

## SECTION F, GEOGRAPHY

### Origin of the Population Increase and Changes in Population Distribution in the Flint, Michigan SMSA — 1950 to 1960

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The Flint, Michigan, Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) experienced a greater percentage rate of population growth between 1950 and 1960 than any other SMSA in the state. The numerical increase for the decade was 103,350 or 38.1% greater than the population total for 1950. The Kalamazoo SMSA ranked second with a 33.9% increase, and Ann Arbor third with a 21.8% expansion, a full 10% below Flint.

A population addition in any city can generally be attributed to the net natural increase and/or to in-migration. In the Flint SMSA both factors have contributed noticeably to the population enlargement between 1950 and the present.

Net natural increase—the excess birth rate over the death rate—was the more significant source of additional population in the SMSA. It accounted for approximately 75% (75,637) of the new Flint inhabitants during the decade. Geographically, net natural increase is local in origin; therefore, it is treated as a major part of the analysis in the subsequent discussion of population distribution and change.

In-migration is infinitely more complex in terms of its origin. It is treated as a lesser part of the discussion of distribution and change, and a more detailed analysis follows.

In analyzing the Flint SMSA it is necessary to define several areas used for discussion of distribution and comparison purposes. (Figs. 1,2, and 3). The first is the SMSA, bounded by political limits and defined as the City of Flint together with the remainder of Genesee County. The second unit is the political City of Flint. The third area is geographic rather than political and constitutes the city and the densely populated urban fringe adjacent to the city limits. The fourth unit is the census tract. Census tracts are small, permanently established, geographical areas into which large cities and their environs have been divided for statistical purposes. The Flint SMSA is composed of 75 census tracts, 41 within the city limits and an additional 34 in the county.

#### POPULATION SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION, 1950

In 1950 the population of the Flint SMSA was 270,963. Of this total 163,143 (60%) were situated in the City of Flint, and the remaining 107,820 (40%) were living in the county. Of the total population 23% were located in four contiguous townships (Flint, Genesee, Burton, and Mt. Morris) and the northern one-half of Grand Blanc Township. Of these approximately 13% were living in the urbanized fringe immediately adjacent to the city limits. Moreover, the outer area of the previously mentioned townships contained another 10%, thereby leaving only 17% of the total SMSA population in the remaining 13.5 townships which comprise the county.

Hence, approximately 83% of the 1950 population centralized in the SMSA, i.e., the city and its contiguous townships. Although it is not apparent from this distribution analysis, the city was, and had been for some time, experiencing a trend of out-migration from the central city. Out-migrants from the central sector of the city were settling primarily in the urban fringe rather than within the outer perimeter of the corporate limits. This explains, in part, the high density of the urban fringe.

Beyond the central part of the SMSA, the heaviest concentration of population was in those townships which contained suburban cities within their boundaries. Other dense concentrations in the outlying area were found along the major thoroughfares connecting Flint with the other parts of Genesee County, or cities and counties outside the SMSA.

Thus, the general distribution of population in 1950 showed a fairly heavy concentration of people in the central city and its immediate urban fringe. A general tendency, toward cluster and linear distribution patterns, focused primarily on smaller urban centers and transportation lines throughout the rest of the SMSA.

