

# Recent Population Trends in Oklahoma

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## What's Happening To Oklahoma's Farm Population . . .

*The following conclusions, based on the population study reported in this bulletin, are drawn from the best data available without making a complete census. Some of the causes and conditions which need to be taken into account are explained in the body of the bulletin.*

1. The farm population of Oklahoma has come to a point at which further numerical as well as proportional decline is inevitable. How long this phase of the growth cycle may last, no one knows. However, it need not necessarily be a permanent trend and there is no reason for gloomy pessimism because of it.

2. Despite a general downward trend in the size of the farm population in Oklahoma, the average number of persons on farms per farm has not changed to any important degree since about 1910.

3. There was a decline between 1930 and 1940 of 24,149 in the number of farms, which alone would account for a loss of 126,000 of the farm population during that period. It is significant that of the 24,149 decrease in the number of farms in Oklahoma, 16,103 or 66.7 percent were formerly operated by share croppers, indicating that most of the change which occurred was among the weaker economic groups of farmers.

4. While both the total population and the farm population of Oklahoma declined between 1930 and 1940, that of the cities increased both in numbers and in proportion.

5. Proportionately, the population of the small towns and villages of Oklahoma has remained about at a standstill. Hence the little town has offered only a small outlet to people who desired to leave the farm for other employment.

6. The distribution of the population between urban, small town and farming communities is a most important factor in understanding the social and economic life of the State because it gives an idea of the social and economic division of labor which has been achieved.

7. The indications are quite clear that farming, as a means of livelihood, has given much ground to non-agricultural employment. Each succeeding census of Oklahoma has shown a smaller proportion of people on farms than that preceding; and the number of people working in agriculture decreased more rapidly between 1930 and 1940 than that of non-agricultural workers increased.

8. The ratio of the total number of employed persons to total population has not changed greatly since 1900, which means that mechanization has not caused as much dislocation of labor, in the aggregate, as might be supposed.

9. The employment of women in Oklahoma has increased both relatively and in total numbers since 1900, and undoubtedly this has been both a result and a cause of the unemployment of men in many instances.

10. The population of Oklahoma is aging rapidly on an average. The proportion of children is decreasing while that of persons 65 years of age and over is increasing rapidly.

11. The sex composition of the Oklahoma population, always predominantly masculine, shows a decided trend toward numerical equality of males and females, for nearly all age groups. This is regarded as a sign of increasing maturity of the population pattern of the State as well as a tendency toward socioeconomic stabilization.

12. The racial composition of the population has become increasingly white, and native-born white. The Negro population has remained relatively stationary in Oklahoma almost from the beginning, while the enumerated Indian population has declined both in numbers and in proportion during late years.

13. The white population of Oklahoma is now 99 percent native born. If the present trend continues, foreign born whites may become statistically extinct in the State by 1950. That is, they may comprise less than 0.1 percent of the total white population. There is no way of knowing that this trend will continue.

14. In Oklahoma nearly two-thirds of the Indian, about one-third of the Negro, and approximately two-fifths of the white population is located on farms. However, Negroes have shifted to cities more rapidly than whites since 1920. There is little shifting of the Indian population to cities, and practically none to villages.

15. Although the total population of Oklahoma was smaller in 1940 than in 1930, there were more married people in actual numbers as well as in proportion to population in 1940 than in 1930. This means that the loss of population has not yet brought disastrous effects upon the prospects for adequate natural increase.

16. The number of marriageable males per 100 marriageable females in the Oklahoma population decreased from 156.2 in 1930 to 144.0 in 1940, which is to say that, statistically

at least, Oklahoma men have better opportunities for marriage than when women were relatively more scarce.

17. Oklahoma is likely to experience a further decline in its population unless conditions favorable to the growth of population can be effected and maintained in the State in the near future.

18. All evidences indicate that the general level of educational achievement in Oklahoma is rising among all classes and races of the population, although there may remain some areas of limited educational opportunity. Trends cannot be cited, however, because there are no adequate data on this point for any census except 1940.

Most of the figures given here are available by counties, and even in some instances by townships and cities. The cost of analyzing and publishing such facts for all the 77 counties of Oklahoma is prohibitive, but the county information is available upon request.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Importance of Population Study

The present war has shown that the human population of a country is its most important asset. To make and execute intelligent war plans, the government must know where people live, what skills they have, how old they are, how many families to support, how many can be mobilized for war and vital industries, and other facts about them. In a democracy, where the people are the government, these facts are likewise of importance to the everyday citizen.

Population data has value, too, in private as well as in public affairs. Knowledge of whether a community is growing, at a standstill, or declining in population is important from the standpoint of investment, of business prospects, and of opportunities for children. Whether a community is growing or dying out makes considerable difference in the matter of buying, selling, or holding on to a farm in that community. The prices of farm products depend in part on the relation between the number of persons living on farms and producing crops and the number living in cities and consuming them. With a bigger percentage of the population living in cities, than on farms, there is more demand for the farmer's products, and the volume of manufactured goods is increased so that the farmer may get them at a lower price. The reverse was true in the 1930's, when the movement of unemployed to farms reduced the number of city dwellers and low wages reduced the ability of the remainder to buy farm products.

To provide information on which public officials and private individuals in Oklahoma can base their plans for future action, the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station maintains a continuous study of changes in the state's farm population. Federal censuses, taken ten years apart, rapidly lose their original reliability and dependability. Population changes often occur rapidly, due to discovery of oil, abandonment of old oil fields, the building of a highway or a bridge, a natural disaster such as a drouth or a flood, or numerous other causes.

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This publication represents a study made cooperatively by the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station and the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

### Sources of Information

Part of the information on population changes given in this bulletin was obtained by sending questionnaires to a large number of farmers in every county in Oklahoma. They were asked to report the number of births and deaths on their own and adjoining farms between January 1, 1941, and January 1, 1942. They were also asked to give the number of persons who moved from these farms to cities and other farms, as well as the number who came to these farms from cities or from other farms during the year. These reports were checked against 1940 Census figures and annual vital statistics reports. They were also compared with a similar population survey made each year by the United States Department of Agriculture. School censuses and ration book applications (Book No. 1 up to May 1, 1942) were also consulted. All estimates are for the civilian population only. It has been impossible to take into complete account the number of young people going into the armed services and their auxiliaries, and the shifting of workers and their families to centers of war industry.

### RESIDENTIAL CHANGES OF OKLAHOMA POPULATION

Oklahoma is now experiencing a period of change in its population that is three fold: First, the total population of the State is declining so fast as to portend necessity for epoch-making socioeconomic readjustments for the near future; second, the farm population is declining both absolutely and relatively; and third, the combined population of the larger towns and cities, as a rule, is increasing at about the same relative pace as the farm population is diminishing. The population of the villages and hamlets has remained fairly constant proportionately to the total population, at least for the past two decades. All this may be considered as an indication that in the post-war future the most complex population problems of Oklahoma may be expected to arise both in the larger towns or cities and on the farms.

#### Farm Population Changes

The general trend of farm population throughout the United States since 1920 has been downward. Since 1932, the downward direction of the trend has been accelerated noticeably.

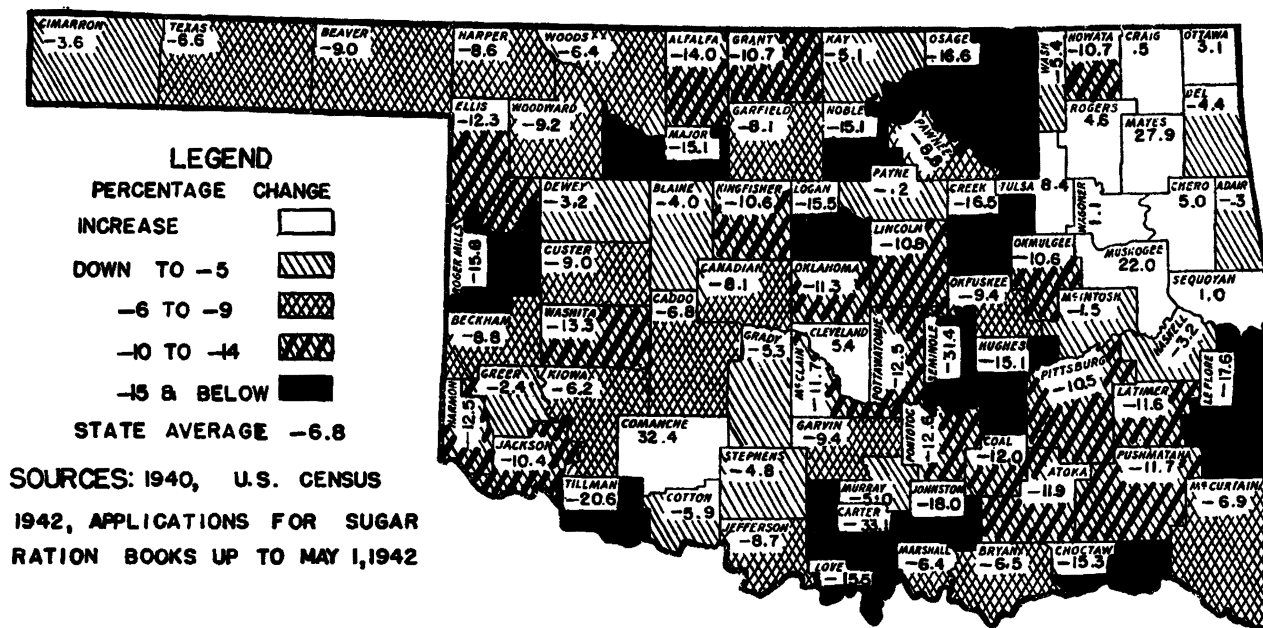


Figure 1.—Estimated Percentage of Change in Total Civilian Population of Oklahoma, 1940 to 1942.

