



For Immediate Release
December 15, 2021
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New Study Finds Wisconsin's 10-Year Population Growth at Record Low *Under-18 Population Declines, Creating Future Workforce Challenges*

(Madison, Wis.) - A new report from Forward Analytics shows that the state of Wisconsin will face challenges in the coming years due to stagnating population growth during the last decade. According to the report, "*Slowing Down: Wisconsin's Waning Population Growth,*" the state's population increased 3.6%, the slowest 10-year growth rate on record. This trend is being driven by a declining youth population. Over the decade, Wisconsin's under-18 population fell 4.3%, more than double the 2.1% decline during 2000-2010.

The decline in the youth population was largely driven by falling birth rates. During 2010-2020, the number of births dropped in every year but one, resulting in about 44,000 fewer babies born than during 2000-2010. With deaths rising due to aging baby boomers, the state's natural population growth (births minus deaths) was 153,000 compared to 243,000 during 2000-2010.

According to Forward Analytics Director Dale Knapp, "Fewer young people in the state affects Wisconsin's future labor force. With this recent decline, the state may not have enough young people to replace retiring baby boomers and GenXers over the next two decades."

The report also notes that a declining labor force puts pressure on the tax base that state and local governments rely on to fund services.

With the exception of Milwaukee County, urban counties continued to grow. However, many rural counties saw populations fall due largely to the lack of growth in the youth population. From 2000-2010, 18 rural counties had more deaths than births, a phenomenon that was rare in previous decades. In each of those rural counties, natural population loss continued during 2010-2020 with 11 additional counties joining them, bringing the total to 29 rural counties with natural population loss.

One of Wisconsin's challenges moving forward will be little or no natural population growth. In 2020, deaths in Wisconsin exceeded births for the first time ever, largely due to COVID-19 deaths in the final six months of the year. However, without the pandemic, Wisconsin was on pace to have natural

population change turn negative by 2025, due to a combination of falling birth rates and an aging baby boomer population.

Without natural growth, the only way to increase or even maintain the state's population and workforce is through migration. Unfortunately, that is trending in an unfavorable direction as well. With the state's population growth at an all-time low, the state will need to attract significantly more people over the next 10 years or risk a critically shrinking workforce and declining tax base.

Find the full study [HERE](#).

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Forward Analytics is the research division of the Wisconsin Counties Association. Its mission is to use data to identify challenges facing Wisconsin and share this information with state and local leaders to help them make informed policy decisions. Forward Analytics is led by Director Dale Knapp, who brings more than two decades of research experience in economics and public policy to the Association.

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