

# North Dakota Population Changes\*

By Courtney B. Cleland<sup>1</sup>

What happens to people born in North Dakota? How many stay, and how many leave? And how many people settle here who were born elsewhere?

A special U. S. Census study on "State of Birth," while it does not give definite answers to these questions, does lead to some general conclusions.<sup>2</sup>

The report shows that in 1950 there were 794,430 people living who had been born in North Dakota, but only 433,290 of them were still in the state.<sup>3</sup> Although North Dakota, of course, acquired people born in other states and in foreign lands, the total in-migration fell short of balancing the outflow by about 175,000.

Thus North Dakota's 1950 population of 619,636 was about 70 percent self-supplied, or born within the state. Back in 1910 that could have been said for only 35 percent of the state's people (who totaled 577,056 at the time). In 1910 about 38 percent of North Dakota residents were born in other states, and 27 percent were foreign born. Today only about 8 percent of North Dakota's people are foreign born.<sup>4</sup>

How does the North Dakota figure of 70 percent home-born for 1950 compare with that of other states? By contrast, only 37 percent of California's population in 1950 was born in that state. At the other extreme, states like the Carolinas, Alabama and Mississippi counted 87 or 88 percent of their populations as born in the home state.

Figure 1 indicates the states that have received the bulk of North Dakota's out-migration. The list is headed by next-door neighbor, Minnesota, which included among its 1950 citizens more than 70,000 born in North Dakota. Next came the Pacific coast states, Washington and California—each with more than 60,000 born in North Dakota. Montana and Oregon followed, then a group of North Central states.

Figure 2 shows that North Dakota received far more population born in Minnesota than from any other state. In the cases of South Dakota and Iowa, it appears that North Dakota received more

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<sup>2</sup>U. S. Bureau of the Census, U. S. Census of Population: 1950, Vol. IV, Special Reports, Part 4, Chapter A, State of Birth. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1953.

<sup>3</sup>Data cited are rounded figures, estimated on the basis of a 20 percent sample of all persons enumerated in the 1950 census.

<sup>4</sup>Norway with 13,268 and the U.S.S.R. with 12,393 were the chief contributors to North Dakota's 1950 foreign-born population. Then followed Canada with 6,179, Germany with 4,195, Sweden with 3,415, and Denmark with 1,315. (These are exact U. S. Census counts, not estimates.)

people born in those states than it gave. But for every other state, the balance was in the other state's favor.

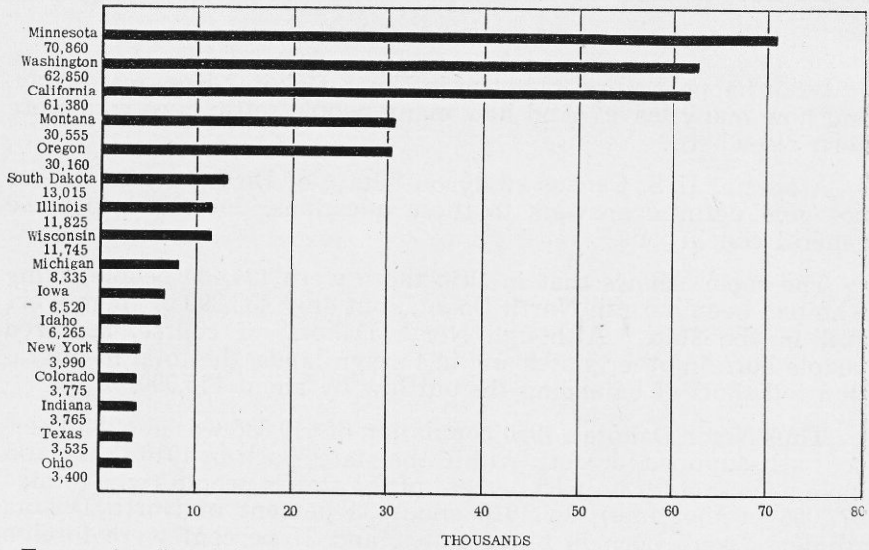


FIGURE 1.—States having as residents in 1950, 3,000 or more persons born in North Dakota.

Practically all the important in-and-out migration involving North Dakotans takes place within the North Central and Pacific West regions. Northeastern and Southern United States have relatively little appeal. Less than 100 people born in North Dakota are found in states like New Hampshire or South Carolina.

