Ohio's Cincinnati-Columbus-Cleveland Corridor Counties Will Thrive as Rest of State Slowly Dies

There simply is no other way to put it than to say that Ohio is increasingly becoming a fractured state. One group features the minority of wealthy and growing core and collar counties around Cincinnati and Columbus along with the suburban counties outside of Cleveland where the professional and government worker classes live. The other group contains the majority of poorer and shrinking counties around the state, especially the crescent starting in the upper northeast that runs along the Ohio River over towards Cincinnati.

On the positive side, there are twenty-one counties that will grow by 10% or more from 2010 to 2050, led by Delaware County at 81.6%, Franklin County at 57.8%, and Union County at 51.4%. Another eighteen counties will grow more slowly ranging from a high of 9.9% in Morrow County to a low of 0.5% in Highland County. Nine counties will grow less than 5% from 2010 to 2050.

PART 3 OF 3
Opportunity Ohio's Projected 2050 Population & Political Power Series

On the negative side, a whopping forty-nine out of eighty-eight counties will LOSE population from 2010 to 2050, with fifteen counties shrinking by 10% or more. The vast majority of these counties are Ohio River counties on the eastern side of the state. The other thirty-four shrinking counties will lose less than 10% of their citizens, with Fayette County, Shelby County, and Noble County losing 0.3%, 0.5%, and 0.9%, respectively.

By 2050, the population differences among the counties will grow more extreme. Franklin County will swell to nearly 1.9 million residents as Monroe County will shrink to just over 12,000 citizens, or just 0.007% of Franklin County. Only twenty-seven counties will contain 5% or more of the population living in Franklin County. Thirty-nine counties will hold 50,000 or fewer Ohioans. The vast majority of Ohio residents will live in counties near the I-71 Cincinnati-Columbus-Cleveland corridor.

The policy implications of this growing divide are severe. Here are a few:

- Should such small counties remain as is, or should Ohio look to consolidate counties or at least the political apparatus of small counties so finite resources can be leveraged more effectively? It doesn't make sense to incur the costs of county commissions and county employees in every county when such entities can be combined to lessen the cost to taxpayers, especially when Ohio's combined state and local tax burden is among America's highest.

- How will such population shifts impact the 613 school districts, especially those in rural areas? Fewer people and businesses will mean lower tax revenues or a growing burden on those who remain. As with counties, should school district administrations be consolidated so that costs can be lowered and shared more broadly?

- How should limited infrastructure funds be allocated to small counties given the growing need the larger counties will have for traffic, housing, roads, and other government services? Along similar lines, what quality of medical and retirement care will be available to the shrinking counties whose residents will on average be older and poorer, thereby needing a greater level of care?

- Having tried virtually all other policy options, is it time to make Ohio a right-to-work state so that more companies look to come to Ohio, especially with access to so much inexpensive land and low-cost energy for large manufacturing facilities?

- Given the current weakness of Ohio's major airports, should Ohio look to move Cincinnati's airport out of Kentucky to Wilmington so that more of Ohio's southeastern population can reach it more easily? Similarly, should Ohio move Columbus' landlocked airport from Franklin County to Rickenbacker straddling both Franklin and Pickaway Counties or even combine the air traffic from Columbus and Cleveland to a new large airport in Richland County (an hour from each city or roughly the same distance most of Greater Denver is from Denver International Airport)? In both cases, should Ohio look to build larger airports like Denver did in the mid-1990s to become even more attractive to businesses and citizens and seek to pull air traffic from the weather nightmare of Chicago?

- Are there ways to spur population growth in smaller counties? For example, could state government be spread more evenly and fairly across Ohio so Franklin County didn't solely benefit from taxes paid by all Ohioans? What about doing more to leverage the natural resources available in the crescent counties such as natural gas, nature, and recreation. Why does West Virginia have the Greenbrier Resort and Pennsylvania the Nemacolin Resort, but Ohio lacks a similar destination resort area despite similar beauty and topography in southeastern Ohio?

- How can more be done to ensure the Greater Toledo and northwestern Ohio areas benefit more from the automotive resurgence in Greater Detroit?

