

The Root of Pittsburgh's Population Drain

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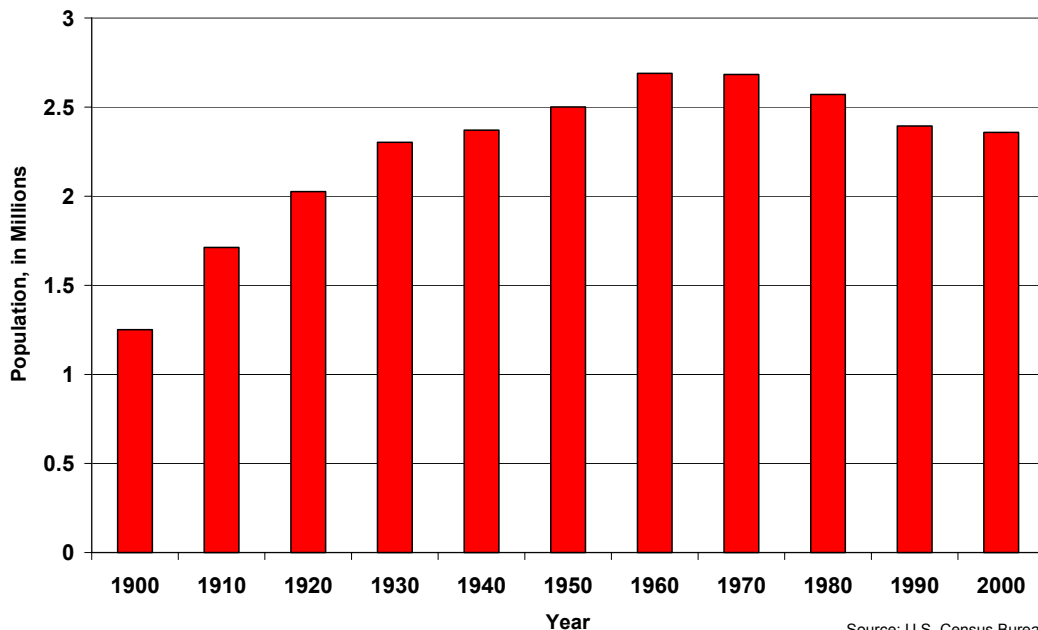
Introduction

Recently-issued population estimates and migration data show that the Pittsburgh region is losing population. Countless news stories following the release of the estimates each year do their best to put a positive spin on the situation, speculating why the region is losing people. The most-common [speculation is that young people are moving out of the region](#). This report attempts to quantify the impact of net migration losses in terms of those that moved away, and the children and grandchildren born elsewhere to former residents of the region.

Echoes from the Past

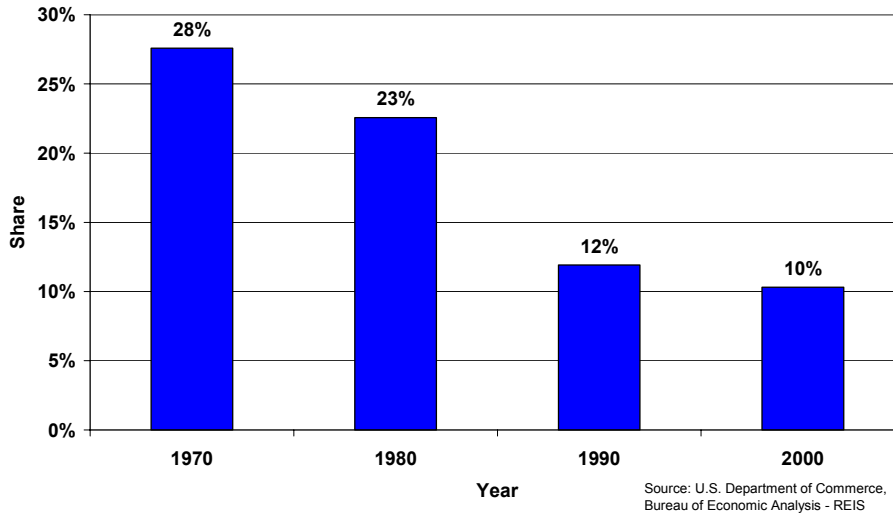
To end the speculation and answer the question of why the Pittsburgh region has been losing people, a historical perspective is essential. Between 1970 and 1990, the region lost 158,000 manufacturing jobs, and over 289,000 residents. The economy's share of jobs in manufacturing fell from 28% to 12% over the same two decades. The foundation of the region's economy was in crisis.

