

Chapter 2. Urban, Rural, and Farm Population, and Large Cities

The first systematic attempt to define the urban population of the United States occurred after the 1870 census when the urban population was defined generally as the population in places (generally, incorporated cities and towns) of 8,000 or more population. The urban threshold was dropped to 4,000 for the 1880 census, and to 2,500 for the 1910 census. The remainder of the population was classified as rural. For a comprehensive description, see Leon E. Truesdell (1949), “*The Development of the Urban-Rural Classification in the United States: 1874 to 1949*,” U. S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-23, No. 1. During the 1930s, the Census Bureau developed an historical series on the population of all urban places (2,500 or more population) since 1790. This work underlies the tables on the urban population by size of place since 1790 that first appeared in 1940 census reports and that have been updated in each subsequent census. A major change in the definition of urban occurred in the 1950 census with the introduction of urbanized areas, defined generally as cities of 50,000 or more population and their surrounding densely settled urban fringe, whether or not in incorporated places. In addition, unincorporated places of 2,500 or more population outside of urbanized areas were also defined as urban, starting in 1950. In the 2000 census, urban clusters were introduced, which represented an extension of the urbanized area concept down to densely settled areas with 2,500 up to 50,000 population.

The farm population (population living on farms) was first defined in the 1920 census; however, estimates of the farm population were developed back to 1880, as shown in Leon E. Truesdell (1960), “*Farm Population: 1880 to 1950*,” U.S. Bureau of the Census, Technical Paper No. 3. Formal criteria for defining a farm were introduced in the 1950 and 1960 censuses. In 2000, an occupied housing unit was defined as a farm residence if it was on a property of at least one acre with at least \$1,000 of agricultural products sold in 1999, and persons living on the farm property in multiunit buildings or in group quarters (e.g., dormitories) were not included in the farm population. Starting with 2010, data on the farm population are no longer available from the decennial census because of the elimination of the long-form questionnaire. Data on the farm population are not available from the American Community Survey (ACS). See About the Chartbook, Addition of Data for 2010.

For information on the many changes over time in the definition of urban, urbanized areas, and the farm population, see [References](#), [Decennial Census Publications](#).

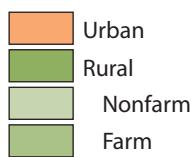
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Figure 2-1.

Population by Urban-Rural and Farm Residence for the United States: 1790 to 2010

(Numbers in millions)

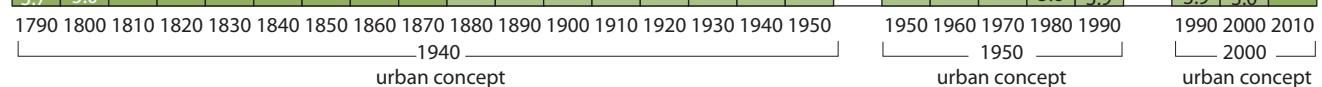


Populations not shown on figure:

Rural (total)	Urban
1880	36.0
1890	40.8
1900	45.8
1910	50.0
1920	51.6
1930	53.8
1940	57.2
1950	61.8