These issues represent just a few of the issues that will increasingly arise as Ohio becomes a fractured state. State, county, city, and smaller Ohio government entities must start thinking about and planning for this future, as failure to do so will only make it harder for Ohio to escape its current mediocrity and malaise.
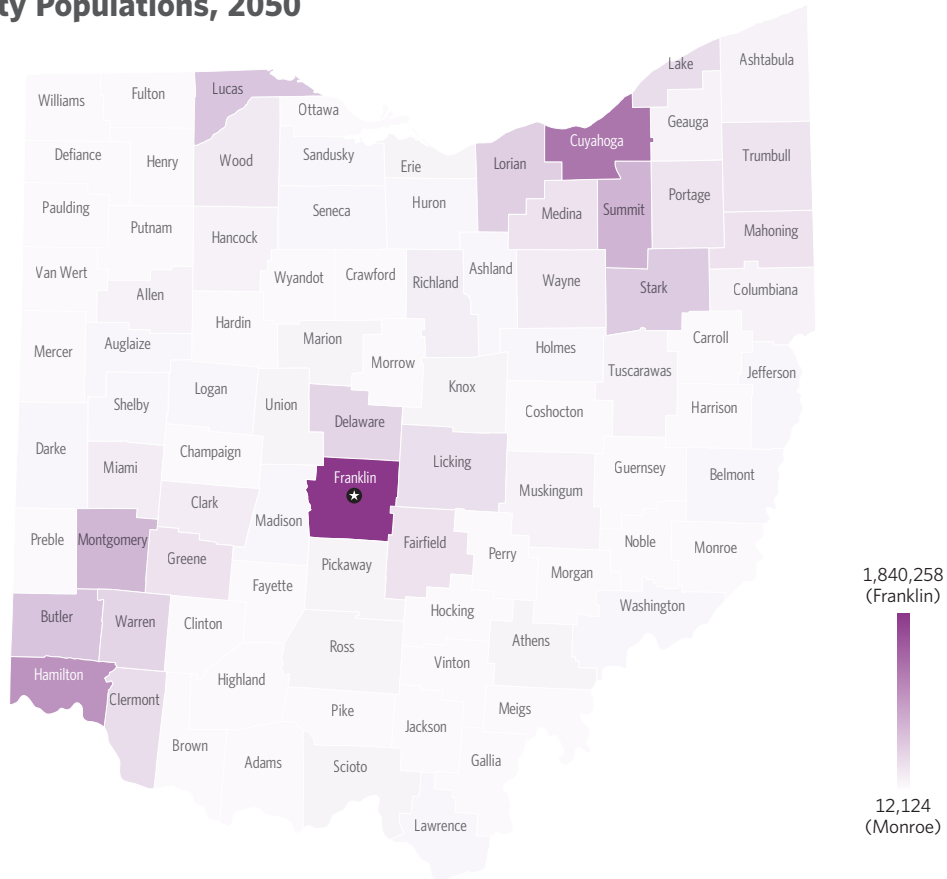
Ohio County Populations, 2010

1,278,326
(Cuyahoga)

