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DIVISION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES IN FOCUS

Population Trends in New York State's Cities

"Declining population accompanied by eroding tax bases and high levels of socioeconomic stress pose serious challenges to the viability of many cities."

"While some cities have fared quite well in recent years and appear to be improving, most of the State's cities have experienced decline."

Summary of Findings

- Most of New York's cities lost population from 1970 to 2000. In 1970, 2.8 million residents lived within the boundaries of the State's 61 cities (excluding New York City), but only 2.3 million resided in these same cities as of 2000—a decrease of 20 percent. At the same time, the population residing in towns has increased by 16 percent. New York City's population changed little overall during this period—with decreases in the 1970s offset by recent increases.
- Several factors have contributed to the general decline of the urban population in New York State. Rapid suburban growth from 1950 to 1970 resulted in substantial residential movement away from cities. Additionally, overall declines in manufacturing jobs and movement of these jobs away from the northeast have weakened cities economically. The relocation of jobs to suburban locations has led to a general worsening of conditions in cities that persists today.
- Many cities are continuing a pattern of decline that was evident decades earlier. Only 16 of 61 cities had a population in 2000 that exceeded the 1950 level. Additionally, 25 cities experienced five consecutive decades of population decline since 1950. For these cities, the average population decrease was 26 percent.
- In terms of population loss, the large upstate cities have been particularly hard hit. For example, the City of Buffalo lost approximately half of its population from 1950 to 2000. This population loss is the fourth highest among large cities nationwide. Rochester (34 percent decline) and Syracuse (33 percent decline) experienced significant population reductions for the same period. Like Buffalo, these cities have had five consecutive decades of declining population levels.
- Population trends are regional. Since 1970, Long Island and Mid-Hudson cities have shown growth, while the pattern of decline has been most severe for cities located in the Western New York and Mohawk Valley regions, with cities in these regions losing 32 percent and 30 percent of their total population, respectively.
- For most cities, property values have mirrored population trends, with the Long Island and Mid-Hudson cities experiencing a 64 percent increase in total property values from 1998 to 2003. However, property values for cities in other regions failed to keep pace with inflation and in some cases declined in both nominal and real terms.
- When compared to surrounding towns, cities tend to have greater levels of poverty, higher levels of vacant housing, a greater percentage of female-headed house–holds with children, and more adults lacking a high school diploma.

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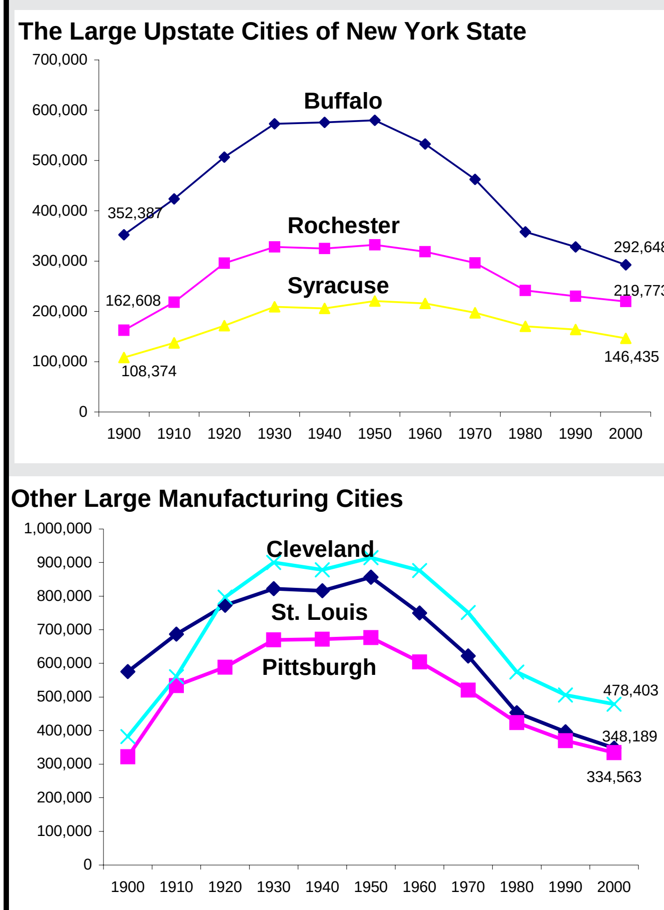
Upstate cities have been in a persistent state of decline. Increased growth in suburban areas has fueled this trend. As people have left cities in favor of suburban communities, tax bases have eroded and conditions in cities have worsened.

Introduction

In recent decades, many of the State's cities have experienced serious population losses which have contributed to economic and fiscal decline. As a result, fiscal conditions are becoming extremely poor in many of these once-flourishing cities. This research brief—focusing mainly on demographic trends—is the first of a series that will examine major issues facing local governments in New York State.

Population dynamics over the past several decades have dramatically changed the social and economic structure of cities nationwide. At the conclusion of World War II, cities were booming centers for jobs and housing, having benefited from decades of growth. At that time, 70 percent of the population residing within metropolitan areas lived in the central city. In contrast, by 2000 this trend had reversed with more than 60 percent of the metropolitan population residing in the surrounding suburbs.[1] For many metropolitan areas, population levels in the central cities began to decline in 1950, and have never recovered.

Population Trends for Large Cities 1900-2000



For example, as documented in the 2000 census, the population level of the City of Buffalo is one half of the 1950 level, making it New York State's hardest-hit city in terms of population loss. Furthermore, when compared to the 100 largest cities in the nation in 1950, Buffalo has experienced the fourth highest rate of population decline—surpassed only by St. Louis, Youngstown, Ohio and Pittsburgh. Detroit and Cleveland also experienced a similar rate of decline. In terms of the other large upstate cities in New York State, Rochester and Syracuse have also had substantial population declines since 1950. Having lost 34 percent of its population since 1950, Rochester ranked 12th highest in population loss among the largest cities in the nation, while Syracuse (33 percent decline) ranks 14th.

[1] David Rusk, "Cities Without Suburbs: A Census 2000 Update," Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003.

Shifts in global manufacturing, the growth of a more technologically-based economy, and the development of suburban-based lifestyles are underlying causes of these population trends. In many parts of the State, more people now live in suburbs than in cities. As cities decline as population, business and cultural centers, the stability of an entire region's economy can be threatened.

> ***Manufacturing Decline in the Rust Belt***
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> As with other "rust belt" cities, upstate urban centers in New York have continued a pattern of decline that has been evident for decades. These manufacturing-focused cities were booming in the early twentieth century, but have steadily lost ground to lower-cost competitors in other states and foreign countries.[2] The relative importance of manufacturing in the U.S. economy has decreased—accounting for 27.7 percent of GDP in 1959, and declining to 16.1 percent by 1999. In addition to its decline in relative importance nationally, manufacturing has shifted away from the Northeast. While total production employment in the U.S. has remained fairly stable from 1954 to 1997, the number of production workers in the Middle Atlantic Region has decreased by 56 percent, reducing the Middle Atlantic share of total production employment by more than half.[3] Recent studies suggest that the economy of upstate New York continues to change—moving away from manufacturing and toward information-intensive industries.[4]
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> The steel industry provides a good illustration of the forces behind these trends. While the demand for steel has remained strong, production technology and corporate practices have shifted. The proliferation of "mini-mills" in lower cost, non-unionized regions of the U.S. has enabled smaller start-up companies to produce steel at a more competitive rate. As a result, steel-centered metropolitan areas such as Buffalo, Youngstown and Pittsburgh—areas which were home to the less competitive, larger, integrated and heavily unionized steel production firms—have all experienced a virtual disappearance of their steel production industries.[5] A similar trend holds for the automotive industry, although its affect is less severe than the steel industry. As foreign automobile manufacturers began to move production to the United States, these new "transplants" were located in areas south and west (outside of the rust belt, where labor is cheaper) of the highly unionized Northeast, and closer to the new population centers.[6]

Despite these trends, cities remain important centers of activity in New York State. Outside of New York City (which has 8 million residents), more than 2 million New Yorkers live within the boundaries of the State's 61 cities. Roughly 4 million live in suburbs of New York City while another 3.3 million reside within the metropolitan areas surrounding New York's upstate cities.

