

## DIFFERENTIAL POPULATION GROWTH OF INCORPORATED MUNICIPALITIES IN THE CHICAGO SUBURBAN REGION

CLYDE F. KOHN

*Northwestern University, Evanston*

Like most metropolitan centers in the United States, Chicago is being surpassed in population growth, both numerically and percentage-wise, by its suburban region. This is not a new trend, however. In terms of rates of increase, it has been true since the turn of the century; in terms of absolute growth, it has been true since 1930.

Studies completed in January, 1956, indicate, moreover, that the city is continuing to gain fewer people and to grow at a slower rate than its suburban region. It is generally agreed that during the past 5 years, the city has grown at a rate of 5.5%. This gives it a population today of about 3,800,000; an increase of 200,000 since 1950. In contrast, it is estimated that its suburban region has gained approximately 446,000 inhabitants since 1950, or at a rate of 28.3%. If continued at this rate for the next five years, the suburban growth for the decade 1950-1960 will match that of the 1920's; the city's rate, however, will have fallen far behind.

Centers of population growth within an area are as significant to the geographer, however, as rates of increase. Problems of education, housing, integration, and transportation are dependent on the area as well as on the rapidity of growth.

It is the purpose of this paper, therefore, to present rates of population growth of incorporated municipalities in the Chicago suburban region for the past five years, and to note differences in their growth patterns.

### THE AREA STUDIED

As outlined on Figure 1, the area included in this study is limited to Lake, Cook, and DuPage counties in northeastern Illinois, to that part of Lake County, Indiana, which lies to the north of Crown Point, and to Crete Township in Will County, Illinois. The area so delimited is hereafter referred to as the Chicago suburban region. It includes the entire urbanized area of Chicago as defined by the Bureau of the Census in 1950, with the exception, of course, of the city itself. It does not include, however, all of the "Standard Metropolitan Area" as defined by the census.

Within this region are 155 incorporated municipalities. Although a number of these had their origins more than 100 years ago, substantial growth has taken place only since 1890. Since then, and especially in the 1920's and the past ten years, a large proportion of these municipalities has experienced rapid growth.