Most of the changes shown on this map have occurred since the entry of the United States into the war. Population is increasing in the counties shown in white. In all others, it is decreasing; and the amount of decrease is shown by the shading. Most of the population increase

in Oklahoma since 1940 has occurred in counties where for several years between 1930 and 1940 there were serious shortages of work opportunities and high proportions of the population on relief.

On January 1, 1933 the farm population of the United States stood at an estimated all-time peak of 32,083,000 persons, according to estimates of the United States Department of Agriculture. Since that time there has been a continual downward trend until January 1, 1942 when, according to the same authority, it was 29,048,000 persons. This represents a decrease of 2,084,000 persons, or an average decline of 208,400 persons per year for that decade.

It is believed that the decline in numbers of persons on farms has been due in the main to the migration of farm people to cities. While there was a decline in the number of births on farms from 1933 to 1942, the number of deaths declined even more rapidly, leaving a higher balance of births over deaths for 1941 than for any other year since 1932. In only one year since 1920 have farms gained more people than they lost through migration. That was in 1932, when farms gained 325,000 persons due to a favorable balance of city-farm migration. In 1941, the farms of this country lost an estimated 1,357,000 persons in the exchange of residents with the cities, which was the greatest loss due to this cause that has occurred since 1920.

In Oklahoma, the trend of the farm population during recent years has been similar to that of the country as a whole. In 1920, the first time when the Census showed the farm population separately, the farm population of Oklahoma was 1,015,899 persons. In 1930 it was 1,021,174; but in 1940 it had declined to 926,741 persons as of April 1 of that year. This is a loss of 94,333 in the number of people actually on farms. Since 1940, surveys by the Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station and the United States Department of Agriculture indicate, the farm population of the State has declined to 848,700 as of January 1, 1942. This represents a decline of approximately 78,000 persons between April 1940 and January 1942, and is evidence of a rapid acceleration in the rate at which the decline in farm population is taking place. Had the farm population of the State continued to decline through 1942 as rapidly as it did in 1941, by January 1, 1943 it would have reached 804,000. This figure probably is not far from correct, since registrations for sugar rationing in 30 of the principally agricultural counties indicate declines in total population of 10 percent or greater between April 1, 1940 and May 1, 1942. Practically all the rural counties which experienced increases in population during this period have new war industries or heavy construction



work which would be expected to draw large numbers of people off the farms in those counties.

Although there has been an increasingly favorable balance of births over deaths since 1935, both in the country as a whole and in Oklahoma, this has undoubtedly been strongly offset by the mobilization of young men and women in the armed forces and by the emigration of defense workers to other states where there are more war industries than in Oklahoma. No accurate estimate of the number of persons Oklahoma has sent into the armed forces is accessible at present, but it is known that the State ranks very high in the number of enlisted personnel relative to its population.

On the basis of data obtained in the surveys by the Oklahoma Agricutlural Experiment Station and the U. S. Department of Agriculture, it is estimated that the rate of natural increase of the farm population of Oklahoma declined from 13.0 per 1,000 in 1940 to 11.1 per 1,000 in 1941. This estimate is no doubt conservative. For the nation as a whole, the rate of natural increase for the farm population was 15.2 per 1,000 in 1941 and 13.4 per 1,000 in 1940 according to computations made from estimates provided by the United States Department of Agriculture.

It is rather unusual for Oklahoma to have a lower rate of natural increase than the average for the entire country, and the fact that it does signifies that the young adults are migrating out of the State, leaving older people behind. This has the inevitable effect of slowing down the rate of natural increase by decreasing the birth rate and somewhat increasing the death rate.

The Oklahoma farm population has always maintained an almost constant relationship with the number of farms in the State (Table I). When the total number of farms decreased, the total number of people on the farms has also decreased. This means that the size of the farm population in Oklahoma is adjusted rather quickly to the number of farms by the process of migration.\* In other words, the ratio of farm

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\* From 1900 to 1940 the average number of persons per farm is 5.1 for the whole period. From this it is possible to say with reasonable accuracy that the typical Oklahoma farm has five persons living on it, and that variations above or below that number are probably results of errors in enumeration, computations and other chance factors. One of the chief causes for variation is that in some years the Census is taken as of January 1, while in other years it is taken as of April 1. This makes a difference because January is a month during which there are few hired laborers on farms, while April is a busy month when the number of workers needed on farms is rising rapidly.

people to farm land in Oklahoma is not usually as erratic, variable, or unstable as might be supposed from the highly migratory population of the State.\*

### Changes in Residence of Total Population

The growth of villages, towns and cities is often related either positively or negatively with the movement of farm population. A fact that has been observed often is that cities and other non-farm centers of population grow rapidly during periods of economic prosperity, while in periods of adversity and social decay the farm population grows most rapidly.

Table II shows the shifting numbers and proportions of the population of Oklahoma between different classes of communities from 1900 to 1940.\*\* The most outstanding features of these data are:

(1) The proportion of Oklahoma population living on farms has declined steadily since 1900, and the general trend in the actual size of the farm population has been downward with the sole exception of 1930.

(2) The total population of the State increased continually from 1900 to 1930, but declined slightly between 1930 and 1940.

(3) The proportion of the population of Oklahoma residing in cities and towns of 2,500 inhabitants or larger has increased continually from 7.4 percent in 1900 to 37.7 percent in 1940.

(4) The combined rural farm and urban populations of the State have comprised an almost constant proportion of the total population (about 78 percent) from 1900 to 1940, except for 1910 when the proportion these combined populations made of the total was 83 percent, and this exception may have been due to errors in estimates.

(5) The small town and village population combined ranged from 10.5 percent to 15.0 percent of the total during the entire period since 1900.

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\* The war and its attendant disturbances have probably disrupted this relationship greatly. The disturbances from the war may be expected to increase in scope and intensity for the duration of hostilities and for some time afterward. While it can be predicted with assurance that this will happen, the extent of its influence cannot be foreseen.

\*\* In 1890, the Census did not report the population of the Indian Territory, and 95.1 percent of the population of the Oklahoma territory was located either on farms or in unincorporated villages. The Census of 1890 is the first complete enumeration for what is now Oklahoma and the first to which the usual degree of reliability can be imputed.

Table I.—Number of Farms, Farm Population, and Persons per Farm in Oklahoma, 1900 to 1940.

Census year*	Number of farms	Total farm population	Persons per farm
1940	179,687	926,741	5.2
1935	213,325	1,015,562	4.8
1930	203,836	1,021,174	5.0
1925	197,218	925,690	4.7
1920	191,988	1,015,899	5.3
1910**	190,192	1,047,450	5.5
1900	108,000	562,015	5.2

\* Censuses of the farm population are not altogether comparable with each other because of two facts. Sometimes the enumeration is made as of January 1, while in other cases it is for April 1. In some instances all persons living on farms are counted as farm population, but in other cases only those engaged in agriculture are so counted.

\*\* In 1900 and 1910 the Census recorded the number of farms but did not tabulate the rural farm population separate from the rural population in general. The population figures given for these years are estimates. They are shown only for their value in indicating trends. The data for other years are taken from the Census as given.

Table II.—Residence of Oklahoma Population.

Residence of population	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900
Number of Persons in Census Year					
Total	2,336,434	2,396,140	2,028,283	1,657,155	790,391
Over 100,000	346,581	326,647	-----	-----	-----
25,000 to 100,000	60,413	58,425	193,647	89,483	-----
10,000 to 25,000	233,521	168,698	123,617	79,383	20,043
5,000 to 10,000	139,226	162,358	104,193	44,072	5,681
2,500 to 5,000	99,922	105,553	118,023	107,217	32,693
1,000 to 2,500	139,005	160,698	157,792	108,650	43,483
Under 1,000	141,538	137,734	134,180	121,717	39,773
Unincorporated villages*	249,487	254,853	180,932	59,183	86,703
Rural farm	926,741	1,021,174	1,015,899	1,047,450	562,015
Percent of Population in Census Year					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Over 100,000	14.8	13.6	-----	-----	-----
25,000 to 100,000	2.6	2.4	9.6	5.4	-----
10,000 to 25,000	10.0	7.0	6.1	4.8	2.5
5,000 to 10,000	6.0	6.8	5.1	2.7	0.7
2,500 to 5,000	4.3	4.4	5.8	6.5	4.2
1,000 to 2,500	5.9	6.7	7.8	6.6	5.5
Under 1,000	6.0	5.7	6.6	7.2	5.0
Unincorporated villages*	10.7	10.7	8.9	3.6	11.0
Rural farm	39.7	42.7	50.1	63.2	71.1

SOURCE: U. S. Census, except rural farm and unincorporated village population estimated for 1900 and 1910.

\* Population of unincorporated villages obtained by subtracting the sum of all other classes of population as given in the Census from the total population. Population of unincorporated villages is not given separately by the Census.

(6) It seems that, except for what have been due to errors in making estimates in 1910, the unincorporated village population ranges from 9 to 11 percent of the total.

The small centers of population (all of those below 2,500 inhabitants) when taken together have remained about at a standstill in proportion to the total population of the state. These smaller centers are in the middle ground between the farms and the larger centers. Probably the relative gains they make from exchange of population with the farms are offset by the proportionate losses they incur in their exchange of population with the larger towns and cities.

