



WINNEBAGO COUNTY

— ILLINOIS —

Winnebago County Population Trends

Below is the white paper provided by the **Region 1 Planning Council** research team on population in the County.

- Winnebago County has been experiencing persistent and generally consistent population decline since the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008. As of 2017, there has been no signs of a turnaround.
- Winnebago County's population decline began earlier than the state of Illinois overall and is at a faster pace.
- Domestic emigration is driving population loss in Winnebago County.
- While a sizable portion of the population loss in Winnebago County is attributable to the larger migration trend out of Illinois, the size and timing of Winnebago's loss indicate there are additional local factors. Our past review of media reports and other studies indicate those may include job losses, property value losses, tax increases, and increase in crime from the recession and a slow recovery, but more primary research would be needed.
- Population loss was largest among younger people – especially those under 20 and those in the 25 to 44 year old range that has been prioritized by regional economic and workforce development efforts.
- Winnebago County actually gained population 65 and up. The combination of losing younger workers and the aging population make workforce retention and attraction one of our highest priorities.
- About half of our population loss from net migration is to neighboring states, primarily Wisconsin, but also Missouri and Iowa
- The largest sources of positive net migration to Winnebago County are North Carolina, the rest of Illinois, and a few other states. These do not come close to overcoming domestic emigration.
- Within Illinois, most population gains to Winnebago County were from Cook, Boone, DuPage, Kane and Will Counties.
- Within Illinois, we are mostly losing population to counties with significant universities – McLean, DeKalb, and Champaign – as well as Logan County.
- More Illinois counties have lost population since at least 2010, with only nine experiencing measurable growth. The trend has not significantly improved – even just from 2016 to 2017, few counties saw measurable growth.
- There is some positive potential as some of the Collar Counties– Kane, Will, and most notably, Kendall - are gaining population, while nearby McHenry and Boone counties are at least basically flat. It is possible that migration out of Chicago up I-90 could eventually bring more population to Winnebago County.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau County & State Intercensal Estimates 2000-2010; Annual Estimate of the Resident Population 2010-2017; ¹ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year Estimates

Sincerely,

Frank Haney
Winnebago County Board Chairman

