

State population slow to grow

It could lead to less power in Congress

By RUBY L. BAILEY
FREE PRESS WASHINGTON STAFF

12-22-05 R

Michigan has gained 182,380 residents since 2000, boosting its population to 10.1 million people, but the state — like others in the Northeast and Midwest — is still a growth slacker compared with many in the South and West, according to a U.S. Census report released today.

Overall, the country grew by 0.9% in the past year, to about 296.4 million people.

Michigan's percentage growth since 2000, 1.8%, ranked it 42nd among the

states and the District of Columbia. Michigan could be at risk to lose another seat in the U.S. House of Representatives after the 2010 census if its growth doesn't accelerate. Since the 1980 census, Michigan has lost four seats in the House after peaking at 19 in the 1960s and '70s.

Michigan had roughly 80,000 to 100,000 residents more than it needed for its 15th congressional seat in 2000, giving the state some cushion against losing another congressional member, said Ed Sarpolus of EPIC/MRA, a Lansing polling firm, which has helped

develop political district maps in Michigan.

"The trouble is there were other states that had more extra people to pick up extra seats," Sarpolus said. "The key thing is that we have to show some growth."

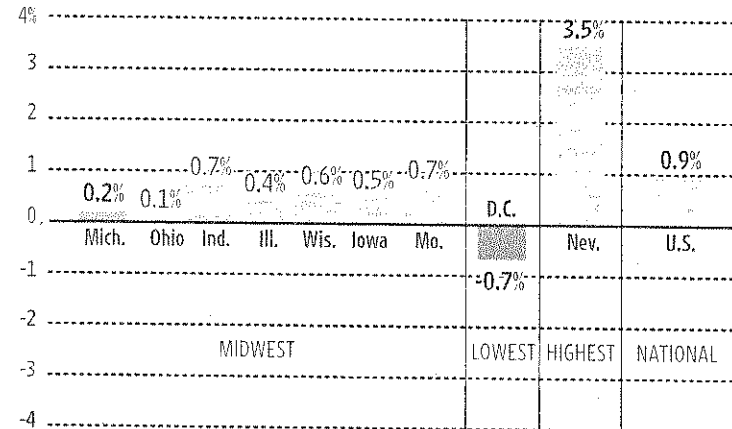
Michigan, however, gained a greater percentage of population than New York, which picked up 1.5% more people, or 277,809 residents, since 2000, and Ohio, which added 1%, or 110,897 residents.

Demographers and political analysts say Texas and Florida could each gain as many as three House seats. Ohio and

See POPULATION, 5B

State population percentage change between 2004 and 2005

According to a U.S. Census Bureau report released Wednesday, the U.S. population grew to about 296.4 million people. Michigan's percentage growth since 2000 was 1.8%, according to the report, and Michigan ranked 42nd among the states and the District of Columbia.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Detroit Free Press

POPULATION | Growth in state is slow, census says

From Page 1B

New York could lose two seats apiece.

Clark Bensen of Polidata, a Virginia firm that crunches political data, said population shifts over the past 65 years have dramatically changed the regional makeup of Congress.

In 1940, Northeastern and Midwestern states had a total of 251 seats in the House, compared with 184 for states in the South and West. Today, Southern and Western states have the edge, 252-183.

State officials said Michigan's declining birthrate, rising death rate and increased number of people migrating to other states contributed to the slow-

er growth. State demographer Kenneth Darga said the state's death rates could be offset by an anticipated increase in births in the state in the next few years.

But Michigan's struggling economy could force more people to leave the state to find work.

The only state to lose population was North Dakota, where the population fell by 5,527 to 636,667. The District of Columbia lost 21,538 residents and now has 550,521 residents, according to the data.

Contact RUBY L. BAILEY at 313 222-6683 or bailey@freepress.com.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.