13,415
(Vinton)
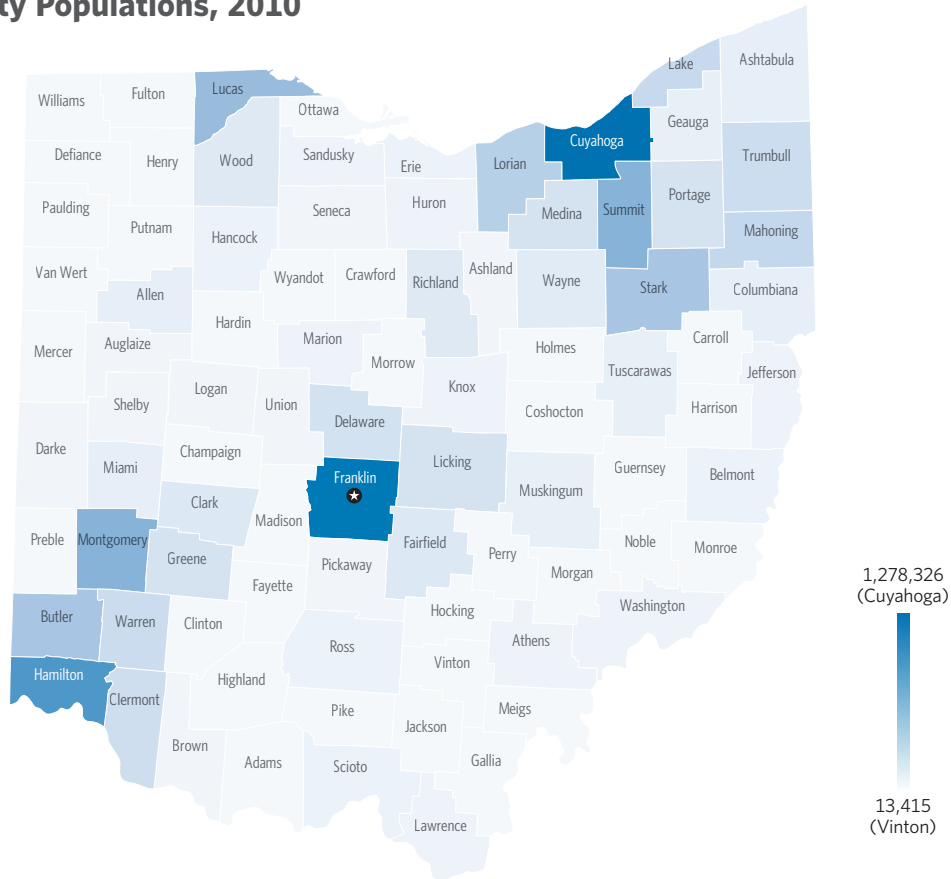
	County	Population		County	Population		County	Population		County	Population
1	Cuyahoga	1,278,326	23	Richland	124,174	45	Seneca	56,626	67	Coshocton	36,927
2	Franklin	1,166,371	24	Wayne	114,433	46	Pickaway	55,723	68	Perry	36,035
3	Hamilton	802,284	25	Columbiana	107,858	47	Ashland	53,319	69	Morrow	34,818
4	Summit	541,674	26	Allen	106,395	48	Darke	52,962	70	Putnam	34,460
5	Montgomery	536,217	27	Miami	102,478	49	Union	52,416	71	Jackson	33,273
6	Lucas	441,571	28	Ashtabula	101,394	50	Shelby	49,311	72	Hardin	32,101
7	Stark	375,470	29	Geauga	93,416	51	Auglaize	45,932	73	Gallia	31,093
8	Butler	369,078	30	Tuscarawas	92,560	52	Logan	45,765	74	Hocking	29,468
9	Lorain	301,468	31	Muskingum	86,220	53	Brown	44,878	75	Fayette	29,013
10	Mahoning	238,385	32	Scioto	79,529	54	Crawford	43,770	76	Carroll	28,825
11	Lake	230,016	33	Ross	78,099	55	Highland	43,608	77	Pike	28,732
12	Warren	213,531	34	Erie	77,036	56	Madison	43,393	78	Van Wert	28,664
13	Trumbull	209,868	35	Hancock	74,687	57	Fulton	42,614	79	Adams	28,562
14	Clermont	197,708	36	Belmont	70,318	58	Holmes	42,471	80	Henry	28,116
15	Delaware	175,148	37	Jefferson	69,614	59	Preble	42,174	81	Meigs	23,729
16	Medina	172,543	38	Marion	66,454	60	Clinton	41,903	82	Wyandot	22,592
17	Licking	166,736	39	Athens	65,221	61	Ottawa	41,394	83	Paulding	19,577
18	Greene	161,612	40	Lawrence	62,418	62	Mercer	40,784	84	Harrison	15,846
19	Portage	161,450	41	Washington	61,709	63	Guernsey	40,117	85	Morgan	15,064
20	Fairfield	146,408	42	Knox	61,087	64	Champaign	40,060	86	Noble	14,634
21	Clark	138,245	43	Sandusky	60,876	65	Defiance	39,103	87	Monroe	14,579
22	Wood	125,939	44	Huron	59,578	66	Williams	37,535	88	Vinton	13,415