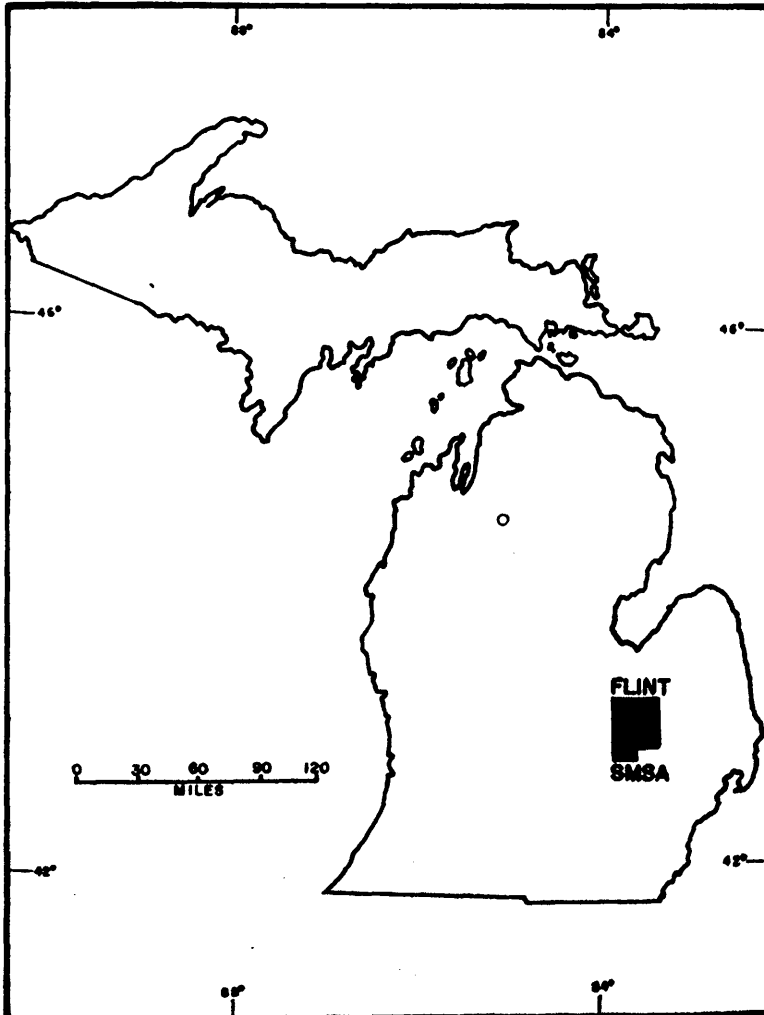


Figure 1. Flint, Michigan SMSA, 1960.

POPULATION SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION, 1960

In 1960 the population of the SMSA was 374,313. Of that number, 196,940 were living within the city limits while the remainder were residing in the county. Thus the distribution patterns were nearer to being equal than in 1950 with a numerical difference of only 19,587. The city-county ratio declined nearly 8% in the interim and the percentage of people living in the central city declined to 52.6% during the decade. Moreover, another 28% were situated within the four contiguous town-

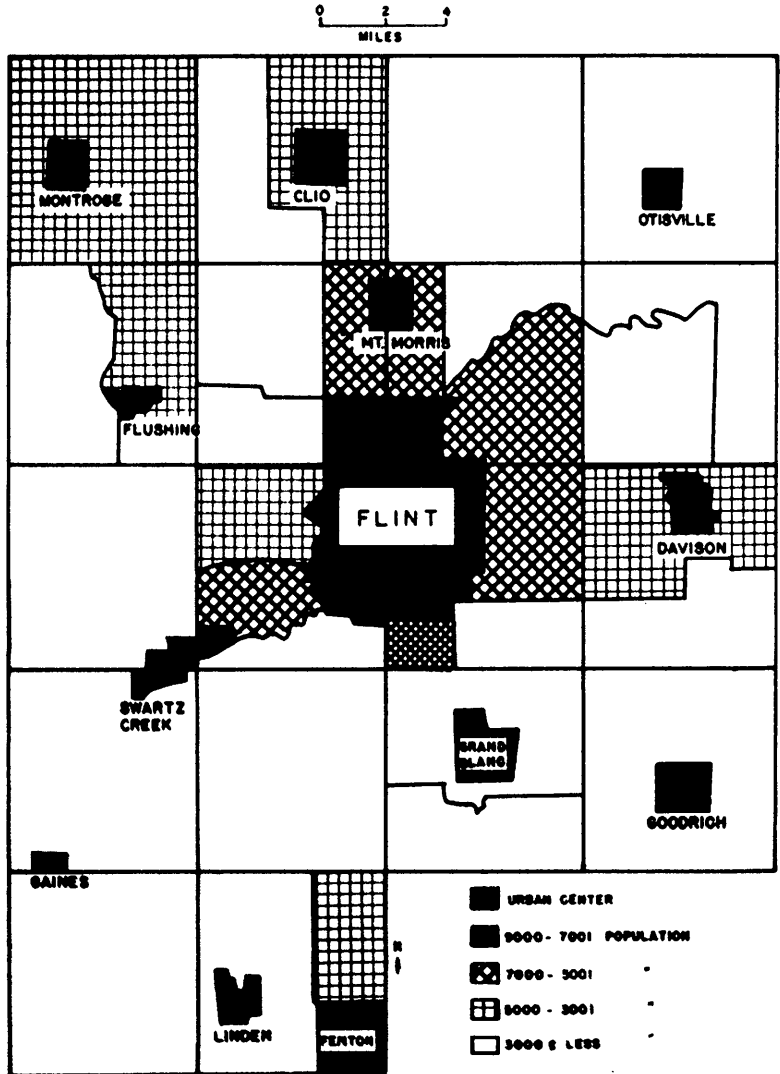


Figure 2. Flint, Michigan SMSA, population distribution, 1950.

ships plus the northern one-half of Grand Blanc Township, leaving about 20% in the outer part of the SMSA.

