

# **A Historical Overview of Socio-Demographic Changes in Southern Illinois (1840-2000)**

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This report answers three questions:

- What has happened to the population of Southern Illinois over the last 100 years?
- How have demographics shifted, both in numbers and in social composition?
- How have people been employed over this period?

Because of the time involved in collecting historical data, the demographic data cover only the seven county area surrounding DSAC. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to be a sample that is indicative of the region as a whole.

## **Socio-Economic and Demographic Changes**

We looked at several information sources for historical data of seven counties in southwestern Illinois: Gallatin, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Saline, and Williamson. We limited the counties covered so that we could look at the data dating back to the 1800s.

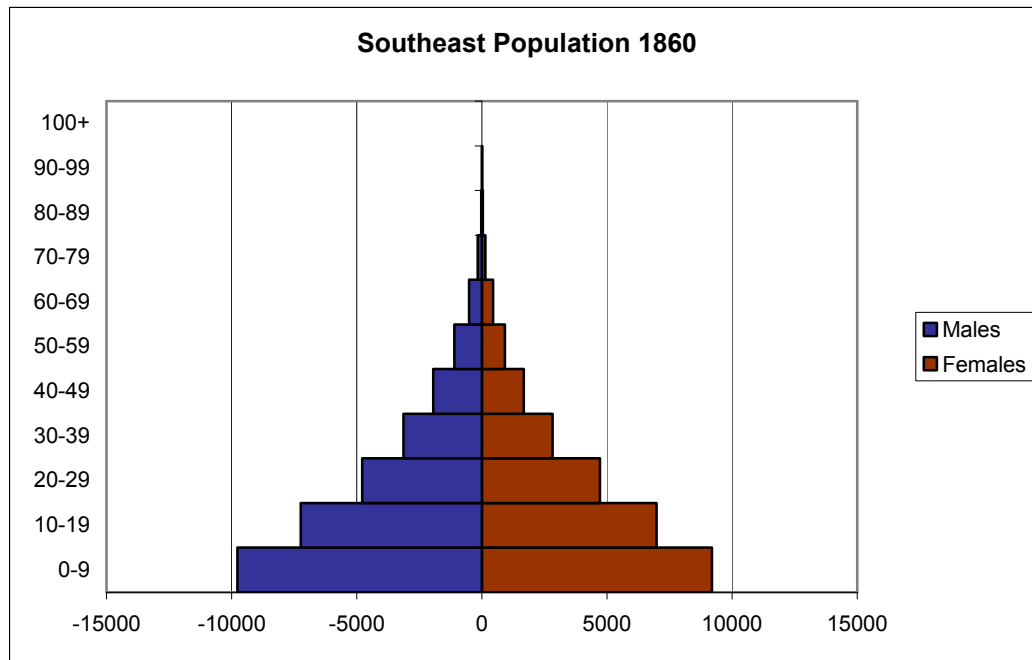
### **Details**

In its earliest years after statehood, the southeastern sub-region of southern Illinois flourished through agriculture. In 1840, agriculture employed nine out of every ten workers in the sub-region. Gallatin County accounted for the majority of the other ten percent of sub-regional employment; its manufacturing employed another five percent and its commerce another three percent. It is unclear whether that manufacturing and commerce was located in modern-day Gallatin County, since Saline County was carved from Gallatin in 1847. Similarly, Massac County was drawn from parts of Johnson and Pope Counties in 1843.

Between 1840 and 1860 the sub-region's population more than doubled, from 24,315 to 55,656 residents. Manufacturing kept pace, increasing from 307 employees in 1840 to 722 in 1860. Though no employment number for agriculture is available for 1860, it is known that 61% of the sub-region's land was in agriculture. There were 6,595 farms, averaging 134.2 acres per farm. The population was normal; the population pyramid looks like one from a textbook (see Figure 1). It is interesting to note here that males out-

numbered females beginning in the 30-39 year cohort. This may have been the result of under-developed medical practices for child delivery, though the reason is unclear.

