



THE LIBRARY OF THE

JULY 1983 57

MAY 16 1984

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

### ILLINOIS SETTLEMENT CHANGES CHALLENGE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Everett G. Smith, Jr.

The 1980 census provides the latest glimpse into who lives where in this nation and its states. Changing locations of people have prompted publicity recently about a repopulation of the American countryside and revival of its small town. These tendencies suggest new directions and dimensions of national settlement patterns. Moreover, these changes challenge governments and their officials at all levels to allocate public works and services to areas where they are needed and demanded. Maps of population redistributions can help clarify government plans and actions.

As one of the megastates, Illinois reflects national trends. The state, with its diverse population, variety of places in which to live—ranging from small hamlets to a major metropolis, and mixture of economic activities, serves as a microcosm of the country at large. The need to redraw legislative districts has focused some popular attention on the fact that Illinois and other midwestern and some northeastern states did not grow as fast as the rest of the nation during the 1970s. Somewhat less well known is information about where people have chosen to live within each state's boundaries.

Most Illinois residents—as well as United States residents in general—continue to live in or near major urban places. In 1980 four people in five, or 81 percent of the Illinois population, lived in 23 counties designated by the Bureau of the Census as metropolitan (Figure 1). This concentration has remained unchanged essentially since midcentury and earlier; for already by 1930, three-quarters of the people in Illinois lived in these urban counties. A fraction of the state's population thus reside in the remaining 79 nonmetropolitan counties. Today 73 percent of the United States population—165 million people—are congregated in metropolitan areas.

Even more interesting, perhaps, is the fact that throughout the country (including Illinois) nonmetropolitan areas grew faster in the past decade than metropolitan areas for the first time in our history. The pull of cities, so prevalent for most of the century, appears to have weakened—not only for the largest centers but also for middle-sized places. If this trend continues, the dominance of our metropolitan areas may well subside at some point in the future. In Illinois, for example, the population in nonmetropolitan counties increased 6 per-

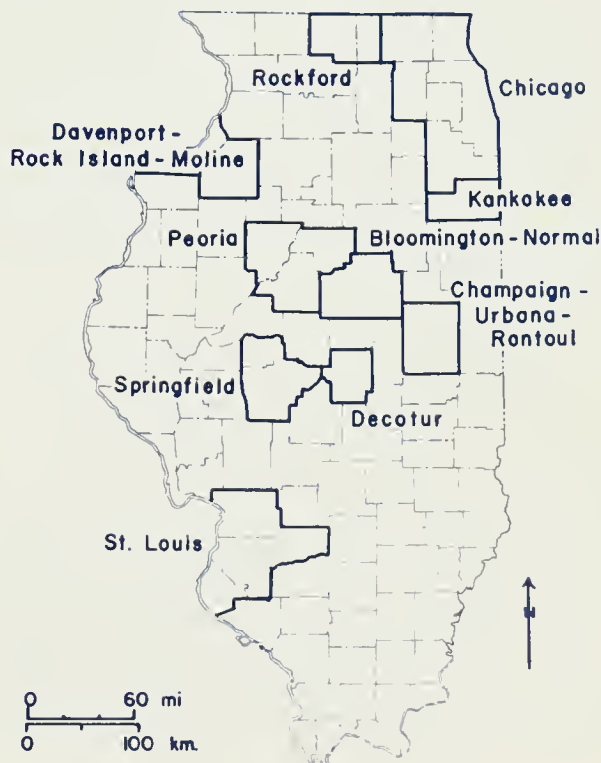
cent between 1970 and 1980, while metropolitan counties increased 2 percent during the decade. In the 1960s and 1950s, by contrast, the 23 metropolitan counties in Illinois registered population gains of 12 and 20 percent respectively, while nonmetropolitan counties in the state could muster gains of barely 2 and 1 percent.

#### COUNTY PATTERNS

The relative attractiveness of nonmetropolitan over metropolitan areas in recent years reveals a restless people, evaluating and reevaluating their personal as well as the nation's resources and moving to locations perceived as more desirable for work or retirement, or both. Patterns of population

Figure 1

#### METROPOLITAN AREAS in the 1980s



Everett G. Smith, Jr., a native of Urbana, Illinois, is a professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Oregon. He was at the University of Illinois from 1961 to 1965 with a joint appointment in the Office of Community Development and the Department of Geography. Professor Smith authored an earlier issue of *Illinois Government Research* (January 1970) entitled "Twentieth Century Voting Patterns for President in Illinois."

gains and losses at the county level over several decades emphasize these dynamics (Figure 2). The unshaded counties on the maps highlight the continuity of urban and suburban growth in northeastern Illinois and in and around the larger cities downstate. More striking were declines in the 1970s in the state's most urban counties, especially Chicago's Cook, coupled with increases in counties more accustomed to population losses than gains for most of the twentieth century.