The country town stands both socially and economically between the farm and the larger town or city. The country trade center can flourish in business only to the extent that it can trade with the local farmers on the one hand and that it can obtain credit from the larger town on the other. It is an intermediary between farm and city, an agent of both the farm and the city. As long as the sum of the combined pressures upon it from the farm and the city remain about the same, it cannot grow very much, nor will it die out completely. The country town cannot obtain complete economic and social independence from the farm on the one hand or from the city on the other. If it breaks its connection with either of them, it can adopt only one of two alternatives. It may either become a city in its own right, or perish.

#### Significance of Changes in Residence

Once the settlement patterns of a population has been established, changes within it are of great importance. Schools, churches, governmental machinery, trade and economic relationships, channels of communications such as highways and mail routes, services such as health and financial agencies, and systems of social interaction are established. All of these are gauged and scaled according to the size of the local population and the anticipated need for them. When unpredicted shifts of appreciable magnitude occur in the population, there are disturbances in the social system to which it is difficult to make immediate adjustments. In the areas which lose population rapidly, schools are often forced to close for want of pupils; roads are abandoned; local government units are rendered obsolete and insolvent for lack of support; bonds are sometimes defaulted; trade is broken up; and other signs of social decay, such as declining property values, neglect, and many forms of degeneracy become strongly evident. On the

other hand, the areas of absorption experience the confusing effects which go with congestion. Schools, hospitals, churches, theaters, and stores are frequently filled to the point of overflowing. Public peace and safety are endangered; rents rise to prohibitive heights; transportation becomes difficult; epidemics and diseases are likely to become numerous; economic relationships are distorted, and a deceptive make-believe prosperity supplants the accustomed healthy tenor of life. Human relations become increasingly indirect, superficial, impersonal, and mercenary where populations grow large with mushroom like rapidity. All this is to say that sudden shifts of population produce serious results at both the point of origin and of destination.

### **Changes in Characteristics of the Population**

Several trends now occurring in the Oklahoma population will be accelerated by the war:

First, the population is aging rapidly.

Second, the proportion of males in the total population is declining.

Third, the cultural advancement of the population is being accelerated.

Fourth, there are important changes in the social composition of the population.

Fifth, widespread changes now going on in the employment of the population in various industries of the State are likely to be sources of serious post-war readjustment problems.

### **Occupations and Employment**

In Table III, the Census figures on employment since 1900 are set forth by broad, inclusive occupational groups. Several important features of this table are worthy of note:

First, the number of persons employed and available for employment in Oklahoma between 1930 and 1940 declined 2.8 percent, from 828,029 to 804,582.\*

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\* A small part of this decrease is accounted for by the fact that the 1930 Census includes persons 10 years of age or over who were gainfully employed while the 1940 Census includes only those who were 14 years of age or over. The differences caused by this change in the minimum age for possible employment is not as great as might be supposed because of the tendency of all forms of industry after 1930 to limit employment to persons who were at least 14 years of age. The prolongation of the period of schooling, labor reforms, and the opposition of older workers to the employment of child labor were in a large measure responsible for this change so that the age of 14 represented the beginning of employment in 1940 about as completely as did the age of 10 in 1930 and before, except possibly in agriculture where younger children are still employed as unpaid family laborers.

Second, the number of persons employed or seeking work in agriculture decreased from 305,986 in 1930 to 234,288 in 1940, or by approximately 23.4 percent. Of the 234,288 persons above 14 years of age who were either employed or seeking employment in agriculture in 1940, 6.8 percent or 15,963 were unemployed. In other words, the decline of employment in agriculture between 1930 and 1940 was over three times as great as the average decline for all occupations in the State, which is

*Table III.—Gainful Workers and Gainfully Employed Population in Oklahoma, According to Occupational Classes.\**

Occupational Classes	1940**	1930	1920	1910	1900
<b>Number Employed or in Labor Force in Census Year</b>					
All occupations	804,582	828,029	681,428	598,629	266,269
Agriculture	234,288	305,986	306,493	336,274	186,704
Trade and transport.	175,442	159,510	108,258	72,502	22,411
Mfg. and mech. industry	109,589	105,820	104,785	66,264	15,275
Dom. and pers. service	68,975	71,119	42,398	33,985	27,400
Extractive industry	40,270	60,210	38,349	10,460	4,201†
Professional	79,660	49,226	34,275	30,489	9,520
Not reported	96,358	76,158	46,870	48,655	758
<b>Percent Employed or in Labor Force in Census Year</b>					
All occupations	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	29.1	37.0	45.0	57.8	70.1
Trade and transport.	21.8	19.3	15.9	12.1	8.4
Mfg. and mech. industry	13.6	12.8	15.3	11.0	5.8
Dom. and pers. service	8.6	8.5	6.3	5.8	10.3
Extractive industry	5.0	7.3	5.6	1.7	1.6†
Professional	9.9	5.9	5.0	3.4	3.5
Not reported	12.0	9.2	6.9	8.2	0.3

SOURCES: 16th Census of the U. S. *Oklahoma, Population 3rd Series, Table 1, 17; Okla. Agri. Exp. Sta. Bul. No 224, p. 22.*

\* Classes shown in the table include:

Agriculture: All agricultural occupations.

Trade and Transportation: Trade, transportation, finance, insurance, and real estate.

Manufacturing and Mechanical Industry: Manufacturing, construction, and repairs.

Domestic and Personal Service: All domestic and personal services; amusement and recreation.

Professional: All professional services and government employes.

Not Reported: Industry not reported. Emergency workers, WPA, NYA, etc., (63,609) and new workers securing work (8,521) included in labor force for 1940.

\*\* 1940 figures are for persons 14 years of age and over, and include the "labor force," i. e. employed and seeking work, which makes the total larger than the number actually employed. This figure is used to give comparability with previous years which include persons 10 years of age or over who were gainfully employed.

† Includes those in mines and quarries only.

highly indicative of the seriousness of the agricultural situation at the outbreak of the present war.

Third, if those engaged in miscellaneous occupations are excepted, because of their indefinite status, the number of persons employed in and seeking work in the principal urban occupations increased from 445,885 in 1930 to 473,936 in 1940, a gain of 6.3 percent. That is not to say urban employment improved, for out of the urban group in 1940, 44,473 or 9.2 percent were unemployed and seeking work. In the miscellaneous urban or nonfarm occupations, including emergency workers, NYA, WPA, and the like, there were 96,358 persons, only 10,951, or 11.2 percent of whom were employed. In other words, the improvement, in nonagricultural employment, even when specified occupations are taken into account, showed little evidence of any improvement.

Fourth, the decline in the number of persons employed in agriculture has been accompanied by a decline in the proportion of all workers who were engaged in agriculture. This is a significant trend because it involves a counterpart in the relative growth of nonagricultural occupations in Oklahoma.

The 1940 situation can be understood more clearly by a closer examination of the figures in Tables IV and V.

Table IV shows number of workers 14 years of age or over employed or seeking work in Oklahoma on April 1, 1940, the date of the last Census. Every occupational class had a larger number of workers available than were actually employed in it, but the proportionate excess of workers was

*Table IV.—Workers 14 Years of Age and Over Employed in Labor Force in Oklahoma, 1940.\**

Occupational Classes	Employed	Labor force	Percent of excess of labor force
All occupations	658,739	804,582	22.1
Agriculture	218,325	234,288	7.3
Trade and transportation	163,969	175,442	7.0
Manufacturing and mech. industry	91,709	109,589	19.5
Domestic and personal service	61,576	68,975	12.0
Extractive industry	77,200	79,660	3.2
Professional	35,009	40,270	15.0
Not reported	10,951	96,358	779.9

SOURCE: U. S. Census, *Population, Oklahoma, 1940*, 2nd Series, Table 18; 3rd Series, Tables 1, 17.

\* For definition of occupational classes, see footnote (\*) to Table III. p. 14.

greatest in manufacturing and construction industries, domestic and personal service, and the extractive industries (except, of course the miscellaneous group). The professions had the smallest excess of workers, while the trade and transportation and the agricultural classes were second and third lowest respectively in the proportion of excess workers. These facts support the statement previously made that the employment situation in cities and nonagricultural occupations showed little improvement over agriculture up to the beginning of the war. This was probably a repercussion of the drastic curtailment of farm production, the increased mechanization of farm processes, and other changes which took place in agriculture between 1930 and 1940.

From the beginning of the depression of 1930-35 up to 1933, there was a tendency for unemployed city people to return to the farms in increasing numbers and for those on farms who ordinarily would have gone to the cities to remain at home in larger proportions than usual. Thus the farms were compelled to bear increasing shares of responsibility for absorbing the unemployed. After 1933, the balance of the farm-city migration turned in favor of the cities; and at the beginning of the present war the cities found themselves in the position of having to absorb increasing amounts of the excess of agricultural population.

Table V gives the relation of the number of workers employed to the size of the population. These figures show that since 1900 the number of employed workers in Oklahoma has remained almost constant in relation to the general population. In 1940, of course, the Census figure relates to the labor force and not to the actually employed population. That there was one potential worker for each 2.9 persons in the general population, although there was one employed worker for each 3.5 persons, indicates that the depression did

*Table V.—Population per Worker and Ratio of Male to Female Workers in Oklahoma.*

Census year	Population per employed worker	Population per female worker	Ratio of male to female workers
1940*	2.9	14.9	4.1
1930	2.9	18.6	5.4
1920	3.0	21.4	6.3
1910	2.8	22.1	7.1
1900	3.0	35.2	9.7

\* In labor force. Of the actually employed, there was one worker for each 3.5 persons in the total population.



not distort greatly the structure of the employment pattern. Had there been a great change in the proportion of unemployables, this ratio would not have shown the same degree of comparability with the corresponding figure for previous years as it actually shows. By January 1, 1943 it is probable that the discrepancy between the labor force and the employed population of Oklahoma had been reduced to a very small figure. It does not seem likely that at any previous time in the history of the State has it had as nearly a condition of complete employment as during the first quarter of 1943.