Figure 1: 1860 Population Pyramid



Between 1860 and 1880 the population grew 63%. The proportion of land in agriculture had increased to 70% and manufacturing employment had grown to 1,038, of which all but four were males. The percent of land in agriculture continued its growth, occupying 86% of the sub-region’s land by the turn of the twentieth century. All seven counties in the sub-region were growing. All but Pope were growing quite substantially. Pope County saw its population peak around 1890, at 14,016.

The 1900 Census provides a rare glimpse of agriculture’s structure by classifying farms by tenure and race. Of the sub-region’s 14,017 farms, more than half (57%) were farmed by owners. Part owners accounted for 12% of farms, while share tenants farmed another quarter of farms. Farms on which responsibilities were shared between owners and tenants, or were performed by managers or cash tenants, accounted collectively for the remaining 5% of farms. Among “colored” farmers, fewer owned (38%) and more were share tenants (43%). Fifteen percent were part owners. While it is true that “colored” farmers were under-represented among farm owners, it is *not* true that all cash or share tenants were colored—96% were white. Similarly it is not true that all farm owners were whites; 38% of colored farmers owned their farms.

By 1930 the economic landscape of the sub-region had started to change. The proportion of land in farms had fallen back to 73%. All counties lost farm acreage over the 30-year period. The largest losses were in Pope and Williamson Counties, which both lost around 40,000 acres, or 15%. The total number of farms also decreased, from 14,017 in 1900 to 10,328 in 1930. Part of the decrease in farm number can be explained by the

consolidation of farms; the average farm size increased by about 19%, from 89 acres to 107 acres per farm. The vast majority of farm operators were white (98.4%). This is slightly disproportionate to blacks' share of the total population (3.7%). White-operated farms were about a third larger on average than colored-operated farms. During the same period, there was a slight decrease (~3%) in share cropping and a concomitant increase in partial ownership.

The population as a whole was 93.2% native-born white, 3.1% foreign-born white, and 3.7% black. The majority of foreign-born whites lived in Saline and Williamson Counties. By a wide margin, the majority of blacks lived in Massac, Saline, and Williamson Counties. Only 15 people claimed to be of another race. Just 3.2% of the population over the age of 10 was documented as illiterate, though in the six counties that had substantial black populations (all but Hardin, which had just 60), the illiteracy rate ranged from 9.5% to 21.2%. About 65% of the population over the age of 15 was married, which is not drastically different from the sub-region's current rate. The population was split almost into thirds between urban (35%), rural-farm (34.3%) and rural-nonfarm (30.6%). Over half of the urban population lived in Williamson County, and another third lived in Saline County. Gallatin, Hardin, Johnson, and Pope Counties had no urban populations. By contrast, all counties had both rural-farm and rural-nonfarm populations.

By 1950, agriculture employed between 10 and 55% of workers in the sub-regional counties, and just 20% across the sub-region. Agriculture's importance had decreased dramatically since the turn of the century. This was caused not only by the Great Depression, but also by downward turns in soil productivity and erosion.<sup>1</sup> Though employment had diversified tremendously, it was still highly specialized in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. The three industries employed between 45% and 65% of each county's workers. Retail trade had started to appear. Services like food and dairy retail, eating and drinking places, medical services, public administration, and educational services and government occupy a fairly consistent share of employment among the counties. Presumably, employment was roughly proportional to county population.

Over time, the sub-region became gradually less rural. By 1950, 62% of the population was rural and 38% was urban, only a slight change from 1930. The native-born white population had grown to account for 94.9% of the sub-region. Foreign-born whites accounted for an additional 2.1%, and blacks constituted another 3.0%. Only 18 people identified themselves as of another race. Education attainment in the region was somewhat lower than statewide rates. Statewide, the median year of school completed was 9.1 for males and 9.5 for females. In the southeastern sub-region of Southern Illinois, the median ranged from 8.3-8.5 for males and 8.4-8.6 for females. The one-year mobility rate (percent of people at least 1 year of age in 1950 who lived in a different house in