Pittsburgh Region Population 1900-2000



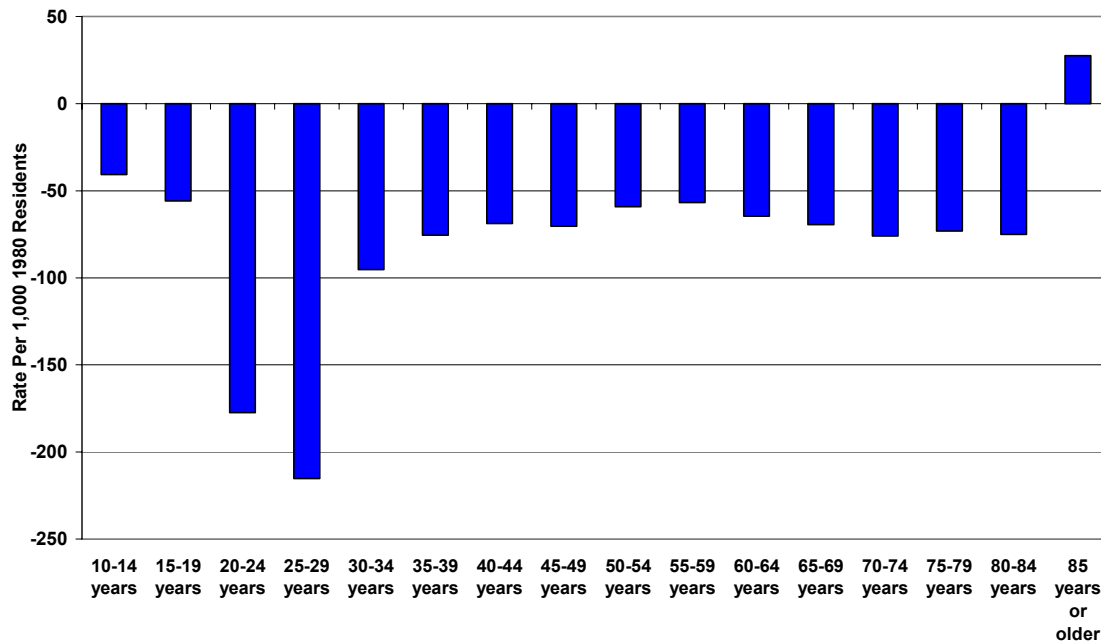
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Pittsburgh MSA Share of Total Employment in Manufacturing
1970-2000**



The young population was especially affected, as the seniority system in place at many manufacturing establishments meant that less-experienced, younger workers were first to be released into an anemic job market. With a paucity of attractive career opportunities, many young people in the region had no alternative but to leave. Net migration data from the 1980's backs up the age-related differences in the response to this type of crisis, as larger rates of young people left the region than older age groups.

