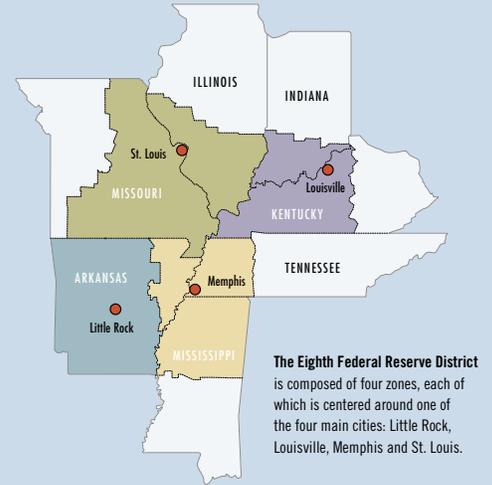


Eighth District Population Growth Follows National Pattern

By Craig P. Aubuchon, Subhayu Bandyopadhyay, Rubén Hernández-Murillo, Christopher J. Martinek



Earlier this year, the U.S. Census Bureau released its population estimates through July of 2007. The data for the Eighth Federal Reserve District contain few surprises. The District continues to closely follow the U.S. growth pattern. From 2006 to 2007, the U.S. population grew by 0.96 percent. Tennessee was the only Eighth District state to exceed that rate by growing at 1.4 percent. The growth rates in other District states ranged from a low of 0.6 percent (Illinois) to a high of 0.9 percent (Arkansas).

For counties within the Eighth District, Spencer County, Ky., of the Louisville metro area remained, at 4.9 percent population growth since 2006, the fastest-growing county in the District. Other counties in the top five were Christian County of Springfield, Mo. (4.7 percent); Benton County of Fayetteville, Ark. (4.1 percent); and Fayette and DeSoto counties of Memphis (4.0 and 3.9 percent, respectively). Of the 10 fastest-growing counties, six were in large metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), while four were in small- and medium-sized MSAs.

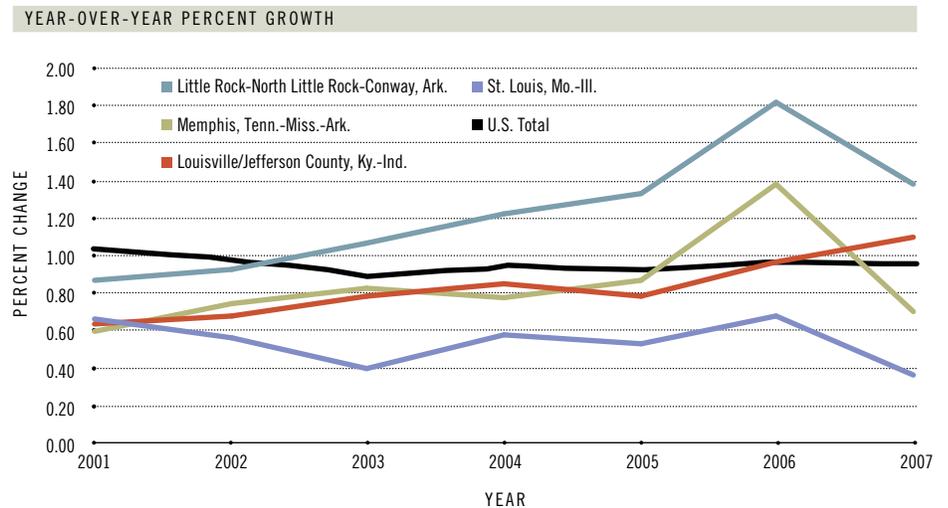
Accelerated Growth

St. Louis, with 2.8 million people, continues to be the largest metro area. Louisville and Memphis are roughly the same size with 1.2 and 1.3 million people, respectively, and Little Rock is half their size with slightly more than 600,000 residents. The chart looks at year-over-year growth rates and highlights the differences among these four largest MSAs of the Eighth District. The

most consistent trend is a widening gap in growth rates among these metro areas. In 2001, growth in these MSAs from the previous year ranged from roughly 0.6 percent to 0.8 percent, well below the U.S. average of 1 percent. In 2007, the range was a low of 0.4 percent in St. Louis to a high of 1.4 percent in Little Rock. The chart also demonstrates a nationwide pattern in urbanization, which

growth almost every year and exceeding the U.S. average since 2003. Little Rock's growth rate peaked in 2006 at 1.8 percent before cooling down slightly and falling to 1.4 percent in 2007. Within the Little Rock zone, the outlying suburb of Saline County grew the fastest (3.3 percent) in 2007. Memphis followed a pattern similar to Little Rock's, although population

