

Indicators Program

Census 2020: Population in Iowa's Counties, 2000 - 2020

Sandra Charvat Burke

Figure 1. Decennial Census 2020, Total Population, Iowa Counties.

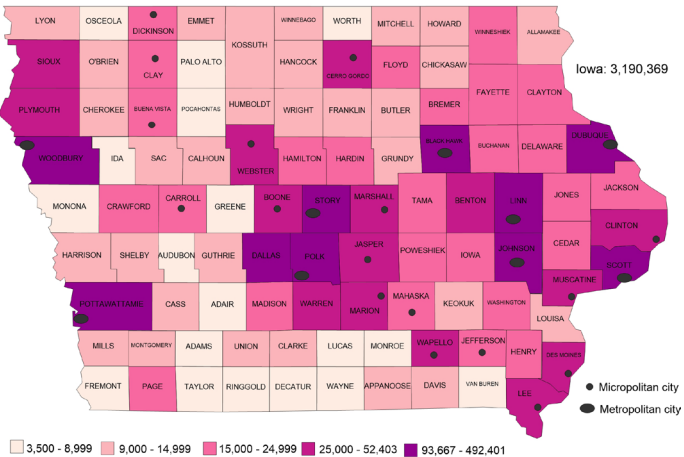


Figure 2. Decennial Numerical Population Change 2010 - 2020.

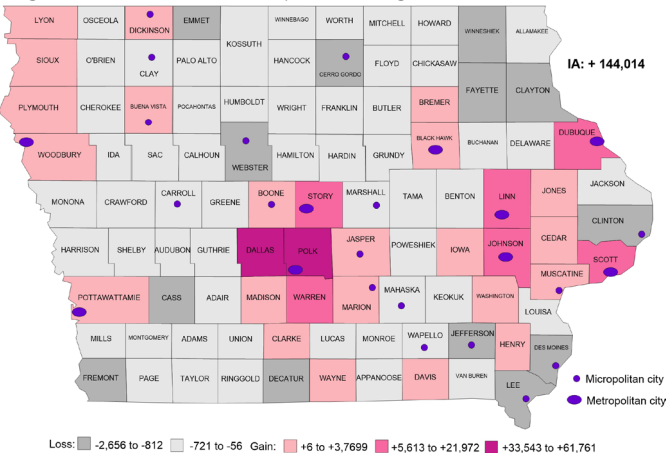
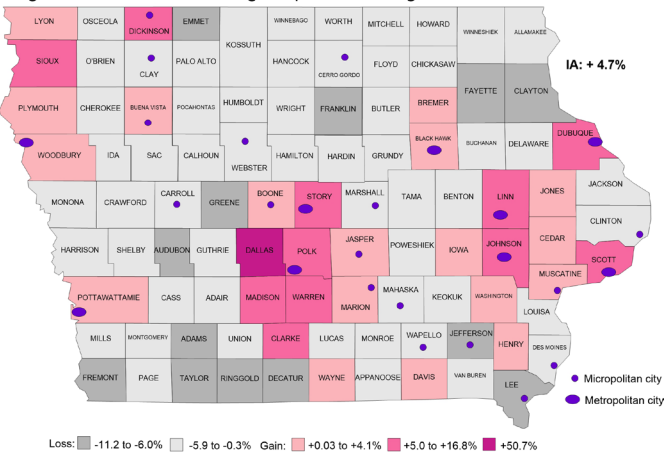


Figure 3. Decennial Percentage Population Change 2010 - 2020.



Iowa recorded an increase of 144,014 residents (4.7%) between the Decennial Censuses of 2010 and 2020.¹ During that same period, there were significant variations in the populations of Iowa's counties and how they changed. Adams County, Iowa's smallest, had 3,704 people in 2020 contrasting with Polk County, the largest, with 492,401. In addition to Adams, there were 17 other counties with fewer than 9,000 residents. Another thirty counties ranged between 9,000 and 14,999 people, 26 recorded populations of 15,000 to 24,999 along with 15 that had from 25,000 to 52,403 residents. The remaining 10 counties exceeded 93,000, with six surpassing 100,000. These six were Black Hawk, Johnson, Linn, Scott, and Woodbury along with Polk (Figure 1, Table 1).