Pittsburgh Region Net Migration Rate by Age 1980-1990



Age in 1990

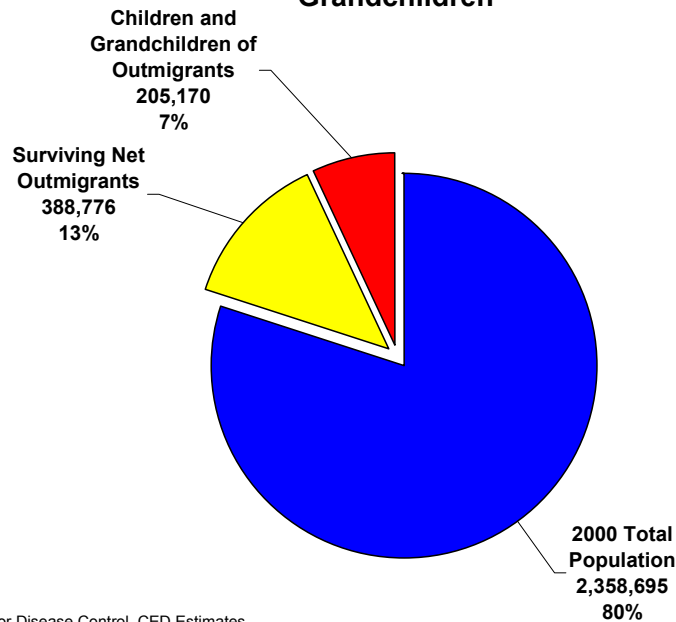
Source: Centers for Disease Control, CED Estimates

Research has shown that “push” and “pull” factors impact the decision to move. Clearly, [a key factor impacting migration decisions is economic opportunity](#). It was unfortunate for the region that this crisis hit just as the largest cohorts of the baby boom population were in their 20’s, [the age at which people are most likely to move](#).

The fact that the region also was perceived as unattractive and was therefore bypassed by those moving to and within the U.S. contributed to the region’s distress. [This negative perception of the region persists](#) in the minds of many, both inside and outside the region. Battling these negative perceptions through a variety of marketing and promotional efforts has been a cornerstone of [regional economic development strategy](#).

The impact of net migration losses has been severe, including both the initial loss of residents and the future population, as those who left or bypassed the region have had children and grandchildren elsewhere. On a net basis, 389,000 people who left the region between 1970 and 2000 were estimated to still be alive in 2000. Children and grandchildren born to these out migrants number an estimated 205,000 in 2000. Had the Pittsburgh region had a neutral net migration rate between 1970 and 2000, the year 2000 population would have been nearly three million, as opposed to the actual figure of 2.35 million.

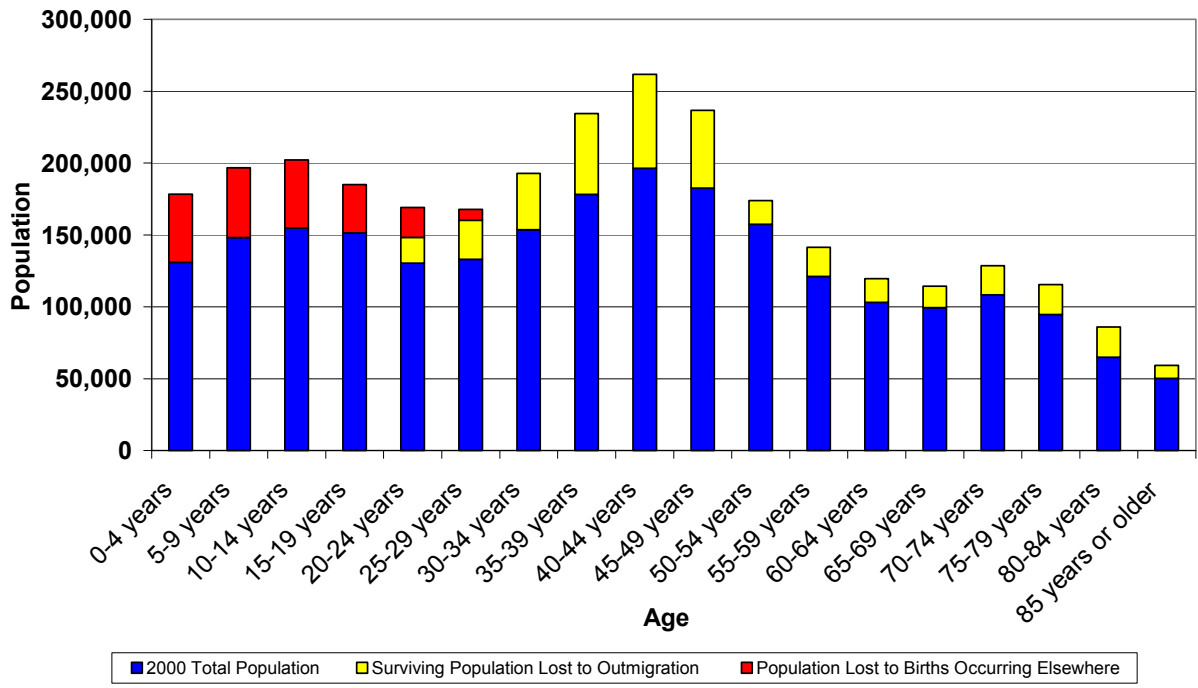
Pittsburgh MSA Year 2000 Population, Surviving Outmigrants Leaving the Region 1970-2000, and their Children and Grandchildren