	Urban
1950	54.2
1960	54.1
1970	53.9
1980	59.5
1990	61.7

1990	54.6
2000	59.1



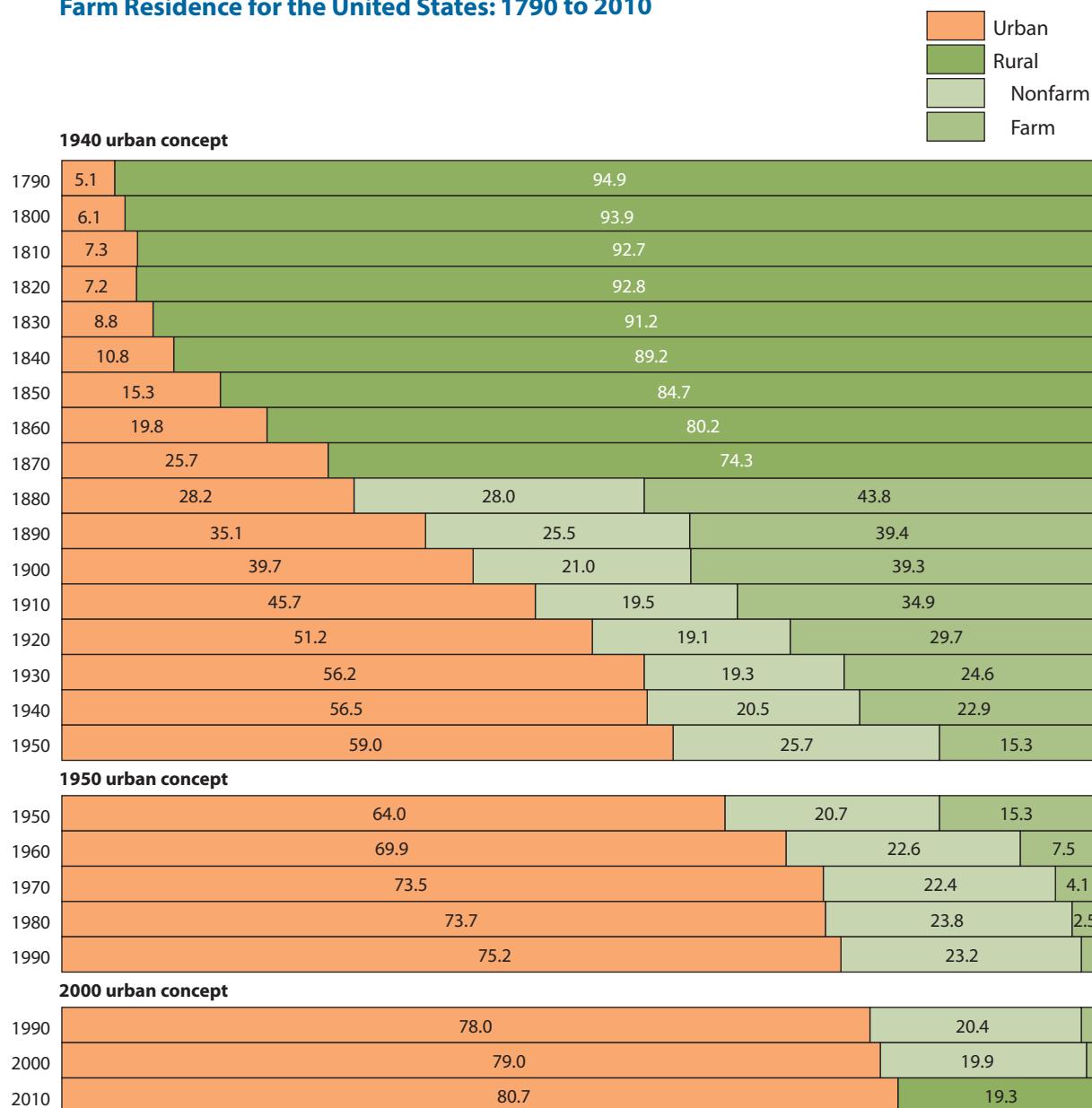
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications, and Leon E. Truesdell (1960), "Farm Population: 1880 to 1950," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Technical Paper No. 3. See wwwdemographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-2.

Percent Distribution of the Population by Urban-Rural and Farm Residence for the United States: 1790 to 2010



Percentages not shown on figure:

Rural farm

1990 1.6 (both concepts)
2000 1.1

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications, and Leon E. Truesdell (1960), "Farm Population: 1880 to 1950," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Technical Paper No. 3. See wwwdemographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-3.

Number of Places of 2,500 or More Population by Size of Place for the United States: 1790 to 2010