This decentralization indicates not only that people have been evacuating big central cities and their suburbs, but also that residents who might once have migrated to urban areas are staying in smaller communities and rural areas. Although the identity of who makes these choices and what precipitates them awaits interviewing in the field, results of these multiple and complex decisions appear in the changing patterns of settlement.

During the 1970s only a handful of the 102 Illinois counties—14 in all—experienced population declines. In five of these, significant drops in city populations affected county results. Chicago's Cook County, along with Madison and St. Clair counties, part of metropolitan St. Louis, and Rock Island County stand out. For the first time ever, each of these counties lost people. Cook County decreased by more than 4 percent. Without Chicago, however, Cook would have increased almost 6 percent. Chicago lost more than a third of a million people during the decade, and adjacent suburbs declined by another 100,000 residents.

The five suburban metropolitan counties surrounding Cook County, on the other hand, increased 25 percent between 1970 and 1980—more than twice the national average growth rate. Overall, the ten metropolitan areas in Illinois continued their long-term gains, adding a net of 200,000 people in the 1970s, as peripheral growth offset losses in older, more central urban districts and counties.

Most nonmetropolitan counties in Illinois also increased their populations in the 1970s, reversing more familiar experiences of repeated decreases. Before 1970, about half or more of the counties in Illinois—not always the same ones, of course, but primarily those in nonmetropolitan areas—experienced population losses in any given decade. Between 1960 and 1970, for example, 50 of the 102 counties in the state declined; in the 1950s, the number was 51; and in the 1940s, it was 55. Only the 1930s resembled the 1970s. In that decade 27 counties—almost double the 14 affected in the 1970s—decreased in population. Fifty years ago, during that earlier economic depression of this century, people clearly saw fewer opportunities in cities and remained in rural areas waiting for better times.

## ILLINOIS GOVERNMENT RESEARCH

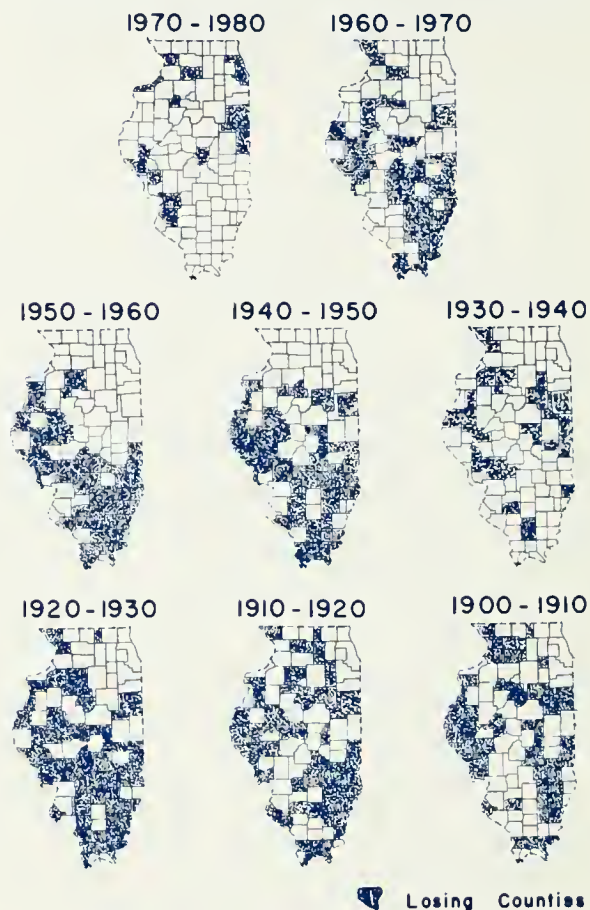
Institute of Government and Public Affairs

University of Illinois

1201 West Nevada Street, Urbana, Illinois 61801

The Institute of Government and Public Affairs of the University of Illinois is committed to research, service, and teaching in the area of governmental affairs. As part of this mission, the institute publishes on an occasional basis *Illinois Government Research*. Each issue brings to the attention of concerned citizens and officials some aspect of public policy research. Although most items are written by institute staff members, manuscripts by other authors will be considered for publication. In each case, the views expressed are solely the responsibility of the author and do not reflect institute policy or imply institute endorsement.