Although Iowa, as a state, gained population during the decade, most of the counties did not. Sixty-nine counties recorded population loss between 2010 and 2020. Although most of these declines were in the hundreds, there were eight for which the loss exceeded 1,000. The two largest declines were in Clinton (-2,656) and Lee (-2,307) Counties. In general, the counties with population losses tended to be those that had smaller populations overall or were relatively rural but several of the state's micropolitan counties lost residents as well (Figure 2, Table 1).

Iowa's overall growth came predominantly from the state's metropolitan regions. A cluster of counties in central Iowa surrounding Polk County along with another cluster in eastern Iowa including Dubuque, Linn, Johnson, and Scott Counties recorded substantial growth during the decade. Another set of counties in northwestern Iowa along the Missouri River that included Woodbury County also recorded increases. The numerical gains among the 30 counties with population increase ranged from six and eight people (Cedar, Jones) to more than 5,000 for eight others. The highest gains were in Linn (+19,073), Johnson (+21,972), Dallas (+33,543), and Polk (+61,761) Counties (Figure 2, Table 1).

Population percentage changes among the counties ranged from a decline of -11.2% (Fremont) to a gain of 50.7% (Dallas). Although Fremont County was the only one to exceed a 10% loss, 12 others declined by at least 6%. Modest percentage losses

Census 2020: Population in Iowa's Counties, 2000 - 2020

Table 1. Decennial Census Population, Number and Percentage Change, and Percentage of Iowa Population, Iowa Counties, 2000 - 2020.¹