Table V also shows significant changes in the proportions of men and women in the labor force in Oklahoma. In 1900, there were 9.7 gainfully employed males to each gainfully employed female worker. By 1940 this ratio was reduced to 4.1. It is not possible to say how much further the figure has been reduced by the war, although there can be little doubt of great reduction. Managers of the new war industries being located in Oklahoma, especially those of large scale, predict that when their plants reach the peak of their production at least two-thirds or three-fourths of their employees will be women.

Another way to estimate the growing importance of women in Oklahoma industry is by computing the ratio of population per woman worker. In 1900 there was one gainfully employed woman for each 35.2 persons in the total population while in 1940 there was one to each 14.9 persons. In other words, the proportionate employment of women in Oklahoma more than doubled between 1900 and 1940.

### Age

The age composition of the population of Oklahoma for each Census year of record is shown in Table VI. Several important changes are shown:

First, there has been a definite decline since 1890 in the proportion of the population under 15, and particularly of those under 5 years of age. Conversely, there has been a considerable increase in the percentages of the population in the older age groups and the higher the age limits, the greater the proportionate increases have been. (Table VII.) Three facts account for this aging of the Oklahoma population: (1) The birth rate has declined; (2) the average expectancy of life has increased; and, (3) the young adult population which settled Oklahoma just before and immediately after 1890 has become old. In addition, there may have been some migration of older people into the State during this time. Further-

more, it is an established fact that the population of the United States as a whole is becoming older on an average, and the age trend in Oklahoma is a part of this general movement.

The aging of the population in general, has had several effects. First, it tends to slow down the geographic movements, because older people are less migratory than those who are younger. Second, as a population grows older, the attitudes tend to become more fixed and conservative. This probably has contributed somewhat to a decrease in agitation

*Table VI.—Age Distribution of Oklahoma Population.*  
(Percent of population.)

Age group	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900	1890*
All ages	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
0 to 4	9.4	11.0	12.5	14.6	15.0	14.2
5 to 9	9.7	11.9	12.9	13.1	14.0	13.6
10 to 14	10.2	10.8	12.2	11.2	12.3	11.2
15 to 19	10.3	10.5	10.3	10.5	10.6	8.7
20 to 24	8.5	9.6	9.0	9.6	9.3	9.5
25 to 29	8.1	8.2	8.2	8.4	8.2	9.2
30 to 34	7.6	7.2	6.8	7.0	6.6	8.2
35 to 39	6.9	6.7	6.6	6.3	5.6	6.7
40 to 44	5.9	5.6	5.2	4.8	4.9	5.4
45 to 49	5.4	4.8	4.6	3.8	4.0	4.6
50 to 54	4.6	4.1	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.5*
55 to 59	3.9	3.2	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.2
60 to 64	3.1	2.4	2.1	1.8	1.5	1.4
65 to 69	2.7	1.7	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.8
70 to 74	1.7	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.4
75 and over	1.7	1.2	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.2
Not reported	----	----	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.3

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series Oklahoma 1940, Table 8, p. 17.  
\* Does not include the population of Indian Territory or of Indian reservations.  
Percentages are not shown when less than 0.1.

*Table VII.—Oklahoma Population of Known Age 65 Years Old or Over, by Census Years.*

Census year*	Persons 65 years of age or over	Percent of increase over last enumeration	Percent of total population
1940	144,934	49.6	6.1
1930	96,888	49.6	4.1
1920	64,772	57.6	3.2
1910	41,105	167.9	2.5
1900	15,379	----	1.9

\* 1890 is omitted because the Census of that year excluded Indian Territory and population on Indian reservations, which renders the data reported incomparable with subsequent years.

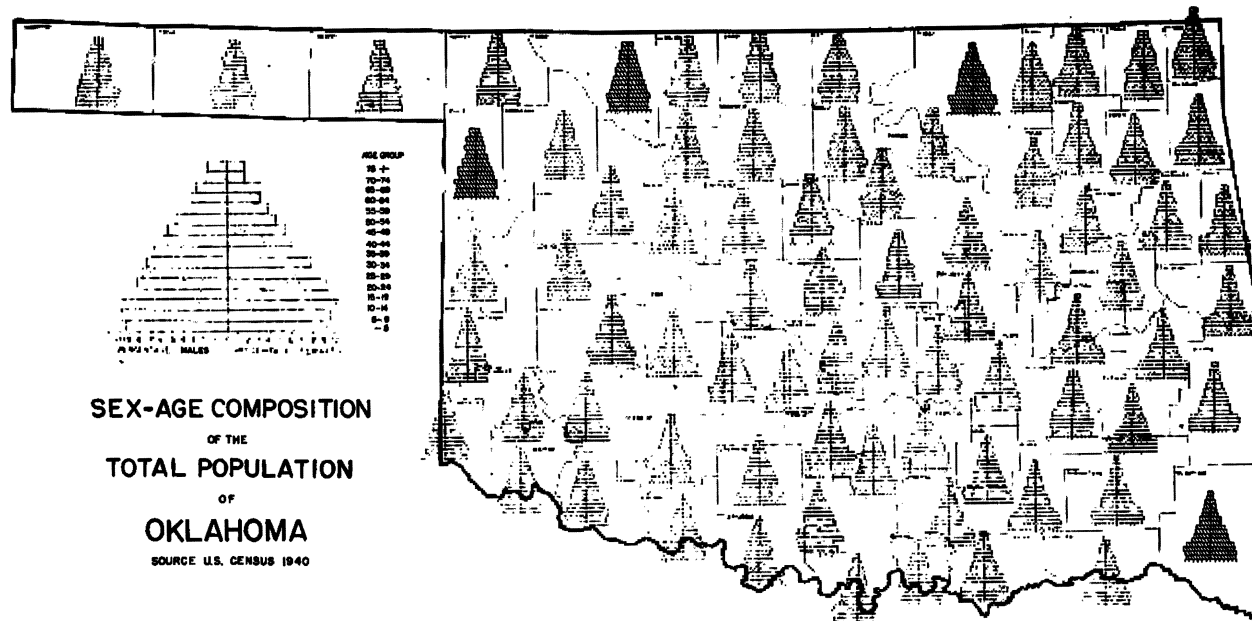


Figure 2.—Sex and Age Composition of the Total Population of Oklahoma in 1940.

The age pyramids are fairly blunt at the top, due to a rapid increase in the proportion of aged people in the total population in recent years (See page 17). In the younger adult ages, in most counties, the pyramids bulge to the left because of the heavy preponderance of males over females. In the older age periods, this male ex-

cess is less pronounced. Ordinarily, females would outnumber males in the old age groups; but in Oklahoma this is not the case because of the much larger proportion of males who came to the State during the period of settlement.

for the impeachment of public officials, an increased conservatism in regard to the adoption of referenda, and to other manifestations of growing maturity which have characterized the administration of affairs, particularly public education, in the State during recent years. Third, the aging of the population is one of perhaps many factors which exert a depressing influence upon the crude birth rate because it increases the proportion of people of non-childbearing age in the total population. Also, it becomes ultimately a factor in the raising of the death rate in the adult population, especially from causes that are associated with advanced age. Fourth, it increases the number and proportion of the population applying for old age assistance.\*

