CENTRAL OHIO
POPULATION PROJECTIONS
2025-2055

Endorsed By:

MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MORPC

Regionomics® From Trends to Insight to Action

THE COLUMBUS REGION

BETA DISTRICT









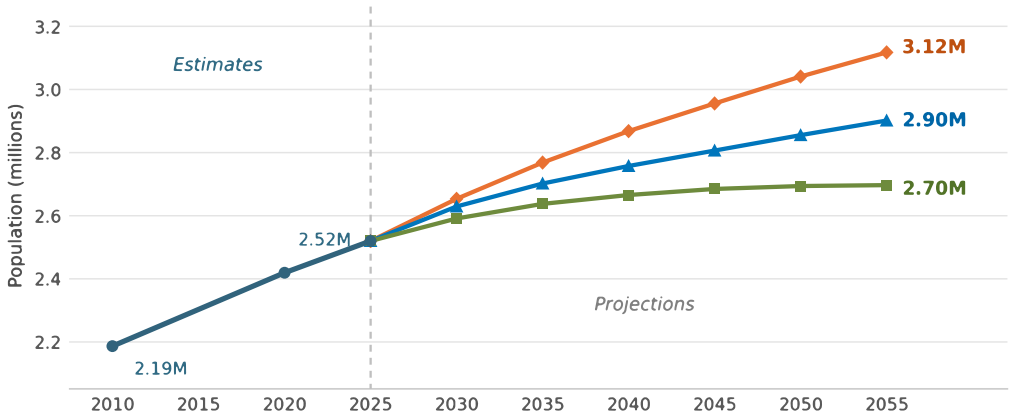
Central Ohio Population: Still Growing. What Drives It Is Changing.

2026 Population Estimates and 2025–2055 County Projections • September 2026

MORPC region: Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Hocking, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, Ross and Union counties.

2,536,115	+116,900	2.70–3.12M
Residents in the 15-county region January 1, 2026	Added since the April 2020 decennial Census	Range of 2055 outcomes across migration scenarios

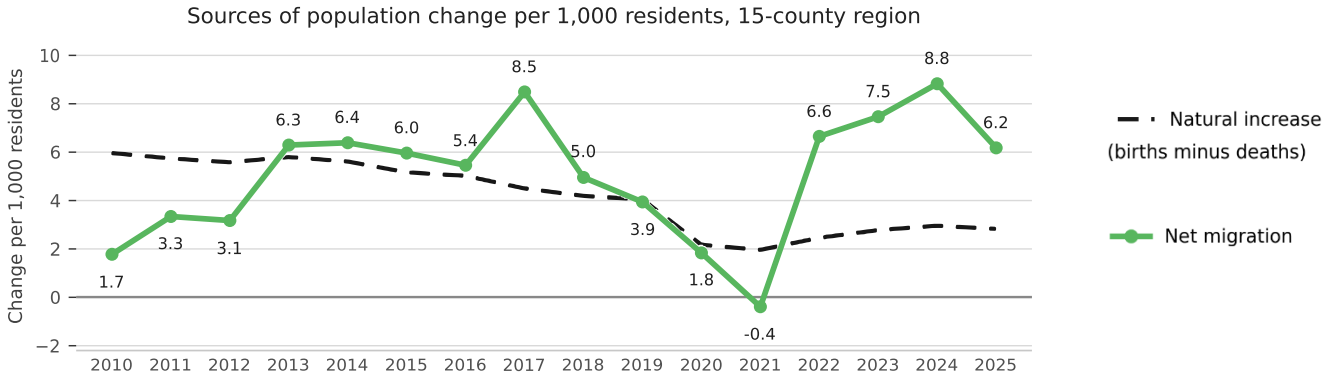
WHERE THE REGION IS HEADED



Estimates through 2025, then three migration scenarios. Green = low, blue = median, orange = high. Source: MORPC county estimates and draft 2025–2055 county projections.

- **The region grows in every scenario.** By 2055 the region reaches 2.70 million under low migration, 2.90 million at the median, and 3.12 million under high migration. None shows decline.
- **2.90 million is a best guess, not a promise.** The median scenario assumes the region consistently repeats the middle of its last 15 years of migration, which would be a gain of roughly 360,000 residents between 2026 and 2055.
- **The spread is the real message.** About 420,000 residents separate the low and high scenarios. That gap is almost entirely a migration question.