With 8 million residents, New York City is the largest city in New York State and in the nation. The greater metropolitan area surrounding the City of New York includes 13 million people, and extends to Long Island, Northern New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania. The other 61 cities of New York State are extremely diverse in terms of size ranging from less than 3,200 residents (Sherrill) to approximately 300,000 (Buffalo). In addition to New York City, there are four other large cities (with populations greater than 125,000) that are commonly referred to as the "Big Four" cities (or "Big Five" cities if New York City is included): Buffalo (292,648), Rochester (219,773), Yonkers (196,086), and Syracuse (147,306). In addition to these large cities,

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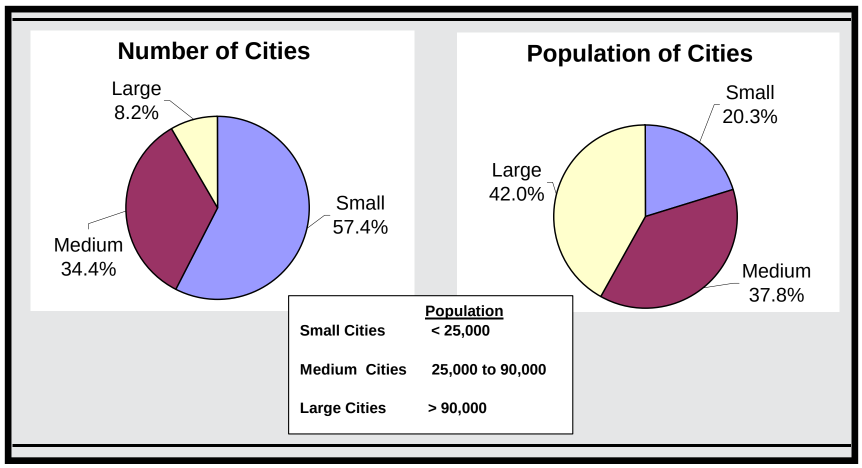
[2] Paul Wing, "Population Trends in New York State: New Yorkers at the Millennium," The Public Policy Institute, 2003.
[3] Robert W. Crandall, "The Migration of U.S. Manufacturing and Its Impact on the Buffalo Metropolitan Area," The Brookings Institution, 2002.
[4] Rolf Pendall, "Sprawl Without Growth: The Upstate Paradox," The Brookings Institution, 2003.
[5] Crandall, 2002.
[6] Crandall, 2002.

it also is interesting to note that there are also seven towns with populations greater than 125,000. Of these seven towns, four (Hempstead, Brookhaven, Islip, and Oyster Bay) exceed the population of Buffalo—making them the largest municipalities outside of New York City.

With New York City excluded from the calculation, Plattsburgh (18,816) represents the median-sized city within New York State, and the average (mean) city population is 37,146—largely a result of the four large cities "pulling the average." More than half of the cities (57 percent) have a population of less than 25,000; thus, the typical city in New York State is small. These small cities account for only 20 percent of the total New York State city population. Subsequent sections of this report will demonstrate the ways in which the large cities are confronted with challenges above and beyond those experienced by the more typical "small" cities of New York State. This difference in population poses challenges for statewide policy makers—most cities are small, but most city residents live in large cities, so policies must account for this diversity.

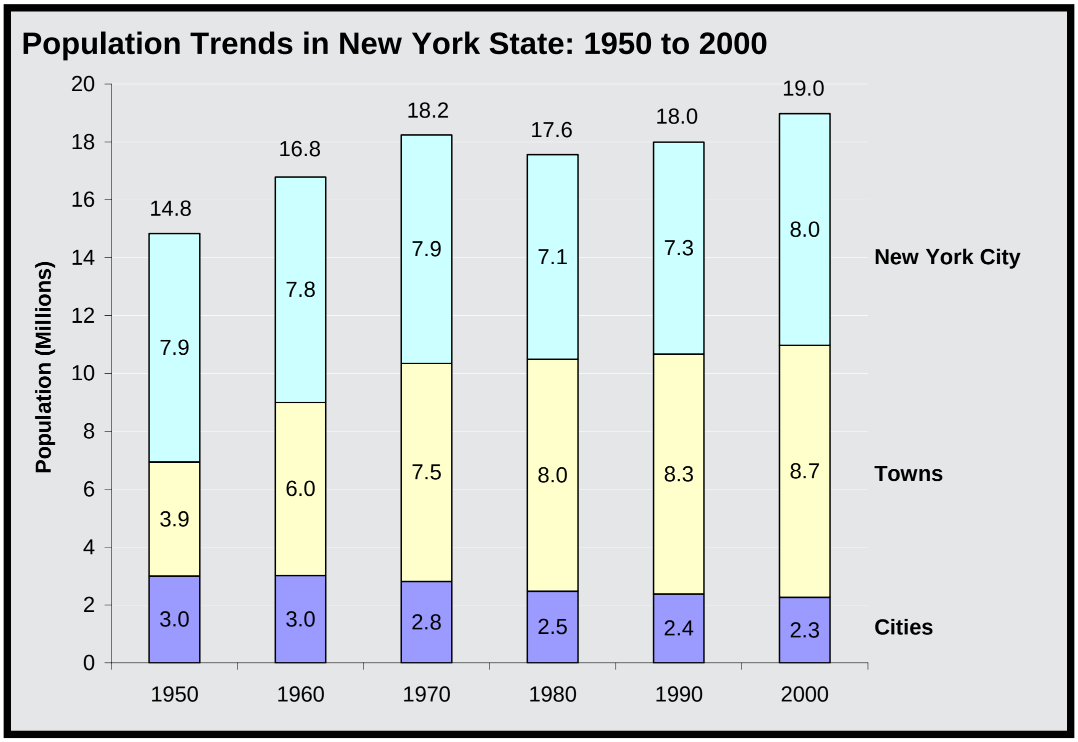


Suburban Growth and the "New Neighborhood"

For New York State (and the nation), the period from 1950 to 1970 was characterized by rapid suburban growth. This trend was fueled by a combination of increased demand for housing after World War II and changes made in federal housing policies. The National Housing Act of 1934 led to the creation of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA)—which was aimed at reviving the housing industry after the great depression. By guaranteeing long-term loans made by private lenders, extending loan periods to 30 years, reducing down payments to 10 percent (previously around 50 percent), and eliminating the balloon payment structure of earlier mortgages, the FHA (and later the Department of Veteran's Affairs) reduced risk to lenders and caused interest rates to drop significantly. These changes made it cheaper to own a home than to rent housing, and by 1972, 11 million families had purchased homes through the FHA. It is noteworthy that FHA standards gave preference to the single-family detached house in a homogeneous residential subdivision and the new affordability—combined with new technology to mass produce homes—gave rise to explosive suburban growth.[7]

[7] Oliver Gillham, "The Limitless City: A Primer on the Urban Sprawl Debate," Island Press, 2002.