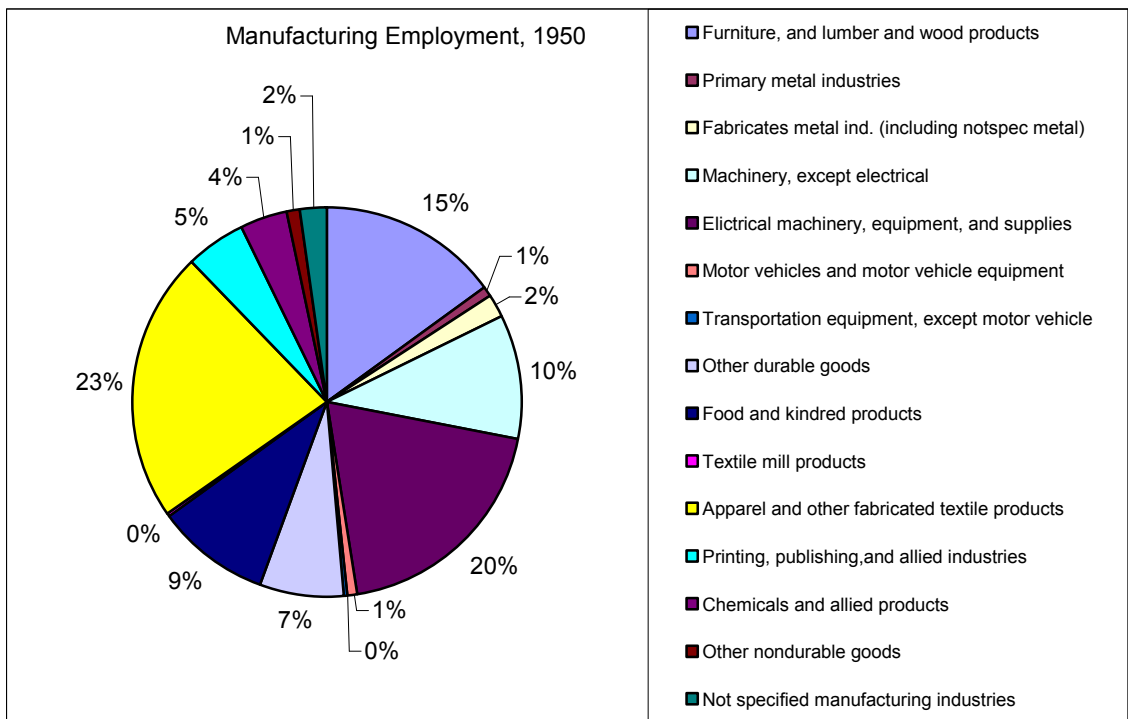
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<sup>1</sup> Kammlade, W.G., P.W. Rexroat, and H.A. Cate (eds.) *Redeeming a Lost Heritage: Development of the Dixon Springs Agricultural Center*. Urbana: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois.

1949) was quite high: 14.6% for the sub-region. Of those who had moved, most (69%) had moved from within the same county.

