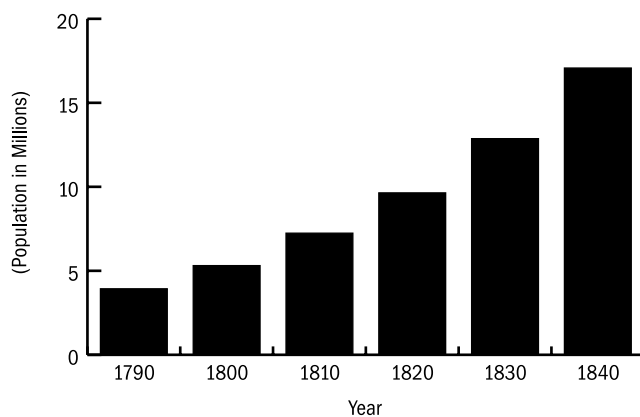


Growth of U.S. Population, 1790–1840

IN THE FIRST 50 YEARS after the Constitution went into effect in 1789, the population of the United States ballooned at a greater rate than it has ever since. During that period, the population grew more than fourfold, from 3,929,214 in 1790, the year of the first census, to 17,069,453 in 1840. (By comparison, the population grew less than twofold from 1890 to 1940.) This rapid growth occurred despite relatively low immigration from 1790 to 1820, when Great Britain sharply restricted emigration and European wars hampered transatlantic shipping. After 1820 immigration began to grow, particularly from Ireland, which was wracked with overpopulation and poverty; and, in the 1830s, from Germany, where the

Industrial Revolution was displacing farmworkers. Natural increase made up the rest of the population growth: a large percentage of Americans were young people starting families, and those families were big. The average woman in 1800 gave birth to about seven children, and since mortality rates were declining, many of those children lived to have children of their own. With the nation's gross area doubling from 891,000 square miles in 1790 to 1.8 million square miles in 1840, there was plenty of land for all those people. The number of states doubled too: from 13 in 1790 to 26 by 1840, or more than half of the states the country has today.

U.S. Population Growth, 1790–1840



New States, 1790–1840

State	Year of Admission
1. Vermont	1791
2. Kentucky	1792
3. Tennessee	1796
4. Ohio	1803
5. Louisiana	1812
6. Indiana	1816
7. Mississippi	1817
8. Illinois	1818
9. Alabama	1819
10. Maine	1820
11. Missouri	1820
12. Arkansas	1836
13. Michigan	1837

A Tale of Two States: Virginia and New York

In 1790 the nation's most populous state was Virginia, with a population of 692,000. New York, with 340,000 people, was in fifth place. But despite Virginia's headstart as the first enduring site of English colonization in North America, New York, with its growing commercial and industrial might, was rapidly displacing it. In the 1810 census, New York edged out Virginia as the nation's most populous state for the first time; by 1840 New York remained in first place, while Virginia had dropped to fourth. By that time two states that had not even been admitted in 1790—Ohio and Tennessee—had also joined the top five.

Virginia and New York: Relative Populations, 1790–1840

1790		1820	
New York	340,000	New York	1,373,000
Virginia	692,000	Virginia	938,000
1800		1830	
New York	589,000	New York	1,919,000
Virginia	808,000	Virginia	1,044,000
1810		1840	
New York	959,000	New York	2,429,000
Virginia	878,000	Virginia	1,025,000

Five Most Populous States, 1790–1840

1790

1. Virginia
2. Pennsylvania
3. North Carolina
4. Massachusetts
5. New York

1820

1. New York
2. Pennsylvania
3. Virginia
4. North Carolina
5. Ohio

1800

1. Virginia
2. Pennsylvania
3. New York
4. North Carolina
5. Massachusetts

1830

1. New York
2. Pennsylvania
3. Virginia
4. Ohio
5. North Carolina

1810

1. New York
2. Virginia
3. Pennsylvania
4. North Carolina
5. Massachusetts

1840

1. New York
2. Pennsylvania
3. Ohio
4. Virginia
5. Tennessee