Year	Total	1,000,000 or more	500,000-999,999	250,000-499,999	100,000-249,999	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	5,000-9,999	2,500-4,999
1940 place concept										
1790.....	24	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	7	12
1800.....	33	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	15	12
1810.....	46	-	-	-	-	2	2	7	17	18
1820.....	61	-	-	-	1	2	2	8	22	26
1830.....	90	-	-	-	1	3	3	16	33	34
1840.....	131	-	-	1	2	2	7	25	48	46
1850.....	236	-	1	-	5	4	16	36	85	89
1860.....	392	-	2	1	6	7	19	58	136	163
1870.....	663	-	2	5	7	11	27	116	186	309
1880.....	939	1	3	4	12	15	42	146	249	467
1890.....	1,348	3	1	7	17	30	66	230	340	654
1900.....	1,737	3	3	9	23	40	82	280	465	832
1910.....	2,262	3	5	11	31	59	119	369	605	1,060
1920.....	2,722	3	9	13	43	76	143	465	715	1,255
1930.....	3,165	5	8	24	56	98	185	606	851	1,332
1940.....	3,464	5	9	23	55	107	213	665	965	1,422
1950.....	4,023	5	13	23	66	128	271	814	1,133	1,570
1950 place concept										
1950.....	4,284	5	13	23	65	126	252	778	1,176	1,846
1960.....	5,445	5	16	30	81	201	432	1,134	1,394	2,152
1970.....	6,435	6	20	30	100	240	520	1,385	1,839	2,295
1980.....	7,749	6	16	34	117	290	675	1,765	2,181	2,665
1990.....	8,510	8	15	41	136	355	741	1,852	2,336	3,026
2000.....	9,063	9	20	38	178	419	838	2,054	2,412	3,095
2010.....	9,644	9	24	41	208	488	896	2,212	2,510	3,256
CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF PLACES IN SIZE CATEGORY AND LARGER										
1940 place concept										
1790.....	24	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	12	24
1800.....	33	-	-	-	-	1	3	6	21	33
1810.....	46	-	-	-	-	2	4	11	28	46
1820.....	61	-	-	-	1	3	5	13	35	61
1830.....	90	-	-	-	1	4	7	23	56	90
1840.....	131	-	-	1	3	5	12	37	85	131
1850.....	236	-	1	1	6	10	26	62	147	236
1860.....	392	-	2	3	9	16	35	93	229	392
1870.....	663	-	2	7	14	25	52	168	354	663
1880.....	939	1	4	8	20	35	77	223	472	939
1890.....	1,348	3	4	11	28	58	124	354	694	1,348
1900.....	1,737	3	6	15	38	78	160	440	905	1,737
1910.....	2,262	3	8	19	50	109	228	597	1,202	2,262
1920.....	2,722	3	12	25	68	144	287	752	1,467	2,722
1930.....	3,165	5	13	37	93	191	376	982	1,833	3,165
1940.....	3,464	5	14	37	92	199	412	1,077	2,042	3,464
1950.....	4,023	5	18	41	107	235	506	1,320	2,453	4,023
1950 place concept										
1950.....	4,284	5	18	41	106	232	484	1,262	2,438	4,284
1960.....	5,445	5	21	51	132	333	765	1,899	3,293	5,445
1970.....	6,435	6	26	56	156	396	916	2,301	4,140	6,435
1980.....	7,749	6	22	56	173	463	1,138	2,903	5,084	7,749
1990.....	8,510	8	23	64	200	555	1,296	3,148	5,484	8,510
2000.....	9,063	9	29	67	245	664	1,502	3,556	5,968	9,063
2010.....	9,644	9	33	74	282	770	1,666	3,878	6,388	9,644

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications. See www.demographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-4.

Percent Urban in the Population by Size of Place for the United States: 1790 to 2010

