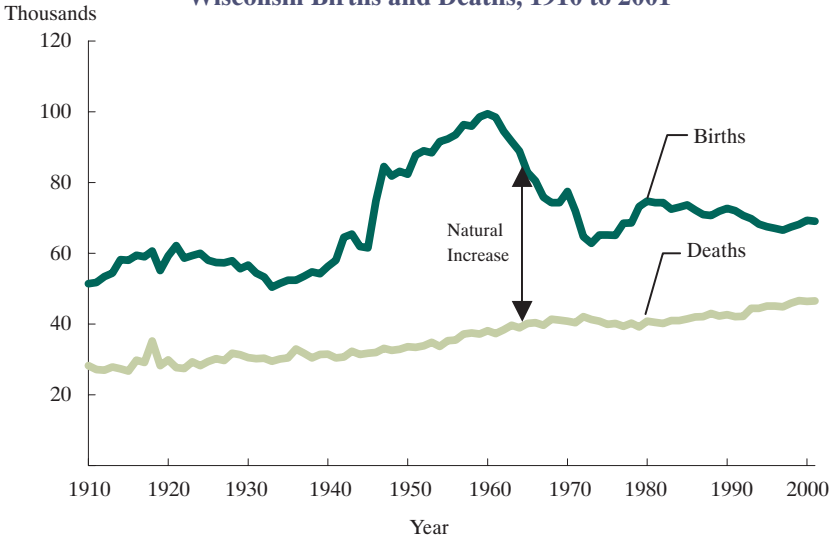


Figure 7 shows that the 1990s witnessed almost equal contributions to growth from natural increase and net migration (the latter being the difference between in-migrants and out-migrants). It is likely that an equal contribution from net migration and natural increase has not occurred since the early years of Wisconsin statehood, although data to test this assumption are not available.

Figure 6

### Wisconsin Births and Deaths, 1910 to 2001



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Wisconsin Vital Statistics Reports, Various years

Many social and economic factors contributed to the relatively strong growth of Wisconsin's population during the 1990s. Declining mortality and improvements in medical technology, generally, has meant that Wisconsin residents are living longer, healthier lives. Nevertheless, the fact that Wisconsin's population is getting larger and, importantly, the fact that the population has a higher proportion of elderly (ages where the impact of mortality is disproportionately felt) means that the number of deaths is slowly rising. Meanwhile, birth rates (and numbers) have remained relatively steady over the past three decades. As a consequence, contributions to growth arising from natural increase are diminishing over time. A strong state economy during the 1990s, coupled with economic distress in the Southwest and Northeast during the early 1990s, led to unprecedented levels of migration to the state.

### Increasing Density

With a fixed land area and a growing population, Wisconsin's population density has increased with the passage of time. Overall population density almost tripled from approximately 37 persons per square mile (of land area) in 1900 to 99 persons per square mile in 2000 (Fig. 8).

Figure 7  
**Components of Wisconsin Population Change: 1950 to 2000**

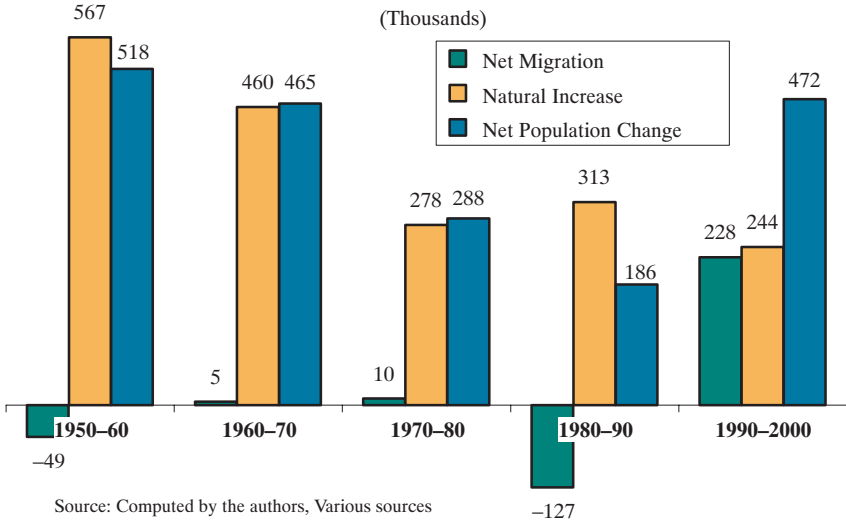
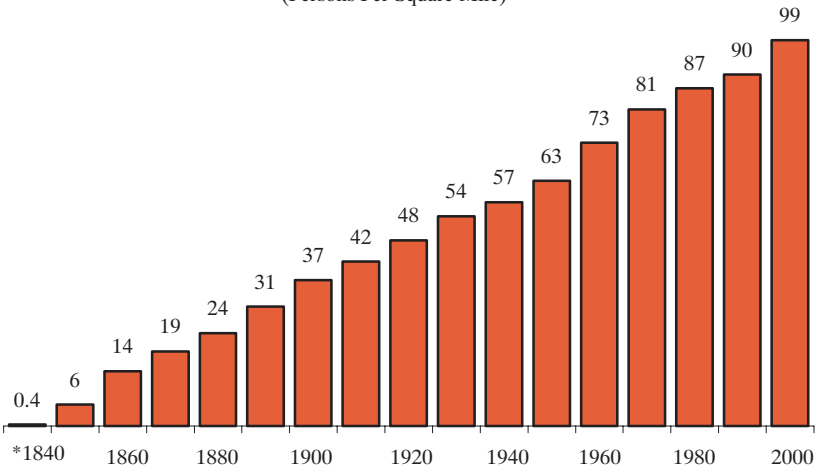


