

## Changes in Size of Rural Families

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Rural families have been becoming smaller each decade for at least the last 50 years. Farm families averaged 4.2 persons in 1930 according to the 1930 census; ten years earlier farm families averaged 4.4 persons. This trend downward is not limited to farm families; all families in Illinois decreased from 4.2 in 1920 to 3.9 in 1930; indeed, in 1890 there were 4.8 persons per family in Illinois.

Farm life is supposed to be conducive to large families; city life has always discouraged large families. Family labor has usually been considered an important factor in the earning of a living on the farm, but in the city a large family is an economic liability. With modernization in agriculture, however, and the spread of the urban influence, farm family sizes are on the downward trend.

Size of family is directly related to population increase. Families are so small in cities now that they do not maintain the population. Purdie and his analysis have computed that it takes 370 children under 5 years of age per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years of age to maintain the population. In 1930 the seven cities of Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Kansas City, St. Louis, Nashville, and Atlanta, all largely of American stock, lacked about 40 per cent of having enough children to maintain their population stationary without accession from the outside, and all cities of over 100,000 population had a deficit of nearly 50 per cent; while the smaller cities had a deficit of about 7 per cent. On the other hand, the rural non-farm (mostly village and suburban) population had a surplus of over 23 per cent and the farm population of nearly 50 per cent. In 1933 urban deficit and rural surplus about balanced.

In Illinois, Lake, Cook, Boone, Winnebago, Stephenson, Carroll, DeKalb, Kane, DePue, Will, Kanekees, Lee, Henry, Rock Island, Knox, Peoria, McLean, McDonough, Adams, Logan, Champaign, Macon, Sangamon, Morgan, Macoupin, St. Clair, and Alexander Counties were not maintaining their population in 1930 on the basis of natural increase, that is, having more than 370 children under 5 per 1,000 women 15 to 44 years of age. Note that these 28 counties are located for the most part in the north third of the state, and that a relatively large city is located in each. If cities are not maintaining their population, then we must depend on the large farm families of the state and nation to keep the population growing.

Farm families, however, are decreasing in size in Illinois. If this trend continues then it will be only a matter of time until Illinois will have to depend upon outside sources for her population growth. The rate of decline can be shown in a rough way by comparing percentages in various age groups. The census gives these figures for males and females separately. The rate of decline seems more rapid for the rural than for the urban areas from 1910 to 1930. For males, the proportion in the under 5-year age group declined from 8.9 per cent in 1910 to 7.8 per cent in 1930 for the urban areas of the state, whereas the decline was from 11.2 per cent to 8.7 per cent for the rural areas. For females the proportion

10. E. Bakery, Future Population Prospect, *Rural Sociology*, June, 1937, Vol. 2, No. 2, page 124.

for the same age group declined from 19.2 per cent in 1910 to 7.7 per cent in 1930 for the urban areas, compared with a decline of from 11.9 per cent in 1910 to 9.2 per cent in 1930. In other words, whereas the difference for the proportion of the urban male population in the under 5-year age group was 2.1 per cent between 1910 and 1930, it was 2.5 per cent for the rural male population; and whereas it was 2.2 per cent for the urban female, it was 2.7 per cent for the rural female population (see Table I).

TABLE I. PERCENTAGES OF AGE GROUPS—ILLINOIS\*

| Group            | Urban |      |      | Rural |      |      |          |
|------------------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|----------|
|                  | 1910  | 1920 | 1930 | 1910  | 1920 | 1930 |          |
| A. Male          |       |      |      |       |      |      |          |
| Under 5.....     | 8.9   | 6.8  | 7.8  | 11.2  | 10.5 | 9.7  | Non-farm |
| 5 to 9.....      | 8.7   | 9.4  | 8.5  | 10.7  | 10.7 | 10.7 | 8.6      |
| 10 to 14.....    | 9.4   | 8.4  | 8.5  | 10.1  | 10.4 | 11.0 | 9.2      |
| 15 to 19.....    | 8.9   | 7.6  | 8.4  | 9.9   | 9.4  | 10.0 | 9.0      |
| 20 to 44.....    | 45.5  | 42.6 | 42.8 | 38.3  | 34.7 | 32.6 | 34.7     |
| 45 and over..... | 18.2  | 21.1 | 23.1 | 21.7  | 24.2 | 26.3 | 20.4     |
| B. Female        |       |      |      |       |      |      |          |
| Under 5.....     | 10.2  | 9.8  | 7.7  | 11.9  | 11.1 | 9.8  | 8.7      |
| 5 to 9.....      | 9.0   | 8.5  | 8.2  | 11.5  | 11.2 | 11.5 | 9.9      |
| 10 to 14.....    | 9.5   | 8.0  | 8.5  | 10.7  | 10.7 | 11.7 | 9.4      |
| 15 to 19.....    | 10.0  | 8.2  | 9.0  | 10.1  | 9.3  | 9.7  | 8.5      |
| 20 to 44.....    | 45.0  | 45.3 | 47.9 | 35.7  | 35.2 | 35.8 | 34.0     |
| 45 and over..... | 15.3  | 20.6 | 22.6 | 20.1  | 23.4 | 23.3 | 29.0     |

\* Source—U. S. Census.

A study of proportions in the other age groups in the population for 1910, 1920, and 1930 shows, conversely, a gradual increase in the proportions in the age group 45 years and over. Moreover, the increases in proportions in this age group were larger for the rural areas than for the urban, a change of 4.8 per cent for the urban male, 6.1 per cent for the rural male, 4.3 per cent for the urban female, and 6.0 per cent for the rural female. Part of the higher rate of increase in the proportion in the 45 years and over age group in rural areas may be due to people moving back to the country after their productive years have passed, but probably most of the increase is due to changing sizes of families.

In summary, farm families are getting smaller. If they keep on getting smaller, Illinois will soon have to depend upon immigration for her increase in population. The rate of decrease in size of families in Illinois is greater for rural than for urban areas.