Year	Total	1,000,000 or more	500,000-999,999	250,000-499,999	100,000-249,999	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	5,000-9,999	2,500-4,999	Other
1940 urban concept											
1790.....	5.1	-	-	-	-	-	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.1	(x)
1800.....	6.1	-	-	-	-	1.1	1.3	1.0	1.8	0.9	(x)
1810.....	7.3	-	-	-	-	2.1	1.1	1.5	1.6	1.0	(x)
1820.....	7.2	-	-	-	1.3	1.3	0.7	1.3	1.6	1.0	(x)
1830.....	8.8	-	-	-	1.6	1.7	0.8	1.9	1.8	1.0	(x)
1840.....	10.8	-	-	1.8	1.2	1.1	1.4	2.4	1.9	1.0	(x)
1850.....	15.3	-	2.2	-	2.8	1.2	2.6	2.4	2.6	1.4	(x)
1860.....	19.8	-	4.4	0.8	3.2	1.4	2.1	2.8	3.1	1.9	(x)
1870.....	25.7	-	4.2	4.0	2.6	2.0	2.4	4.4	3.3	2.8	(x)
1880.....	28.2	2.4	3.8	2.6	3.6	1.9	2.9	4.4	3.4	3.2	(x)
1890.....	35.1	5.8	1.3	3.9	4.4	3.2	3.6	5.5	3.8	3.6	(x)
1900.....	39.7	8.5	2.2	3.8	4.3	3.6	3.7	5.7	4.2	3.8	(x)
1910.....	45.7	9.2	3.3	4.3	5.3	4.5	4.4	6.0	4.6	4.1	(x)
1920.....	51.2	9.6	5.9	4.3	6.2	5.0	4.8	6.7	4.7	4.1	(x)
1930.....	56.2	12.3	4.7	6.5	6.1	5.3	5.2	7.4	4.8	3.8	(x)
1940.....	56.5	12.1	4.9	5.9	5.9	5.6	5.6	7.6	5.1	3.8	(x)
1950.....	59.0	11.5	6.1	5.5	6.4	6.0	6.3	8.3	5.2	3.7	(x)
1950 urban concept											
1950.....	64.0	11.5	6.1	5.5	6.3	5.9	5.8	7.9	5.4	4.3	5.3
1960.....	69.9	9.8	6.2	6.0	6.5	7.7	8.3	9.8	5.5	4.2	5.9
1970.....	73.5	9.2	6.4	5.1	7.0	8.2	8.8	10.5	6.4	4.0	7.8
1980.....	73.7	7.7	4.8	5.4	7.5	8.7	10.3	12.2	6.8	4.1	6.1
1990.....	75.2	8.0	4.1	5.9	7.9	9.7	10.3	11.7	6.7	4.3	6.7
2000 urban concept											
1990.....	78.0	8.0	4.0	5.8	7.9	9.6	10.2	11.5	6.4	3.8	10.8
2000.....	79.0	8.1	4.5	4.8	9.3	10.0	10.2	11.1	5.8	3.4	11.6
2010.....	80.7	7.6	5.2	4.6	10.1	10.9	9.9	10.9	5.4	3.2	12.8
CUMULATIVE PERCENT IN SIZE CATEGORY AND LARGER											
1940 urban concept											
1790.....	5.1	-	-	-	-	-	1.6	2.8	4.0	5.1	(x)
1800.....	6.1	-	-	-	-	1.1	2.4	3.4	5.2	6.1	(x)
1810.....	7.3	-	-	-	-	2.1	3.2	4.7	6.3	7.3	(x)
1820.....	7.2	-	-	-	1.3	2.6	3.3	4.6	6.2	7.2	(x)
1830.....	8.8	-	-	-	1.6	3.3	4.1	6.0	7.8	8.8	(x)
1840.....	10.8	-	-	1.8	3.0	4.1	5.5	7.9	9.8	10.8	(x)
1850.....	15.3	-	2.2	2.2	5.1	6.3	8.9	11.3	13.9	15.3	(x)
1860.....	19.8	-	4.4	5.2	8.4	9.8	12.0	14.8	17.9	19.8	(x)
1870.....	25.7	-	4.2	8.1	10.7	12.7	15.1	19.5	22.9	25.7	(x)
1880.....	28.2	2.4	6.2	8.8	12.4	14.3	17.2	21.5	24.9	28.2	(x)
1890.....	35.1	5.8	7.1	11.0	15.4	18.6	22.2	27.7	31.5	35.1	(x)
1900.....	39.7	8.5	10.6	14.4	18.7	22.3	25.9	31.7	35.9	39.7	(x)
1910.....	45.7	9.2	12.5	16.8	22.1	26.6	31.0	37.0	41.6	45.7	(x)
1920.....	51.2	9.6	15.5	19.8	25.9	30.9	35.7	42.4	47.1	51.2	(x)
1930.....	56.2	12.3	17.0	23.4	29.6	34.9	40.1	47.5	52.3	56.2	(x)
1940.....	56.5	12.1	17.0	22.9	28.9	34.4	40.1	47.6	52.7	56.5	(x)
1950.....	59.0	11.5	17.6	23.1	29.5	35.5	41.8	50.1	55.3	59.0	(x)
1950 urban concept											
1950.....	64.0	11.5	17.6	23.1	29.4	35.3	41.2	49.0	54.5	58.8	64.0
1960.....	69.9	9.8	15.9	21.9	28.4	36.2	44.5	54.3	59.8	64.0	69.9
1970.....	73.5	9.2	15.6	20.8	27.8	36.0	44.8	55.3	61.7	65.7	73.5
1980.....	73.7	7.7	12.5	17.9	25.4	34.1	44.5	56.7	63.5	67.6	73.7
1990.....	75.2	8.0	12.1	18.0	25.9	35.5	45.9	57.5	64.2	68.5	75.2
2000 urban concept											
1990.....	78.0	8.0	12.1	17.9	25.7	35.3	45.6	57.0	63.4	67.3	78.0
2000.....	79.0	8.1	12.7	17.5	26.9	36.9	47.1	58.2	64.0	67.4	79.0
2010.....	80.7	7.6	12.8	17.4	27.5	38.4	48.3	59.3	64.7	67.9	80.7

