

California reports first ever yearly population decline

May 7 2021, by Adam Beam



In this Dec. 7, 2020, file photo, a person wearing a protective mask walks in front of the skyline on Bernal Heights Hill during the coronavirus pandemic in San Francisco. California's population has declined for the first time in its history. State officials announced Friday, May 7, 2021, that the nation's most populous state lost 182,083 people in 2020. California's population is now just under 39.5 million. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File)

California's population fell by more than 182,000 people in 2020, marking the first year-over-year loss ever recorded for the nation's most populous state.

State officials announced Friday that California's population dipped 0.46% to just under 39.5 million people from January 2020 to January 2021.

The news comes one week after the U.S. Census Bureau announced a paltry population growth for California, resulting in the state losing a congressional seat for the first time because it grew more slowly than other states over the past decade.

But the census numbers reflect the state's population in April 2020. The new state numbers released Friday reflect the state's population as of January 2021.

The state four most populated cities—Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and San Francisco—lost a combined 88,000 people. LA dropped the most at nearly 52,000 and has now lost about 75,000 people in the last three years to fall to an overall population of just over 3.9 million.

California became a state in 1850 on the heels of a gold rush that prompted people to seek their fortune out west. The population soared following World War II with the help of a robust defense and aerospace industry. It boomed again in the 1980s and 1990s as technology companies put Silicon Valley on the map.



In this Dec. 15, 2020, file photo Matt Frinzi, 68, poses with his dog and his belongings, in West Sacramento, Calif. Prinzi who has lived in California for 25 years officially moved to Reno, Nevada. California's population has declined for the first time in its history. State officials announced Friday, May 7, 2021, that the nation's most populous state lost 182,083 people in 2020. (AP Photo/Adam Beam, File)

But the growth slowed after the end of the Cold War in the 1990s when the federal government cut back on defense spending and again in the years before the Great Recession in the late 2000s.

State officials say California has seen more people leave than move in from other states for much of the last three decades. However, that had been offset by international immigration and births so that California

continued to grow.

That changed in 2020. State officials say a declining birth rate, plus reductions in international immigration and an increase in deaths because of the coronavirus, led to the state's first ever year-over-year population loss.

California had a negative international migration in 2020, which state officials say was a direct impact from the Trump administration's decision to stop issuing new visas for much of that year. Coronavirus restrictions around the world also caused about a 29% decline in international students coming to California, or about 53,000 people.



In this April 23, 2021, file photo, California Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a press conference in Big Sur, Calif. The state's population has become a political issue this year in light of the effort to recall Newsom, with Republicans blaming high taxes and the governor's policies for people fleeing the state. (AP Photo/Nic Coury, File)



In this April 18, 2021, file photo, people walk on a beach path as evening winds kick up sand in Long Beach, Calif. California's population has declined for the first time in its history. State officials announced Friday, May 7, that the nation's most populous state lost 182,083 people in 2020. California's population is now just under 39.5 million. (AP Photo/Ashley Landis, File)



In this Monday, Jan. 11, 2021, file photo, people overlook the skyline of Los Angeles. California's population has declined for the first time in its history. State officials announced Friday, May 7 that the nation's most populous state lost 182,083 people in 2020. California's population is now just under 39.5 million. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

Plus, about 51,000 people died from the coronavirus in California last year. That's a 19% increase above the state's average death rate for the past three years. In all, 51 of the state's 58 counties posted death rates above the three-year average—including 12 that had increases of 20% or more.

"As the pandemic recedes and with changes in federal immigration policy, we expect to return to more normal immigration trends into California from other countries," said H.D. Palmer, spokesman for the Department of Finance. "All of which means that by the time we do this same projection 12 months from now, we expect that 2021 will show a return to a slightly positive growth rate."

The state's population has become a political issue this year in light of the effort to recall Gov. Gavin Newsom, with Republicans blaming high taxes and the governor's policies for people fleeing the state. From 2010 to 2020, about 6.1 million people left California for other states compared to about 4.9 million people who moved to California from other states, according to an analysis of census data by the Public Policy Institute of California.

The Department of Finances population estimate comes from a number of sources, including birth and death counts, the number of new driver's licenses and address changes, school enrollments and federal tax returns.

© 2021 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed without permission.

Citation: California reports first ever yearly population decline (2021, May 7) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-05-california-population-fell-history.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--