Mass production of suburban housing spurred substantial economic growth throughout New York State. Located on Long Island, the first Levittown community was completed in 1951 and contained more than 17,000 homes—making Levittown the nation's largest housing development constructed by a single builder. The Levitt & Sons approach was one of mass production combined with limited options for buyers, thereby maximizing the efficiency of production. Levittown, and developments like it across the nation, quickly became a "new community" for the middle class, offering a desirable setting for families at an affordable price. Following the success in New York, two other Levittown communities were built in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.[8]



From 1950 to 1970 the population levels in towns increased from 3.9 million to 7.5 million—*an increase of 92 percent*. When examining just "suburban" towns (i.e., towns located within metropolitan areas), it is clear that this growth was largely due to a suburban boom. From 1950 to 1970, population levels increased by 110 percent in these suburban towns,[9] whereas population levels in rural towns grew by only 24 percent. During this period—a period that reflects the post-war baby-boom generation—total State population growth mirrored suburban growth. At the same time, the population residing within most cities began to level off or decline while New York City's population remained fairly stable.

[8] Information on the three Levittown communities was obtained from www.levittown.org, and the Levittown Historical Society at www.levittownhistoricalsociety.org/history.

[9] For the purpose of this analysis, suburban towns are those located within metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), and rural towns are those towns located in non-MSA counties, using the 2000 Census designation.

While the population in cities as a whole remained fairly stable from 1950 to 1960, cities located in larger metropolitan areas were undergoing substantial growth. For example, Glen Cove and Long Beach (suburbs of New York City) increased by 57 percent and 70 percent respectively during the 1950s. Similarly, suburban cities near Buffalo, such as Tonawanda (48 percent increase) and North Tonawanda (41 percent increase) also grew rapidly during the 1950s. At the other end of the spectrum, cities such as Buffalo, Little Falls, and Amsterdam began a pattern of population decline, which became severe from 1970 to 1980 and continues today.

New York City's population declined in the 1970s along with most other cities statewide, but unlike most other cities, the population of the City has recovered in the 1990s and remains above the 1950 level. Increased immigration has allowed New York City to avoid some of the declines experienced by other cities, and the City continues to be an immigration center. These immigration trends combined with a highly dynamic economy have allowed the City to maintain a stable population in recent decades and have fostered growth in recent years.

Excluding New York City, the population in New York State's 61 cities has decreased by 20 percent since 1970. At the same time, the population residing in towns has increased by 16 percent. The most severe decline during this period occurred in cities in Western New York and the Mohawk Valley.

Overall, 2.8 million residents lived within the boundaries of the state's 61 cities in 1970, but only 2.3 million resided in these cities by 2000—*a decrease of 20 percent.* The greatest degree of decline occurred from 1970 to 1980, when the total population of cities declined by 12 percent. At the same time, population levels in towns continued to grow, although at a much slower rate than in the previous decades—increasing by 16 percent from 1970 to 2000.

In the following table, cities are arrayed according to the largest decrease in population from 1970 to 2000. Buffalo (36.8 percent decline) and Niagara Falls (35.1 percent decline) have had the most striking loss of population. Lackawanna and Tonawanda (also located in Western New York) also are among the fastest declining cities. The decline in population for cities in Western New York amounts to a 32 percent overall decrease in population for the 10 cities located in this region—the worst pattern of urban decline compared to cities in any other region statewide.

Also prominently represented among the most severely declining cities are those in the Mohawk Valley Region. Utica (34 percent), Little Falls (32 percent), Rome (30 percent) and Amsterdam (28 percent) have lost substantial population, and the rate of decline from 1990 to 2000 shows signs of acceleration over the previous decade.

In terms of population growth, only 13 cities have gained population over the 30-year period from 1970 to 2000. The City of Saratoga Springs had the largest percentage growth (31.5 percent), which was nearly double that of the next fastest growing city (Peekskill at 16.4 percent). For Saratoga Springs, the fastest growth occurred from 1970 to 1980, and its population has been growing steadily (by around 5 percent) over the last

Summary of City Population Trends (1950 to 2000)