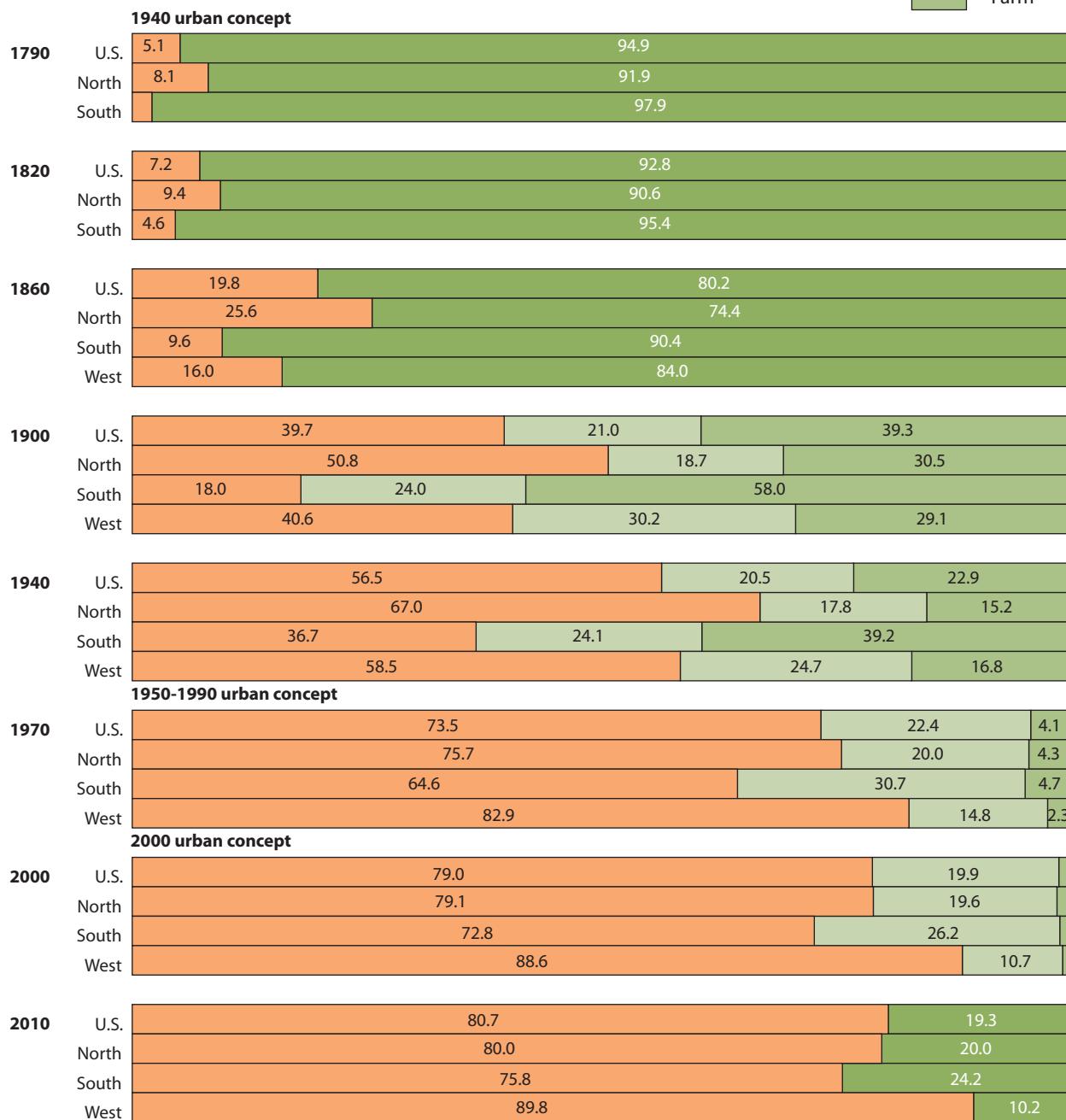
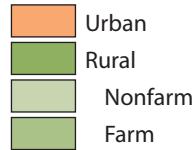
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications. See www.demographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-5.