Figure 8  
**Population Density: 1840 to 2000**  
 (Persons Per Square Mile)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census of Population, 1840 to 2000

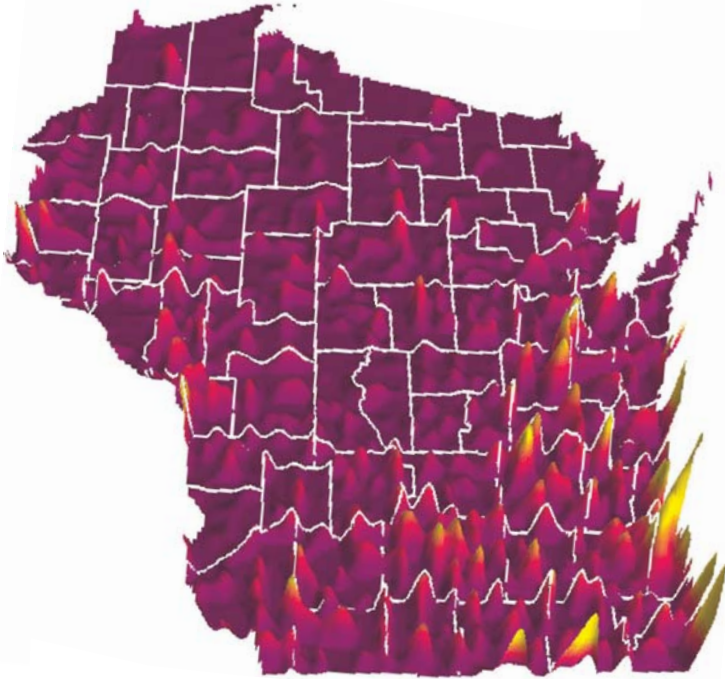
\* 1840 population count is reported for the Wisconsin Territory

Wisconsin's population density is high when compared to the rest of the nation, but roughly on par with the U.S. if low-density Alaska is removed from the calculation. Of course, population density varies dramatically across the state. Rural areas with low population density (average of 32 persons per square mile) contrast with

urban areas generally (average 2,240 persons per square mile) and with large, densely settled, areas such as the City of Milwaukee (6,214 persons per square mile) to form an exceedingly uneven landscape defined by density of population (Fig. 9).

Figure 9

### 3-D Perspective of Population Density, Wisconsin MCDs: 2000



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

### The Distribution of Population Growth

With respect to population change in rural and urban areas, the course of Wisconsin's demographic history largely parallels that of the country generally. The Census Bureau roughly defines the urban population to include all persons living in and around large cities over 50,000 population, in addition to those who reside in smaller cities and villages down to 2,500 population. The remainder of the population is considered to be rural.

At the time of statehood, over 90% of the state's population was rural by today's definition. The growth of cities and villages, however, quickly marked the acceleration of the urban population (Fig. 10). By 1900, 38% of Wisconsin's 2-plus million residents were to be found in cities. One hundred years later, the 2000 Census found 68% of the population in cities and larger villages (this contrasts with 79%, nationally).

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