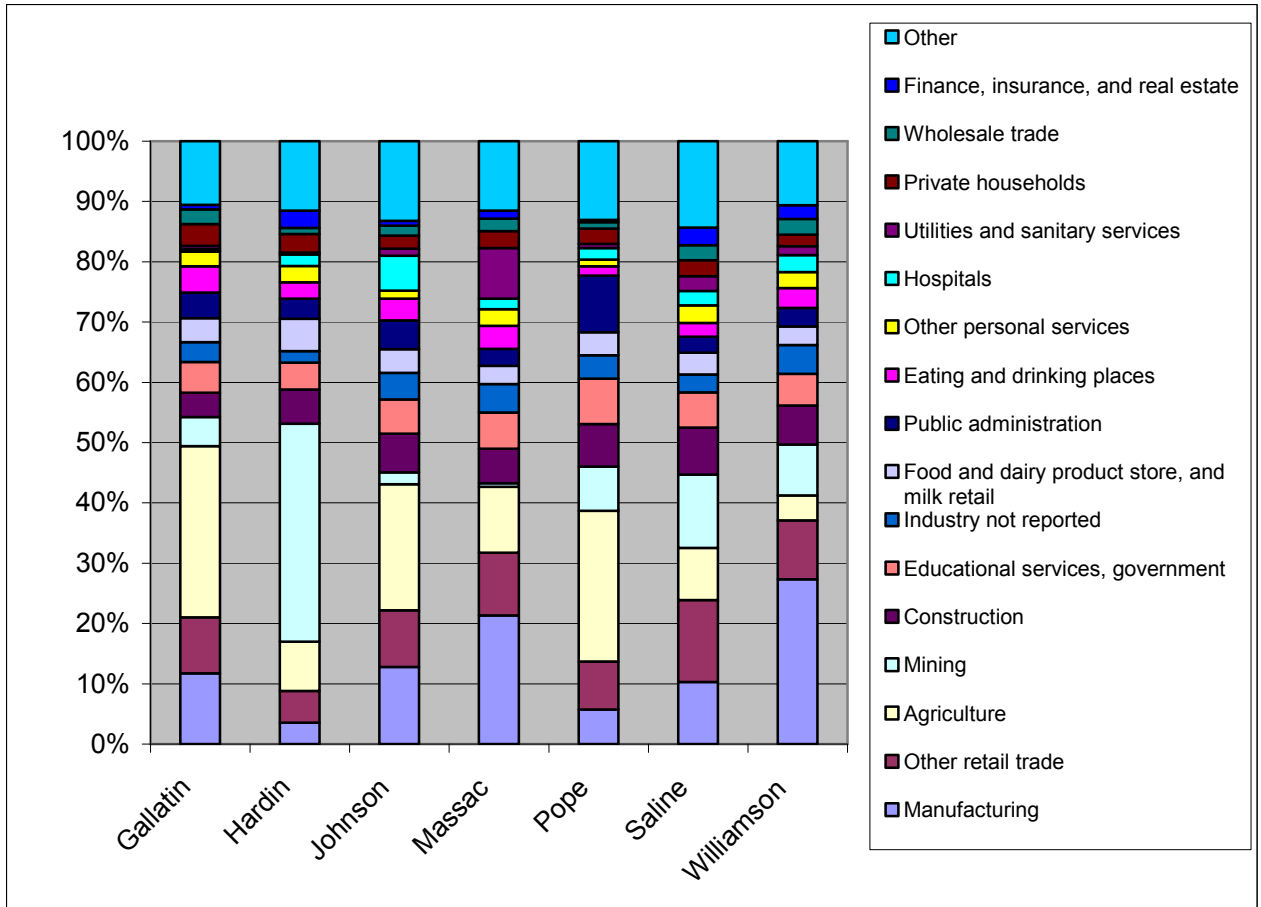
One might imagine that the manufacturing employment relied on the natural resources in the sub-region (See Figure 2). To some extent this is true; food products accounted for around 9% of manufacturing. Some of the other manufacturing, like furniture, lumber, and wood products, or perhaps the textile or apparel manufactures, also relied on primary materials from the sub-region. Almost one quarter of manufacturing employees worked in apparel and other fabricated textile products. Another 20% produced electrical machinery, equipment and supplies. Fifteen percent worked in manufacturing furniture, lumber, and wood products.

Figure 2: 1950 Manufacturing Employment



By 1960 “other retail trade” had surpassed both mining and agriculture in sub-regional employment (See Figure 3). The urban population had increased to 43% of the population. During this time, Pope County was the only county in which males continued to outnumber females, implying that employment must have emanated from something like a prison or military base.