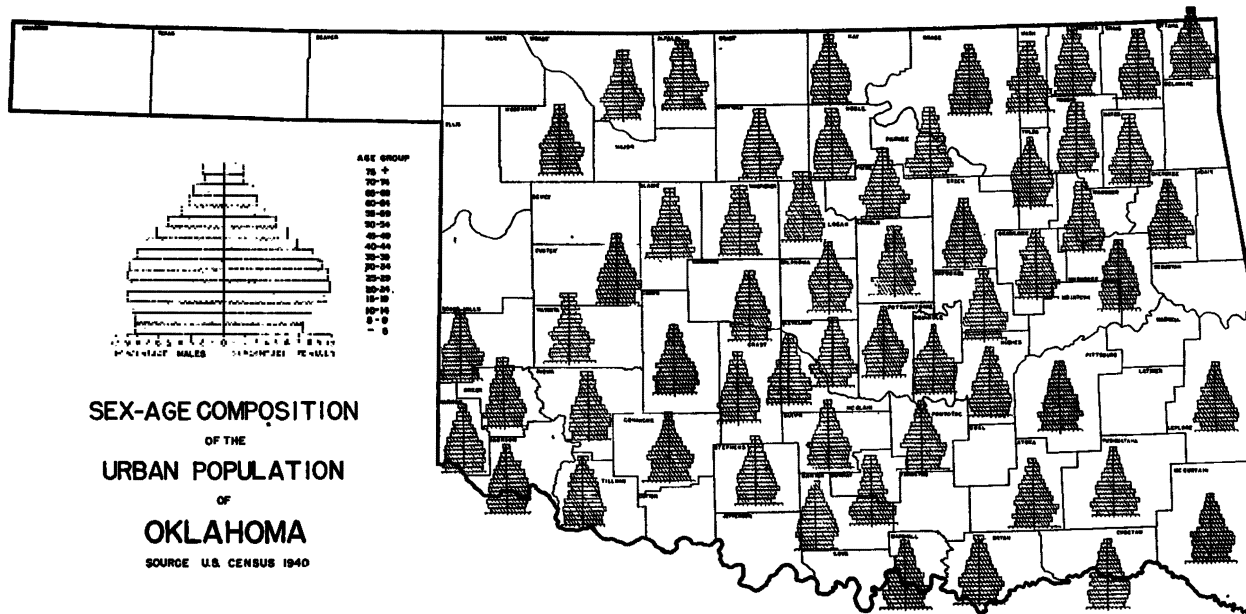
### Sex Ratio

The sex composition of a population has an important bearing upon many phases of life. Usually, in a newly settled area, such as Oklahoma, there are many more males than females in the population. This holds true for mining and lumbering communities, and for agricultural regions as well as for new settlements generally. Oklahoma is a relatively new area and its economy is characterized by a considerable amount of mining, agriculture, and lumbering. Hence, the State has had a tremendously large proportion of males in its population. This excess of males has had a depressing effect upon the birth rate, and it has also held up the death rate because in nearly all ages of life the incidence of deaths among males is greater than among females. This condition has induced a great deal of strain upon the family institution, since the population has had to absorb a large proportion of unmarried men, and no doubt, this is one reason why Oklahoma has ranked near the top of all the states in its divorce rate. In addition, the heavy predominance of males in the population undoubtedly has contributed greatly to its reputation as a state of high mobility.

Table VIII shows the number of males to 100 females in the Oklahoma population for each Census year beginning with

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\* An instance in which the aging of the population has given rise to a practical problem in public administration may be cited at this point. When the public assistance program began operation in Oklahoma toward the end of 1936 and the beginning of 1937, officials were surprised to receive more requests for old age assistance than the census of 1930 indicated there should have been. The reason for this was that the number and proportion of persons 65 years of age or over were increasing with unpredictable rapidity. A similar illustration may arise in determining the available man power or the military strength of the population. It is a phase of population on which study must be continual because age composition changes every day.



SEX-AGE COMPOSITION  
OF THE  
URBAN POPULATION  
OF  
OKLAHOMA  
SOURCE U.S. CENSUS 1940

Figure 3.—Age and Sex Composition of the Urban Population of Oklahoma in 1940.

The heavy predominance of females in the early adult years of life, and the small proportions of children, are indications of how the city population is built up largely by the migration of country people to the urban

centers. An urban center, according to the Census, is one with 2,500 or more inhabitants. Several Oklahoma counties have no urban centers.

1890. From these data it may be readily observed that during the period of rapid settlement Oklahoma was populated more largely by males than by females. This was true for practically all groups. The great preponderance of males over females in the State has been due to sex selection in migration, and not to death rates more favorable to males than to females as might be inferred from the figures. It can be seen plainly that as the population matures the excess of males over females declines. Just as migration brought more males than females into Oklahoma prior to 1910 it is now taking out of the State relatively more males than females. Actually in 1940, there were fewer males than females in the age groups from 20 to 40 years, which is the most active and productive as well as the most migratory period of human life, both biologically and economically. This is an age period in which a loss of male population may give rise to a serious depletion of manpower. It means that there are relatively fewer producers of wealth than previously in proportion to the number of persons who produce comparatively little of what they consume. It places the burden of caring for the aged and helpless upon the shoulders of fewer people who are left to carry it. This is a problem that is entitled to grave consideration at the close of the war when the rehabilitation process is undertaken.

*Table VIII.—Number of Males to 100 Females in Oklahoma Population of Known Age, by Age Groups.*

Age group	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900	1890
All ages	102.4	106.1	109.0	113.7	115.6	128.2
0 to 4	103.6	102.9	103.3	103.2	102.1	109.0
5 to 9	103.3	103.1	101.7	103.2	103.5	108.2
10 to 14	103.0	102.9	103.6	104.5	105.7	106.5
15 to 19	101.8	100.2	99.6	104.4	105.2	97.8
20 to 24	97.7	98.2	99.1	105.4	109.7	114.8
25 to 29	94.6	99.3	101.9	112.0	110.2	141.3
30 to 34	96.9	102.9	105.3	118.9	129.2	159.8
35 to 39	97.6	105.6	115.2	126.5	138.8	160.9
40 to 44	102.4	109.8	117.3	130.9	150.3	155.5
45 to 49	103.2	111.2	131.9	134.2	143.5	178.1
50 to 54	107.3	126.2	147.0	163.9	151.0	181.6
55 to 59	107.9	129.1	147.0	155.0	143.9	201.8
60 to 64	112.3	133.3	146.4	151.0	144.8	217.5
65 to 69	115.6	132.9	143.2	140.3	153.7	184.8
70 to 74	120.3	134.0	138.7	137.7	140.3	187.8
75 and over	116.1	121.0	116.1	122.9	114.9	110.0

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series, Oklahoma, 1940, Table 8, p. 17.

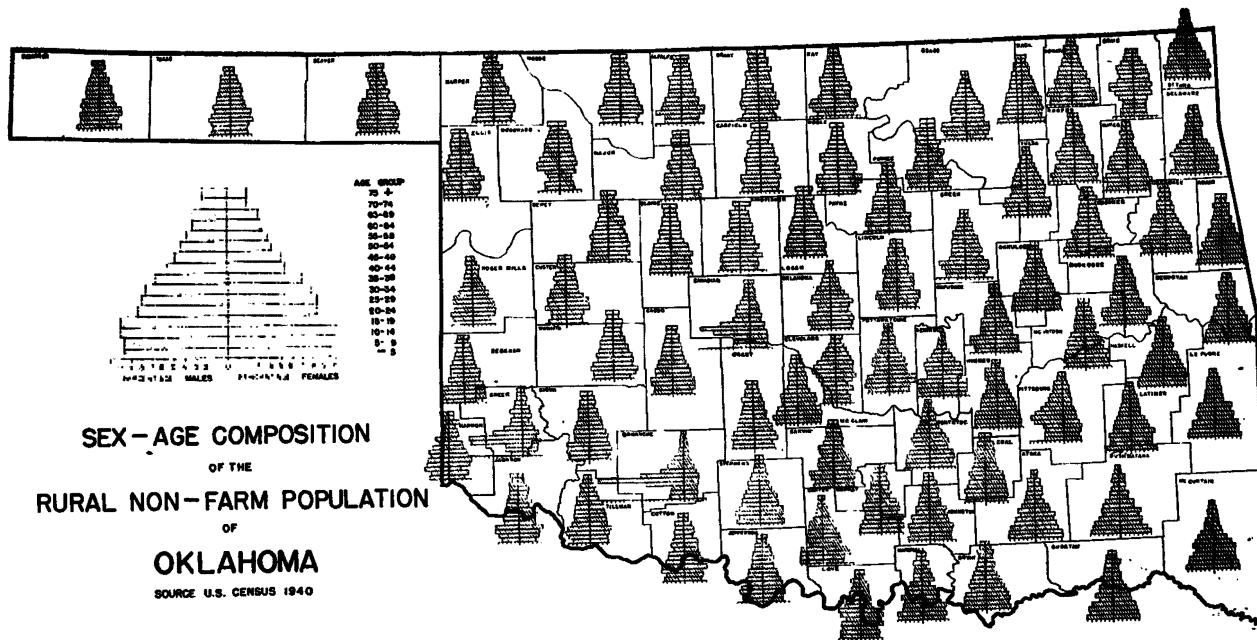


Figure 4.—Age and Sex Composition of the Rural Nonfarm Population of Oklahoma in 1940.

The rural nonfarm population includes primarily the population of incorporated villages of less than 2,500 inhabitants. One feature of this map is the irregularity of the pyramids. The extreme distortion of the pyramid in Comanche County is a result of the location of the army post at Fort Sill, with its large number

of young men, especially in the 20 to 24 year age group. While the rural nonfarm population contains a larger proportion of children than the urban centers, the indications are that there is a deficit of young children in this class of the population.

While the excess of males over females is declining, as a general rule, at all ages of the Oklahoma population, it is decreasing most rapidly between the ages of 40 and 75 years, with the decrease being accelerated as age advances up to 75 years. The smallness of the number of persons over 75 years of age renders the computations for that group somewhat unreliable. However, the fact that there is a reversal of tendency for this extreme age group is indicative of a very high death rate for old men relative to that of old women.

In general, the indications are, barring the unpredictable influence of the present war upon the age and sex structure of the population, that in the not too distant future there will be a still further equalization of the numbers and proportions of the sexes in the Oklahoma population.

Unless some unforeseen immigration takes place to offset its influence, it may be expected that the crude death rate in Oklahoma will rise appreciably within a very few years. The facts that old people have increased proportionately in the total population and that a disproportionate number of the old people are men, among whom the death rate is relatively high under any circumstances, can lead only to this result. Thereafter, when the sex proportions approximate equality, the death rate will diminish again until it reaches a minimum and will remain fairly uniform, as long as it is not accelerated by some radical change in the population structure.

The balancing of the sexes, which, in part, will be a function of the death rates in the older age groups, will have the effect of increasing the potential, if not the actual, crude birth rate, because it will make it possible for a larger proportion of the total population to marry and to have children.