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau and Opportunity Ohio calculations.
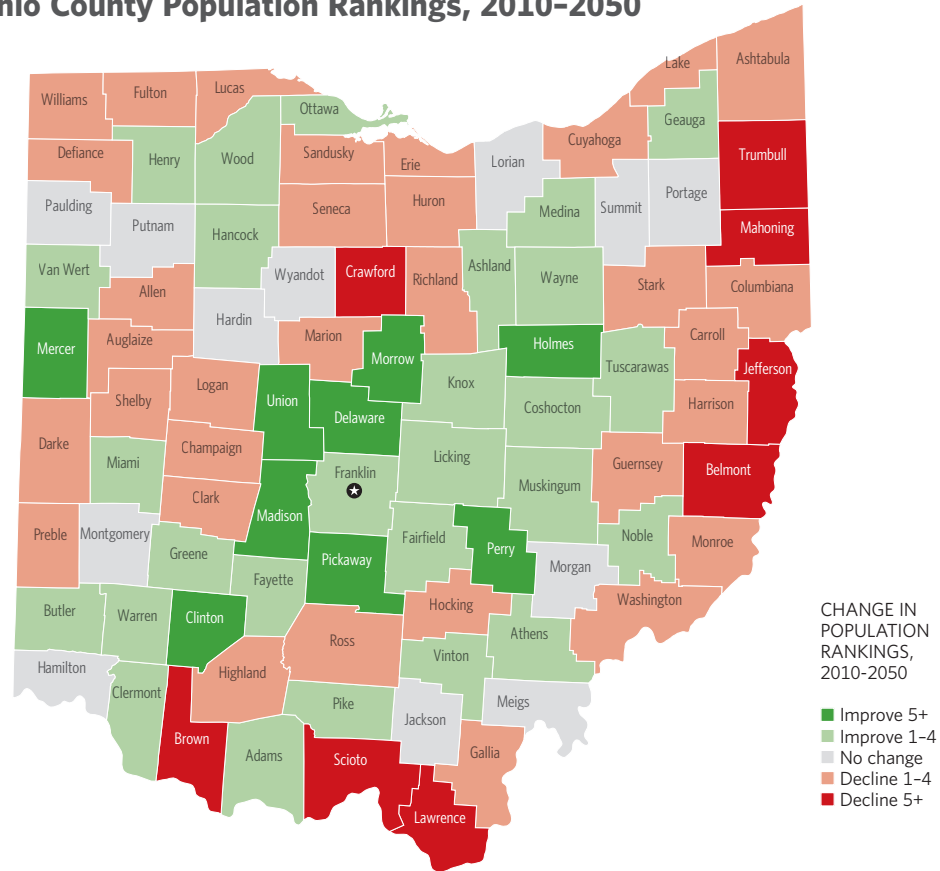
OPPORTUNITY *Ohio*

Ohio County Populations, 2050

1,840,258
(Franklin)

12,124
(Monroe)