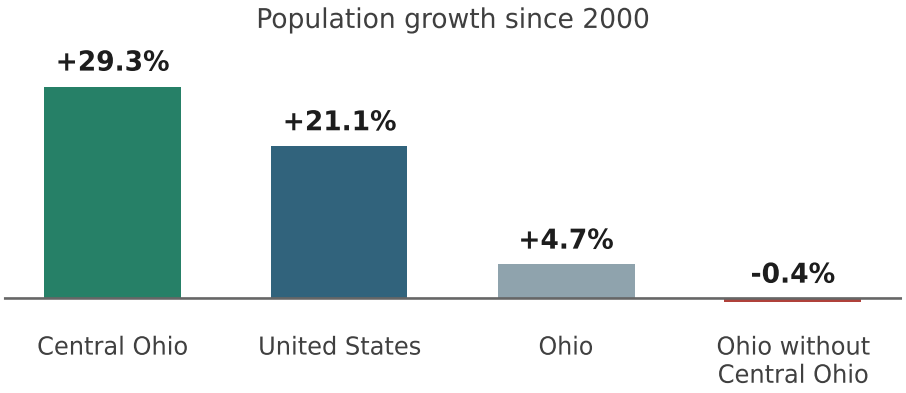
GROWTH IS SHIFTING FROM BIRTHS TO MIGRATION



Natural increase — births minus deaths — has fallen by more than half since 2010, while net migration has become the region's primary source of growth. Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program; Ohio Department of Health.

- **Births are down and deaths are up.** Births per 1,000 residents fell from 13.8 in 2010 to 11.6 in 2025, while deaths rose from 7.8 to 8.7. Natural increase dropped from 6.0 per 1,000 to 2.8.
- **Around 2040, deaths begin to exceed births.** From that point forward, every additional resident comes from migration. This reflects an aging population and national fertility trends, not anything particular to Central Ohio.
- **Migration in recent years means international migration.** Migration now means international migration. Over 2020–2025, international migration accounted for 96 percent of the region's net migration, adding 68,113 residents while net domestic migration was essentially flat at −390 and was negative outright in 2021, 2023 and 2024.
- **Central Ohio attracts other Ohioans.** From 2011 to 2023, Central Ohio gained about 30,000 households from around Ohio.

CENTRAL OHIO IS CARRYING THE STATE



Source: U.S. Census Population Estimates Program, MORPC analysis.

- **The region outpaces the nation.** Since 2000 the 15-county region has grown 29.3 percent, ahead of the United States at 21.1 percent and far ahead of Ohio at 4.7 percent.
- **Without this region, Ohio shrinks.** Ohio excluding Central Ohio has lost population since 2000. The state's growth story is, in large part, this region's growth story.
- **The State projects more conservatively.** Two of the three new scenarios run above the Ohio Department of Development's 2023 projections; only the low-migration scenario is roughly in line with them.

Between 2020 and 2025 Central Ohio added 100,045 residents, about a third from natural change and two-thirds from migration. That is modest next to fast-growing Sun Belt metros, but is steady, positive growth different from many peer metros in the Midwest.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE REGION

- **A more moderate pace is an opportunity.** Slower growth than we projected four years ago gives communities and businesses room to get ahead of demand rather than react to it.
- **Growth will not be evenly distributed.** Several counties in the 15-county region are projected to lose population even as the region as a whole continues to grow.
- **Plans should consider all three scenarios.** The low, median, and high scenarios are all plausible. Infrastructure, housing, and service decisions should be tested against the range rather than a single line on a chart.

ACTION IS NECESSARY — GROWTH IS NOT GUARANTEED

Building a deliberate strategy to recruit and welcome new residents while meeting the market needs of a changing population matters whether the region intends to grow or simply hold steady.

- **Attraction is now the main growth strategy.** A region whose growth depends on migration must remain a place people choose to move to, whether from elsewhere in Ohio or from other states and other countries. Housing supply, affordability, education, and quality of life are growth issues.
- **Retention is also a growth strategy.** Keeping residents matters as much as attracting them. Investment in education, workforce, and quality of life connects people to the region's prosperity and slows out-migration.
- **More housing is still needed.** Every scenario requires more housing. How much depends on migration, and that is before addressing the backlog from years of underbuilding.
- **Infrastructure investment is critical.** Effectively competing for growth requires regional cooperation on water and energy as well as investments in transportation with robust options in air service and facilities, road upgrades, transit and rail service, and sidewalks and trails. Alignment with growth and retention goals promotes fiscal sustainability and quality of life.
- **Regional policy must address larger disruptive trends.** Local and regional policies must leverage and navigate national policy shifts in migration, changes to workforce and productivity from AI deployment, and shifting federal and state investments.

COUNTY-LEVEL PROJECTIONS

MORPC's data team produced 2025-2055 population projection charts and accompanying tables for the region and each of the 15 Central Ohio counties. Scan the QR code or go to tinyurl.com/2026CountyControls.

County-level projections and data | Sources: MORPC 2026 County Population Estimates; MORPC 2025–2055 County Projections; U.S. Census Population Estimates Program (2025 vintage); Ohio Department of Health; IRS county-to-county migration data.