Estimates indicate that in 1955,

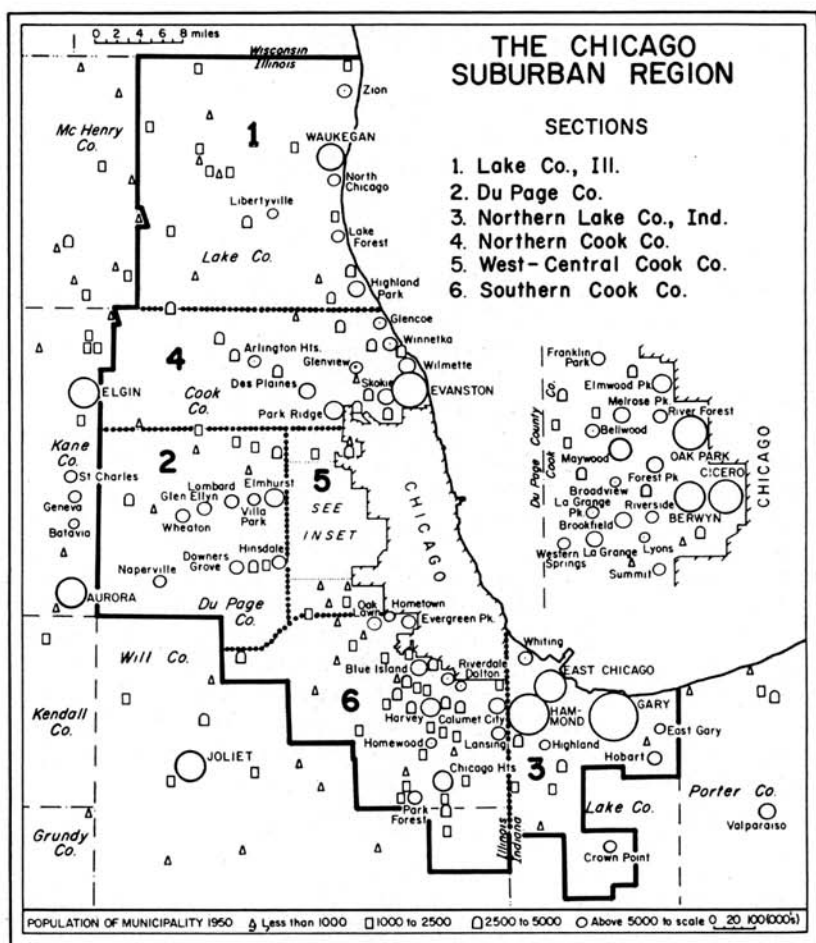


FIG. 1.—Cities named are indicated by dot in center of appropriate circle.

the 155 incorporated municipalities of the Chicago suburban region had a population of nearly 1,750,000. This represents a numerical increase since 1950 of nearly 415,000, or an average percentage growth of 31%. An additional 273,000 live in unincorporated areas. It is estimated that the Chicago suburban region has a total population today of more than 2,000,000, compared to the

city's population of 3,800,000. The ratio of population in the city to that of the suburban region is now less than 2 to 1.

#### BASIS OF ESTIMATES

The population estimates presented in this paper are based on data collected from a number of sources late in 1955. For that year

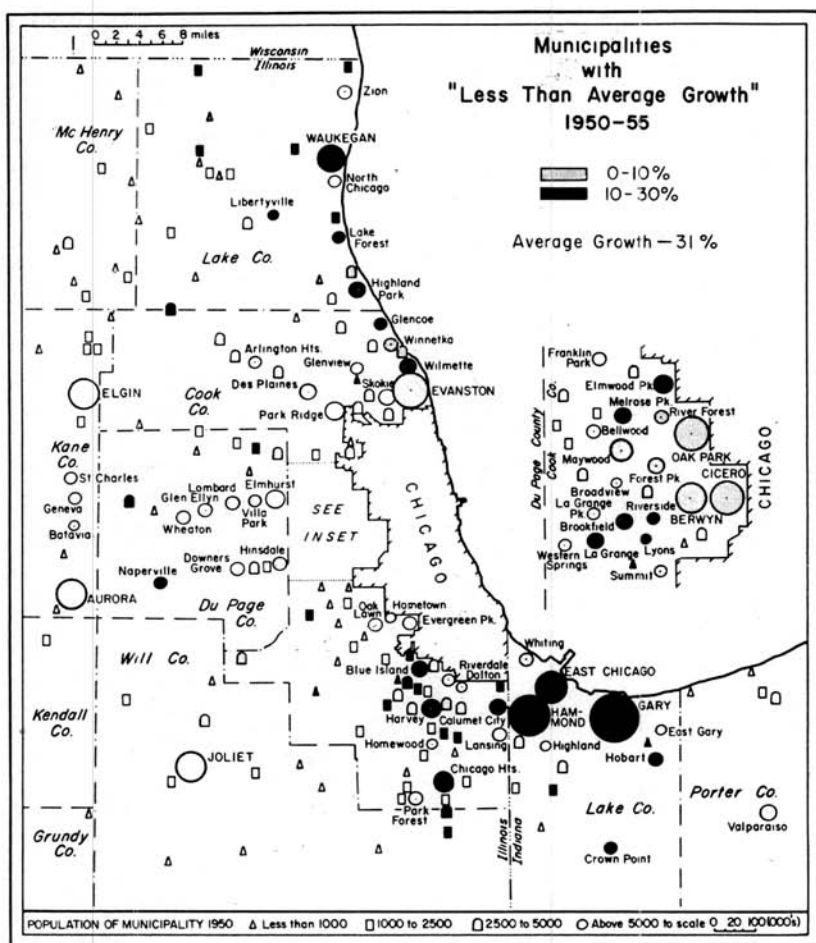


FIGURE 2

supplemental United States Census counts were made for 40 municipalities located within the Chicago suburban region. These data were used, wherever possible, to determine the rate of growth. Estimates of population for those municipalities for which there were no supplemental United States Census counts were based on: 1) field mapping of new dwelling units; 2) comparison of aerial photographs taken in

the 1940's and in 1955; 3) examination of records of building permits; 4) forecasts by other groups and organizations; 5) studies of recent birth rates and school populations; and 6) records of family service agencies. Great reliance was placed on correlations which were established between number of residential building permits and population increases. Correlations were established for suburban communities for



