

Detroit's population drops 25% to lowest since 1910 as a growing number of black people leave major U.S. cities

By Daily Mail Reporter

Last updated at 7:09 PM on 23rd March 2011

- **Detroit population drops 25 per cent, now at 713,777 - its lowest since 1910**
- **Cities with traditional black strongholds see considerable change**
- **Economic woes, climate and draw of suburbs all contributing factors**

The population of Detroit has dropped by 25 per cent in the last ten years and is now at its lowest since 1910.

A number of factors is blamed on this, the biggest of which is the struggling automotive industry in a place which was once known as the 'Motor City'.

The figures, released in the 2010 Census Data, also showed that the number of black people living in other major cities has dropped considerably over the last ten years.



Empty: Burned-out vacant dwellings in Detroit, Michigan, which abound in the city, the population of which has dropped by 25 per cent in ten years



Neglected: Run down buildings and overgrown streets have almost become hallmarks of Detroit since the automotive industry collapsed

The 2010 Census data suggests that the settlement pattern of African Americans is changing and a number of factors, such as the economy, weather and the draw of the suburbs, are blamed on this.

Traditional black strongholds such as Chicago, Oakland, Atlanta, Cleveland and St Louis all saw a considerable change but it was in Detroit, where black people are in the majority, that it was most prevalent.

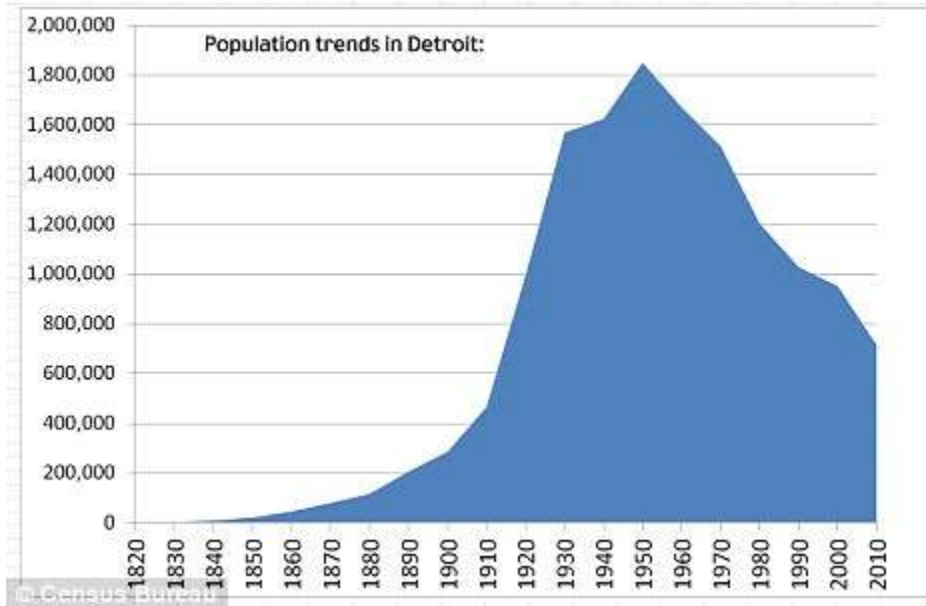
The city's population dropped 25 per cent over the last ten years to its lowest in a century, falling to 713,777 from 951,270 in 2000 when the last census was taken.

This is being blamed on the struggling automotive industry, plant closures and job losses.

Michigan's population also dropped by 0.6 per cent, the only state to suffer a loss, with a population now standing at 9.88million.

Nearly a century ago, the expansion of the auto industry fuelled a growth spurt that made the 'Motor City' the fourth-largest in the country by 1920, a place it held until 1950 when it was at 1.85million,

By 2000, Detroit had fallen to tenth place and it is now at its lowest since 1910 when it was 285,704.



Trend: Detroit's population plunged 25% in the past decade to 713,777, the lowest count since 1910. It was at its peak in 1950 at 1.85million

L. Brooks Patterson, county executive of neighbouring Oakland County, whose population rose by almost one per cent thanks to an influx of black residents, told the New York Times: 'It's a major city in free-fall. Detroit's tax base is eroding, its citizens are fleeing and its school system is in the hands of a financial manager.'

The data also shows that 20 of the 25 cities that have at least 250,000 people and a 20 per cent black population either lost more black people or gained fewer in the past decade than during the 1990s.

In Atlanta, the number of black people leaving tripled in the ten years since 2000 to almost 30,000, with the percentage in the city dropping from 61 per cent to 53.

However, in the state's vast metropolitan area, the African-American population soared 40 per cent to 1.7 million showing that a large number are leaving cities for a life in the suburbs.



Pattern change: The black population is moving from large cities into suburbs and the south seeking sun and suburbia

In Chicago, both metropolitan and suburban areas suffered a loss. In 2010, the city lost more than 200,000 residents, more than 180,000 of whom were African-American.

In the metropolitan area, the black population fell 3.5 per cent to 1.6 million, pushing it 66,000 below metropolitan Atlanta's. This change was being put down to the weather.

According to Chinwe Onyeagoro, CEO of O-H Community Partners, a Chicago-based economic development consulting firm, sunny skies and warm temperatures are luring not only retirees but also young professionals who may have friends or relatives in the Sun Belt — Atlanta and Houston in particular.

Suburbs are also a huge draw.

She told USA Today: 'Typically, middle-class African-American families make the same kind of choices that white families have made for some time.

'As soon as kids are school-age, they move to the suburbs which are also luring lower-income blacks who are leaving neighbourhoods that don't have supermarkets and other retail.'

This was also thought to be a trend in Detroit.

Demographer at Brookings Institution William Frey, who analysed the data, said: 'In the northern cities, a lot of young blacks who might have grown up in cities are leaving maybe the entire region.'

'They're going to the Sun Belt and particularly the South. The ones who stay in the area want to move to the suburbs.'

'Detroit has suffered the biggest loss of blacks the city has shown, and that's tied to the foreclosures in the city's housing. It has been the most segregated city in the country and it is still pretty segregated, but not as much.'

The staggering loss over the past decade surprised even demographers who track Detroit's out-migration patterns.

Kurt Metzger, an urban affairs expert and demographer who analyzes data about the city, said: 'I never thought it would go this low. This is the biggest percentage loss that Detroit has ever seen.'

Published by Associated Newspapers Ltd

Part of the Daily Mail, The Mail on Sunday & Metro Media Group

© Associated Newspapers Ltd