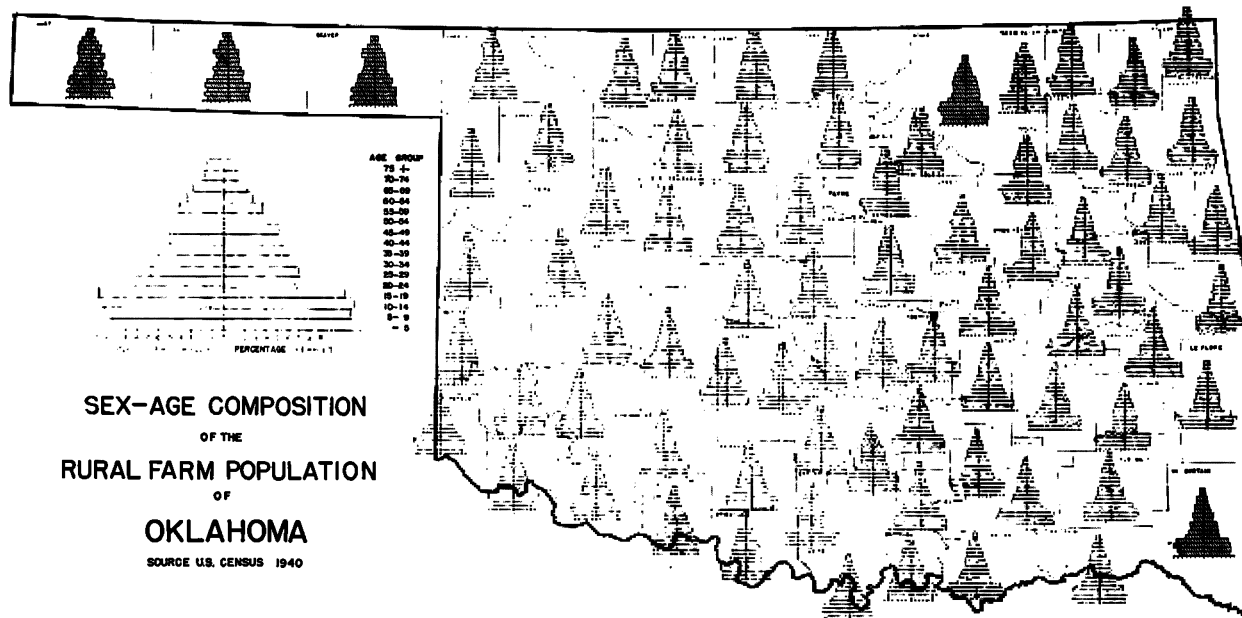
### Racial Composition

While Oklahoma is a state which has an overwhelmingly white population, it has a large proportion of all the Indians in the United States and an appreciable minority of Negroes. Other racial groups are of negligible statistical importance. About one-tenth of one percent of all the Indians in Oklahoma were born outside the United States, and an equally small proportion of the Negroes in the State are of foreign birth. The white population of Oklahoma has been drawn from all parts of the United States, but mostly from Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas.\*

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\* It is impossible to show the state of birth of the population of 1940 because the Census does not give data on this point as it did in previous years. This has been summarized for all years for which the figures are available in another study (Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 224, 1935, pp. 8-11).





**Figure 5.—Age and Sex Composition of the Rural Farm Population of Oklahoma in 1940.**

The striking features of this map are: (1) The bases of the pyramids are wide, indicating a large proportion of children in the population; (2) the pyramids show a preponderance of weight on the left, indicating a much larger proportion of males than of females in the population; and (3) the earlier adult and middleage sections of the pyramids are often hollowed out, indicating that

large numbers of the population in those age groups have migrated away from the farms. The pyramids in most counties are broad and flat on top, which means that old people remain on the farm and that the expectancy of life for the farm population is greater than for other population groups.

Table IX.—Racial Composition of Oklahoma Population, by Census Years.

Racial group	1940	1930	1920	1910	1900	1890
Number of Persons						
Total	2,336,534	2,396,060	2,028,267	1,657,155	790,391	258,644
White	2,104,228	2,130,778	1,821,194	1,444,531	670,204	172,554
Negro	168,849	172,198	149,408	137,612	55,684	21,609
Indian	63,125	92,725	57,337	74,825	64,445	64,456
Other	332	359	328	187	58	25
Percent of Total Population						
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	90.1	88.9	89.8	87.2	84.8	66.7
Negro	7.2	7.2	7.4	8.3	7.0	8.4
Indian	2.7	3.9	2.8	4.5	8.2	24.9
Others*	---	---	---	---	---	---

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Oklahoma, *Population*, 2nd Series, 1940, Table 4.

\* Percentages smaller than 0.1 percent are not shown.

The racial composition of the Oklahoma population is shown in Table IX. The main points to be noted are:

First, the proportion of whites in the total population of the State has increased, with negligible exceptions, from 1890 to 1940.

Second, the proportion of Negroes in the population has remained almost stationary, at least for all practical purposes, although the actual number of Negroes increased from 1890 to 1930, but decreased between 1930 and 1940.

Third, the proportion of Indians has decreased markedly, although there were almost as many Indians in the State in 1940 as in 1890. The number of Indians varies erratically between census years, but the reason for this variation is unknown.\*

Fourth, both the Negro and the Indian are failing to show as great genetic increase relative to numbers as the white race has experienced.

Not only has the white race had a greater relative increase of numbers than either Negroes or Indians, but the proportion of native whites in the total white population

\* A likely reason for it may be that some persons of mixed Indian and white blood may not have themselves enumerated consistently. It may be that children of the older Indians, specifically those of mixed blood, have a preference toward being enumerated as whites. The Indian population is known to have a high rate of natural increase, and to be less inclined toward migration than the white population. It seems logical to suppose, in the absence of proof, that much of the variation in the numbers of Indians arises from a lack of consistency or regularity in their classification of the census enumerators.

(Table X) has also increased steadily. However, there was never any appreciable number of foreign-born whites in the State.

That the rural areas have even larger proportions of native born whites than the city population is also shown in Table X. It is a fact well known to rural sociologists, and students of population generally, that rurality is generally associated with homogeneity or similarity while urbanity is correlated with heterogeneity or lack of similarity of population. This principle holds true for Oklahoma, even with the very small proportions of non-native whites which are found in the State.

Table XI was compiled to see if the principle of greater uniformity in rural than in urban population is supported by racial selection. The table shows that the rural areas, both farm and non-farm, contain larger proportions of Negroes and Indians than the cities, and hence, slightly smaller proportions of white people than the urban communities. This does not militate against the principle of uniformity of rural population characteristics, because both Indians and Negroes have an ancestral tradition in favor of the open country. The American Indian has never been a city dweller, and only in comparatively recent years has the Negro begun to show a marked preference for cities. It is the white race that has made the cities of the United States, and it is largely the white population of which it has been said that variation and differences exist in greater degrees in the city than in the country.

The rural non-farm, or village, population has remained practically unchanged in racial composition (Table XII), and contains about the same proportion of each race as is contained in the total population.

*Table X.—Percentage of Native-born Whites in the Total White Population of Oklahoma, by Census Years.*

Census year	Total	Urban	Rural Non-farm	Rural
1940	99.0	98.7	99.1	99.3
1930	98.6	98.2	98.5	98.9
1920	97.7	97.1	97.1	98.5
1910	97.2	95.9	*	*
1900	97.0	96.4	*	*

SOURCE: *16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series. Oklahoma, 1940. Tables 4 and 5; Ibid., 1930, Table 2.*

\* Data for rural non-farm and rural farm population are not given separately by the Census for 1910 and 1900.

**Table XI—Percentage Distribution of Population Classes by Race in Oklahoma in Different Census Years.**  
(Percent of population class)

Census year and Racial group	Total	Urban	Rural non-farm	Rural farm
<b>1940</b>				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	90.1	90.1	91.4	89.3
Negro	7.2	9.0	5.7	6.4
Indian*	2.7	0.9	2.9	4.3
<b>1930</b>				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	88.9	89.9	91.5	86.7
Negro	7.2	8.3	4.5	7.8
Indian*	3.9	1.8	4.0	5.5
<b>1920</b>				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
White	89.8	90.2	92.0	88.6
Negro	7.4	8.9	5.0	7.7
Indian*	2.8	0.9	3.0	3.7

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series, Oklahoma, 1940. Table 5.

\* Other racial groups amounting to less than 0.1 percent of the total population are included with Indians by the Census in this breakdown; hence the proportions are virtually unchanged by their inclusion.

**Table XII.—Distribution of Racial Groups by Population Class in Oklahoma; by Census Years, 1920 to 1940.\***  
(Percent of racial group)

Census Year and Population Class	White	Negro	Indian**
<b>1940</b>			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Urban	37.6	37.7	12.1
Rural nonfarm	22.7	23.0	24.5
Rural farm	39.7	39.3	63.4
<b>1930</b>			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Urban	34.3	34.7	16.0
Rural nonfarm	23.1	23.7	24.0
Rural farm	42.6	41.6	60.0
<b>1920</b>			
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Urban	26.5	26.7	9.0
Rural nonfarm	23.4	23.9	24.9
Rural farm	50.1	49.4	66.1

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series, Oklahoma, 1940. Tables 4 and 5.

\* This comparison cannot be carried back of 1920 because the earlier censuses did not show the rural farm and rural non-farm populations separately.

\*\* Other racial groups amounting to less than 0.1 percent of the total population are included with Indians by the Census in this breakdown; hence the proportions are virtually unchanged by their inclusion.

Although the process of urbanization is affecting all races to some extent, Negroes are being absorbed by the cities more rapidly than Indians (Table XII). There are at least two groups of speculative reasons for the rapid urbanization of the Negro in Oklahoma:

First, the mechanization of agriculture, the reduction in the number of farms, in some sections of the State the enlargement of the farm unit aided by mechanization, the reduction of acreages planted to cotton, and other changes in the agricultural system of the State have exerted strong pressures upon the poorer classes of farmers generally, i. e., those in the lower economic strata, and upon the Negro farmer in particular.

