Population data released at the end of 2018 show South Dakota and Minnesota growing at the fastest rates in the Midwest. They also were the only two states in this region to eclipse the U.S. growth rate of 0.6 percent between July 2017 and July 2018 (South Dakota, +1.0 percent; and Minnesota, +0.8 percent), according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Three factors cause changes in a state’s population: 1) the number of births vs. the number of deaths; 2) domestic migration; and 3) international migration. On that first factor, every Midwestern state experienced a “natural increase” in population — more births than deaths. However, U.S. Census Bureau researchers note that this natural increase has been in decline over the past decade. Nationwide, it was 1.04 million last year; that compares to 1.8 million in 2008.

Between 2017 and 2018, most states in the Midwest lost population due to domestic migration, most notably Illinois (-114,154, the third biggest drop in the country behind only New York and California). Indiana joined Minnesota and South Dakota in experiencing a net increase in residents due to domestic migration.

Illinois had the region’s highest net gain from international migration (+30,735); however, it was one of eight U.S. states (and the only state in the Midwest) where total population fell.