	County	Population		County	Population		County	Population		County	Population
1	Franklin	1,840,258	23	Wayne	128,189	45	Huron	57,289	67	Crawford	36,798
2	Cuyahoga	1,190,608	24	Miami	124,163	46	Sandusky	55,295	68	Defiance	36,631
3	Hamilton	907,838	25	Richland	117,620	47	Lawrence	54,989	69	Williams	36,305
4	Summit	569,175	26	Geauga	99,869	48	Seneca	53,869	70	Putnam	33,715
5	Montgomery	548,650	27	Allen	96,815	49	Holmes	51,426	71	Jackson	31,543
6	Butler	447,614	28	Tuscarawas	96,175	50	Madison	49,648	72	Hardin	30,851
7	Lucas	417,748	29	Columbiana	90,660	51	Darke	49,116	73	Fayette	28,918
8	Stark	379,824	30	Muskingum	90,381	52	Shelby	49,086	74	Van Wert	28,343
9	Lorain	352,490	31	Ashtabula	89,811	53	Auglaize	47,608	75	Gallia	28,075
10	Delaware	318,130	32	Hancock	83,727	54	Logan	46,436	76	Pike	26,805
11	Warren	309,203	33	Union	79,359	55	Clinton	44,749	77	Adams	26,367
12	Clermont	243,798	34	Ross	76,985	56	Mercer	44,236	78	Hocking	26,076
13	Lake	242,158	35	Athens	72,162	57	Highland	43,812	79	Henry	25,146
14	Licking	214,391	36	Erie	70,013	58	Fulton	43,199	80	Carroll	23,344
15	Medina	211,326	37	Pickaway	69,415	59	Brown	41,464	81	Meigs	21,790
16	Mahoning	208,608	38	Knox	67,636	60	Ottawa	40,116	82	Wyandot	20,894
17	Greene	198,370	39	Scioto	66,201	61	Preble	39,441	83	Paulding	17,047
18	Fairfield	197,812	40	Marion	64,703	62	Perry	38,296	84	Noble	14,497
19	Portage	175,274	41	Belmont	61,692	63	Morrow	38,276	85	Morgan	13,711
20	Trumbull	174,976	42	Washington	58,732	64	Guernsey	37,520	86	Harrison	13,631
21	Wood	153,920	43	Jefferson	57,541	65	Coshocton	37,442	87	Vinton	12,568
22	Clark	129,413	44	Ashland	57,337	66	Champaign	37,117	88	Monroe	12,124

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau and Opportunity Ohio calculations.

OPPORTUNITY *Ohio*

Shifting Ohio County Population Rankings, 2010–2050

CHANGE IN POPULATION RANKINGS, 2010-2050

- ■ Improve 5+
- ■ Improve 1–4
- ■ No change
- ■ Decline 1–4
- ■ Decline 5+

County	RANKINGS 2010	2050	Chg.
Union	49	33	+16
Holmes	58	49	+9
Pickaway	46	37	+9
Madison	56	50	+6
Mercer	62	56	+6
Morrow	69	63	+6
Perry	68	62	+6
Clinton	60	55	+5
Delaware	15	10	+5
Athens	39	35	+4
Knox	42	38	+4
Van Wert	78	74	+4
Ashland	47	44	+3
Geauga	29	26	+3
Hancock	35	32	+3
Licking	17	14	+3
Miami	27	24	+3
Adams	79	77	+2
Butler	8	6	+2
Clermont	14	12	+2
Coshocton	67	65	+2
Fairfield	20	18	+2

County	RANKINGS 2010	2050	Chg.
Fayette	75	73	+2
Noble	86	84	+2
Tuscarawas	30	28	+2
Franklin	2	1	+1
Greene	18	17	+1
Henry	80	79	+1
Medina	16	15	+1
Muskingum	31	30	+1
Ottawa	61	60	+1
Pike	77	76	+1
Vinton	88	87	+1
Warren	12	11	+1
Wayne	24	23	+1
Wood	22	21	+1
Hamilton	3	3	0
Hardin	72	72	0
Jackson	71	71	0
Lorain	9	9	0
Meigs	81	81	0
Montgomery	5	5	0
Morgan	85	85	0
Paulding	83	83	0

County	RANKINGS 2010	2050	Chg.
Portage	19	19	0
Putnam	70	70	0
Summit	4	4	0
Wyandot	82	82	0
Allen	26	27	-1
Clark	21	22	-1
Cuyahoga	1	2	-1
Fulton	57	58	-1
Guernsey	63	64	-1
Huron	44	45	-1
Lucas	6	7	-1
Monroe	87	88	-1
Ross	33	34	-1
Stark	7	8	-1
Washington	41	42	-1
Auglaize	51	53	-2
Champaign	64	66	-2
Erie	34	36	-2
Gallia	73	75	-2
Harrison	84	86	-2
Highland	55	57	-2
Lake	11	13	-2

