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The Southwest Megapolitan Triangle: Immigration and Population Growth

Yanneli Llamas

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, yanneli.llamas@unlv.edu

Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, eliadelcarmen.solano-patricio@unlv.edu

Caitlin J. Saladino

The Lincy Institute and Brookings Mountain West, caitlin.saladino@unlv.edu

William E. Brown Jr.

Brookings Mountain West, william.brown@unlv.edu

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THE SOUTHWEST MEGAPOLITAN TRIANGLE: IMMIGRATION AND POPULATION GROWTH

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Prepared by: Yanneli Llamas, Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio, Caitlin J. Saladino, and William E. Brown, Jr.

PURPOSE:

This Fact Sheet analyzes population changes in three Mountain West metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs): Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA; Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ; and Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV. Collectively, these three major metropolitan areas are known as the *Southwest Megapolitan Triangle*.¹ This Fact Sheet illustrates population changes between 2010 and 2018, using data provided by Brookings Institution senior fellow and demographer, William H. Frey, in his report titled, “As Americans spread out, immigration plays a crucial role in local population growth.”² By 2019, more than 20 million Americans called this region home.³

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)	2018 Population
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA	13,249,879
Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ	4,849,209
Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV	2,226,115

ABOUT THE DATA:

The early 2010s saw greater population concentration in large metropolitan areas, as both job and housing availability were severely affected by the Great Recession (2007-2009). In recent years, most large metropolitan areas in the U.S. have seen their growth slow, and even decline, while smaller metropolitan areas have experienced widespread growth. Today, urban cores are experiencing population loss through out-migration, while suburban and exurban areas continue to increase in size due to domestic migration.⁴ Most major metro areas are experiencing out-migration, as job and housing opportunities expand in smaller metros. However, Frey notes that “immigration from abroad is increasingly counteracting population decline for areas experiencing out-migration” (Frey, 2019).⁵

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Unlike most large metros across the U.S., the Phoenix and Las Vegas MSAs defied national trends, as both experienced an influx in domestic migration.
2. Of the three metros in the *Southwest Megapolitan Triangle*, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA was the only MSA to experience domestic out-migration.
3. Of the three metros in the *Southwest Megapolitan Triangle*, the Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV MSA had the smallest immigration share of population gain (10%); as shown in Figure 5, immigration accounted for the smallest share of net population gain *within* the metro, compared to gains from domestic migration and natural increase.

¹ Nelson, Arthur, and Robert Lang. *Megapolitan America*. Routledge, 2018.

² William H. Frey, “As Americans spread out, immigration plays a crucial role in local population growth,” Brookings Institution, April 2019. Retrieved from www.brookings.edu/research/as-americans-spread-out-immigration-plays-a-crucial-role-in-local-population-growth/

³ Calculated for the year 2018 using data provided by Erin Duffin on Statista.com

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The Southwest Megapolitan Triangle (Figure 1) includes three MSAs: Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA, Phoenix-Mesa-Chandler, AZ, and Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV.

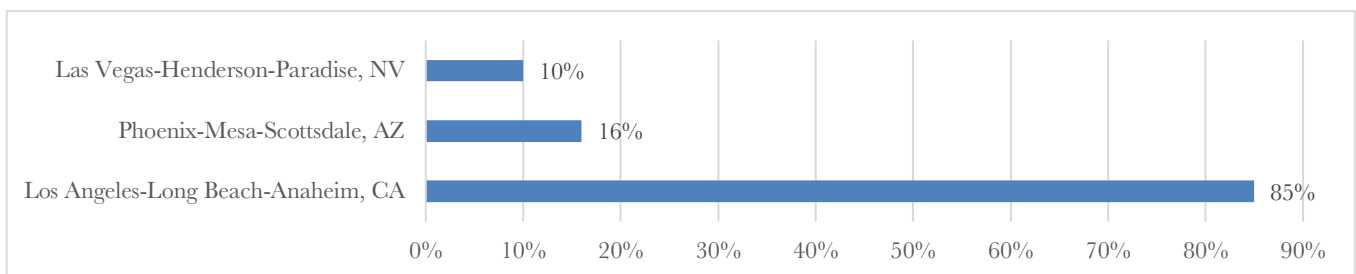
Figure 1: THE SOUTHWEST MEGAPOLITAN TRIANGLE



*Figure 1 was created by the authors using PolicyMap™.