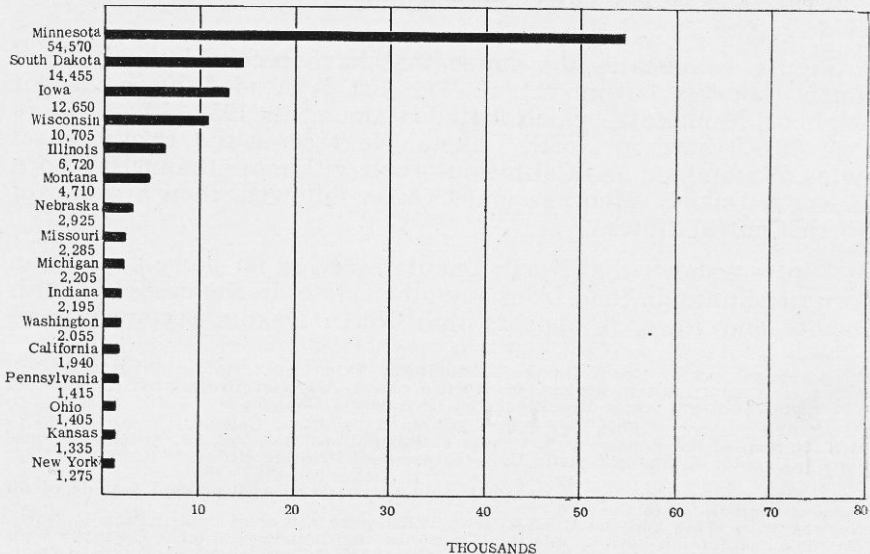


FIGURE 2.—1950 residents in North Dakota born in other states.

These data are of value mainly for the information they provide on the location of North Dakota-born people at the time of the census. The data do **not** indicate **total** amount of population movement. Some natives who left North Dakota have returned, some have died since their departure, and others have resided in a number of different states since leaving North Dakota. Such information cannot be determined from these particular data. The data do indicate, however, the net result of migration during the widely differing periods of the lives of the persons enumerated in the 1950 census.

It is assumed that the migration pattern has changed little since 1950. North Dakota continued to produce a surplus of population (about 60,000 more births than deaths from July, 1950, through December, 1955). Although North Dakota's estimated 1955 population of 642,000 represented a 22,000 gain since 1950, it still fell approximately 38,000 short of balancing the net loss due to migration. It is believed that, again, most of the out-migrants went to states in the North Central and Pacific regions, while most of the in-migrants came from the North Central states.

One new incoming stream from states like Texas and Oklahoma was related to the development of the oil first found in the state in 1951, but not until the 1960 census will it be known how many people born in the older oil states have made North Dakota their permanent home.

#### **NORTH DAKOTA—A HUMAN AND ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY**

The North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies at the North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo has announced the publication of a new book, "North Dakota—A Human and Economic Geography." The author is Dr. Melvin E. Kazeck, assistant professor of geography, University of North Dakota, Grand Forks.

Through this book North Dakotans have a wonderful opportunity to really know their state. It is valuable reference material for anyone interested in the geography of the great plains region of the United States.

The book discusses the stages in the state's human ecology, the general farming area, the wheat region, the cattle-wheat region, industries, transportation and principal cities, soil and water development and the state's future. It is well illustrated with photographs, tables and maps.

It is written in a lively and interesting style and also interprets North Dakota's geography in its relation to resources, to economic potentialities, to climate and soil, crops and minerals. It shows the state's geography in its association with the people who are closely connected with it—who live, work and hope on this land.

In the introduction, Dr. H. L. Walster, former dean of the school of agriculture and director of the experiment station at the North Dakota Agricultural College says,

"'North Dakota—A Human and Economic Geography' presents the reader with a picture of the impact of environment upon that which North Dakotans have done, are doing, and are likely to do with their resources in this Northern Plains state. There is an old Russian saying that the landscape makes the people. By landscape is meant the land plus all the forces which act upon it. Here in North Dakota, these forces have subjected the land and the people to wide variations in stress and strain. Only as the people deal wisely with their principal resource—the land—through scientific planning and action individually and collectively, can they hope to establish a stable agricultural economy."

The book may be purchased from the North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies at the North Dakota Agricultural College in Fargo.