The 1960 distribution pattern shows a slight decrease in the concentration of population in the central part of the SMSA from that in 1950, while a corresponding increase of about the same percentage is evident in the remainder of the county. This change tends to indicate that the general out-migration from the city continued throughout the decade.

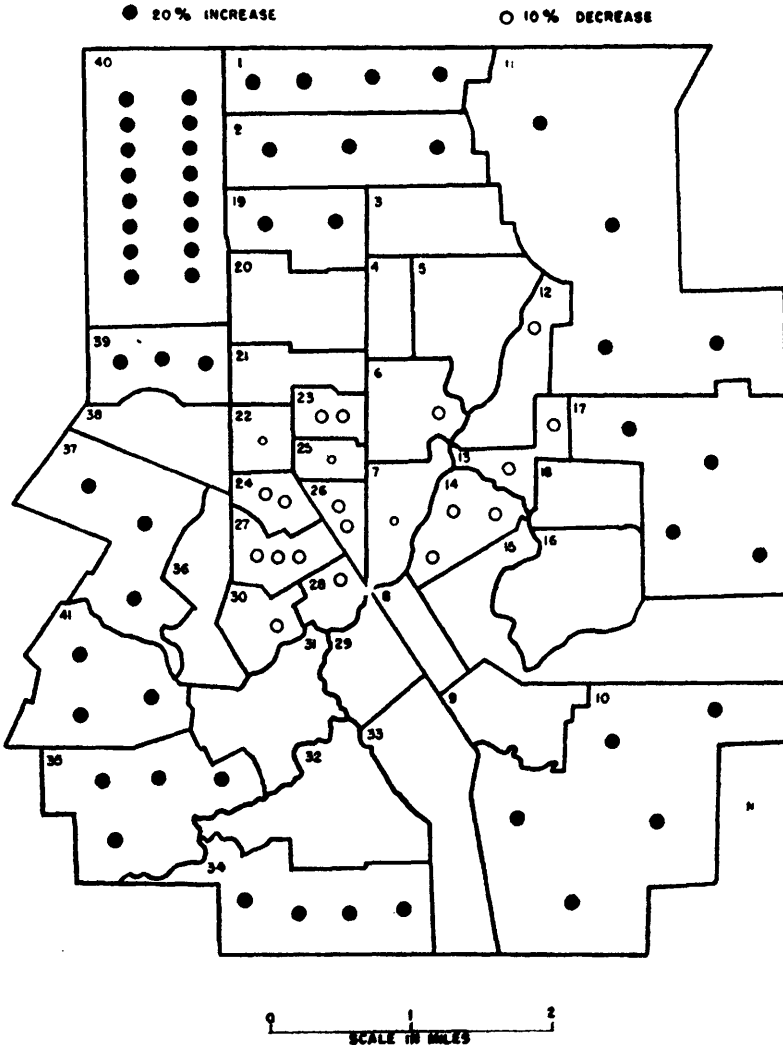


Figure 3. Percent population change 1950-1960, Flint, Michigan.

The city decrease is not necessarily wholly responsible for the county increase. Other factors which undoubtedly contributed to the increase are the net natural increase, and the settlement of in-migrants in the county, especially in the urban fringe.

CHANGES WITHIN THE CITY, 1950-'60

Currently, the population is distributed throughout the city with normal patterns interrupted only by various nonresidential land uses—industrial, commercial, schools, parks, etc. The population in 1960 was primarily at ground level because Flint had very few high-rise apartment