Second, the Negro has advanced culturally at a rapid pace of late years. Negro businesses in cities have increased in numbers; public relief programs have been centered in cities; and the Negro has begun to seek aggressively a higher standard of living, the pursuit of which has led him to the cities.

The external evidences seem to indicate that the Negro has sought to adopt a pattern of living which is as closely similar to that of the white population as it is possible for him to achieve. He has been swept into the cities by forces much the same in kind as have drawn the white population to the cities. The Indian, on the other hand, has remained rural because he has had land and has been under some degree of supervision by Government agencies. The Indian has not learned the skills required in urban industry, and has not freed himself from the lure of the open spaces with the same degree of abandon as has characterized either the Negro or the white race. In other words, his land, his ancestral mode of life, and his reluctance to adopt the complexities of urban life have served as bonds which have tended to hold the Indian to the country. The Negro has not had these same bonds in the same degree of intensity, and has felt less restraint in going to the city. The white population, since white men made the cities, has had a strong yearning for them as well as finding in them a multiplicity of opportunities for capitalizing upon its various talents.

#### **Marital Condition**

It is important to know the proportions of a population commonly referred to as single, married, widowed, and divorced. This gives information upon the extent of the family institution throughout the population. While married pairs

do not comprise families in the strictest sense of the term, they constitute the foundations upon which families are built. They indicate the importance of the family framework to society. The proportions of the population widowed and divorced are indexes of family breakdown. The proportion of an adult population single, or never married, may indicate the presence of economic, racial, or other barriers to marriage. One of the best, if not the best, indications of the socio-economic stability is the proportion of a population of marriageable age who are actually living in the married state. Insanity, crime, suicide, and other indexes of socioeconomic instability are practically always found in the greater relative frequency among the single, widowed, and divorced segments of a population than among those who are married.

The marital condition of Oklahoma population 15 years of age and over is shown in Table XIII. These data show that the proportion of the male population married increased between 1930 and 1940, although that of the female population

*Table XIII.—Marital Conditions of Oklahoma Population  
15 Years of Age and Over.  
(Percent of each sex)*

Marital Status and Popula- tion Class	MALES		FEMALES	
	1940	1930	1940	1930
State	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single	29.5	30.9	20.9	21.3
Married	64.3	61.4	65.2	67.2
Widowed	4.4	4.8	11.4	9.5
Divorced	1.8	2.9	2.5	2.0
Urban	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single	25.7	27.9	21.1	23.5
Married	67.4	65.3	61.2	63.9
Widowed	4.3	4.4	13.7	10.6
Divorced	2.6	2.4	4.0	2.0
Rural Nonfarm	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single	29.5	29.0	19.9	19.3
Married	64.0	64.7	65.3	66.7
Widowed	4.7	4.7	12.7	10.4
Divorced	1.8	1.6	2.1	1.6
Rural Farm	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Single	33.2	34.6	21.2	22.5
Married	61.5	59.8	70.1	69.9
Widowed	4.3	4.6	7.8	6.8
Divorced	1.0	1.0	0.9	0.8

SOURCES: "Characteristics of Oklahoma Population by Age," U. S. Bureau of the Census, Series P. 17, no. 20, Feb. 12, 1943. 15th Census of U. S. Population Bulletin, 2nd Series, Oklahoma, 1930, Table 8.

declined slightly. This, as will be explained more fully later on, is what should have happened because the excess of males over females has declined. In the urban population a higher proportion of males than of females are married, because there are more females than males in the urban population. In both the rural farm and the rural nonfarm populations, where there are more males than females, the proportions of males married are lower than for females. Generally there are more single males than females in all residential classes of the population. This is due largely to the fact that males postpone marriage longer than females, and to the further fact that there are more males than females in the population. In the past, also, males have migrated into the State in larger proportions than females, especially at the ages at which people are most likely to marry. The greater proportion of widowed females than of males arises from two facts long since established: First, husbands, being older than their wives and being subject to the higher death rates of males, die first, leaving more widowed females than males. Second, as a general rule, widowed males are more likely than females to marry again after former mates have died. The proportions of divorced persons are too small to admit of much analysis. Divorced persons are younger, as a rule, than those widowed, and those divorced are more likely to marry again than the widowed because of the age difference. Of the two sexes, divorced males probably remarry more quickly than divorced females, at least in urban society.

The effects of urbanization upon the marital condition of the population are pronounced. Rural people are more conservative in their attitudes in regard to the moral and traditional aspects of marriage than the urban population, if behavior is a reliable standard of judgment. The nature of the differences between urban and rural social environments are such as to stress the attitudinal differences between the two populations in respect to marriage. As is shown in Tables XIII and XIV, larger proportions of divorced people are found in the cities than in rural areas, but the number of males per 100 females divorced is much higher in the country than in the city. The same is true of widowed males. It is probable that widowed and divorced women migrate to the city in disproportionately large numbers, while the males of similar marital status do not remarry as often in the country as in the city.

More significant than any other feature of Table XIV is the indicated heavy excess of male over female population of marriageable age and eligible for marriage in Oklahoma. The

**Table XIV—Males to 100 Females in Different Marital Groups of Oklahoma Population 15 Years of Age or Over by Class of Population.**

(Males per 100 females in population)

Census Year and Population Class	Total	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced
<b>1940</b>					
Total	102.0	144.0	100.6	39.1	74.8
Urban	90.6	110.3	99.7	28.2	59.6
Rural					
Nonfarm	103.6	153.7	101.5	38.6	88.7
Rural					
Farm	115.1	179.8	100.9	64.3	137.0
<b>1930</b>					
Total	107.6	156.2	100.7	62.0	92.1
Urban	98.4	129.1	100.6	37.2	71.1
Rural					
Nonfarm	107.5	161.3	101.2	48.9	103.1
Rural					
Farm	117.4	180.3	100.4	79.8	141.9

SOURCES: Characteristics of Oklahoma Population by Age," U. S. Bureau of Census, Series P. 17, 20, Feb. 12, 1943. 15th Census of U. S. Population Bulletin, 2nd Series, Oklahoma, 1930, Table 8.

more rural the population is, the greater is the sex disparity. However, the excess masculinity of the Oklahoma single population declined appreciably everywhere between 1930 and 1940 except in the farm population, where it remained virtually unchanged. From the standpoint of potential natural increase of the population this is a favorable trend because it means that relatively more males now than formerly have an opportunity to marry and to contribute to the future growth of the State's population. It may be assumed that Oklahoma will have an ideal population balance when the maximum proportions of both men and women are married. The result of that situation will be to reduce greatly the existing strain upon family life, and to lower the divorce rate which in Oklahoma is among the highest in the Nation.

#### Natural Increase

The trend of natural increase for the nation as a whole during the past half century or longer has been steadily downward. Oklahoma has experienced the same trend throughout its history, although the rate of natural increase in the State's population has remained higher than that of the nation generally. There has been much speculation as to the causes for this decline, but no satisfactory explanation has been given.



Urbanization, rising levels of living, levels of education, costs of living, costs of health care, and many other such trends have been taking place along with the declining rate of natural increase of the population; but it is largely a matter of conjecture whether or not the occurrence of two or more things at the same time is a sign of cause and effect relationship. It may be that all of these have a common cause without necessarily being causally related to each other.

Since reliable birth and death rates are not available for Oklahoma further back than about a decade, the next best measure of the natural increase in the fertility ratio, which as used in this study is the number of children under five per 1000 women 20 to 44 years of age. The fertility ratios are shown in Table XV for all available census years for different classes of population.

*Table XV—Number of Children Under Five per 1000 Women Aged 20 to 44 Years in Oklahoma Population.*

Census year	Total	Urban	Rural non-farm	Rural farm
1940	489.9	341.4	531.5	644.3
1930	601.0	398.9	633.3	824.8
1920	717.5	445.4	704.7	932.7
1910	872.4	510.8	-----	-----
1900	965.6	-----	-----	-----
1890	753.0	-----	-----	-----

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series, Oklahoma 1940, Tables 7, 8, and 9.

The data in Table XV are conclusive proof that the rate of natural increase in the Oklahoma population is declining. This does not mean that more people are dying than are being born, but that the population is increasing less rapidly now than formerly, and, in as far as the available figures admit of comparison, the *rate of natural increase* is consistently lowered as the urbanization of the population increases. Except for 1890, while the influence of recent migration was still present in the Oklahoma population, each earlier census year shows a much higher fertility ratio than the next succeeding.

According to Lorimer and Osborn (*Dynamics of Population*, New York, 1934, p. 359) Oklahoma's permanent replacement ratio was 443 children under 5 per 1000 women aged 20 to 44 years, whereas the State had a fertility ratio of 599 for its native white population. This meant that the natural

increase was 135 percent of the number required to maintain a stationary population. If the conditions\* necessary to maintain a stationary population were about the same in 1940 as in 1930, Oklahoma had in 1940 only about 110 percent as large a fertility ratio as would be needed to maintain a stationary population. This figure is not too small an estimate, because of the large proportion of old people in the population.