County	2020	Change 2010 - 2020		2020	2010	2000	Change 2000 - 2010		2010	2000
	Population	Number	Percent	Percent of IA	Population ²	Population ²	Number	Percent	Percent of IA	Percent of IA
Adair	7496	-186	-2.4	0.2	7682	8243	-561	-6.8	0.3	0.3
Adams	3704	-325	-8.1	0.1	4029	4482	-453	-10.1	0.1	0.2
Allamakee	14061	-269	-1.9	0.4	14330	14675	-345	-2.4	0.5	0.5
Appanoose	12317	-570	-4.4	0.4	12887	13721	-834	-6.1	0.4	0.5
Audubon	5674	-445	-7.3	0.2	6119	6830	-711	-10.4	0.2	0.2
Benton	25575	-501	-1.9	0.8	26076	25308	768	3.0	0.9	0.9
Black Hawk	131144	54	0.04	4.1	131090	128012	3078	2.4	4.3	4.4
Boone	26715	409	1.6	0.8	26306	26224	82	0.3	0.9	0.9
Bremer	24988	712	2.9	0.8	24276	23325	951	4.1	0.8	0.8
Buchanan	20565	-393	-1.9	0.6	20958	21093	-135	-0.6	0.7	0.7
Buena Vista	20823	563	2.8	0.7	20260	20411	-151	-0.7	0.7	0.7
Butler	14334	-533	-3.6	0.4	14867	15305	-438	-2.9	0.5	0.5
Calhoun	9927	-250	-2.5	0.3	10177 ²	11115	-1445	-13.0	0.3	0.4
Carroll	20760	-56	-0.3	0.7	20816	21421	-605	-2.8	0.7	0.7
Cass	13127	-829	-5.9	0.4	13956	14684	-728	-5.0	0.5	0.5
Cedar	18505	6	0.03	0.6	18499	18187	312	1.7	0.6	0.6
Cerro Gordo	43127	-1024	-2.3	1.4	44151	46447	-2296	-4.9	1.4	1.6
Cherokee	11658	-414	-3.4	0.4	12072	13035	-963	-7.4	0.4	0.4
Chickasaw	12012	-427	-3.4	0.4	12439	13095	-656	-5.0	0.4	0.4
Clarke	9748	462	5.0	0.3	9286	9133	153	1.7	0.3	0.3
Clay	16384	-283	-1.7	0.5	16667	17372	-705	-4.1	0.5	0.6
Clayton	17043	-1086	-6.0	0.5	18129	18678	-549	-2.9	0.6	0.6
Clinton	46460	-2656	-5.4	1.5	49116	50149	-1033	-2.1	1.6	1.7
Crawford	16525	-571	-3.3	0.5	17096	16942	154	0.9	0.6	0.6
Dallas	99678	33543	50.7	3.1	66135	40750	25385	62.3	2.2	1.4
Davis	9110	357	4.1	0.3	8753	8541	212	2.5	0.3	0.3
Decatur	7645	-812	-9.6	0.2	8457	8689	-232	-2.7	0.3	0.3
Delaware	17488	-276	-1.6	0.5	17764	18404	-640	-3.5	0.6	0.6
Des Moines	38910	-1415	-3.5	1.2	40325	42351	-2026	-4.8	1.3	1.4
Dickinson	17703	1036	6.2	0.6	16667	16424	243	1.5	0.5	0.6
Dubuque	99266	5613	6.0	3.1	93653	89143	4510	5.1	3.1	3.0
Emmet	9388	-914	-8.9	0.3	10302	11027	-725	-6.6	0.3	0.4
Fayette	19509	-1371	-6.6	0.6	20880	22008	-1128	-5.1	0.7	0.8
Floyd	15627	-676	-4.1	0.5	16303	16900	-597	-3.5	0.5	0.6
Franklin	10019	-661	-6.2	0.3	10680	10704	-24	-0.2	0.4	0.4
Fremont	6605	-836	-11.2	0.2	7441	8010	-569	-7.1	0.2	0.3
Greene	8771	-565	-6.1	0.3	9336	10366	-1030	-9.9	0.3	0.4
Grundy	12329	-124	-1.0	0.4	12453	12369	84	0.7	0.4	0.4
Guthrie	10623	-331	-3.0	0.3	10954	11353	-399	-3.5	0.4	0.4
Hamilton	15039	-634	-4.0	0.5	15673	16438 ²	-765	-4.7	0.5	0.6
Hancock	10795	-546	-4.8	0.3	11341	12100	-759	-6.3	0.4	0.4
Hardin	16878	-656	-3.7	0.5	17534	18812	-1278	-6.8	0.6	0.6
Harrison	14582	-346	-2.3	0.5	14928	15666	-738	-4.7	0.5	0.5
Henry	20482	337	1.7	0.6	20145	20336	-191	-0.9	0.7	0.7
Howard	9469	-97	-1.0	0.3	9566	9932	-366	-3.7	0.3	0.3
Humboldt	9597	-218	-2.2	0.3	9815	10381	-566	-5.5	0.3	0.4
Ida	7005	-84	-1.2	0.2	7089	7837	-748	-9.5	0.2	0.3
Iowa	16662	307	1.9	0.5	16355	15671	684	4.4	0.5	0.5
Jackson	19485	-363	-1.8	0.6	19848	20296	-448	-2.2	0.7	0.7
Jasper	37813	971	2.6	1.2	36842	37213	-371	-1.0	1.2	1.3

¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau; ²Some may be revised from originally released data

Census 2020: Population in Iowa's Counties, 2000-2020

Table 1. Decennial Census Population, Number and Percentage Change, and Percentage of Iowa Population, Iowa Counties, 2000 - 2020.¹ (continued)