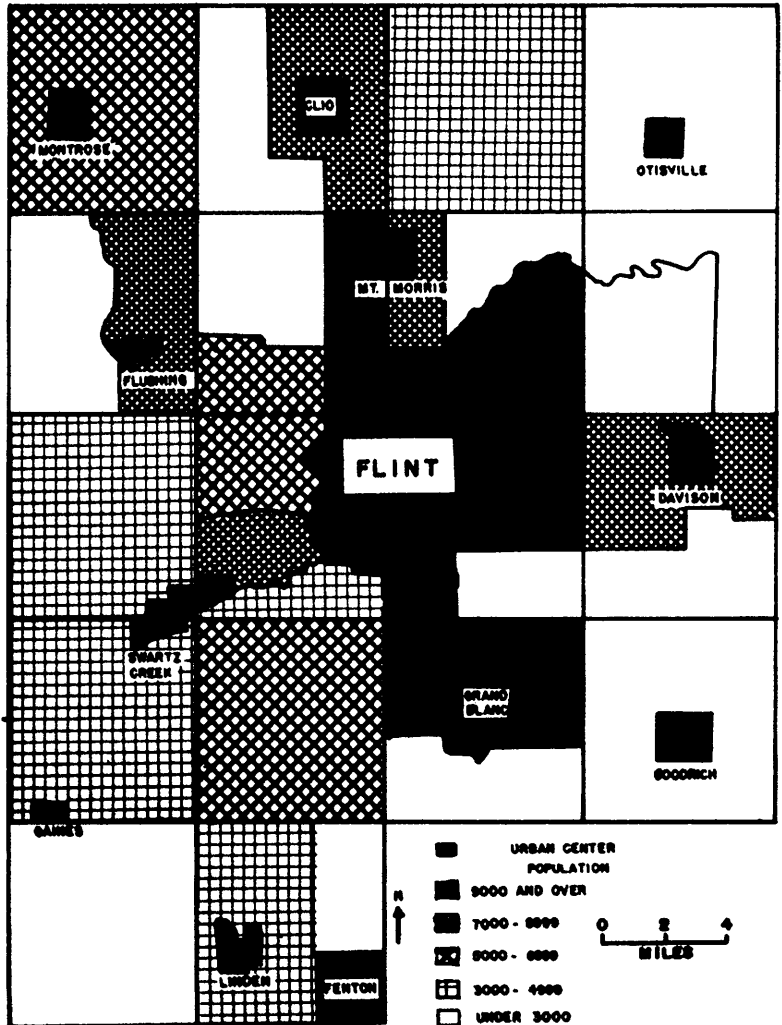


Figure 4. Flint SMSA population distribution, 1960.

buildings at that time, although, in recent years, the construction of such buildings has increased rapidly to permit the city to absorb population increases. Presently, the land-use situation leaves little or no space for horizontal expansion within the city limits.

In both 1950 and 1960 the highest population density per acre was in the central and north central parts of the city. The most significant expansions in density during the decade occurred in the outer census tracts around the perimeter of the city, within the corporate limits. Census tracts 40 and 1 in the northwest showed the greatest density increases. This trend is slightly different from that noted in 1950 when most of the out-migrants from the center of the city were settling in the urban fringe.

The census tracts showing decreases can be divided into four distinct areas, each containing one or more census tracts.

Area one: census tracts 29 and 8

Area two: census tracts 14, 13, and 12

Area Three: census tracts 23, 25, and 26

Area Four: census tract 4

Area one is composed of the Flint CBD. Thus, following the national trend of a decline in core population, a decrease might be expected. The other three areas are immediately adjacent to census tracts 5, 6, and 7—made up primarily of a nonwhite populace. The latter is one of the two predominantly nonwhite "ghettos" which have existed in Flint for a number of decades. This one is here referred to as the "Buick District" because of its proximity to the Buick Motor Division complex located in this section of the city. The other ghetto, located to the east and south of the CBD, is here called the "Thread Lake District" because of its proximity to the Thread Lake Reservoir. There is a distinct social class difference between the two. The Buick District is noticeably of a lower socioeconomic class.

Proximity to predominately Negro neighborhoods, coupled with the concept held by many Flint inhabitants that Negro settlement in an area automatically deflates land values, has caused a good many Flint citizens to change their place of residence. Thus, in the latter three areas of population decrease mentioned, the mobility of the populace is motivated in part by its attempt to avoid the Negro expansion away from the ghetto.

Other mobility factors are significant. The reasons most frequently given for moving out of the core of the city are the attractiveness of land and housing, and the greater space and privacy obtainable. Escape from the noise, dirt, and congestion and, to a lesser extent, the prospect of securing lower taxes were also mentioned. Surprisingly enough, very few people considered lower taxes as a major reason for moving into the outer part of the SMSA.

Most of the areas adjacent to the Buick District were considered to be upper-class neighborhoods, even though somewhat old. The neighborhoods in the urban fringe were of a lower class. Therefore, to maintain their social housing positions, the migrants had to choose either the outer perimeter of the city, specifically, the northwest corner or the area of the county beyond the urban fringe. Many of these migrants chose the former; and the density of the city's perimeter increased significantly between 1950 and 1960.