**Figure 2**  
**COUNTIES THAT LOST POPULATION BETWEEN:**



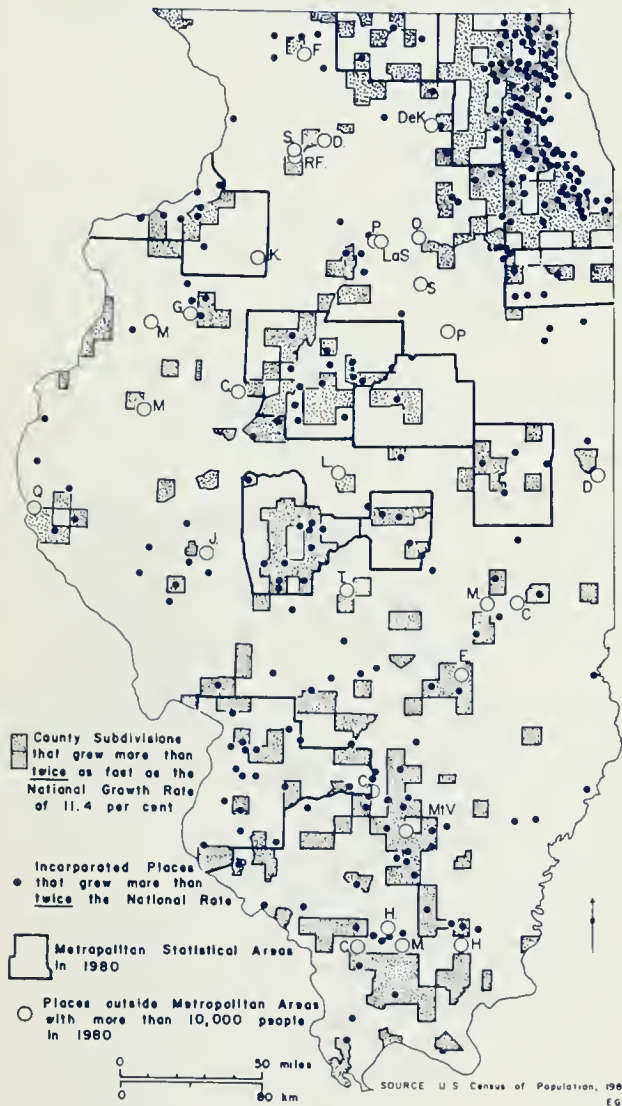
Since 1900, therefore, most local government officials in Illinois counties have had to adjust public programs and finances for population declines more often than for increases. Specifically, 58 Illinois counties lost people in four or more of the eight decades between 1900 and 1980 (Table 1). Just one in this group, Menard County, holds metropolitan status, but this role is new, for it was not until the late 1970s that the Bureau of the Census included Menard County with Sangamon County to enlarge the Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area. The population profile of Menard typifies the majority of Illinois counties: it had more decades of loss than gain during this century. Population figures increased in the 1930s and after 1960, but the number of people living in Menard County in 1980 remained below the peak for the century registered in 1900.

Only one Illinois county—Stark—lost people in every decade between 1900 and 1980. Located north of Peoria, Stark County comprises prime farmland, a relatively flat prairie without many wooded tracts, water resources, or rolling countryside that people seeking homesites beyond cities and towns increasingly choose. Stark County is also a bit too far from Peoria, Galesburg, and Moline-Rock Island for daily commuting. In addition, the farm population continues to drop, as farms expand in size and diminish in number. This migration, mostly out of the county, still exceeded the slight gains in the four incorporated places made during the 1970s.

Stark County, however, may join other rural counties that

In nonmetropolitan counties, for example, there were fifty-one townships or precincts in 1980 that had experienced population increases of more than 23 percent between 1970

**Figure 5**  
**FAST GROWTH AREAS IN ILLINOIS, 1970-80**



and 1980 and that were neither an incorporated place nor located next to a city. Many of these "open country" areas with new residents border on lakes created on smaller rivers in central and southern Illinois, such as Lakes Shelbyville, Mattoon, Sara, Carlyle, Rend, Kincaid, Cedar, Crab Orchard, and Egypt. Comparable settings with rapidly growing populations are in townships with lakes in the floodplain beside the Illinois River both above and below Peoria and Pekin.