Source, Centers for Disease Control, CED Estimates

As can be seen in the following graph, the impact of population loss due to net migration losses and births occurring elsewhere was the most severe on the youngest cohorts. The graph below compares year 2000 age structure to what it would be had there been no negative net migration between 1970 and 2000.

Estimated Population if the Pittsburgh Region Experienced No Migration Loss 1970-2000



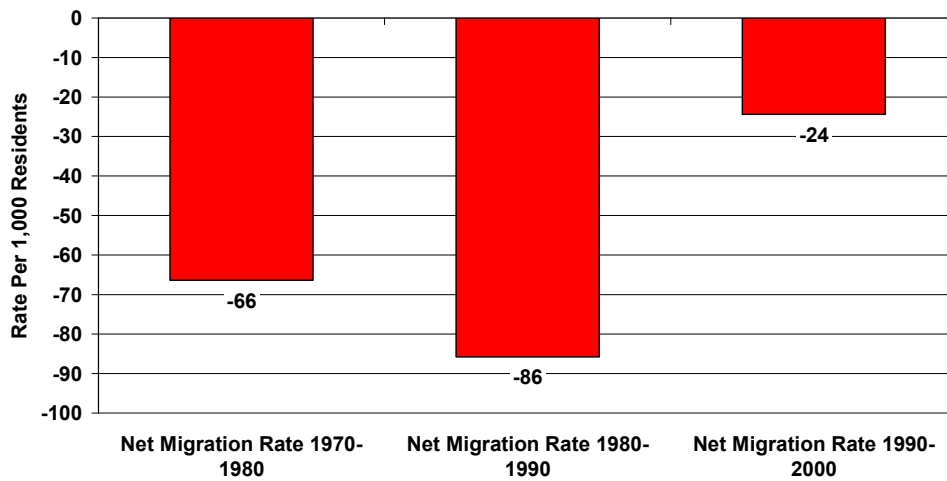
Source, Centers for Disease Control, CED Estimates

Current Conditions

While the region's demographic picture is far from rosy, the situation has improved during the 1990's

- Negative net migration rates have fallen in the region, dropping from -86 per 1,000 residents between 1980 and 1990, to -24 per 1,000 over the 1990-2000 period. In other words, the region had lost nearly nine of every 100 1980 residents by 1990, and just over two of every 100 1990 residents by the year 2000.