Population Growth



is characterized by faster growth rates in small- to medium-sized metro areas. St. Louis is the only metro area that grew at a slower rate in 2007 than in 2001, seeing its growth nearly cut in half, while Louisville and Little Rock grew at about 1.5 times their 2001 rates. Memphis seemed to grow like Louisville and Little Rock through 2006 before declining sharply in 2007.

Among the individual MSAs, Little Rock has grown the fastest, accelerating its

growth held steady at about 0.8 percent from 2003 to 2005. Memphis didn't see a surge in population growth until 2006, when it exceeded the U.S. average and followed Little Rock in both the upward trend from 2005 to 2006 and the slight cooling in 2007. Despite this slowdown, Memphis in 2007 was home to the fourth and fifth fastest-growing counties of the Eighth District: Fayette County (4 percent) in Tennessee and DeSoto County (3.9 percent) in

Mississippi. The Louisville metro area has grown every year since 2001. It was the only large MSA in the Eighth District to grow faster in 2007 (at 1.1 percent) than in 2006. St. Louis is the only metro area consistently below the U.S. average and only grew by 0.36 percent in 2007. The area continues to see high growth in the secondary suburbs near St. Charles, Mo., that just barely cover for the population declines in St. Louis city. Since 2006, Lincoln (3.8 percent) and Warren (3.2 percent) counties have grown the fastest, with St. Charles (2.3 percent) not far behind. St. Louis city (−0.9 percent) and St. Louis County (−0.4 percent) have declined, albeit slightly, since 2006.

The 14 other small- and medium-sized metro areas also showed a widening gap in their year-over-year growth rates. In 2001, 12 areas were clustered between zero and 1.3 percent. The exceptions were the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, Ark., area, which in the decade before 2001 was the sixth fastest-growing metro area in the U.S., and Pine Bluff, Ark., the only Eighth District MSA to lose population since 2000. In 2001, Fayetteville grew at a year-over-year rate of 2.6 percent, almost double the rate of the next closest MSA, Springfield, Mo. In 2007, growth in those same 12 areas ranged between 0.2 and 2.2 percent. Among them, the fastest growers in 2001 also increased their growth rates by 2007. Springfield grew at 2.3 percent; Bowling Green, Ky., Columbia, Mo., and Jonesboro, Ark., all grew at 1.6 percent in 2007, down from their respective highs in 2006 of nearly 2 percent. Fayetteville continued its upward surge, adding almost 4 percent more people in 2005 and another 3 percent in 2006 and 2007. Pine Bluff, on the other hand, continued to decline, and population losses accelerated as its year-over-year growth rate slowed to −1.3 percent in 2007.

Rate of Natural Increase

The U.S. Census Bureau also releases estimates of the natural population increase by county and metropolitan area. The rate of natural increase is computed as the birth rate minus the death rate for a specific year, while the birth rate (or death rate) is simply the number of births (or deaths) per 1,000 people. The natural increase for a given year does not include migration, either

domestic or international, but offers a snapshot of demographic trends in an area.

Overall, the rate of natural increase remained fairly constant for each of the metro areas. Within the Eighth District, both Little Rock and Memphis had the highest rate of natural increase, which is to be expected from the population growth rates presented above. From 2001 to 2007, Memphis maintained a steady rate of natural increase of 7 percent, a full point above the U.S. average. Little Rock was closer to the national trend before the rate of natural increase went up to 6.5 percent in 2007. Louisville and St. Louis continued to increase at about 4 percent per year, and St. Louis passed Louisville in 2005. In 2007, St. Louis experienced a natural rate of increase of 4.6 percent. ¹⁰

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