County	RANKINGS 2010	2050	Chg.
Logan	52	54	-2
Marion	38	40	-2
Preble	59	61	-2
Richland	23	25	-2
Shelby	50	52	-2
Ashtabula	28	31	-3
Darke	48	51	-3
Defiance	65	68	-3
Sandusky	43	46	-3
Seneca	45	48	-3
Williams	66	69	-3
Carroll	76	80	-4
Columbiana	25	29	-4
Hocking	74	78	-4
Belmont	36	41	-5
Brown	53	59	-6
Jefferson	37	43	-6
Mahoning	10	16	-6
Lawrence	40	47	-7
Scioto	32	39	-7
Trumbull	13	20	-7
Crawford	54	67	-13

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau and Opportunity Ohio calculations.

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Ohio County Populations and Rankings, 2010 vs. 2050

County	POPULATION			RANKING			County	POPULATION			RANKING		
	2010	2050	Chg.	2010	2050	Chg.		2010	2050	Chg.	2010	2050	Chg.
Adams	28,562	26,367	-2,195	79	77	+2	Licking	166,736	214,391	47,655	17	14	+3
Allen	106,395	96,815	-9,580	26	27	-1	Logan	45,765	46,436	671	52	54	-2
Ashland	53,319	57,337	4,018	47	44	+3	Lorain	301,468	352,490	51,022	9	9	0
Ashtabula	101,394	89,811	-11,583	28	31	-3	Lucas	441,571	417,748	-23,823	6	7	-1
Athens	65,221	72,162	6,941	39	35	+4	Madison	43,393	49,648	6,255	56	50	+6
Auglaize	45,932	47,608	1,676	51	53	-2	Mahoning	238,385	208,608	-29,777	10	16	-6
Belmont	70,318	61,692	-8,626	36	41	-5	Marion	66,454	64,703	-1,751	38	40	-2
Brown	44,878	41,464	-3,414	53	59	-6	Medina	172,543	211,326	38,783	16	15	+1
Butler	369,078	447,614	78,536	8	6	+2	Meigs	23,729	21,790	-1,939	81	81	0
Carroll	28,825	23,344	-5,481	76	80	-4	Mercer	40,784	44,236	3,452	62	56	+6
Champaign	40,060	37,117	-2,943	64	66	-2	Miami	102,478	124,163	21,685	27	24	+3
Clark	138,245	129,413	-8,832	21	22	-1	Monroe	14,579	12,124	-2,455	87	88	-1
Clermont	197,708	243,798	46,090	14	12	+2	Montgomery	536,217	548,650	12,433	5	5	0
Clinton	41,903	44,749	2,846	60	55	+5	Morgan	15,064	13,711	-1,353	85	85	0
Columbiana	107,858	90,660	-17,198	25	29	-4	Morrow	34,818	38,276	3,458	69	63	+6
Coshocton	36,927	37,442	515	67	65	+2	Muskingum	86,220	90,381	4,161	31	30	+1
Crawford	43,770	36,798	-6,972	54	67	-13	Noble	14,634	14,497	-137	86	84	+2