	Population (U.S. Census)						Percentage Change					50-yr % Chg	30-Yr % Chg
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	1950-60	1960-70	1970-80	1980-90	1990-2000	1950-2000	1970-2000
Buffalo	580,132	532,759	462,768	357,870	328,175	292,648	-8.2%	-13.1%	-22.7%	-8.3%	-10.8%	-49.6%	-36.8%
Niagara Falls	90,872	102,394	85,615	71,384	61,840	55,593	12.7%	-16.4%	-16.6%	-13.4%	-10.1%	-38.8%	-35.1%
Utica	101,531	100,410	91,611	75,632	68,637	60,651	-1.1%	-8.8%	-17.4%	-9.2%	-11.6%	-40.3%	-33.8%
Lackawanna	27,658	29,564	28,657	22,701	20,585	19,064	6.9%	-3.1%	-20.8%	-9.3%	-7.4%	-31.1%	-33.5%
Little Falls	9,541	8,935	7,629	6,156	5,829	5,188	-6.4%	-14.6%	-19.3%	-5.3%	-11.0%	-45.6%	-32.0%
Corning	17,684	17,085	15,792	12,953	11,938	10,842	-3.4%	-7.6%	-18.0%	-7.8%	-9.2%	-38.7%	-31.3%
Rome	41,682	51,646	50,148	43,826	44,350	34,950	23.9%	-2.9%	-12.6%	1.2%	-21.2%	-16.2%	-30.3%
Amsterdam	32,240	28,772	25,524	21,872	20,714	18,355	-10.8%	-11.3%	-14.3%	-5.3%	-11.4%	-43.1%	-28.1%
Tonawanda	14,617	21,561	21,898	18,693	17,284	16,136	47.5%	1.6%	-14.6%	-7.5%	-6.6%	10.4%	-26.3%
Binghamton	80,674	75,941	64,123	55,860	53,008	47,380	-5.9%	-15.6%	-12.9%	-5.1%	-10.6%	-41.3%	-26.1%
Rochester	332,488	318,611	296,233	241,741	230,356	219,773	-4.2%	-7.0%	-18.4%	-4.7%	-4.6%	-33.9%	-25.8%
Hornell	15,049	13,907	12,144	10,234	9,877	9,019	-7.6%	-12.7%	-15.7%	-3.5%	-8.7%	-40.1%	-25.7%
Syracuse	220,583	216,038	197,297	170,105	163,860	147,306	-2.1%	-8.7%	-13.8%	-3.7%	-10.1%	-33.2%	-25.3%
Rensselaer	10,856	10,506	10,136	9,047	8,255	7,761	-3.2%	-3.5%	-10.7%	-8.8%	-6.0%	-28.5%	-23.4%
Salamanca	8,861	8,480	7,877	6,890	6,566	6,097	-4.3%	-7.1%	-12.5%	-4.7%	-7.1%	-31.2%	-22.6%
Elmira	49,716	46,517	39,945	35,327	33,724	30,940	-6.4%	-14.1%	-11.6%	-4.5%	-8.3%	-37.8%	-22.5%
Dunkirk	18,007	18,205	16,855	15,310	13,989	13,131	1.1%	-7.4%	-9.2%	-8.6%	-6.1%	-27.1%	-22.1%
Troy	72,311	67,492	62,918	56,638	54,269	49,170	-6.7%	-6.8%	-10.0%	-4.2%	-9.4%	-32.0%	-21.9%
Gloversville	23,634	21,741	19,677	17,836	16,656	15,413	-8.0%	-9.5%	-9.4%	-6.6%	-7.5%	-34.8%	-21.7%
Schenectady	91,785	81,682	77,958	67,972	65,566	61,821	-11.0%	-4.6%	-12.8%	-3.5%	-5.7%	-32.6%	-20.7%
Jamestown	43,354	41,818	39,795	35,775	34,681	31,730	-3.5%	-4.8%	-10.1%	-3.1%	-8.5%	-26.8%	-20.3%
Olean	22,884	21,868	19,169	18,207	16,946	15,347	-4.4%	-12.3%	-5.0%	-6.9%	-9.4%	-32.9%	-19.9%
Mechanicville	7,385	6,831	6,247	5,500	5,249	5,019	-7.5%	-8.5%	-12.0%	-4.6%	-4.4%	-32.0%	-19.7%
Geneva	17,144	17,286	16,793	15,133	14,143	13,617	0.8%	-2.9%	-9.9%	-6.5%	-3.7%	-20.6%	-18.9%
Watervliet	15,197	13,917	12,404	11,354	11,061	10,207	-8.4%	-10.9%	-8.5%	-2.6%	-7.7%	-32.8%	-17.7%
Auburn	36,722	35,249	34,599	32,548	31,258	28,574	-4.0%	-1.8%	-5.9%	-4.0%	-8.6%	-22.2%	-17.4%
Albany	134,995	129,726	115,781	101,727	100,031	95,658	-3.9%	-10.7%	-12.1%	-1.7%	-4.4%	-29.1%	-17.4%
Oneonta	13,564	13,412	16,030	14,933	13,954	13,292	-1.1%	19.5%	-6.8%	-6.6%	-4.7%	-2.0%	-17.1%
Norwich	8,816	9,175	8,843	8,082	7,613	7,355	4.1%	-3.6%	-8.6%	-5.8%	-3.4%	-16.6%	-16.8%
Cohoes	21,272	20,129	18,653	18,144	16,825	15,521	-5.4%	-7.3%	-2.7%	-7.3%	-7.8%	-27.0%	-16.8%
Glens Falls	19,610	18,580	17,222	15,897	15,023	14,354	-5.3%	-7.3%	-7.7%	-5.5%	-4.5%	-26.8%	-16.7%
Hudson	11,629	11,075	8,940	7,986	8,034	7,524	-4.8%	-19.3%	-10.7%	0.6%	-6.3%	-35.3%	-15.8%
Fulton	13,922	14,261	14,003	13,312	12,929	11,855	2.4%	-1.8%	-4.9%	-2.9%	-8.3%	-14.8%	-15.3%
Johnstown	10,923	10,390	10,045	9,360	9,058	8,511	-4.9%	-3.3%	-6.8%	-3.2%	-6.0%	-22.1%	-15.3%
Ogdensburg	16,166	16,122	14,554	12,375	13,521	12,364	-0.3%	-9.7%	-15.0%	9.3%	-8.6%	-23.5%	-15.0%
Oswego	22,647	22,155	20,913	19,793	19,195	17,954	-2.2%	-5.6%	-5.4%	-3.0%	-6.5%	-20.7%	-14.1%
Watertown	34,350	33,306	30,787	27,861	29,429	26,705	-3.0%	-7.6%	-9.5%	5.6%	-9.3%	-22.3%	-13.3%
Lockport	25,133	26,443	25,399	24,844	24,426	22,279	5.2%	-3.9%	-2.2%	-1.7%	-8.8%	-11.4%	-12.3%
Kingston	28,817	29,260	25,544	24,481	23,095	23,456	1.5%	-12.7%	-4.2%	-5.7%	1.6%	-18.6%	-8.2%
North Tonawanda	24,731	34,757	36,012	35,760	34,989	33,262	40.5%	3.6%	-0.7%	-2.2%	-4.9%	34.5%	-7.6%
Poughkeepsie	41,023	38,330	32,029	29,757	28,844	29,871	-6.6%	-16.4%	-7.1%	-3.1%	3.6%	-27.2%	-6.7%
Batavia	17,799	18,210	17,338	16,703	16,310	16,256	2.3%	-4.8%	-3.7%	-2.4%	-0.3%	-8.7%	-6.2%
Mount Vernon	71,899	76,010	72,778	66,713	67,153	68,381	5.7%	-4.3%	-8.3%	0.7%	1.8%	-4.9%	-6.0%
Rye	11,721	14,225	15,869	15,083	14,936	14,955	21.4%	11.6%	-5.0%	-1.0%	0.1%	27.6%	-5.8%
Oneida	11,325	11,677	11,658	10,810	10,850	10,987	3.1%	-0.2%	-7.3%	0.4%	1.3%	-3.0%	-5.8%
Cortland	18,152	19,181	19,621	20,138	19,801	18,740	5.7%	2.3%	2.6%	-1.7%	-5.4%	3.2%	-4.5%
New Rochelle	59,725	76,812	75,385	70,794	67,265	72,182	28.6%	-1.9%	-6.1%	-5.0%	7.3%	20.9%	-4.2%
Yonkers	152,798	190,634	204,297	195,351	188,082	196,086	24.8%	7.2%	-4.4%	-3.7%	4.3%	28.3%	-4.0%
Port Jervis	9,372	9,268	8,852	8,699	9,060	8,860	-1.1%	-4.5%	-1.7%	4.1%	-2.2%	-5.5%	0.1%
Plattsburgh	17,738	20,172	18,715	21,057	21,255	18,816	13.7%	-7.2%	12.5%	0.9%	-11.5%	6.1%	0.5%
Glen Cove	15,130	23,817	25,770	24,618	24,149	26,622	57.4%	8.2%	-4.5%	-1.9%	10.2%	76.0%	3.3%
Beacon	14,012	13,922	13,255	12,937	13,243	13,808	-0.6%	-4.8%	-2.4%	2.4%	4.3%	-1.5%	4.2%
Sherrill	2,236	2,922	2,986	2,830	2,864	3,147	30.7%	2.2%	-5.2%	1.2%	9.9%	40.7%	5.4%
White Plains	43,466	50,485	50,346	46,999	48,718	53,077	16.1%	-0.3%	-6.6%	3.7%	8.9%	22.1%	5.4%
Long Beach	15,586	26,473	33,127	34,073	33,510	35,462	69.9%	25.1%	2.9%	-1.7%	5.8%	127.5%	7.0%
Canandaigua	8,332	9,370	10,488	10,419	10,725	11,264	12.5%	11.9%	-0.7%	2.9%	5.0%	35.2%	7.4%
Newburgh	31,956	30,979	26,219	23,438	26,454	28,259	-3.1%	-15.4%	-10.6%	12.9%	6.8%	-11.6%	7.8%
Ithaca	29,257	28,799	26,226	28,732	29,541	29,287	-1.6%	-8.9%	9.6%	2.8%	-0.9%	0.1%	11.7%
Middletown	22,586	23,475	22,607	21,454	24,160	25,388	3.9%	-3.7%	-5.1%	12.6%	5.1%	12.4%	12.3%
Peekskill	17,731	18,737	19,283	18,236	19,536	22,441	5.7%	2.9%	-5.4%	7.1%	14.9%	26.6%	16.4%
Saratoga Springs	15,473	16,630	19,906	23,906	25,001	26,186	7.5%	19.7%	20.1%	4.6%	4.7%	69.2%	31.5%
All Cities (excl NYC)	**2,996,499**	**3,018,134**	**2,813,293**	**2,473,866**	**2,378,395**	**2,265,897**	**0.7%**	**-6.8%**	**-12.1%**	**-3.9%**	**-4.7%**	**-24.4%**	**-19.5%**
New York City	**7,891,957**	**7,781,984**	**7,895,563**	**7,071,639**	**7,322,564**	**8,008,278**	**-1.4%**	**1.5%**	**-10.4%**	**3.5%**	**9.4%**	**1.5%**	**1.4%**
Non-Cities (Towns)	**3,941,736**	**5,982,186**	**7,533,728**	**8,012,660**	**8,289,496**	**8,702,282**	**51.8%**	**25.9%**	**6.4%**	**3.5%**	**5.0%**	**120.8%**	**15.5%**
New York State	**14,830,192**	**16,782,304**	**18,242,584**	**17,558,165**	**17,990,455**	**18,976,457**	**13.2%**	**8.7%**	**-3.8%**	**2.5%**	**5.5%**	**28.0%**	**4.0%**