North Otter Township in Macoupin County, adjacent to and just south of the Springfield Metropolitan Area, increased 73 percent in population between 1970 and 1980. There are no incorporated places in North Otter, and for seven successive decades, from 1900 to 1970, the township lost people. By 1970 only little more than half of the 1900 population lived there. During the 1970s, however, the number of people increased from 493 to 852 new people. Inspection of topographic maps reveals that all but a handful of these occupy dwellings around a lake called Sunset formed by damming a small tributary to Otter Creek. Although Sunset Lake covers parts of two mile-square sections in the township, the lake is too small to appear on the official 1981-82 Illinois Highway Map. Ironically, larger Otter Lake, also created since the mid-1960s a few miles west and identified on the official state highway map, contains only a few houses near its shoreline, according to topographic maps.

### CONCLUSION

The 1980 census reveals that in Illinois today vast areas contain residents on sites never before occupied and that people are moving to or near farmsteads that were evacuated in years past as small farms were expanded into huge tracts and the countryside was emptied of its population. Many unincorporated hamlets, villages, towns, and smaller cities have shared in this population redistribution. Past experience suggests that such redistributions will continue.

Selective as they are, these locational shifts can strain the resources of local and state governments. Careful monitoring of where people move, however, can help officials prepare for the future needs of citizens in their jurisdictions. Those from areas with similar settlement patterns can discuss past experiences and trade views on future expectations, thereby reducing uncertainty for themselves and the people who elected them. Maps like the ones presented here can help in this process. More detailed documentation of settlement changes for smaller areas can then refine the needs and further assist in these important public tasks.

children who can live more cheaply in the country by renting a former farmhouse and by tilling a few marginal acres around it on a part-time basis; and some may be escaping city taxes and, in the process, "externalizing their costs," to use the economists' language. All must have cars and trucks that run, and all seek sites, once restricted to the very rich, with a physical amenity or some combination of space, view, trees, water, and slope. Because the climate in Illinois will never rival Arizona's, even in summer, many people will migrate from the state to find that vague and heterogeneous region we call the Sun Belt. But Illinois, which looks flat, cropped, mined, and cluttered with industry from the heavily travelled routes used by most people, contains many locations that fit the desires of people who hanker for a "place in the country."

Decreases in unincorporated population, particularly through central Illinois, reflect continuing movements away from farms without compensating nonfarm settlement in these open, prairie lands. Losses in larger urban counties reflect municipal annexations. Cook County, for example, decreased 63,300 in its unincorporated population, as some of Chicago's suburbs extended their city boundaries. Even so, 132,800 people still lived in unincorporated territory of Cook County in 1980, more than in any other county in the state. Similarly, almost half-a-million people lived in the unincorporated parts of the five metropolitan counties adjacent to Cook in 1980. Together they registered an increase since 1970 of 60,300 people outside the corporate limits. This 16 percent increase in suburban Chicago occurred despite city boundary changes and the formation of several new municipalities.

The Rockford Metropolitan Area and other northern Illinois counties also added to their unincorporated populations in the 1970s. Most of the counties along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers increased, too, or recorded slight losses of a few hundred or so. The large shaded region in Figure 3, showing more people living outside cities and towns in eastern and southern Illinois, corresponds closely with counties that gained in total population between 1970 and 1980.

Changes in Effingham County again illustrate the trend. Each of the ten incorporated communities in that county increased in population during the 1970s, exhibiting the affinity of many people for living once more in smaller towns. People residing outside these corporate limits, however, accounted for more than one-half of the total rise in population during the decade. In 1980, 12,500 people lived in unincorporated parts of Effingham County. This figure exceeded the city of Effingham's total and represented two of every five people in the county. A small portion of these people still farm full time. Many more dabble part time with several cattle and a few acres of crops, while most people have absolutely nothing directly to do with the land other than weeding and harvesting summer gardens and mowing their lawns.