Figure 2 shows the percent change in population growth for each of the three MSAs in the Southwest Megapolitan Triangle from 2010 to 2018. During this period, immigrant migration to the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA MSA accounted for 85% of the metro’s total population gain.

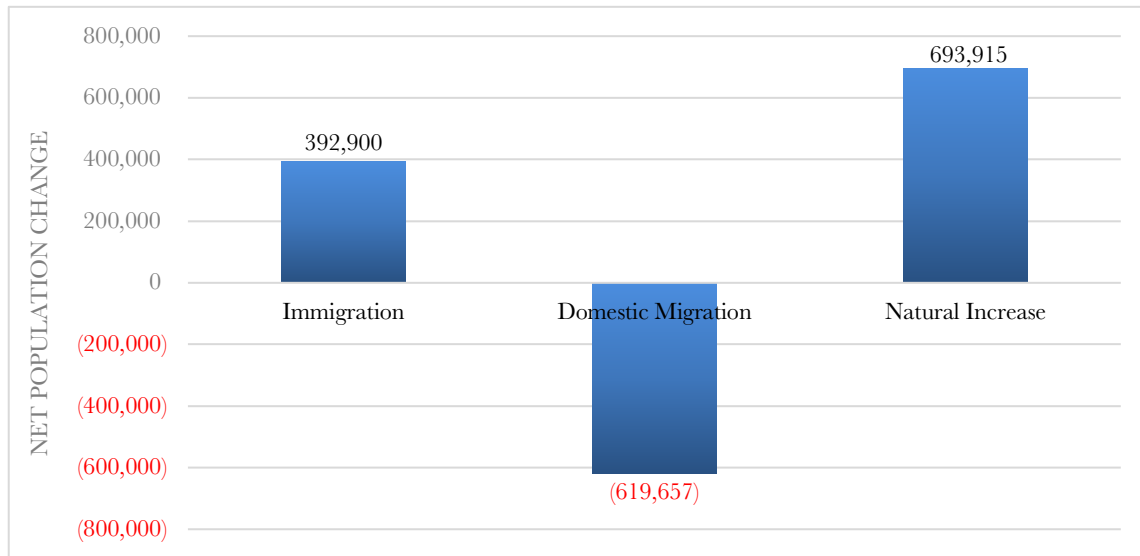
Figure 2: IMMIGRATION SHARE OF NET POPULATION GAINS IN THE SOUTHWEST MEGAPOLITAN TRIANGLE, 2010-2018



Adapted from Frey (2019) “As Americans spread out, immigration plays a crucial role in local population growth”

Figure 3 illustrates the net change in population in the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA MSA from 2010 to 2018. Like most major metropolitan areas nationwide, the Los Angeles metro area saw a high level of out-migration during this period. Population loss is offset by natural increase, which describes the quantity of births that outnumber deaths in the area. The loss is also offset by immigration, as is the case with other large metropolitan areas in the Southwest.

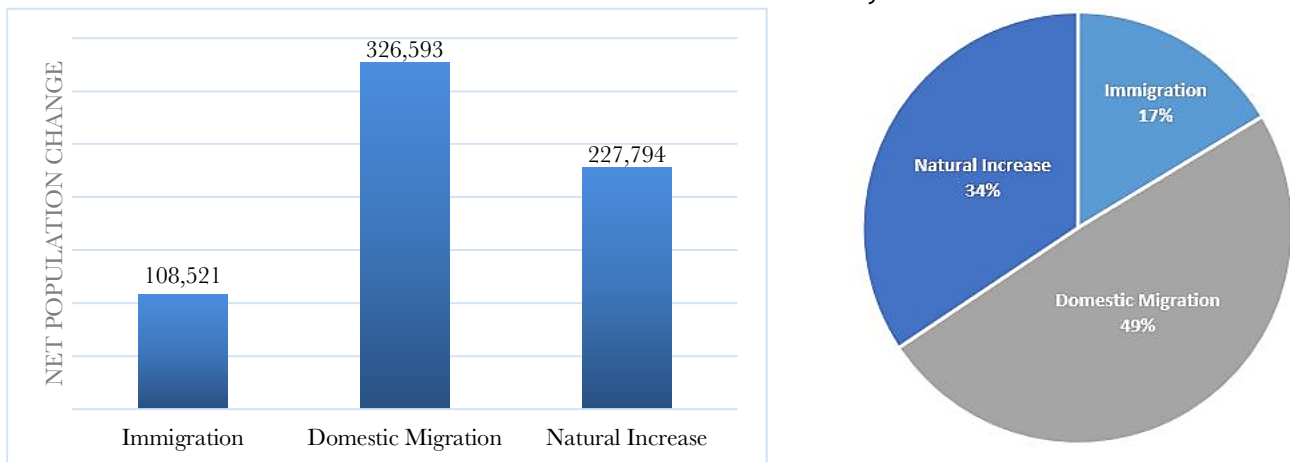
Figure 3: POPULATION CHANGE IN THE LOS ANGELES-LONG BEACH-ANAHEIM, CA METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA, 2010 - 2018