**Percent Distribution of the Population by Urban-Rural and Farm Residence for the United States by Region:
1790, 1820, 1860, 1900, 1940, 1970, 2000, and 2010**



Percentage not shown on figure:

Urban	Farm	Urban	Farm	Urban	Farm
1790	South	2.1	2000	U.S.	1.1
				North	1.3
				South	1.0
				West	0.6
				2010	U.S. 1.1 North 1.3 South 1.0 West 0.6

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications, and Leon E. Truesdell (1960), "Farm Population: 1880 to 1950," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Technical Paper No. 3. See wwwdemographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-6.

**Number of Places of 2,500 or More Population by Size of Place for the United States
by Region: 1790, 1820, 1860, 1900, 1940, 1970, 2000, and 2010**

Year	Region	Total	1,000,000 or more	500,000-999,999	250,000-499,999	100,000-249,999	50,000-99,999	25,000-49,999	10,000-24,999	5,000-9,999	2,500-4,999
1790.....	U.S.	24	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	7	12
	North	18	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	7	8
	South	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
1820.....	U.S.	61	-	-	-	1	2	2	8	22	26
	North	44	-	-	-	1	1	1	5	16	20
	South	17	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	6	6
1860.....	U.S.	392	-	2	1	6	7	19	58	136	163
	North	314	-	2	1	4	4	16	46	116	125
	South	70	-	-	-	2	2	3	11	19	33
	West	8	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	5
1900.....	U.S.	1,737	3	3	9	23	40	82	280	465	832
	North	1,256	3	2	6	19	29	60	219	367	551
	South	355	-	1	2	2	7	17	47	74	205
	West	126	-	-	1	2	4	5	14	24	76
1940.....	U.S.	3,464	5	9	23	55	107	213	665	965	1,422
	North	2,062	4	6	11	36	68	146	438	588	765
	South	1,002	-	2	8	13	30	43	154	267	485
	West	400	1	1	4	6	9	24	73	110	172
1970.....	U.S.	6,435	6	20	30	100	240	520	1,385	1,839	2,295
	North	3,311	4	8	11	46	119	273	724	974	1,152
	South	2,046	1	7	12	34	56	130	414	592	800
	West	1,078	1	5	7	20	65	117	247	273	343
2000.....	U.S.	9,063	9	20	38	178	419	838	2,054	2,412	3,095
	North	4,118	3	5	12	49	160	369	932	1,109	1,479
	South	3,154	3	10	11	56	121	258	739	848	1,108
	West	1,791	3	5	15	73	138	211	383	455	508
2010.....	U.S.	9,644	9	24	41	208	488	896	2,212	2,510	3,256
	North	4,194	3	5	14	50	169	360	944	1,121	1,528
	South	3,461	3	11	12	70	151	309	827	888	1,190
	West	1,989	3	8	15	88	168	227	441	501	538

CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF PLACES IN SIZE CATEGORY AND LARGER