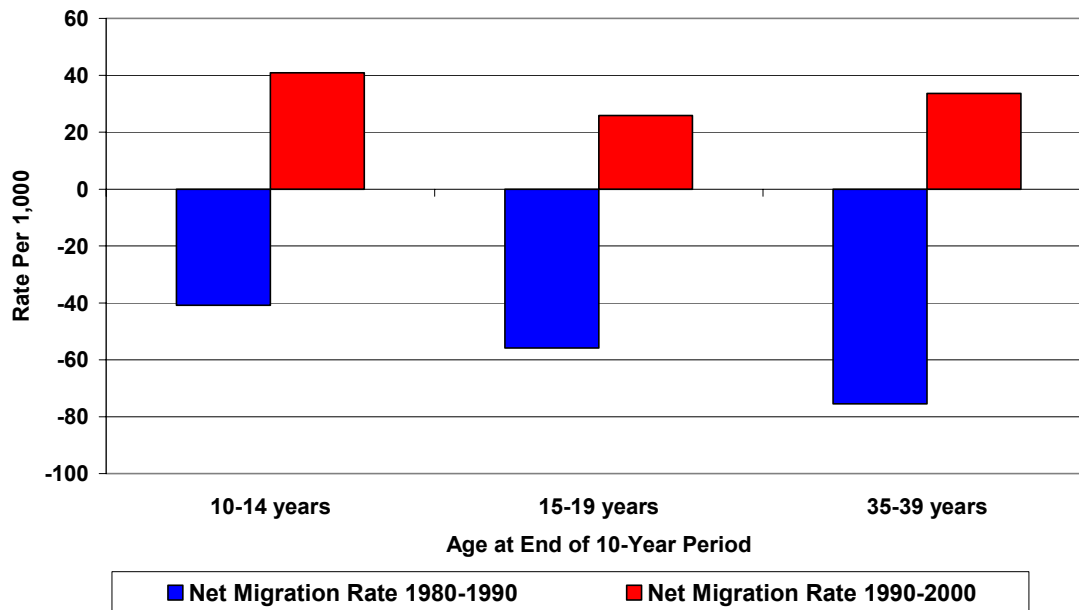
Pittsburgh MSA Total Net Migration Rate, 1970-2000



Source, Centers for Disease Control, CED Estimates

- The region's quality of life and economic opportunities appear to be attractive to mid-career families and professionals. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of regional residents in the cohort aged 35-39 in 2000 actually grew. There are strong indications that many also have brought their children in tow, as growth in the cohort aged 10-14 (in 2000) was also apparent. Growth in the age 15-19 (in the 2000 cohort) also took place, although it is unclear how much of this growth is due to parent-driven migration or college-related moves.

**Pittsburgh Region Age Cohorts With Population Growth
1990-2000**

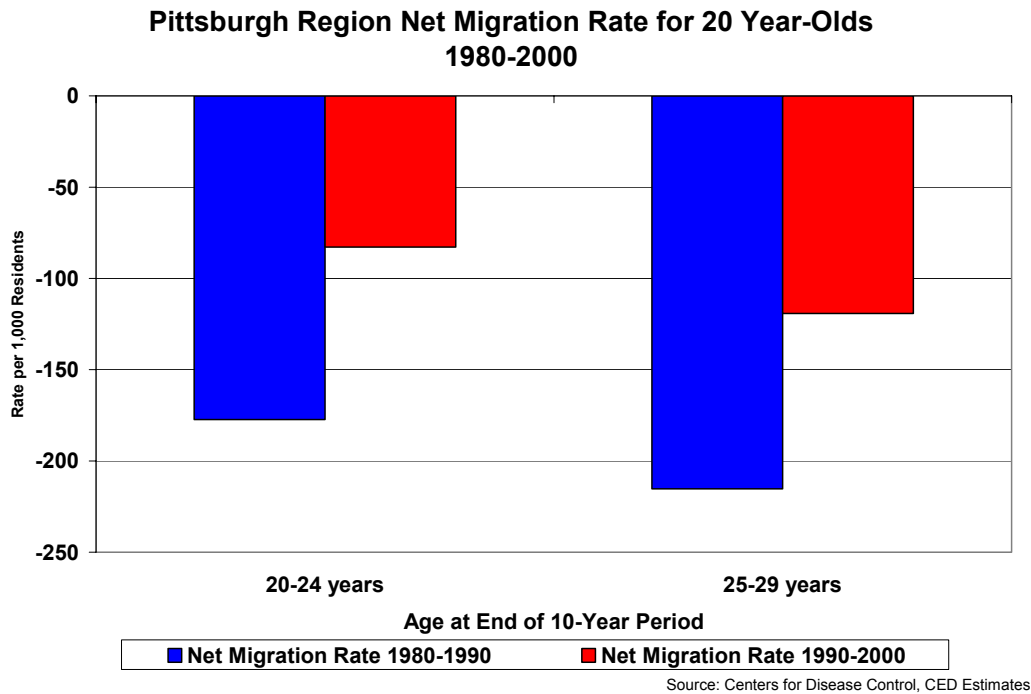


Source, Centers for Disease Control, CED Estimates

- [Out migration from the Pittsburgh region was lower than nearly all other regions of comparable size.](#) This data describing the overall population may, however mask trends occurring within smaller subgroups. [A recent Census Bureau report](#) has ranked Pittsburgh 166th of 276 regions in the rate of loss among young, single individuals with a college degree.