Adapted from Frey (2019) “As Americans spread out, immigration plays a crucial role in local population growth”

Figure 4 shows the net population gain and the component shares of the gains for the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ MSA from 2010 to 2018. The Phoenix metro area defied national trends during this period; rather than experiencing domestic out-migration, the region absorbed an influx of domestic residents. Immigration (17%) and natural increase (34%) also contributed to the population increase.

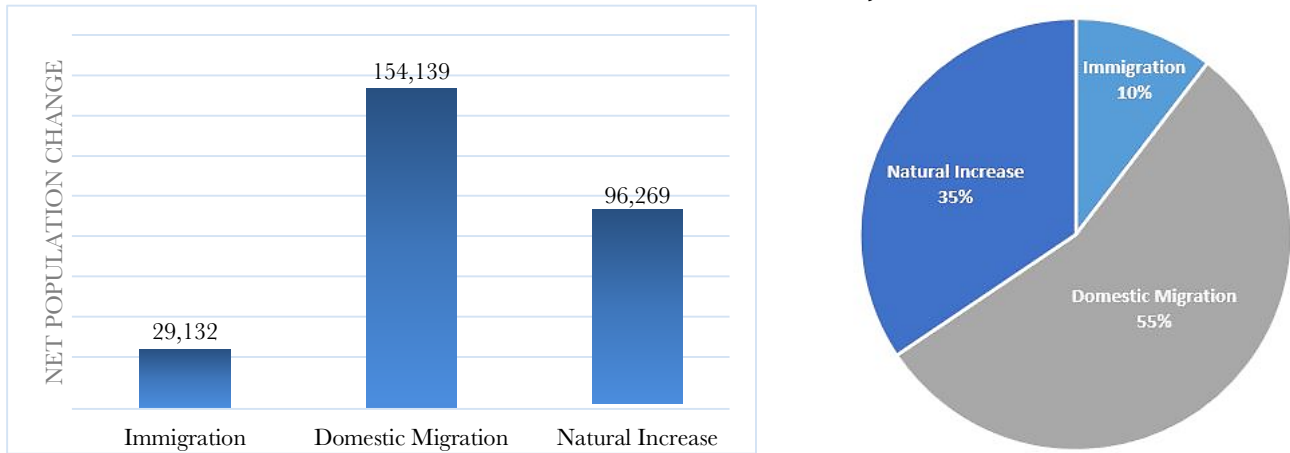
Figure 4: POPULATION CHANGE IN THE PHOENIX-MESA-SCOTTSDALE, AZ METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA, 2010 - 2018



Adapted from Frey (2019) “As Americans spread out, immigration plays a crucial role in local population growth”

Figure 5 shows the net population gain, and the component shares of that gain, in the Las Vegas-Henderson-Paradise, NV MSA from 2010 to 2018. Similar to the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ MSA, the Las Vegas metro area defied national trends and saw an increase in domestic migration. Natural increase (35%) also contributed to population growth, as well as immigration, though to a lesser degree (10%).

Figure 5: POPULATION CHANGE IN THE LAS VEGAS-HENDERSON-PARADISE, NV METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA, 2010 - 2018



Adapted from Frey (2019) "As Americans spread out, immigration plays a crucial role in local population growth"