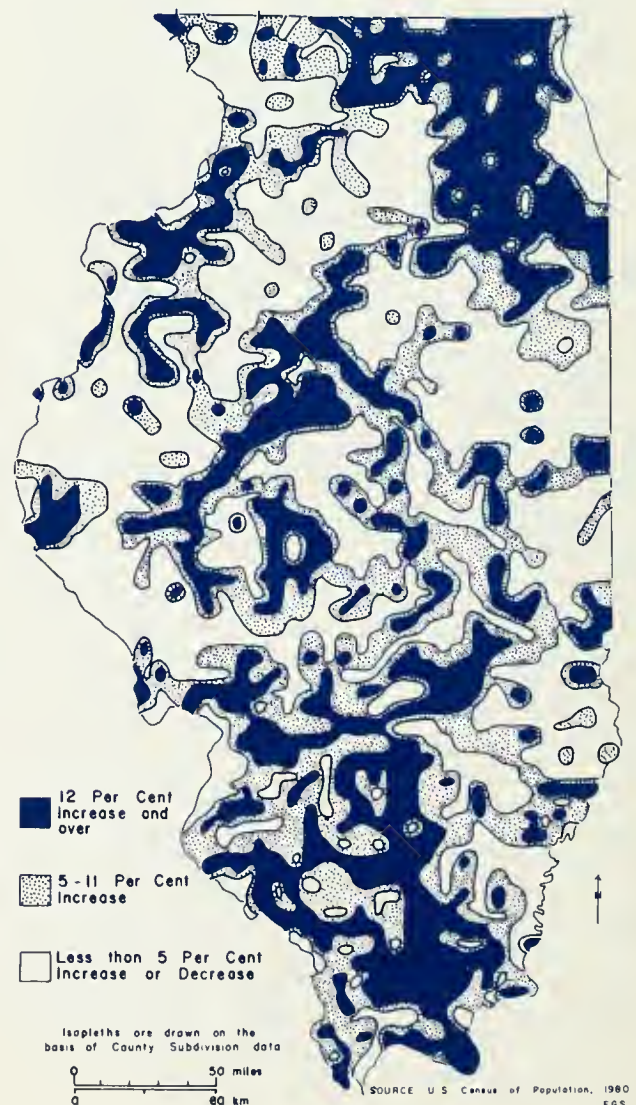
### Growth Areas

Maps of population growth patterns in the 1970s based on units smaller than counties (i.e., townships and precincts) disclose more precisely the dynamic locations in Illinois (Figures 4 and 5). Exceeding the Illinois and United States average rates of increase between 1970 and 1980 were areas that included outer suburbs and metropolitan margins as well as corridors between these places near routes of access such as freeways and amenities such as rivers. A broad growth region surrounds Chicago and close-in suburbs and extends northwest in a thick swath past Rockford toward Wisconsin and Iowa. More people settled away from this large growth area in northeastern Illinois in parallel paths in the Rock and Illinois river valleys to the Quad Cities and to Peoria and south toward St. Louis.

Across central Illinois, the growth corridors tend to link larger urban centers. To the south, population increases in the 1970s show a pattern that spreads widely through the more rugged and wooded lands of Little Egypt. Aside from significant losses in the largest cities and adjacent suburbs, areas of slow growth or population decline appear as pockets of productive prairie and other agricultural lands relatively remote from major transport courses and areas with desirable physical amenities.

The map locating the most rapidly growing places and areas in Illinois during the 1970s shows suburbanization and metropolitan decentralization as important forces in the settlement of the state. Especially striking is the concentration of growing places around Chicago and the townships farther out in the rolling morainic and lake country that are gaining newcomers at a rapid rate. County subdivisions beyond metropolitan areas that added people at rates more than twice the national average express similar desires of people for more personal space.

**Figure 4**  
**POPULATION GROWTH PATTERNS IN ILLINOIS**  
**1970-80**



**Table 1**  
**POPULATION LOSSES, BY DECADE AND COUNTY:**  
**1900-1980**

Number of decades in which losses occurred	Types of counties with losses		Total number of counties with losses
	Metropolitan	Nonmetropolitan	
8		1	1
7		8	8
6		13	13
5	1	18	19
4		17	17
3	3	10	13
2	2	5	7
1	4	4	8
0	13	3	16

Source U.S. Censuses of Population

already have switched from losses to gains. The rate of population decrease in Stark fell from 8 percent in the 1960s to less than 2 percent in the 1970s, an indication that depopulation, running unbroken since the late 1800s, will probably cease in the 1980s.

Striking turnarounds in settlement appeared in the 1970s all across the southern half of Illinois. Of 21 counties that lost people in six or seven of the eight decades after 1900, 16 displayed increases in the 1970s. This reversal is particularly apparent in southeastern Illinois which people had been leaving for decades. In the three counties in the lower Illinois River Valley with losses again in the 1970s, rates of decline were lower than in the 1960s, as in Stark County.