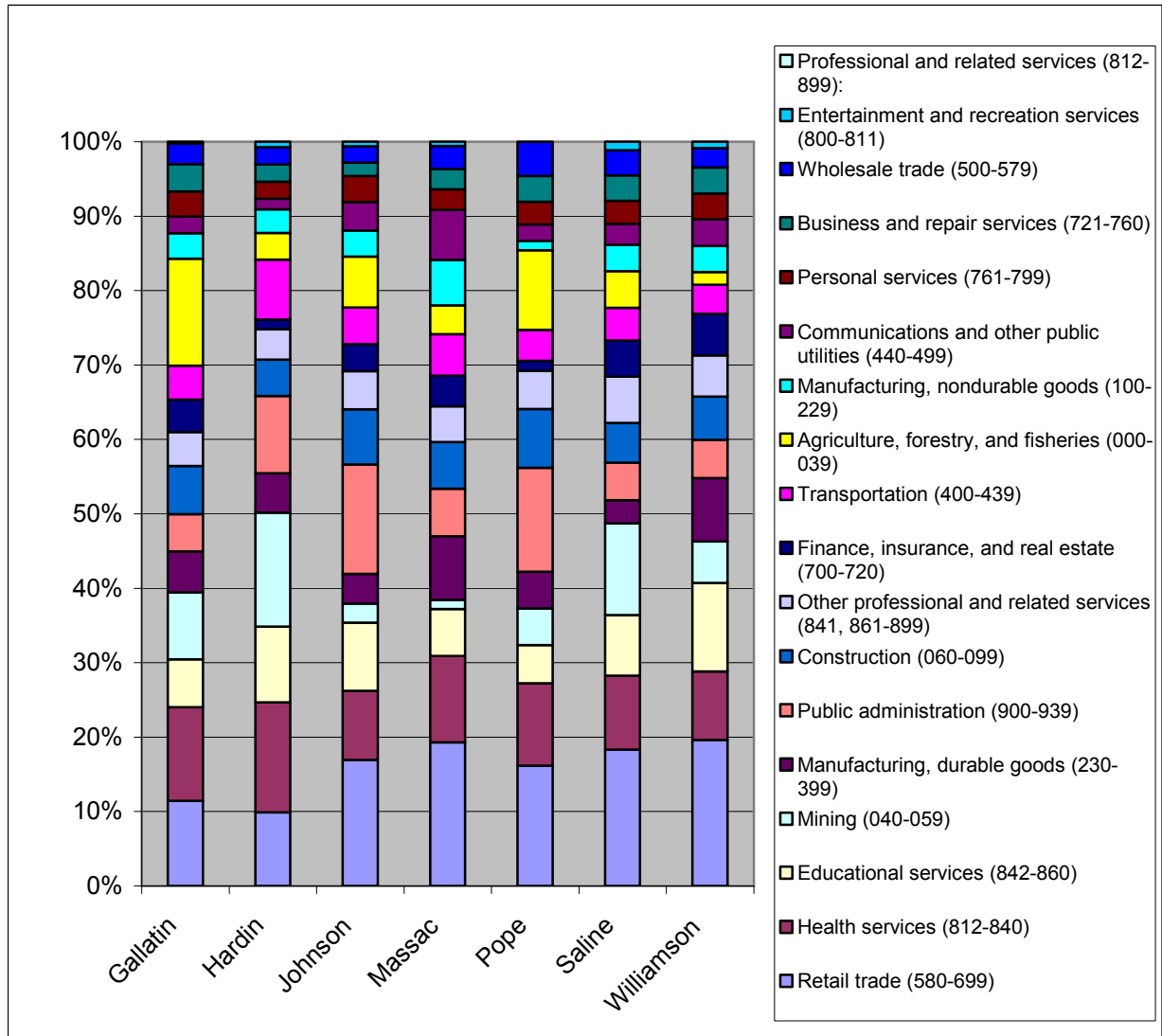
Figure 3: County Employment by Industry 1960



In 1980 the urban population was still 43%. Of the 72,300 rural people, roughly equal numbers lived in places of less than 1,000 people and places of 1,000-2,500 people (12,613 and 12,318 people, respectively). By far, most (47,369 people) lived in “other rural” areas, meaning that they lived in rural areas that are not census designated places. There were four counties in which everyone was rural (Gallatin, Hardin, Johnson, and Pope), but no counties in which everyone was urban. Saline and Williamson Counties both had an urban majority.