Cuyahoga	1,278,326	1,190,608	-87,718	1	2	-1	Ottawa	41,394	40,116	-1,278	61	60	+1
Darke	52,962	49,116	-3,846	48	51	-3	Paulding	19,577	17,047	-2,530	83	83	0
Defiance	39,103	36,631	-2,472	65	68	-3	Perry	36,035	38,296	2,261	68	62	+6
Delaware	175,148	318,130	142,982	15	10	+5	Pickaway	55,723	69,415	13,692	46	37	+9
Erie	77,036	70,013	-7,023	34	36	-2	Pike	28,732	26,805	-1,927	77	76	+1
Fairfield	146,408	197,812	51,404	20	18	+2	Portage	161,450	175,274	13,824	19	19	0
Fayette	29,013	28,918	-95	75	73	+2	Preble	42,174	39,441	-2,733	59	61	-2
Franklin	1,166,371	1,840,258	673,887	2	1	+1	Putnam	34,460	33,715	-745	70	70	0
Fulton	42,614	43,199	585	57	58	-1	Richland	124,174	117,620	-6,554	23	25	-2
Gallia	31,093	28,075	-3,018	73	75	-2	Ross	78,099	76,985	-1,114	33	34	-1
Geauga	93,416	99,869	6,453	29	26	+3	Sandusky	60,876	55,295	-5,581	43	46	-3
Greene	161,612	198,370	36,758	18	17	+1	Scioto	79,529	66,201	-13,328	32	39	-7
Guernsey	40,117	37,520	-2,597	63	64	-1	Seneca	56,626	53,869	-2,757	45	48	-3
Hamilton	802,284	907,838	105,554	3	3	0	Shelby	49,311	49,086	-225	50	52	-2
Hancock	74,687	83,727	9,040	35	32	+3	Stark	375,470	379,824	4,354	7	8	-1
Hardin	32,101	30,851	-1,250	72	72	0	Summit	541,674	569,175	27,501	4	4	0
Harrison	15,846	13,631	-2,215	84	86	-2	Trumbull	209,868	174,976	-34,892	13	20	-7
Henry	28,116	25,146	-2,970	80	79	+1	Tuscarawas	92,560	96,175	3,615	30	28	+2
Highland	43,608	43,812	204	55	57	-2	Union	52,416	79,359	26,943	49	33	+16
Hocking	29,468	26,076	-3,392	74	78	-4	Van Wert	28,664	28,343	-321	78	74	+4
Holmes	42,471	51,426	8,955	58	49	+9	Vinton	13,415	12,568	-847	88	87	+1
Huron	59,578	57,289	-2,289	44	45	-1	Warren	213,531	309,203	95,672	12	11	+1
Jackson	33,273	31,543	-1,730	71	71	0	Washington	61,709	58,732	-2,977	41	42	-1
Jefferson	69,614	57,541	-12,073	37	43	-6	Wayne	114,433	128,189	13,756	24	23	+1
Knox	61,087	67,636	6,549	42	38	+4	Williams	37,535	36,305	-1,230	66	69	-3
Lake	230,016	242,158	12,142	11	13	-2	Wood	125,939	153,920	27,981	22	21	+1
Lawrence	62,418	54,989	-7,429	40	47	-7	Wyandot	22,592	20,894	-1,698	82	82	0