The rate of Negro dispersal in the Flint SMSA has been greatly accelerated in the past 8 years which corresponds fairly closely to the national civil rights movement. Their movement from the ghetto districts was, at first, mainly toward the north. Later, a westward movement

into a portion of the city, previously barred to settlement by migrant Negroes, commenced. This dispersal served as an additional impetus acting upon the migration out of the city and into the county since 1960.

In the SMSA outside the city, the distribution of the population was, in 1960, and still is, sporadically scattered much as it was in 1950, although the areal concentrations have expanded and the densities are higher. The larger suburban and urban densities still occur along major thoroughfares and in platted subdivisions which are strikingly more numerous than in 1950. Within the suburban cities of Grand Blanc and Mt. Morris, comparable population densities to those of certain areas of Flint are in evidence. The suburban cities of Flushing, Fenton, Swartz Creek, and Davison have also experienced growing population densities. Population density in the urban fringe increased mainly because of in-migration. It is estimated that approximately two-thirds of the in-migrants arriving during the decade settled in the urban fringe.

#### IN-MIGRATION 1950-1960

The total net in-migration for the 10-year period was 26,713 or about 25.8%. During this period all age groups from 5 to 60 in the Flint SMSA increased because of in-migration, whereas the age groups 60 and over showed a decrease in numbers due to out-migration. Generally, this was true for both sexes and all color groups, although there was no significant out-migration of nonwhites of either sex in the 60-and-over age group.

The age range between 25 and 40 showed the most significant increase for the period. This age range can be considered to contribute most to the labor force. This might be expected because the majority of individuals indicated that their major reason for moving to the Flint area was to better their employment status. The growth in this age range was true for both sexes and both whites and nonwhites. Moreover, a majority of male in-migrants in these age categories was evident in both color groups. The other outstanding increase in in-migrants was in the 10 to 14 age group, which tends to reflect the age of parents as being between 30 and 40. Another significant factor was a decrease in the numbers of white males in the 15 to 24 age group due to out-migration. This indicates a growing proportion of young nonwhites which, if it continues may have a considerable impact on the Flint population structure.

Of all in-migrants, females outnumbered males by only 2.8%. White females outnumbered white males by 5%, whereas the number of nonwhite females was only 0.8% higher than nonwhite males. The higher percentage of females can be explained in part by the increase in service occupations employing primarily women. The higher wages and the rising number of jobs in manufacturing resulting in a larger disposable income have provided an increased need for services; and, thus, nonmanufacturing labor force. Also of some importance is the fact that the AC Spark Plug Division of General Motors employs over 50% women.

To determine the geographical origin of the in-migrants, a multistage cluster sample was used. From the sample results four distinct geographical source regions are in evidence. The regions correspond very closely to the Bureau of the Census' Regions and Geographic Division of the United States, adopted herein for ease of explanation. Of the total in-migrants it was estimated that half originated in the North Central Region. This includes the State of Michigan, excluding the Flint SMSA. Michigan, alone, accounted for 28.8% of the total. The South Region was second with 33.9%. The Northeast Region ranked third with 8.1%, whereas the West accounted for only 4% of the total in-migration.

Of the 13,479 nonwhite in-migrants, 55.7% came from the South Region, 29.1% from the North Central Region (with Michigan accounting

for 8.8% of the over-all total), 15.2% from the Northeast Region, and none from the West. Of the 13,134 white in-migrants 63.8% originated in the North Central Region, with about 42% of the total from Michigan. The South Region contributed 26% and the West Region and Northeast Region accounted for 6.7 and 3.3% respectively.

#### SUMMARY

The greatest rate of increase in the history of Flint occurred during the decade 1950 to 1960. During this time the distribution of the population changed significantly, and the trend indicates that the proportionate population increase within the City was greatest along the perimeter of the incorporated area with a decelerated rate of growth or actual decrease in population occurring toward the center, and a significant rate of increase in the outer environs, enough so that in 1960 the difference in numbers was relatively small. And today, recent population estimates indicate that the population of the City and the County are nearly equal.

A part of this change can be attributed to in-migration, the most significant factors of which are: women out-number men slightly, but the ratio of men is higher in the younger employment age bracket; non-whites slightly outnumber whites in total numbers; most of the in-migrants originated in the North Central States or in the South, with the whites coming mainly from the North Central States and nonwhites primarily from the South; and areas in Michigan outside the SMSA contributed significantly to the in-migration totals. These trends will, no doubt, continue as long as Flint is able to offer the excellent employment opportunities and expanding economy which now exist.

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