two decades. Saratoga Springs is the only city to have population increases in each of the decades examined in this report and, as the fastest growing city in New York State (from 1970 to 2000), sustainable development has become a critical focus for local officials.

Most cities have continued to lose population in the 1990s and recent Census estimates suggest that this negative trend is continuing.

Like Saratoga Springs, the City of Plattsburgh experienced population growth (12.5 percent) from 1970 to 1980—a period when most cities were declining. However, this growth was offset by a population decrease of 11.5 percent from 1990 to 2000. This recent decline in population is most likely the result of the 1995 closing of the Plattsburgh Air Force Base, of which 25 percent was located within the City.[10]

From 1990 to 2000, the majority of cities (44 out of 62) have continued to experience a decrease in population. Furthermore, analysis of more recent Census population estimates suggests that this negative trend is continuing for most cities.[11]

From 1990 to 2000, Rome and Utica experienced the largest percentage drop in population, most likely due to the closing of an air force base in the mid-1990s. In contrast, cities in the Mid-Hudson region (with the exception of Port Jervis) increased their population from 1990 to 2000. This growth has offset the population declines that occurred in the 70s, indicating recovery and growth in these Mid-Hudson cities.

Regional Differences

Regional population trends show a chronic pattern of population decline in upstate New York, and substantial recovery and population growth in the cities located downstate—cities which have benefited from their proximity to New York City. The two Long Island cities (Glen Cove and Long Beach) have experienced a 5.4 percent increase in population from 1970 to 2000, with most of the population growth occurring in the last decade. For the 12 cities located in the Mid-Hudson Valley Region, recent population growth suggests substantial economic recovery for cities in this region. Despite a period of decline from 1970 to 1990, city population in both the Long Island and the Mid-Hudson regions remains well above its 1950 levels.

Outside the downstate regions, the overall city population in each of the other New York State regions shows a severe and continuing pattern of decline. Nearly all of the other regions experienced three consecutive decades of population decline. As described earlier, this pattern of decline has been most severe for cities in the Western New York and Mohawk Valley regions, with these regions losing 32 percent and 30 percent of their population respectively. Cities located in the North Country (9.6 percent decline) and the Capital Region (16.3 percent decline) have experienced less of an overall decrease when compared to other upstate regions. However, like the other regions, recent trends suggest an acceleration of this negative pattern in these areas.

[10] City of Plattsburgh: Official Statement, New York State Comptroller's Office, 2004.
[11] Using these Census Bureau estimates, 45 out of 62 cities show some type of decline during the 2000 to 2003 period, with New York City increasing by 1 percent.

Population Trends for Cities by Region (1970 to 2000)

Three Decades of Sustained Decline Upstate vs. Recovery and Growth Downstate

	Population				Percent Change			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970-80	1980-90	1990-2000	1970-2000
Upstate								
Capital Region	350,165	318,171	309,314	293,221	-9.1%	-2.8%	-5.2%	-16.3%
Central NY	298,091	266,706	257,893	235,416	-10.5%	-3.3%	-8.7%	-21.0%
Finger Lakes	340,852	283,996	271,534	260,910	-16.7%	-4.4%	-3.9%	-23.5%
Mohawk Valley	207,620	177,512	168,108	146,215	-14.5%	-5.3%	-13.0%	-29.6%
North Country	64,056	61,293	64,205	57,885	-4.3%	4.8%	-9.8%	-9.6%
Southern Tier	183,103	166,121	159,655	148,115	-9.3%	-3.9%	-7.2%	-19.1%
Western NY	744,045	607,434	559,481	505,287	-18.4%	-7.9%	-9.7%	-32.1%
Downstate								
Long Island	58,897	58,691	57,659	62,084	-0.3%	-1.8%	7.7%	5.4%
Mid-Hudson	566,464	533,942	530,546	556,764	-5.7%	-0.6%	4.9%	-1.7%
All Cities (Excl. NYC)	**2,813,293**	**2,473,866**	**2,378,395**	**2,265,897**	**-12.1%**	**-3.9%**	**-4.7%**	**-19.5%**
Big Five Cities								
New York City	7,895,563	7,071,639	7,322,564	8,008,278	-10.4%	3.5%	9.4%	1.4%
Buffalo	462,768	357,870	328,175	292,648	-22.7%	-8.3%	-10.8%	-36.8%
Syracuse	197,297	170,105	163,860	147,306	-13.8%	-3.7%	-10.1%	-25.3%
Rochester	296,233	241,741	230,356	219,773	-18.4%	-4.7%	-4.6%	-25.8%
Yonkers	204,297	195,351	188,082	196,086	-4.4%	-3.7%	4.3%	-4.0%

Population trends for each of the Big Five Cities are displayed at the bottom of the table, and reflect a similar upstate/downstate pattern. New York City and Yonkers have shown signs of recovery following decline in the 1970s, while population levels have steadily decreased in Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse. Population levels in these three cities alone have declined by roughly 300,000 residents since 1970. In fact, the decline experienced by Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse accounts for 54 percent of the total population loss for all cities since 1970.

Property Value Trends[12]

Population and property-value trends are related: Declines in population tend to be accompanied by declines in property values. Similarly, increases in population tend to be accompanied by increases in property values.[13] A city in decline faces a reduced capacity to raise revenue, but may not necessarily be able to reduce all types of operating costs.

[12] The property value measure used in this report is the taxable real property full value. This measure is intended to represent the full market value of property located within the city; however, it does not include tax exempt properties such as churches, schools, and properties that make payments in lieu of taxes.

[13] In fact, 44 percent of the variability in the full-value change measure can be accounted for using the 1970 to 2000 population change variable.