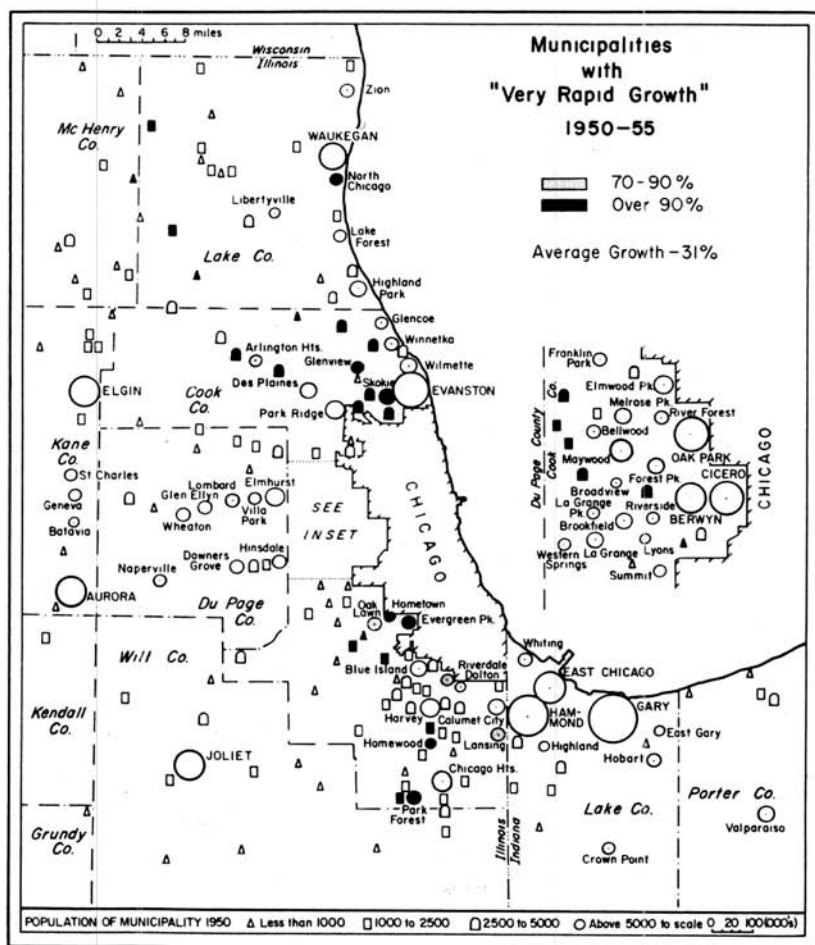


FIGURE 4

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

In analyzing the differential population growth of incorporated municipalities in the Chicago suburban region, attention is directed to: 1) population growth by sections; 2) growth of the large municipalities; 3) municipalities of less than average growth; 4) municipalities of more than average growth; and 5) municipalities of very rapid growth.

*Population growth by sections.*—

The several sections of the Chicago suburban region are growing at different rates. Northern Cook County (Fig. 1, Sec. 1) has gained the largest number of people, but ranks second to southern Cook County in rate of increase. West-central Cook County and northern Lake County, Indiana, rank third and fourth, respectively, in terms of numerical increases, but fifth and sixth in terms

of rates of growth. DuPage and Lake counties have gained fewer people than any of the other sections, but rank third and fourth in terms of percentage increases.

*Growth of the large municipalities.*—In 1950, there were 30 municipalities in the Chicago suburban region which had a population of more than 10,000. Seven exceeded 50,000 and one, Gary, exceeded 100,000. From the standpoint of numbers, growth in these large municipalities has been outstanding. Altogether, the 30 cities account for nearly 41% of the total increase registered for all the suburban municipalities. Two cities, Skokie and Gary, have each gained more than 20,000 residents during the past 5 years.