Calhoun County, squeezed between the Mississippi and lower Illinois rivers, is characteristic of these nonmetropolitan counties where residents until recently have been more attuned to losses than to gains. Remote from larger urban centers, Calhoun added 200 people between 1970 and 1980—its first increase since the 1930s. With losses in six of eight decades during this century, the 1980 count of 5,900 people still measured only two-thirds of that county's 1900 population, the highest in this century; this was also the case in Menard, Stark, and 29 other Illinois counties. There are no real growth pressures in Calhoun County; but if the pattern of the 1970s continues, concern will build, followed by calls for action over such things as the condition of roads, schools, and public safety and protection.

Growth management is already high on agendas of local governments in metropolitan counties where the 1980 census marked the highest population levels so far in the century. In 16 Illinois counties, all but three classified metropolitan, the number of people increased every decade between 1900 and 1980.

In 22 other counties, mostly nonmetropolitan, populations reached their peak in 1980, despite one or more decades of depopulation. Counties in this latter group included DeKalb, McDonough, and Jackson; each has a large regional university: Northern, Western, and Southern Illinois, respectively. Other nonmetropolitan counties that reached their highest populations in 1980 and had experienced recent growth following earlier decades of decrease are scattered throughout the state. They contain the smaller industrial and trade cities of Sterling, Morris, Galesburg, Quincy, Havana, Jacksonville, Effingham, Olney, Mt. Vernon, Chester, and Metropolis.

Effingham County, with four decades of decline but none since the 1940s, is representative of these areas. Always an

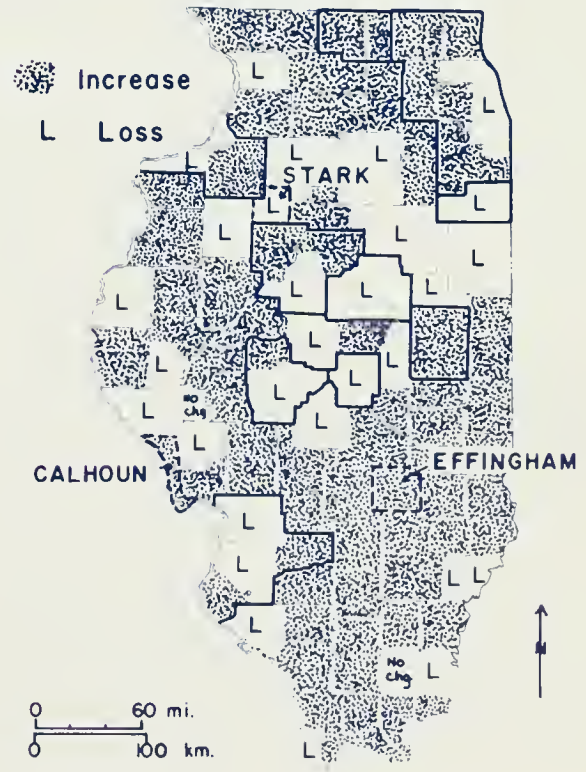
important railroad crossroads, the city and county of Effingham also benefited economically from intersecting, interstate free-ways that opened in the 1960s. Physical amenities associated with a small lake and several wooded areas along streams further enhanced residential possibilities in the locality. As a result, population in the county increased 26 percent in the 1970s for an absolute gain of 6,300 people. Rates of increase were slower in the 1960s and 1950s with increments of about 1,500 people each decade. Population declined 2 percent in the 1940s, following an influx of 3,000 people in the 1930s. Effingham County dropped about 500 people in each of the three decades between 1900 and 1930. The 1980 census count of 30,944 people was 51 percent higher than the 1900 total of 20,500. Since most of this gain took place in recent years, Effingham County public officials face the problem of supplying urban services to a growing population that has located increasingly outside of the boundaries of the county's municipalities.

### The Unincorporated Population

More than two-thirds of Illinois' counties, metropolitan and nonmetropolitan alike, contained more people in unincorporated areas in 1980 than in 1970 (Figure 3). In some areas, this increase reflects a traditional lag between settlement and annexation. In other areas, especially beyond metropolitan counties, this increase identifies people who are feeding streaks of independence by living beyond the confines, and frequently even the fringes, of corporate limits.

To these people, "five acres make good neighbors." Some are retired and in good health; some are young people with

**Figure 3**  
**UNINCORPORATED POPULATION CHANGE**  
**1970-80**





INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT  
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1201 WEST NEVADA STREET / URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801