Full Value Trends for Cities by Region (1970 to 2000)

	Full Value (1970 Constant Dollars)				Percent Change			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	1970 to 1980	1980 to 1990	1990 to 2000	1970 to 2000
Upstate		($ Millions)						
Capital Region	$1,515	$1,330	$1,773	$1,935	-12.2%	33.3%	9.1%	**28%**
Central NY	$1,458	$1,407	$1,500	$1,266	-3.5%	6.6%	-15.6%	**-13%**
Finger Lakes	$2,062	$1,678	$1,751	$1,408	-18.6%	4.3%	-19.6%	**-32%**
Mohawk Valley	$772	$638	$735	$659	-17.4%	15.2%	-10.4%	**-15%**
North Country	$250	$222	$263	$293	-11.2%	18.6%	11.1%	**17%**
Southern Tier	$887	$725	$842	$757	-18.2%	16.0%	-10.0%	**-15%**
Western NY	$3,540	$2,853	$2,521	$2,384	-19.4%	-11.6%	-5.4%	**-33%**
Downstate								
Long Island	$449	$376	$1,068	$945	-16.3%	183.9%	-11.5%	**110%**
Mid-Hudson	$4,141	$3,454	$5,728	$5,945	-16.6%	65.9%	3.8%	**44%**
All Cities (Excl. NYC)	**$15,074**	**$12,683**	**$16,182**	**$15,591**	**-15.9%**	**27.6%**	**-3.7%**	**3%**
Big Five Cities								
New York City	Not Available	$39,765	$68,881	$68,707	--	73.2%	-0.3%	**--**
Buffalo	$1,857	$1,467	$1,330	$1,203	-21.0%	-9.4%	-9.5%	**-35%**
Syracuse	$997	$793	$885	$779	-20.5%	11.7%	-12.0%	**-22%**
Rochester	$1,839	$1,470	$1,524	$1,147	-20.1%	3.7%	-24.7%	**-38%**
Yonkers	$1,507	$1,149	$1,800	$1,789	-23.7%	56.7%	-0.6%	**19%**

In real terms, property values have increased by 3 percent from 1970 to 2000 (excluding New York City).[14] For most regions, growth in the 1980s has offset declining property values in the 1970s. While property values for cities have been fairly stable *overall* during the 30-year period, there has (and continues to be) substantial variation between regions. Cities in the Finger Lakes and Western New York Regions have decreased the most in real terms, while property values in Capital Region and North Country cities have grown from 1980 to 2000. The Western New York Region is the only region to experience real declines in property values in each of the decades examined in this analysis.

In constant dollars, property values have declined from 1970 to 2000 for each of the large upstate cities, with Rochester experiencing the largest decrease (38 percent decline). As outlined in the previous sections, this decline in property values coincides with substantial population losses for these cities.

Recent data suggest that property values in Long Island and Mid-Hudson cities continue to outpace upstate cities, with total property value in downstate cities increasing by 64 percent (in nominal terms) from 1998 to 2003. However, in other regions property values in cities failed to keep pace with inflation. And, in some cases, city property values in these regions declined in both nominal and real terms. In the following table, cities are arrayed according to the percentage change in their property values (in nominal terms) from 1998 to 2003. Many of the patterns that are evident in the population data also are evident in property value trends. For example, Saratoga Springs (42 percent increase) is

[14] For this analysis, full-value numbers were converted to 1970 constant dollars using the CPI-U (all items and all urban consumers) supplied by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. CPI data can be obtained from the following website: http://stats.bls.gov/cpi/.

the only upstate city with a substantial rate of property value growth, while the other high-growth cities are all located downstate.

Recently, the rate of growth in these downstate cities has been substantial. Property values in the City of Rye increased by 96 percent from 1998 to 2003—a rate of growth roughly *eight times* that of the average city. New Rochelle also showed tremendous growth (82.9 percent). The two cities located in the Long Island Region (Glen Cove and Long Beach) experienced substantial increases in property values as well. Like Saratoga Springs, these cities face critical concerns regarding sustainable development and will need to continue to focus on managing this growth.[15]

Summary of Property Value Changes for Cities in New York State (1998 to 2003)

City	%Ch Property Values (Nominal Terms) (1998 to 2003)	City	%Ch Property Values (Nominal Terms) (1998 to 2003)
Oswego	-45.37%	Plattsburgh	4.27%
Dunkirk	-38.03%	Gloversville	5.41%
Fulton	-12.59%	Sherrill	5.80%
Lackawanna	-11.95%	Port Jervis	7.08%
Schenectady	-11.48%	Mechanicville	7.18%
Buffalo	-10.79%	Ithaca	7.22%
Utica	-9.74%	Hornell	8.38%
Amsterdam	-6.43%	Oneida	8.55%
Rochester	-6.41%	Glens Falls	8.98%
Rome	-4.75%	Salamanca	9.38%
Lockport	-4.20%	Binghamton	9.59%
Batavia	-4.05%	Canandaigua	9.65%
Tonawanda	-3.67%	Rensselaer	10.49%
Syracuse	-3.47%	Norwich	11.38%
Watervliet	-2.46%	Olean	16.75%
Niagara Falls	-1.62%	Hudson	17.74%
North Tonawanda	-1.53%	Newburgh	19.81%
Little Falls	-1.45%	Kingston	28.14%
Cohoes	-0.72%	Middletown	31.58%
Ogdensburg	-0.31%	Peekskill	36.50%
Jamestown	0.16%	Poughkeepsie	36.56%
Watertown	1.37%	Beacon	39.65%
Elmira	1.44%	Saratoga Springs	41.96%
Cortland	1.59%	New York City	41.96%
Oneonta	2.20%	Mount Vernon	48.78%
Auburn	2.57%	Long Beach	59.39%
Geneva	2.59%	White Plains	64.94%
Troy	2.68%	Yonkers	67.51%
Johnstown	3.50%	Glen Cove	69.35%
Corning	3.80%	New Rochelle	82.87%
Albany	4.17%	Rye	95.92%
All Cities (Mean)	**12.20%**	**Inflation**	**12.88%**

Two cities (Oswego and Dunkirk) experienced severe declines in property values. For both of these cities, the transfer of a power plant to the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) moved a substantial portion of the tax base to an exempt status. In both cases, the power company made payments to the city in lieu of taxes to offset the reduction in tax revenue.