Despite these positive trends, there remain several large barriers to regional population growth.

- Net migration losses among people in their 20's persist, although they are less severe than they were during the 1980's.



- [Comparatively few people move to the region from elsewhere in the US.](#) While the region had lost relatively few residents to migration, it was unable to replace them from other domestic sources. Due to the lack of new blood from outside the region, an insular culture has developed in many regional communities. Newcomers often express difficulty in acclimating to life in the region compared to their experiences in communities with a larger number of recent arrivals.
- [The region also attracts few international immigrants.](#) According to immigration data, the region is off the beaten path for foreign migrants when compared to other comparably-sized regions.

Measuring Success

Regional foundations and taxpayers are making substantial investments in regional marketing and amenity-based development strategies in the hopes of expanding the region's population base. Policymakers in the region should not wait ten years for the data from the next decennial Census to measure the effectiveness of these investments in attracting and retaining people in the region. Other data sources to use as benchmarks include:

American Community Survey

Annual data includes regional domestic migration flows to and from the region. The American Community Survey also provides the number of foreign immigrants moving to the region.

Internal Revenue Service County to County Migration Files

This annual dataset tracks the number of tax filers moving to and from the region, along with the origin county of regional immigrants, and the destination county of those leaving the area.

United States Postal Service Change of Address

Data of recent movers collected by third-party data providers can be matched against the USPS National Change of Address database to obtain the previous and current street address of migrants to, from, and within the region. While this data does not include individuals who do not file a change of address with the Postal Service, it can identify the most attractive communities to domestic immigrants, identify the largest exporting communities, and shed light on intra-regional migration patterns.

Student Data

Student data from regional colleges and universities could track the number of students remaining in the region by their degree and hometown, although inconsistent data collection and reporting practices make this currently impossible. Until a better data collection system is in place, student exit surveys and follow-up evaluation with alumni can help to fill the gap. Another advantage of exit and alumni surveys is the opportunity to identify specific factors contributing to the decision to leave.

Data Sources

Population by Age

United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division; Census Data for Public Health Research, CDC WONDER On-line Database. Data for Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland aggregated by the CED.

1900-2000 Pittsburgh Regional Population

United States Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990. <http://www.census.gov/population/cencounts/pa190090.txt>

Age Specific Fertility

U.S. rates, All Races

Births: Final Data for 2000. NVSR Volume 50, No. 5. 104 pp. (PHS) 2002-1120. Table 4. Total fertility rates and birth rates by age of mother: United States, 1970-2000, and by age and race of mother: United States, 1980-2000

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/nvsr50_05.pdf

Age Specific Mortality

U.S. rates by gender, all races

CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality, Unpublished trend table 290 for 1968-78.

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statab/mx6878.pdf>

Table HIST002A_1. Death rates for 113 selected causes by 5-year age groups, race and sex: United States, 1979-98

Plate 1 of 2 Age groups <1 year to 40-44 years

CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statab/hist002a_1.pdf

Table HIST002A_2. Death rates for 113 selected causes by 5-year age groups, race and sex: United States, 1979-98

Plate 2 of 2 Age groups 45-49 years to 85+ years

CDC/NCHS, National Vital Statistics System

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/statab/hist002a_2.pdf

- 1970-78 5-year mortality rate estimates based on 10-year 1968-78 and 5-year 1979-98 data.
- 1979-98 Mortality for Under Age 5 Calculated from Pennsylvania data obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Office of Analysis and Epidemiology (OAE) Compressed Mortality File (CMF) computer tape CDC WONDER On-line Database.
- The rate of change between 1997 and 1998 rates applied to 1998 data was used to calculate 1999 mortality rates

Regional Employment

US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis. Table CA25 Total full-time and part-time employment by industry. Accessed 8/21/03. <http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/default.cfm>

Methodology