On a percentage basis, however, the large cities of the Chicago suburban region have not equalled the population growth experienced by some of the smaller municipalities. As a whole, the 30 larger municipalities have gained at a rate of only 18.4%. Only 7 of the 30 have gained at rates faster than the average for all of the suburban municipalities. All of the first 10 have increased at rates lower than the 31% average. Of these, Evanston, Cicero, Oak Park, Berwyn, and Maywood have registered very small rates of increase since 1950.

*Municipalities with less than average growth.*—The municipalities which have grown at rates lower than the area's average of 31% are indicated in Figure 2. These include: 1) all North Shore municipalities, except North Chicago and Zion; 2) a cluster of municipalities along the west-central limits of Chicago, including the large and long-

established centers of Oak Park, Berwyn, and Cicero, and several nearby residential suburbs; 3) four small industrial centers, Blue Island, Harvey, Chicago Heights, and Calumet City, together with a few very small suburbs; 4) large industrial cities of northern Lake County, Indiana; and 5) a number of small communities located near the fringes of the Chicago suburban region, principally in the lake region of western Lake County, western DuPage County, and southwestern Cook County.

In general, it appears that the suburban municipalities which have grown at less than average rates include: 1) older municipalities in which there is no longer room for extensive development of single-family homes; 2) industrial municipalities which may have experienced large numerical increases but because of size do not register high rates of growth; and 3) small settlements which are still considered too far from the central city for daily trips to work.

It may be predicted that rates of growth in the older suburbs will continue to decelerate unless single-family homes are replaced by multiple dwelling units or the suburbs annex additional land. Small settlements now located near the fringes of the Chicago suburban region will grow more rapidly if the present widespread demand for single-family homes, located in the open country, continues. Finally, it may be predicted that present industrial centers will grow at a more rapid rate when strong attractive forces, such as the St. Lawrence Seaway and the deepening of the Sag Chan-

nel, cause industrial location in the Chicago suburban region.

*Municipalities with more than average growth.*—Eighty-nine municipalities in the study area (Fig. 3) have added more than 31% to their population in the last five years. These include: 1) scattered small settlements in western Lake County in which former resort dwellings are being converted into year-round homes, and new dwellings being built, and from which many workers commute to Waukegan and North Chicago as well as to the city of Chicago itself; 2) a string of municipalities which lie inland from and roughly parallel to the North Shore suburbs, including Skokie (which has achieved the largest numerical increase of any Chicago suburban municipality), Lincolnwood, Niles, Morton Grove, Glenview, Northfield, Northbrook, and Wheeling—all more dependent on the automobile than on rail transportation for commuting; 3) all but five municipalities of DuPage County, comprising three distinct string settlements: in the north along the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad; centrally, along the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad; and in the south along the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad and Ogden Avenue; and 4) a large number of residential, dormitory suburbs located on or near main railroad lines and major highways in southern Cook County.

*Municipalities of extremely rapid growth.*—Since 1950, 29 municipalities have more than doubled their populations. (Fig. 4) A third of them are in northern Cook County. They include Skokie, Niles, North-

brook, Lincolnwood, Morton Grove, Wheeling, Northfield, Glenview, Mt. Prospect, and Rolling Meadows which now has an estimated population of more than 5000. It is a dormitory suburb which has been built since 1950.

The second largest area of rapidly growing municipalities lies to the south of Chicago. Here may be found such suburbs as Evergreen Park, Hometown, and Park Forest, all residential developments of recent years.

It is interesting to note that no city in northern Lake County, Indiana, or in DuPage County, Illinois, has doubled its population since 1950. All of the cities in these counties have grown at more than average rates, but not so phenomenally as have the suburbs in northern and southern Cook County.

#### FUTURE TRENDS

Based on field observations and the trends of the time, it is predicted that the population of the Chicago suburban region will continue to increase at about the same rate as it has since 1950. An expected additional increase of some 440,000 is indicated. This will bring the total 1960 population to nearly 2,460,000. The average rate of growth for the Chicago suburban region over the ten-year period will amount, therefore, to nearly 56%.

Again, based on empirical evidence, it is expected that the higher rates of increase during the next five years will take place in DuPage County and in southern Cook County. Northern Cook County will continue to gain numerically but at a lower rate.