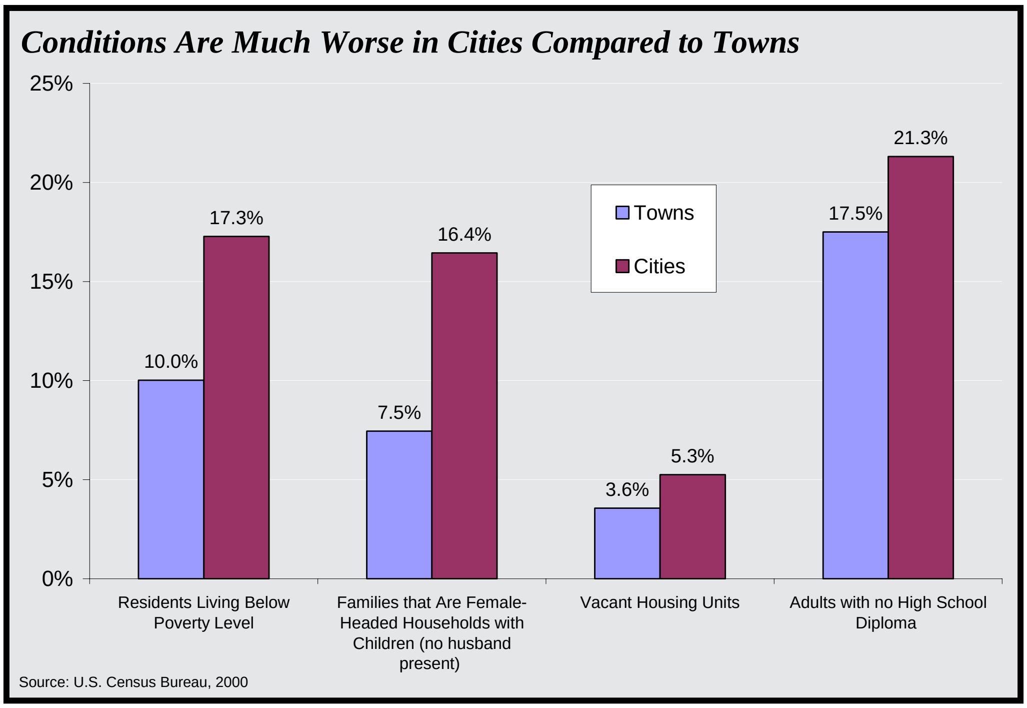
In terms of the Big Four Cities, Yonkers experienced population growth which helped produce substantial increases in property values in recent years (67.5 percent). The large upstate cities fared much worse. In Buffalo, substantial decreases in population levels and property values have negatively impacted the financial condition of the City, forcing the State to intervene and provide oversight. Syracuse and Rochester also have experienced population losses and declining property values. Researchers from the Brookings Institution who focused on neighborhood-level population trends found that many U.S

[15] The Institute for Sustainable Development at Long Island University, "Measuring the Quality of Life in the City of Glen Cove: Indicators of Community Sustainability," July, 2000; and City Manager Glen L. Spiritis, Ph.D., "6-Month Report to the City Council and Long Beach Community," August, 2004.

cities struggled to manage deteriorating inner-core populations with rapidly expanding outer-ring neighborhoods. Buffalo and Rochester not only experienced overall declines, but these declines were more heavily concentrated in the inner-core and middle-ring city neighborhoods—suggesting that the downward trend occurring in the inner-city portion of these larger cities is accelerating.[16]

Socio-Economic Conditions

The middle-class exodus over the past few decades has led to a general worsening of socio-economic conditions in cities. In general, cities tend to have greater levels of poverty, higher levels of vacant housing, a greater percentage of female headed households with children, and a higher percentage of adults with less than a high school diploma when compared to surrounding suburban neighborhoods. These factors reflect the effects of out-migration patterns and home-purchasing decisions, particularly where conditions within a city are significantly worse when compared to outer-fringe and suburban neighborhoods.[17]



Additionally, research suggests that a high degree of socio-economic disparity between cities and suburbs can result in a general worsening of conditions for the suburbs in the surrounding areas. In other words, urban decline not only causes migration between cities and suburbs, it can also threaten the metropolitan region as a whole.[18]

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[16] Alan Berube and Benjamin Forman, “Living on the Edge: Decentralization within Cities in the 1990s,” The Brookings Institution, October, 2002.
[17] Scott South and Kyle Crowder, “Residential Mobility Between Cities and Suburbs: Race, Suburbanization, and Back-to-the-City Moves,” *Demography*, Vol. 34 (1997), 525-538.
[18] Richard P. Nathan and Charles F. Adams, “Four Perspectives on Urban Hardship,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 91, (Autumn 1989), 483-508.

Summary of Socio-economic Stress Indicators for New York State Cities (2000)

City	Region	Population Trend (1970 to 2000)	Socio-economic Stress Indicators[1] Percentage of… Residents Below Poverty	Families that Are Female-Headed Households with Children (no husband present)	Vacant Housing Units	Adults with no High School Diploma	Index of Social Stress[2]
Hudson	Capital District	-15.8%	25.56%	25.57%	7.93%	39.11%	Far Above Average
Newburgh	Mid-Hudson	7.8%	25.76%	25.91%	7.38%	37.94%	Far Above Average
Rochester	Finger Lakes	-25.8%	25.90%	30.92%	6.97%	26.97%	Far Above Average
Syracuse	Central NY	-25.3%	27.31%	26.11%	9.14%	23.82%	Far Above Average
Buffalo	Western NY	-36.8%	26.60%	26.38%	8.22%	25.36%	Far Above Average
Utica	Mohawk Valley	-33.8%	24.50%	18.80%	8.58%	27.41%	Above Average
Elmira	Southern Tier	-22.5%	23.08%	21.92%	7.31%	25.78%	Above Average
Poughkeepsie	Mid-Hudson	-6.7%	22.73%	24.31%	4.91%	27.67%	Above Average
Niagara Falls	Western NY	-35.1%	19.47%	19.19%	8.82%	23.37%	Above Average
Binghamton	Southern Tier	-26.1%	23.67%	17.64%	8.19%	21.85%	Above Average
Schenectady	Capital District	-20.7%	20.78%	20.75%	7.24%	22.18%	Above Average
Gloversville	Mohawk Valley	-21.7%	19.28%	15.60%	8.26%	25.37%	Above Average
Troy	Capital District	-21.9%	19.11%	20.25%	7.29%	22.28%	Above Average
Albany	Capital District	-17.4%	21.74%	23.29%	5.67%	18.78%	Average
Fulton	Central NY	-15.3%	19.33%	17.58%	7.55%	22.59%	Average
Rome	Mohawk Valley	-30.3%	14.99%	15.06%	8.50%	26.02%	Average
Ogdensburg	North Country	-15.0%	18.33%	15.69%	4.76%	31.50%	Average
Auburn	Central NY	-17.4%	16.54%	16.69%	7.09%	25.70%	Average
Amsterdam	Mohawk Valley	-28.1%	16.32%	15.40%	7.75%	24.55%	Average
Dunkirk	Western NY	-22.1%	22.29%	16.42%	5.14%	24.96%	Average
Watertown	North Country	-13.3%	19.26%	17.10%	8.62%	17.48%	Average
Geneva	Finger Lakes	-18.9%	17.46%	18.21%	6.99%	21.53%	Average
Hornell	Southern Tier	-25.7%	21.45%	17.31%	7.75%	17.39%	Average
Norwich	Southern Tier	-16.8%	18.73%	18.19%	7.37%	18.55%	Average
Salamanca	Western NY	-22.6%	22.16%	15.88%	5.58%	22.76%	Average
Jamestown	Western NY	-20.3%	19.55%	17.88%	6.27%	20.58%	Average
Port Jervis	Mid-Hudson	0.1%	17.45%	17.04%	4.75%	27.24%	Average
Cortland	Central NY	-4.5%	24.66%	15.07%	5.73%	20.40%	Average
Cohoes	Capital District	-16.8%	13.27%	17.55%	6.70%	24.76%	Average
New York City	NYC	1.4%	21.25%	16.87%	2.77%	27.72%	Average
Ithaca	Southern Tier	11.7%	40.24%	17.71%	2.59%	10.47%	Average
Little Falls	Mohawk Valley	-32.0%	16.63%	14.66%	7.26%	21.74%	Average
Oswego	Central NY	-14.1%	22.99%	14.67%	5.63%	20.58%	Average
Middletown	Mid-Hudson	12.3%	17.49%	17.11%	3.20%	25.71%	Average
Lackawanna	Western NY	-33.5%	16.75%	15.86%	4.48%	24.13%	Average
Watervliet	Capital District	-17.7%	13.26%	19.93%	5.89%	18.69%	Average
Mount Vernon	Mid-Hudson	-6.0%	14.25%	19.02%	3.29%	25.61%	Average
Oneonta	Southern Tier	-17.1%	30.28%	14.57%	4.34%	14.16%	Average
Plattsburgh	North Country	0.5%	23.09%	16.76%	3.38%	17.74%	Average
Kingston	Mid-Hudson	-8.2%	15.83%	17.66%	3.95%	21.18%	Average
Rensselaer	Capital District	-23.4%	12.81%	17.86%	4.74%	20.04%	Average
Glens Falls	Capital District	-16.7%	14.84%	16.00%	5.22%	18.22%	Average
Olean	Western NY	-19.9%	15.89%	14.40%	6.27%	15.99%	Average
Peekskill	Mid-Hudson	16.4%	13.66%	15.83%	2.34%	24.97%	Average
Yonkers	Mid-Hudson	-4.0%	15.53%	14.61%	2.60%	23.27%	Average
Beacon	Mid-Hudson	4.2%	10.96%	15.93%	3.45%	22.39%	Average
Batavia	Finger Lakes	-6.2%	12.27%	14.19%	4.58%	20.10%	Average
Johnstown	Mohawk Valley	-15.3%	13.24%	14.63%	4.99%	17.71%	Average
Corning	Southern Tier	-31.3%	13.02%	15.29%	6.21%	13.77%	Average
Lockport	Western NY	-12.3%	13.32%	14.86%	4.13%	18.86%	Average
Mechanicville	Capital District	-19.7%	7.98%	14.12%	4.02%	20.95%	Below Average
Oneida	Central NY	-5.8%	12.50%	13.50%	3.23%	19.61%	Below Average
Canandaigua	Finger Lakes	7.4%	9.49%	12.89%	2.78%	14.88%	Below Average
New Rochelle	Mid-Hudson	-4.2%	10.48%	8.92%	1.48%	19.98%	Below Average
Glen Cove	Long Island	3.3%	9.06%	7.70%	1.10%	22.44%	Below Average
North Tonawanda	Western NY	-7.6%	7.16%	9.55%	3.42%	14.51%	Below Average
Tonawanda	Western NY	-26.3%	7.06%	8.87%	3.34%	14.83%	Below Average
White Plains	Mid-Hudson	5.4%	9.85%	8.36%	1.44%	17.97%	Below Average
Saratoga Springs	Capital District	31.5%	8.84%	10.23%	2.23%	11.01%	Far Below Average
Long Beach	Long Island	7.0%	9.39%	9.07%	2.04%	11.33%	Far Below Average
Sherrill	Mohawk Valley	5.4%	2.16%	6.70%	1.94%	10.81%	Far Below Average
Rye	Mid-Hudson	-5.8%	2.50%	3.38%	0.92%	5.71%	Far Below Average
All Cities (Mean)		**-12.7%**	**17.28%**	**16.44%**	**5.25%**	**21.31%**	