OPPORTUNITY *Ohio*

Ohio County Population Gains and Losses, 2010-2050

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN POPULATION, 2010–2050

- Gain 40%+
- Gain 10%–40%
- Gain 0%–10%
- Lose 0%–10%
- Lose 10%+
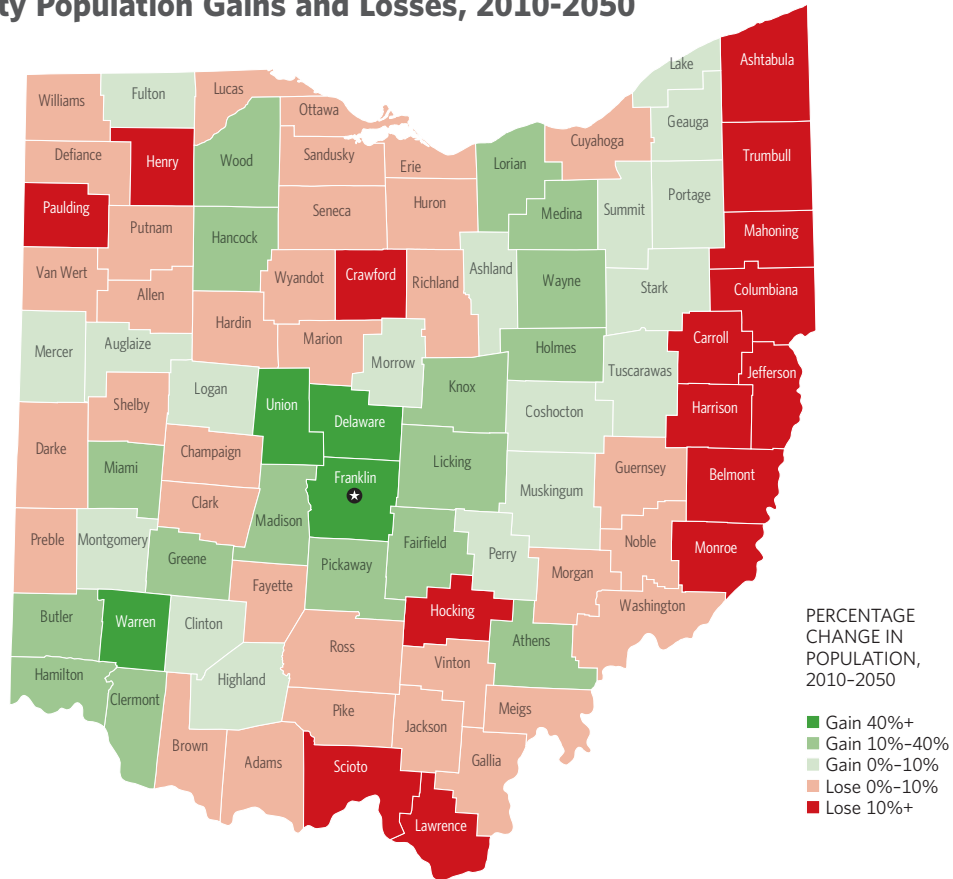
Rank	County	Change	Rank	County	Change	Rank	County	Change	Rank	County	Change
1	Delaware	81.6%	23	Portage	8.6%	45	Putnam	-2.2%	67	Adams	-7.7%
2	Franklin	57.8%	24	Mercer	8.5%	46	Marion	-2.6%	68	Meigs	-8.2%
3	Union	51.4%	25	Ashland	7.5%	47	Ottawa	-3.1%	69	Morgan	-9.0%
4	Warren	44.8%	26	Geauga	6.9%	48	Williams	-3.3%	70	Allen	-9.0%
5	Fairfield	35.1%	27	Clinton	6.8%	49	Huron	-3.8%	71	Erie	-9.1%
6	Licking	28.6%	28	Perry	6.3%	50	Hardin	-3.9%	72	Sandusky	-9.2%
7	Pickaway	24.6%	29	Lake	5.3%	51	Washington	-4.8%	73	Gallia	-9.7%
8	Clermont	23.3%	30	Summit	5.1%	52	Seneca	-4.9%	74	Henry	-10.6%
9	Greene	22.7%	31	Muskingum	4.8%	53	Jackson	-5.2%	75	Ashtabula	-11.4%
10	Medina	22.5%	32	Tuscarawas	3.9%	54	Richland	-5.3%	76	Hocking	-11.5%
11	Wood	22.2%	33	Auglaize	3.6%	55	Lucas	-5.4%	77	Lawrence	-11.9%
12	Butler	21.3%	34	Montgomery	2.3%	56	Vinton	-6.3%	78	Belmont	-12.3%
13	Miami	21.2%	35	Logan	1.5%	57	Defiance	-6.3%	79	Mahoning	-12.5%
14	Holmes	21.1%	36	Coshocton	1.4%	58	Clark	-6.4%	80	Paulding	-12.9%
15	Lorain	16.9%	37	Fulton	1.4%	59	Guernsey	-6.5%	81	Harrison	-14.0%
16	Madison	14.4%	38	Stark	1.2%	60	Preble	-6.5%	82	Crawford	-15.9%
17	Hamilton	13.2%	39	Highland	0.5%	61	Pike	-6.7%	83	Columbiana	-15.9%
18	Hancock	12.1%	40	Fayette	-0.3%	62	Cuyahoga	-6.9%	84	Trumbull	-16.6%
19	Wayne	12.0%	41	Shelby	-0.5%	63	Darke	-7.3%	85	Scioto	-16.8%
20	Knox	10.7%	42	Noble	-0.9%	64	Champaign	-7.3%	86	Monroe	-16.8%
21	Athens	10.6%	43	Van Wert	-1.1%	65	Wyandot	-7.5%	87	Jefferson	-17.3%
22	Morrow	9.9%	44	Ross	-1.4%	66	Brown	-7.6%	88	Carroll	-19.0%

SOURCES: U.S. Census Bureau and Opportunity Ohio calculations.

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