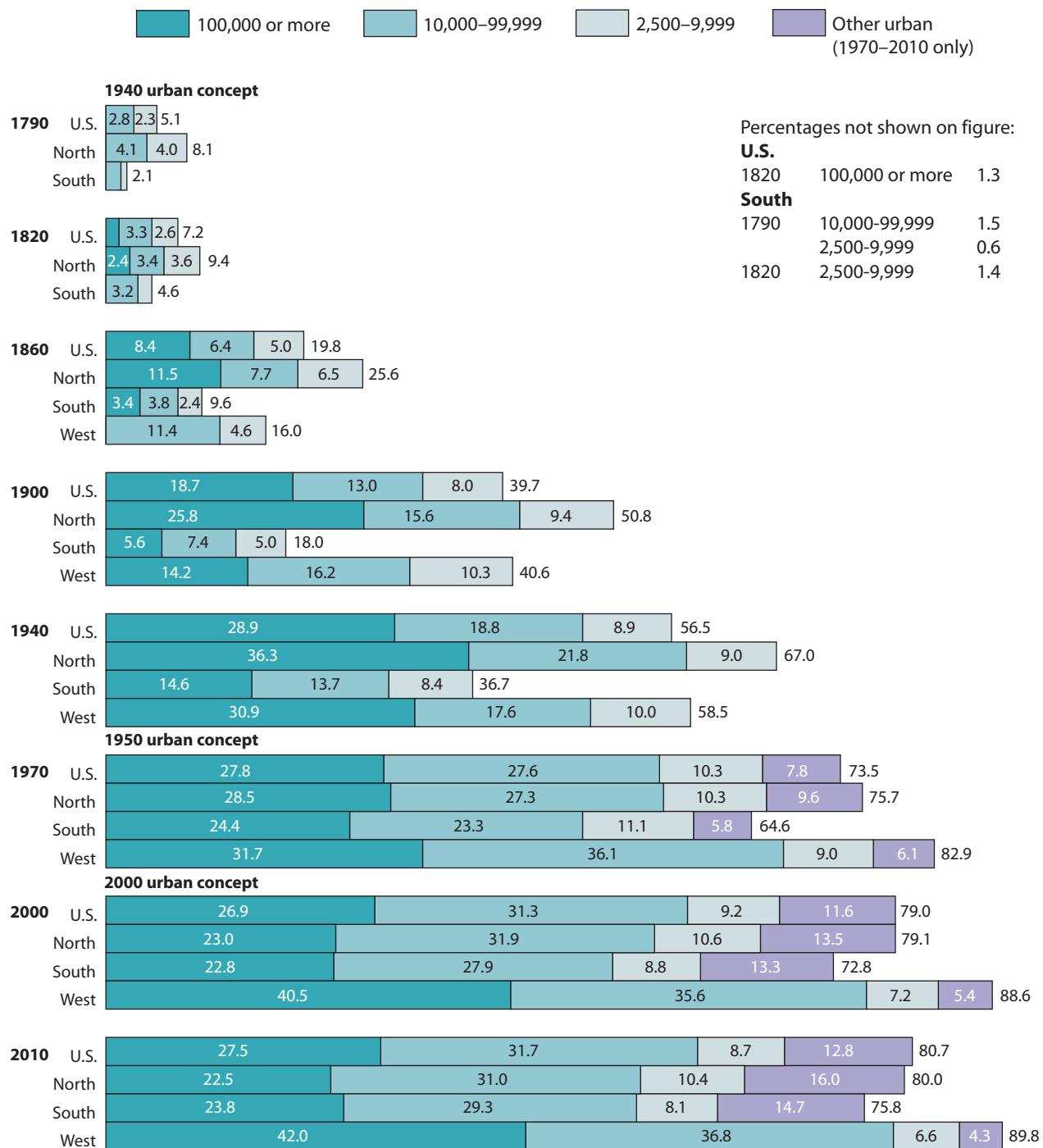
1790.....	U.S.	24	-	-	-	-	-	2	5	12	24
	North	18	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	10	18
	South	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	6
1820.....	U.S.	61	-	-	-	1	3	5	13	35	61
	North	44	-	-	-	1	2	3	8	24	44
	South	17	-	-	-	-	1	2	5	11	17
1860.....	U.S.	392	-	2	3	9	16	35	93	229	392
	North	314	-	2	3	7	11	27	73	189	314
	South	70	-	-	-	2	4	7	18	37	70
	West	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1900.....	U.S.	1,737	3	6	15	38	78	160	440	905	1,737
	North	1,256	3	5	11	30	59	119	338	705	1,256
	South	355	-	1	3	5	12	29	76	150	355
	West	126	-	-	1	3	7	12	26	50	126
1940.....	U.S.	3,464	5	14	37	92	199	412	1,077	2,042	3,464
	North	2,062	4	10	21	57	125	271	709	1,297	2,062
	South	1,002	-	2	10	23	53	96	250	517	1,002
	West	400	1	2	6	12	21	45	118	228	400
1970.....	U.S.	6,435	6	26	56	156	396	916	2,301	4,140	6,435
	North	3,311	4	12	23	69	188	461	1,185	2,159	3,311
	South	2,046	1	8	20	54	110	240	654	1,246	2,046
	West	1,078	1	6	13	33	98	215	462	735	1,078
2000.....	U.S.	9,063	9	29	67	245	664	1,502	3,556	5,968	9,063
	North	4,118	3	8	20	69	229	598	1,530	2,639	4,118
	South	3,154	3	13	24	80	201	459	1,298	2,146	3,154
	West	1,791	3	8	23	96	234	445	828	1,283	1,791
2010.....	U.S.	9,644	9	33	74	282	770	1,666	3,878	6,388	9,644
	North	4,194	3	8	22	72	241	601	1,545	2,666	4,194
	South	3,461	3	14	26	96	247	556	1,383	2,271	3,461
	West	1,989	3	11	26	114	282	509	950	1,451	1,989

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications. See www.demographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-7.

