CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE ARCTIC

We tend to think of the Arctic as an unchanging landscape of ice and snow, but... The Arctic, a region home to nearly 10 million people, is on the move. Each Arctic country, city, and village is different. Arctic communities differ in population size, growth rates, settlement structures, fertility, epidemiological, and migration patterns. Let's learn how Arctic populations are changing and moving.

HOW DO DEMOGRAPHICS CHANGE?

**A HEALTH & EPIDEMIOLOGICAL TRANSITION**

- Mortality shifts away from infants, children, and mothers impacted by communicable and infectious diseases to degenerative and lifestyle causes of death in older ages.

**A FERTILITY TRANSITION**

- Shift from high births to more controlled fertility

**A AGE TRANSITION**

- Older average age and relatively more people in the older ages than younger age groups

**A MIGRATION TRANSITION**

- Overpopulation in rural areas leading to out-migration to urban areas

**A URBAN TRANSITION**

- More and more of the population resides in urban areas that centralize economic activity

HOW ARE DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE ARCTIC CHANGING?

**Natural Increase**

- Urban & Migration Transition

When analyzing these two components in the Arctic, an important distinction is between Arctic indigenous populations and others. Arctic indigenous populations tend to have higher birth and death rates, larger families, younger age structures, and reside more in rural areas.

LET'S TAKE A TRIP AROUND THE ARCTIC TO SEE HOW EACH REGION CHANGED SINCE 1990.

**ALASKA**

The population of Alaska grew by one-third because of higher natural increase and moderate out-migration. There has been net out-migration from Alaska since 2012, and in 2017, the population of the state declined for the first time in three decades.

**CANADA**

The population of the three Canadian northern territories continues to grow. Nunavut grew the most of the three by 41 percent since 2000, all due to natural increase as there was some out-migration. There has been considerable population growth of 38 percent in Iceland. In 2017, there was the highest ever recorded migration into the country of 14,929 persons, equivalent to more than 4 percent of the population.

**ICELAND**

The population of Greenland has remained remarkably constant over time varying by less than 1000 plus or minus of 56,000. Faroe Islands had moderate population growth of 5.7 percent.

**NORWAY**

The populations of the three Arctic regions increased only slightly, Nordland by 1.6 percent, Troms by 13.6 percent, and Finnmark by 2.7 percent. The population of Västerbotten grew by much less than the national rate by 7.3 percent and the population of Norrbotten has declined by 4.4 percent.

**FINLAND**

Of the three Arctic regions of Finland, only Pohjoil-Pohjanmaa (North Ostrobothnia) grew over this period, increasing by 18 percent, all due to natural increase.

**SWEDEN**

The population of the Russian north adjusted to post-Soviet economic conditions by declining by 20 percent, and a number of settlements were either closed or abandoned.

WHERE IS THE ARCTIC HEADING?

Common trends seen in nearly all Arctic regions in the future areas:

- Aging populations
- More balanced gender ratios
- Urbanization from educational and job opportunities
- Depopulation of smaller settlements

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Policy makers need to be aware of these demographic trends when planning for the future. Demographics aren't the only changes the Arctic is facing. Climate changes like ice melt, permafrost thaw, shoreline erosion, and changing weather patterns also affect the region.