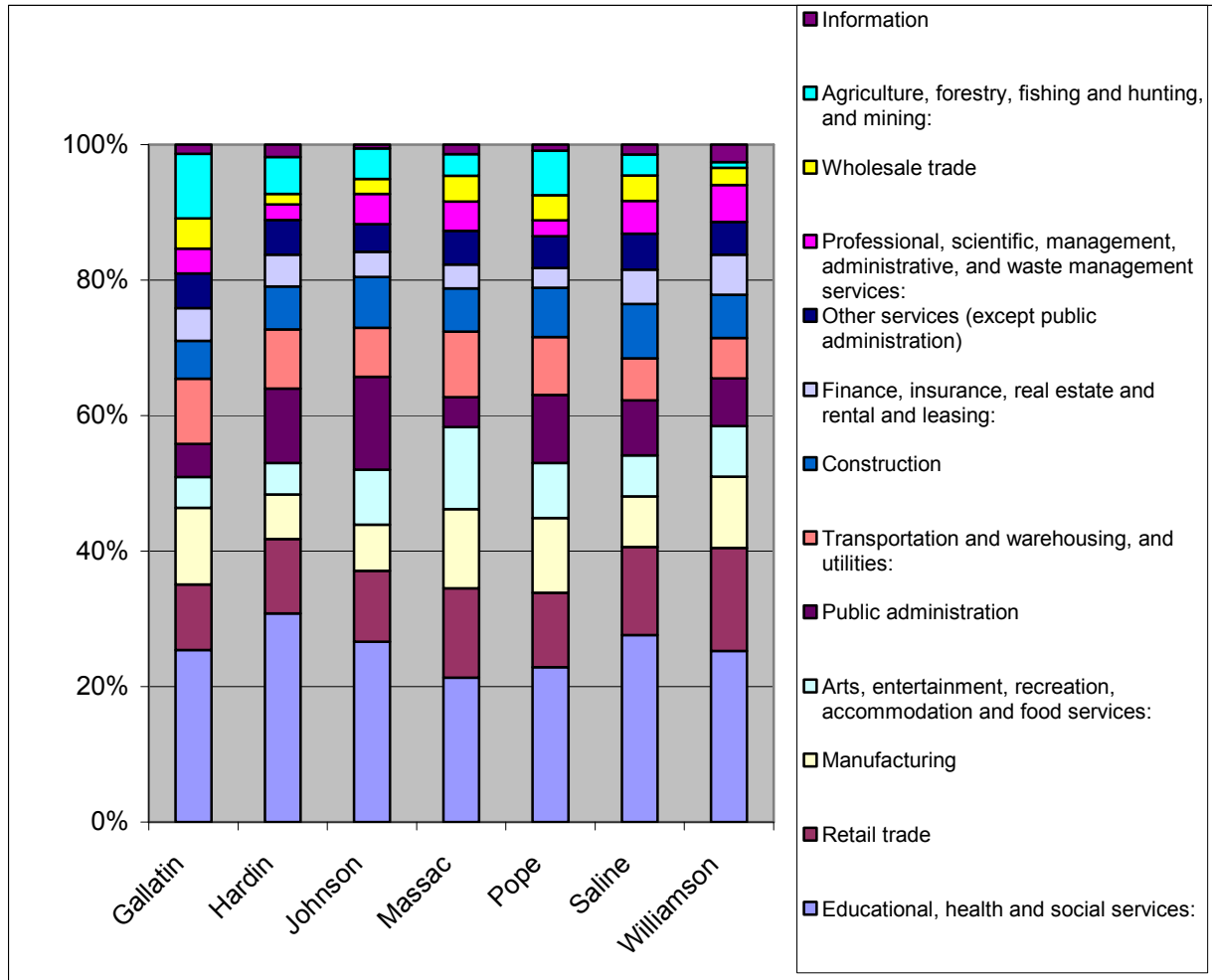
By 1990 the top three industries were retail trade, health services, and educational services (Figure 4). These three industries employed at least 31% of the workers in any county and up to 41% in Williamson. It is worth noting that none of these are export-oriented industries. The top three industries in the sub-region all recycle money within the economy or draw on state or Federal support.