[1]Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

[2]The socio-economic stress index was computed by taking the average of the standardized scores for the four subcomponents, and developing a series of ranges above and below a standard score of "0," which would be the mean or an "average" score on the socio-economic stess index. An index value of between -0.50 and 0.50 was labeled "average," a value of 0.50 to 1.25 was considered "above average," a value of -0.50 to -1.25 was considered "below average," a value above 1.25 was considered "far above average," a value below -1.25 was considered "far below average."

Populations residing within cities differ dramatically when examining indicators of socio-economic need.[19] In the accompanying table, cities are arrayed according to their score on the socio-economic index.[20] As shown, three of the Big Four Cities (Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester) and the cities of Hudson and Newburgh were found to have the highest relative levels of socio-economic stress. With the exception of Newburgh, which has gained population in recent decades, these high-stress cities have all experienced high rates of population decline since 1970. Utica, Elmira, Poughkeepsie, Niagara Falls, Binghamton, Schenectady, Gloversville and Troy also were found to have above-average levels of socio-economic stress. These cities also have experienced large decreases in population in recent decades, and many have experienced fiscal difficulties (see the accompanying box).

Relating Population Trends and Socioeconomic Stress

When examining the relationship between population trends and socio-economic stress, it is clear that the two are related; although, the direction of the causal relationship is not necessarily clear. Do declining population levels lead to social stress, or does social stress lead to population decline? Results of regression analysis suggest that the change in population from 1990 to 2000 accounts for 23 percent of the variability in the socio-economic stress index. When population size is added to the equation, these two variables account for 33 percent of the variability in the social measure. Thus, regardless of the causal direction, population dynamics and social conditions are clearly related.

On the other side of the socio-economic stress scale are the cities that fall below average on the social indicators. For these cities, performance on the socio-economic indicators is much better than the average city. Conditions in these cities, particularly those that rank far below average on the socio-economic stress measures, compare quite favorably to those observed in suburban locations. These cities tend to be more suburban in nature—existing as urban areas within a larger metropolitan area.

[19] Four socio-economic stress indicators were examined using 2000 census data: the percentage of residents living below poverty, the percentage of female-headed households with children, the housing vacancy rate, and the percentage of adults with less than a high school diploma.

[20] The index reflects an equally weighted combination of the four indicators and is based on standardized scores. This approach is similar to that used by researchers from the Rockefeller Institute, but for this analysis we have used a somewhat different (and smaller) set of indicators and benchmarked against the average for cities in New York State only. See for example, Lisa Montiel, Richard P. Nathan and David J. Wright, "An Update on Urban Hardship," The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government, August, 2004.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

This report has highlighted demographic trends among the cities in New York State in recent decades. While some cities—particularly downstate cities—have fared quite well in recent years and appear to be improving, most of the State's cities have experienced decline. Declining population levels accompanied by eroding tax bases and worsening socio-economic conditions pose serious challenges to the viability of these cities. The trends highlighted in this report all point to the need for improving conditions in New York State's urban centers.

Conditions are particularly poor in the large upstate cities. Buffalo has experienced one of the highest rates of population decline—surpassing all but a few cities nationwide. As a result of declining population and high levels of socio-economic distress, financial conditions in Buffalo (and other large cities) have worsened significantly. Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse currently rank among the highest of all cities statewide on measures of socio-economic stress.

In contrast to cities, suburbs in the State grew most rapidly in the 1950s and have continued a pattern of growth. New York City's population growth in recent decades has offset its 1970s decline, with the City continuing to benefit from favorable immigration patterns.

The trends highlighted in this report point to the need for a better understanding of the changing characteristics of central-city, suburban and outer-ring neighborhoods in New York State, and the need to review the structure and boundaries for municipalities, which were generally established in the 19th century and are in many ways outdated. Cities are no longer centers of population and wealth, and many towns and villages have urban characteristics (with some exceeding cities in size). Areas for study include similar characteristics among naturally occurring clusters of municipalities, the differences in treatment for different classes of municipalities (e.g., services provided to towns, but not cities, by county governments), and a review of the State's municipal structures and incorporation/annexation procedures in comparison with other states and regions.

Finally, this report highlights the need for an urban agenda in New York State, and an examination of policies that can foster fiscal stability and economic recovery within our urban centers. A number of recent studies have begun to focus on this topic and more research is warranted.[21]

[21] See, the Brookings Institution Special Series on the Health of Upstate New York. This series can be accessed at http://www.brookings.edu/urban/projects/upstatenewyork.htm.

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