Percent Urban in the Population by Size of Place for the United States by Region: 1790, 1820, 1860, 1900, 1940, 1970, 2000, and 2010



Percentages not shown on figure:

U.S.

1820 100,000 or more 1.3

South

1790 10,000-99,999 1.5

2,500-9,999 0.6

1820 2,500-9,999 1.4

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications. See www.demographicchartbook.com, References.

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Figure 2-8.

Ten Largest Cities in the United States: 1790 to 2010

(Numbers in thousands. Includes towns and other urban places. See Chapter 1 text)

North (Green)
South (Yellow)
West (Red)

		1790	1800	1810	1820
1.....	New York, NY	33	61	96	124
2.....	Philadelphia, PA	29	41	54	64
3.....	Boston, MA	18	27	47	63
4.....	Charleston, SC	16	25	34	43
5.....	Baltimore, MD	14	19	25	27
6.....	N.Liberties, PA	10	11	20	25
7.....	Salem, MA	8	10	17	20
8.....	Newport, RI	7	9	14	15
9.....	Providence, RI	6	8	13	13
10.....	(two places) ¹	6	7	11	13
		1830	1840	1850	1860
1.....	New York, NY	203	313	516	814
2.....	Baltimore, MD	81	102	169	566
3.....	Philadelphia, PA	80	102	137	267
4.....	Boston, MA	61	94	121	212
5.....	New Orleans, LA	46	93	116	178
6.....	Charleston, SC	30	46	115	169
7.....	N.Liberties, PA	29	36	97	161
8.....	Cincinnati, OH	25	34	78	161
9.....	Albany, NY	24	34	59	112
10.....	Southwark,PA	21	29	51	81
		1870	1880	1890	1900
1.....	New York, NY	942	1,206	1,515	3,437
2.....	Philadelphia, PA	674	847	1,100	1,699
3.....	Brooklyn, NY	396	567	1,047	1,294
4.....	St.Louis, MO	311	503	806	575
5.....	Chicago, IL	299	363	452	561
6.....	Baltimore, MD	267	351	448	509
7.....	Boston, MA	251	332	434	382
8.....	Cincinnati, OH	216	255	299	352
9.....	New Orleans, LA	191	234	297	343
10.....	San Francisco, CA	149	216	261	326
		1910	1920	1930	1940
1.....	New York, NY	4,767	5,620	6,930	7,455
2.....	Chicago, IL	2,185	2,702	3,376	3,397
3.....	Philadelphia, PA	1,549	1,824	1,951	1,931
4.....	St Louis, MO	687	993	1,569	1,623
5.....	Boston, MA	671	797	1,238	1,504
6.....	Cleveland, OH	561	773	900	878
7.....	Baltimore, MD	558	748	822	859
8.....	Pittsburgh, PA	534	734	805	816
9.....	Detroit, MI	466	588	781	771
10.....	Buffalo, NY	424	577	670	672
		1950	1960	1970	1980
1.....	New York, NY	7,892	7,782	7,895	7,072
2.....	Chicago, IL	3,621	3,550	3,367	3,005
3.....	Philadelphia, PA	2,072	2,479	2,816	2,967
4.....	Los Angeles, CA	1,970	2,003	1,949	1,688
5.....	Detroit, MI	1,850	1,670	1,511	1,595
6.....	Baltimore, MD	950	939	1,233	1,203
7.....	Cleveland, OH	915	938	906	904
8.....	St Louis, MO	857	876	844	876
9.....	Washington, DC	802	764	757	790
10.....	Boston, MA	801	750	751	787
		1990	2000	2010	
1.....	New York, NY	7,323	8,008	8,175	
2.....	Los Angeles, CA	3,485	3,695	3,793	
3.....	Chicago, IL	2,784	2,896	2,696	
4.....	Houston, TX	1,631	1,954	2,099	
5.....	Philadelphia, PA	1,586	1,518	1,526	
6.....	San Diego, CA	1,111	1,321	1,446	
7.....	Detroit, MI	1,028	1,223	1,327	
8.....	Dallas, TX	1,007	1,189	1,307	
9.....	Phoenix, AZ	983	1,145	1,198	
10.....	San Antonio, TX	936	951	946	

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census publications, and Campbell Gibson (1998), "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States, U.S. Bureau of the Census," Population Division Working Paper No. 56. See www.demographicchartbook.com, References.

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¹ Marblehead, MA and Southwark, PA
(each with a population of 5,661)

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