Figure 4: Employment by Industrial Sector 1990



By 2000, three industries (educational, health, and social services, retail trade, and manufacturing) once again employed almost half (48%) of the sub-region’s workers (Figure 5). In the counties, the top two industries (educational, health, and social services, and retail trade) employed between 35 and 40% of workers. Manufacturing employed upwards of 10% of workers in Gallatin, Massac, Pope, and Williamson Counties. This marks an increase in manufacturing since 1990, when manufacturing was not a top three industry (manufacturing employed 6.7% of workers in 1990 and 9.5% in 2000). Public administration no longer appears to be proportional to population size; it employs varying proportions of workers among counties. At the turn of the millennium, the once-textbook population pyramid appeared very different (see Figure 7). Thirty to 49-year-olds made up the widest part of the pyramid. Females outnumber males in the older age cohorts. The slowly growing urban population, at 51%, had finally overtaken the rural population.

Figure 5: Employment by Industrial Sector 2000



### Socioeconomic Summary of Southern Illinois

In many ways, Southern Illinois has typified one pattern in the transformation of rural life in rural Midwest. The population for this area peaked in 1920 and while it has risen slightly more recently, it still lags behind the level reached during that year (see Figure 6). The population pyramid for the region has transformed from a true pyramid through the 1950s to a skewed graphic representing an aging population in 2000. The portion of this population engaged in agriculture has also steadily decreased since the 1930s to less than two percent in 2000. In particular counties, these declines are even more dramatic.

Figure 6: Population Pyramid 2000

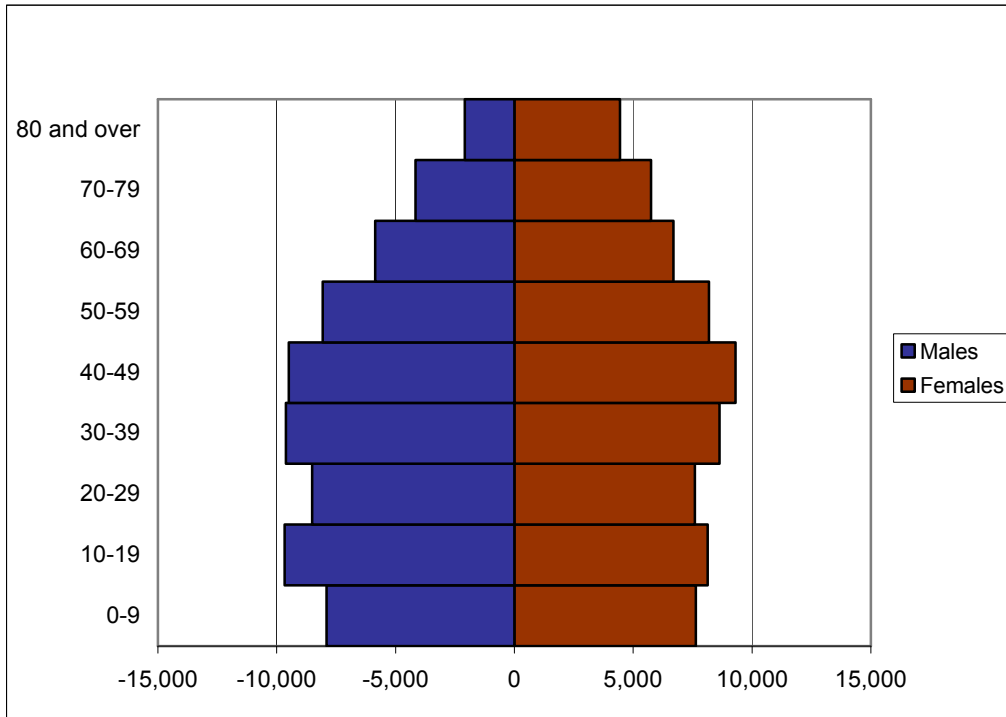


Figure 7: Population Change from 1840-2000