County	2020	Change 2010 - 2020		2020	2010	2000	Change 2000 - 2010		2010	2000
	Population	Number	Percent	Percent of IA	Population ²	Population ²	Number	Percent	Percent of IA	Percent of IA
Jefferson	15663	-1180	-7.0	0.5	16843	16181	662	4.1	0.6	0.6
Johnson	152854	21972	16.8	4.8	130882	111006	19876	17.9	4.3	3.8
Jones	20646	8	0.04	0.6	20638	20221	417	2.1	0.7	0.7
Keokuk	10033	-478	-4.5	0.3	10511	11400	-889	-7.8	0.3	0.4
Kossuth	14828	-715	-4.6	0.5	15543	17163	-1620	-9.4	0.5	0.6
Lee	33555	-2307	-6.4	1.1	35862	38052	-2190	-5.8	1.2	1.3
Linn	230299	19073	9.0	7.2	211226	191701	19525	10.2	6.9	6.6
Louisa	10837	-550	-4.8	0.3	11387	12183	-796	-6.5	0.4	0.4
Lucas	8634	-264	-3.0	0.3	8898	9422	-524	-5.6	0.3	0.3
Lyon	11934	353	3.0	0.4	11581	11763	-182	-1.5	0.4	0.4
Madison	16548	869	5.5	0.5	15679	14019	1660	11.8	0.5	0.5
Mahaska	22190	-191	-0.9	0.7	22381	22335	46	0.2	0.7	0.8
Marion	33414	105	0.3	1.0	33309	32052	1257	3.9	1.1	1.1
Marshall	40105	-543	-1.3	1.3	40648	39311	1337	3.4	1.3	1.3
Mills	14484	-575	-3.8	0.5	15059	14547	512	3.5	0.5	0.5
Mitchell	10565	-211	-2.0	0.3	10776	10874	-98	-0.9	0.4	0.4
Monona	8751	-492	-5.3	0.3	9243	10020	-777	-7.8	0.3	0.3
Monroe	7577	-393	-4.9	0.2	7970	8016	-46	-0.6	0.3	0.3
Montgomery	10330	-410	-3.8	0.3	10740	11771	-1031	-8.8	0.4	0.4
Muscatine	43235	490	1.1	1.4	42745	41722	1023	2.5	1.4	1.4
O'Brien	14182	-216	-1.5	0.4	14398	15102	-704	-4.7	0.5	0.5
Osceola	6192	-270	-4.2	0.2	6462	7003	-541	-7.7	0.2	0.2
Page	15211	-721	-4.5	0.5	15932	16976	-1044	-6.1	0.5	0.6
Palo Alto	8996	-425	-4.5	0.3	9421	10147	-726	-7.2	0.3	0.3
Plymouth	25698	712	2.8	0.8	24986	24849	137	0.6	0.8	0.8
Pocahontas	7078	-232	-3.2	0.2	7310	8662	-1352	-15.6	0.2	0.3
Polk	492401	61761	14.3	15.4	430640	374601	56039	15.0	14.1	12.8
Pottawattamie	93667	509	0.5	2.9	93158	87704	5454	6.2	3.1	3.0
Poweshiek	18662	-252	-1.3	0.6	18914	18815	99	0.5	0.6	0.6
Ringgold	4663	-468	-9.1	0.1	5131	5469	-338	-6.2	0.2	0.2
Sac	9814	-536	-5.2	0.3	10350	11529	-1179	-10.2	0.3	0.4
Scott	174669	9445	5.7	5.5	165224	158668	6556	4.1	5.4	5.4
Shelby	11746	-421	-3.5	0.4	12167	13173	-1006	-7.6	0.4	0.5
Sioux	35872	2168	6.4	1.1	33704	31589	2115	6.7	1.1	1.1
Story	98537	8995	10.0	3.1	89542	79981	9561	12.0	2.9	2.7
Tama	17135	-632	-3.6	0.5	17767	18103	-336	-1.9	0.6	0.6
Taylor	5896	-421	-6.7	0.2	6317	6958	-641	-9.2	0.2	0.2
Union	12138	-396	-3.2	0.4	12534	12309	225	1.8	0.4	0.4
Van Buren	7203	-367	-4.8	0.2	7570	7809	-239	-3.1	0.2	0.3
Wapello	35437	-188	-0.5	1.1	35625	36051 ³	-426	-1.2	1.2	1.2
Warren	52403	6178	13.4	1.6	46225	40671	5554	13.7	1.5	1.4
Washington	22565	861	4.0	0.7	21704	20670	1034	5.0	0.7	0.7
Wayne	6497	94	1.5	0.2	6403	6730	-327	-4.9	0.2	0.2
Webster	36999	-1014	-2.7	1.2	38013	40235	-2222	-5.5	1.2	1.4
Winnebago	10679	-187	-1.7	0.3	10866	11723	-857	-7.3	0.4	0.4
Winneshiek	20070	-986	-4.7	0.6	21056	21310	-254	-1.2	0.7	0.7
Woodbury	105941	3769	3.7	3.3	102172	103877	-1705	-1.6	3.4	3.5
Worth	7443	-155	-2.0	0.2	7598	7909	-311	-3.9	0.2	0.3
Wright	12943	-286	-2.2	0.4	13229	14334	-1105	-7.7	0.4	0.5
State of Iowa	3,190,369	144,014	4.7	100	3,046,355	2,926,324	120,031	4.1	100	100
United States	331,449,281	22,703,743	7.4		308,745,538	281,424,603	27,320,935	9.7		

¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau; ²Some may be revised from originally released data

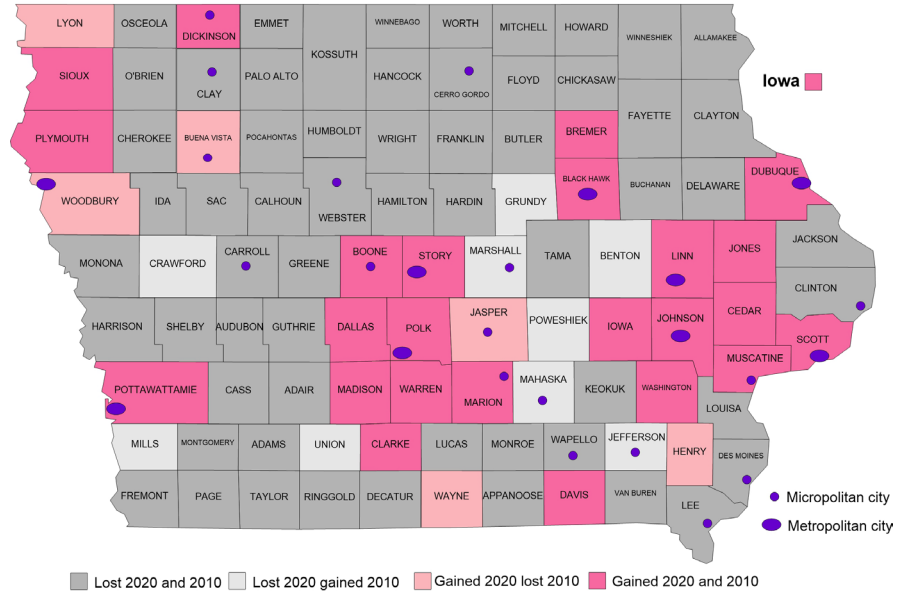
Census 2020: Population in Iowa's Counties, 2000 - 2020

of less than 2% were recorded in 16 other counties. Percentage gains were less than 2% for 10 counties and under 5% for 8 others. The highest growth rates were, not surprisingly, in and around metropolitan counties. Six counties (Dallas, Johnson, Linn, Polk, Story, Warren) all had at least a 9% gain. The growth rate for Dallas County (50.7%) was the fourth highest among counties across the entire nation² between 2010 and 2020 (Figure 3, Table 1).

As counties have gained in recent years, Iowa's population has become more concentrated. In 2020, Polk County had 15.4% of the state's total. Adding four more counties (Black Hawk, Johnson, Linn, Scott), brings the percentage to 37%. Including Dallas, Dubuque, Story, and Woodbury Counties brings the percentage total in these nine counties to 49.6%. In 2020 then, half of Iowa's population was living in just 10% of the state's counties (Table 1).

The pattern of population change among Iowa's counties between 2010 and 2020 was very similar to

Figure 4. Decennial Population Change 2000 - 2010 and 2010 - 2020.



the changes recorded between 2000 and 2010. Of Iowa's 99 counties, 84 changed in the same direction in both decades with 60 counties losing residents both times and 24 gaining population in both decades. For the other 15 counties, 9 lost in 2020 but had increased in 2010 while 6 gained

in 2020 with losses recorded in 2010. Overall, Iowa's core metropolitan counties and those surrounding them have gained population during the last 20 years while rural areas and micropolitan counties have, in general, experienced population losses (Figure 4, Table 1).

This report and others in the series are available at: <https://indicators.extension.iastate.edu/Indicators/Census/>

Notes
¹U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Censuses; <https://www.census.gov/> and <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census.html>
²U.S. Census Bureau; <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/2020-population-and-housing-state-data.html>

Sandra Charvat Burke
 Iowa State University
 Ames, IA
 515-294-9307
 scburke@iastate.edu
 August 13, 2021

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. For the full non-discrimination statement or accommodation inquiries, go to www.extension.iastate.edu/diversity/ext

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Indicators Portal: www.indicators.extension.iastate.edu