

## In 1950, the U.S. population became predominantly metropolitan and became increasingly more metropolitan in each subsequent decade.

The U.S. Census Bureau defined metropolitan population concentrations<sup>13</sup> for the first time in 1910. At that time, 26.1 million people lived in 19 metropolitan districts of 200,000 or more population and cities of 100,000 to 200,000 and their adjacent territory, leaving 65.9 million who lived in nonmetropolitan territory. With each passing decade, the metropolitan population increased, while the nonmetropolitan population generally decreased (see Figure 1-14).

While metropolitan concentrations certainly grew as a result of births and migration, they also grew as a result of territorial expansion. Over the course of the century, the changing definition of “metropolitan” caused new areas to achieve metropolitan status and existing metropolitan areas to acquire more territory.

<sup>13</sup> The 1910 forerunner of a metropolitan area was the “metropolitan district.” Metropolitan districts/areas were redefined at each census. The definition of metropolitan areas was based on county boundaries for the first time in 1950 (see the Glossary). Data presented in Figures 1-14 through 1-19 are based on the definition of metropolitan at the time of each census.

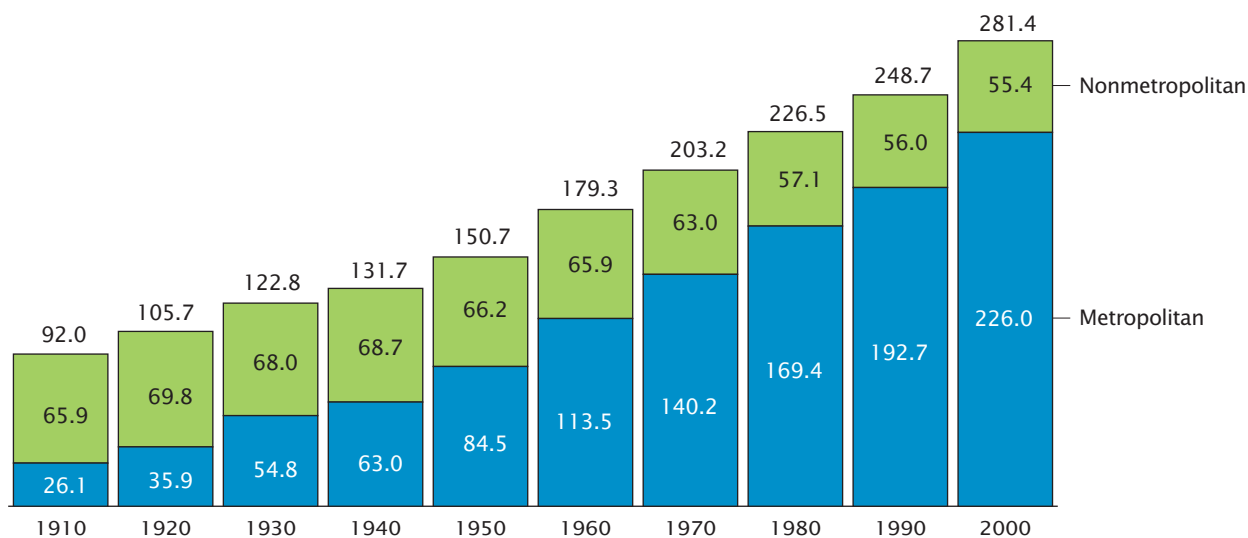
During the early part of the century, the metropolitan population grew quickly, due in part to the influx of immigrants into large cities, while the nonmetropolitan population changed very little. The smallest increase in the metropolitan population occurred during the 1930s (8.2 million people). This was also the last decade when the nonmetropolitan population increased, although it remained larger than the metropolitan population into the 1940s.

By 1950, the U.S. population had become predominantly metropolitan for the first time, and the metropolitan population exceeded the nonmetropolitan population by 18.3 million people. By 2000, the metropolitan population (226 million) was four times the size of the nonmetropolitan population (55 million).

From 1910 to 2000, the metropolitan population grew by nearly 200 million people, with the largest increase, 33.3 million, occurring from 1990 to 2000.

Figure 1-14.  
**Total Population by Metropolitan Status: 1910 to 2000**

(Millions)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1910 to 2000.