From the standpoint of natural increases, Oklahoma is approaching a stationary population rapidly at the present time. The cities and towns of 2500 or more inhabitants have fertility ratios below the requirements for a stationary population now, while the small towns and farms are still producing a diminishing surplus of children above the numbers required to maintain their own inhabitants. In the light of all these facts, coupled with heavy losses of population through emigration, Oklahoma can only expect a further diminution of its population in the near future unless it can do one or both of two things: either (1) stem the tide of emigration of the population to other states; or (2) increase the birth rate, especially in the larger towns and cities. Either of these developments can come only as a result of social and economic change favorable to population growth in the State.

#### Educational Characteristics

The educational achievement of a population is one of the best indexes of its cultural advancement. Prior to 1940, the principal measure of educational attainment available was the proportion of the population 10 years of age and over which was illiterate. Literacy was defined to mean the ability to read and write without reference to any specified degree of competence in reading and writing. Hence, if a person could write his name, he would have been considered literate although he might not have been able to write a simple sentence. In 1930 and 1920 the percentages of illiteracy for different population groups of Oklahoma were as follows:

	1930	1920
Total . . . . .	2.8	3.8
Urban . . . . .	1.2	1.9
Rural Nonfarm . . . . .	3.0	4.5

Thus it can be seen that illiteracy had declined to almost a negligible quantity by 1930, although it was still inexcusably high in the rural population.

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\* I. e., death rate, and age and sex composition of the population.

Because of the decline in illiteracy to so small a figure, the Bureau of the Census felt that a measure more descriptive of the educational achievement of the population was needed. It was decided, therefore, to discontinue the use of the term as a census category and to substitute for it the "highest grade of school completed" for the population 25 years of age and over. This, admittedly, is a much needed improvement in the Census, but it is unfortunate that data for only 1940 are available.

The 1940 Census shows the median (one form of average) school years completed by the Oklahoma population to be as follows:

	Total	Native white	Foreign-born white	Negro	Indian and others
Total	8.4	8.5	7.7	7.0	7.1
Urban	9.9	10.4	8.3	7.6	9.4
Rural nonfarm	8.2	8.3	7.2	6.3	7.4
Rural farm	7.7	7.7	7.1	6.0	6.4

These figures show two facts, namely, that educational advancement increases rapidly in proceeding from rural to urban environments, which is to be expected, and that the educational achievement of the native white population is higher than for any other population group. However, the number of years of school finished by the native white farm population is not significantly greater than that of the urban negro and is perceptibly below that of the urban Indian population.

Table XVI shows the percentage distribution of the population 25 years of age and over with reference to school attainment. These data show the advantage of the urban over other classes of the population in two ways: (1) the relatively smaller proportion of the urban population than of other groups who stopped school in the elementary grades; and (2) the relatively higher proportions of the urban population that went through high school and college. There is one qualification that should be placed on this interpretation, however. The data are for the resident population as of the date of the Census. Many in the urban population with high school and college education undoubtedly went to the cities from the farms. It is an established fact that migration from farms to cities tends to select people of the highest educational advancement. The farm has the responsibility of affording these youths their educational opportunities, but loses them

**Table XVI—Percentage Distribution of Oklahoma Population 25 Years of Age or Over by Years of School Completed.**

	Total	Urban	Rural nonfarm	Rural farm
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
None	2.5	1.5	2.9	3.3
1 to 4 years G. S.	11.0	6.6	12.3	15.5
5 to 6	13.3	9.1	14.3	17.7
7 to 8	33.0	26.9	34.1	39.6
1 to 3 years H. S.	14.7	17.3	14.3	11.8
4 years	12.8	19.2	10.4	6.6
1 to 3 years Col.	6.7	10.2	5.8	3.1
4 years or over	4.7	7.8	4.5	1.2
Not reported	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.1

SOURCE: 16th Census of U. S. Population, 2nd Series, Oklahoma, 1940, Table 13.

to the city in the exchange of population. While this accounts for a part of the unfavorable position of the farm population, it is by no means responsible for the whole difference as it exists.

The data on education, however, tend to disprove many popular assumptions and prejudices to the effect that the average level of intelligence of the population is about sixth grade. The average amount of schooling of the adult population of Oklahoma is much above the sixth grade, and if the informal education which is achieved through life experiences could be added to that received in school, it probably would be found that the minimum average level of education is greater than would be indicated by the completion of any grade in school. If the population from 15 to 25 years of age had been included in the Census count, it is not unlikely that the average would have been raised to 10 years of school finished for the whole population. The often repeated allegation that the American people are of sixth grade mentality is indefensible in the face of known facts to the contrary.

## SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE DATA

### Recent Historical Influences

The depression which lasted almost the entire decade from 1930 to 1940 brought not only unemployment to Oklahoma, but also innumerable other ills. Prices declined, production declined, consumption declined, and there was disturbance generally in the socioeconomic balance. In these respects the situation of Oklahoma was not peculiar, for most of them were Nation-wide, and even world-wide in scope. Oklahoma

was caught in the maelstrom of depression with the remainder of the country.

But Oklahoma had other troubles which were at least more severe than in the remainder of the states except those of the Great Plains region. The period between January 7, and March 1, 1930 was covered by one of the most severe blizzards in the history of the State. The damage done by the unprecedented cold was enormous, which meant a great loss of wealth. In 1934, there was devastating drought which was attended by blistering heat during the entire summer. In some sections of the State, lack of water and feed for livestock reached the proportions of a famine. Cattle and hogs were either killed or shipped out of the State. Grasshoppers and chinch bugs devoured growing crops, if any had escaped the drought. Virgin forest timber died for lack of moisture as far eastward as the Arkansas State line. The year 1935 brought temporary but only partial relief. Then followed 1936 which brought a longer period of drought and heat than was experienced in 1934. In North Central Oklahoma there was not enough rain to lay the surface dust from May 14 until the morning of September 3, 1936, a period of 112 days. In North-western Oklahoma the situation was even more severe. Again, the livestock died of thirst, the grasshoppers swarmed, and the sand blew in clouds that darkened the midday sun. When 1937 came, it was also dry and hot, not to the extent to bring human suffering but enough so to ruin most of the feed crops. Had there not been adequate transportation facilities to bring food to the State from elsewhere, it is likely that the misery brought by the years from 1934 to 1937 would have been comparable to the famines of ancient Egypt and modern China.

As a result of all this, there was a widespread exodus of people from Oklahoma to other places. At least a half million people left Oklahoma between 1930 and 1940, and most of them went during the period of the droughts. In some areas the emigration was so heavy that consolidated rural schools had to be either closed entirely or consolidated with other schools. Villages and towns lost population everywhere, especially in the western half of the State. Wherever this outward movement of people was pronounced, the social order was disrupted at least in some measure.

Added to these untoward events, Oklahoma had reached what would normally have been a slowing down phase in its population growth by 1930. Most of its timber had been cut; its agricultural land had become badly eroded and worn out

in many places; its petroleum and mining industries had passed from the developmental to the production stage; its cities had passed the peak of boom days and were beginning to assume settled form. Many of its villages had actually shrunk in size, and some of them were on the verge of disappearance. All in all, it can be said that 1930 marked the end of the economic and demographic youth of Oklahoma and it had begun by then to assume the characteristics of a maturing society. Had not the calamities of 1930-36 been visited upon the State, there is no evidence that its population would have continued to grow as rapidly as it had grown in decades past. The boom days were gone. On the other hand, without these catastrophies, there is little reason to believe that the total population of the State would have declined as it did between 1930 and 1940.

### Prospect for the Future

What the future holds for the growth of population in Oklahoma, no one knows; it depends upon a number of things that may happen and the way in which they happen. For commercial agriculture, there is no visible need for a widespread return of people to the farm. From the point of view of the subsistence of workers who inevitably must be released from war work and the armed forces at the close of the war, a return of many people to agriculture will be a necessity. The war effort has suggested the feasibility of placing more manufacturing industries in Oklahoma. If this proves expedient and wise, there is no doubt that more industries will be brought to the State in the future, which will help in holding the population at home.

The war will have a profound effect upon births, deaths, marriages, divorce, and migration. The birth rate sooner or later must drop as the men and women of reproductive age are sent away to the theaters of war. Existing families are being broken up, some of which will never be reunited. Children are being born every day who are destined to be fatherless because of the ravages of war. Sooner or later the proportion of the population beyond middle age will increase, not only raising the death rate but also lowering the birth rate. Again, Oklahoma's situation is only a fragment of a world condition, but the interest of this study is focused upon Oklahoma. When the war ends, be it sooner or later, soldiers will return home to claim their brides from the munitions factories, and the priests and magistrates will be kept busy with the performance of marriages for a time. Soon there-

after the natural increase of the population should be accelerated, and to some extent the losses of the war will be offset by new population.

Before all this happens, however, it seems desirable that the rehabilitation of discharged soldiers and factory workers must be accomplished. Land and equipment must be procured for those returning to agriculture, jobs for those in cities, and war industries must be converted to civilian uses. Even more difficult, the working population must be reconditioned in mind, body and skills for the conditions of civil life. Time and effort will be required for all this, and upon its accomplishment depends the prospect of Oklahoma's future population.

In any event, the recent reversals of trends in population growth are not to be viewed with alarm. They are but incidents in a long process of change. With abundant transportation facilities, house rents and real estate values are about the only phases of urban business that depend entirely upon location. Agricultural products are shipped everywhere, even if farms are not. Finally, wherever there is wealth to be gained, money to be had, or jobs to be got, there will be people. Human beings do not run away from promising signs of prosperity. The population of Oklahoma will flourish or decline in proportion as the State of Oklahoma offers people more attractive opportunities than other areas for making a living. There need be no fear of under-population where opportunity abounds. The quest for opportunity is the unending pursuit of mankind, and explains all forms of human migration and settlement.