Energy Boom Fuels Rapid Population Growth in Parts of Great Plains; Gulf Coast Also Has High Growth Areas, Says Census Bureau

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Oil- and gas-rich areas in and near the Great Plains contained many of the fastest-growing areas in the U.S. last year, according to U.S. Census Bureau population estimates released today. Areas along and near the Gulf Coast were also home to several high-growth communities.

Of the nation's 10 fastest-growing metropolitan statistical areas in the year ending July 1, 2013, six were within or near the Great Plains, including Odessa, Texas; Midland, Texas; Fargo, N.D.-Minn.; Bismarck, N.D.; Casper, Wyo.; and Austin-Round Rock, Texas.

Micropolitan statistical areas, which contain an urban cluster of between 10,000 and 49,999 people, followed a similar pattern, with seven located in or adjacent to the Great Plains among the fastest-growing between 2012 and 2013. Williston, N.D., ranked first in growth (10.7 percent), followed by Dickinson, N.D. Andrews, Texas; Minot, N.D.; and two areas in western Oklahoma (Weatherford and Woodward) also made the top 10, as did Hobbs, N.M.

"The data released in today's population estimates report provide an important look at the fastest-growing counties and metro areas," said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. "Coupled with yesterday's Economic Census report results, the Census Bureau's population report provides a bigger picture of why certain areas may be growing or shrinking, which is critical for business and government decision-making. The Commerce Department's 'Open for Business Agenda' supports making our data easier to access and understand, so that it can continue enabling startups, moving markets, protecting life and property, and powering both small and large businesses across the country."

"As the first results from the 2012 Economic Census revealed yesterday, mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction industries were the most rapidly growing part of our nation's economy over the last several years," Census Bureau Director John H. Thompson said. "A major reason was the energy boom on the Plains, which attracted job seekers from around the country. Combining data about America's people, places and economy gives businesses and government the information they need for good investment and policy decisions."

The nation's fastest-growing metro area between 2012 and 2013 was The Villages, Fla. Its population rose by 5.2 percent over the period. The Gulf Coast metro areas of

Daphne-Fairhope-Foley, Ala., and Cape Coral-Fort Myers, Fla., also made the top 10 list.

U.S. metro areas with populations of 1 million or more in 2012 grew 1.0 percent, compared with 0.5 percent for those with populations of less than 250,000. The 1,335 counties not inside either a metro area or micro area had a collective population decline of 35,674 between 2012 and 2013, with more than six in 10 of these counties losing population. Overall, 51 percent of counties in the United States gained population between 2012 and 2013. In 68 percent of counties, births outnumbered deaths. Net migration (including both domestic and international migration) had a positive or neutral impact on population growth in 45 percent of counties.

Many counties in or near the Great Plains appear in the lists of fastest-growing counties. Williams, N.D.; Stark, N.D.; and Kendall, Texas, were all among the five fastest-growing counties with populations of 10,000 or more (Williams ranked first nationally). Meade, S.D., and Hays, Texas, also in the Great Plains, made the top 10 list as well. North Dakota counties appear many times in the top-five lists when looking at the fastest-growing counties within different total population size categories (such as those with fewer than 5,000 people, those with 5,000 to 9,999 people, those with 10,000 to 19,999 people, and so forth).

Among the 10 fastest-growing counties in the vicinity of the Gulf Coast were Sumter, Fla.; St. Bernard Parish, La.; and Fort Bend, Texas. See a series of **Rankings**.

Other highlights:

Metro Areas
- Houston had the largest numeric increase between 2012 and 2013, gaining about 138,000 people.
- The nation's metro areas contained 269.9 million people in 2013, up about 2.3 million from 2012.
- Most metro areas (289 of 381) gained population between 2012 and 2013, with 92 losing population.
- Metro areas grew faster than the U.S. as a whole between 2012 and 2013 (0.9 percent compared with 0.7 percent).
- Of the 50 fastest-growing metro areas, net migration was the largest contributor to population growth in all but five. The exceptions (in which natural increase was the largest contributor) were Ogden-Clearfield, Utah; Provo-Orem, Utah; Dallas-Fort Worth; Washington, D.C.; and Salt Lake City.
- New York continued to be the most populous metro area, with 19.9 million residents on July 1, 2013, followed by Los Angeles and Chicago.
- Sierra Vista-Douglas, Ariz., had the largest rate of decline from 2012 to 2013 (-1.7 percent); Youngstown, Ohio, had the most sizable numeric loss (just under 3,000).

Micro Areas

- Dunn, N.C., had the largest numeric increase among all micro areas, growing by 2,855 people between 2012 and 2013. The other two micro areas gaining 2,500 or more people over the period were in North Dakota (Williston and Minot).
- The nation's micropolitan statistical areas contained 27.2 million people in 2013, up about 8,000 from 2012.
- All of the 10 fastest-growing micro areas between 2012 and 2013 were west of the Mississippi River.
- More than half of all U.S. micro areas (306 of 536) lost population between 2012 and 2013.
- Of the 10 fastest-growing micro areas, Vernal, Utah, was the only one in which natural increase was the largest contributor to population growth. Net domestic migration was the largest contributor in the other nine.
- Collectively, micro areas of 50,000 or more people in 2012 had a population gain between 2012 and 2013, while those with fewer than 50,000 in 2012 lost population over the period.

Counties
- Overall, with the exception of Williams, N.D., the growth rates among the fastest-growing counties have slowed somewhat during the last year.
- The fastest-growing county with 250,000 or more people in 2012 was Fort Bend, Texas, whose population increased by 4.2 percent between 2012 and 2013. Loudoun, Va., and Osceola, Fla., followed.
- Harris, Texas (Houston) again had the largest numeric population increase between July 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013, adding almost 83,000 people. Following Harris were Maricopa, Ariz. (Phoenix), which added 69,000; Los Angeles, Calif. (65,000); King, Wash. (Seattle), which added 37,000; and San Diego, Calif. (35,000).
- Los Angeles was the nation's most populous county on July 1, 2013, with its population surpassing 10 million. It was followed by Cook, Ill. (Chicago); Harris, Texas (Houston); Maricopa, Ariz. (Phoenix); and San Diego, Calif.
- The fastest-losing county (among those with 10,000 or more people) was Lassen, Calif., whose population declined by 4.4 percent.
- Los Angeles County, Calif., had the largest number of net international migrants between 2012 and 2013, at 39,000. It was followed by Miami-Dade County, Fla., with a net of 32,000 international migrants, and Queens County, N.Y., with a net of 24,000 international migrants.
- Eight of the top 10 counties where deaths exceeded births were in Florida.

Puerto Rico
- Nine municipios (which are similar to counties) experienced population growth between July 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013. Gurabo, whose population rose by 1.1 percent over the period, led the way, followed by Culebra and Toa Alta (0.4 percent each), Naguabo (0.3 percent) and Juncos (0.2 percent).
- Gurabo also experienced the largest numeric population increase among all municipios, gaining more than 500 people.

- Each of Puerto Rico's seven metro areas and five micro areas declined in population between 2012 and 2013. San Juan was Puerto Rico's most populous metro area in 2013.

  In the coming months, the Census Bureau will release 2013 estimates of the total population of cities and towns, as well as national, state and county population estimates by age, sex, race and Hispanic origin.

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  The Census Bureau develops county, metro and micro area population estimates by measuring population change since the most recent census. The Census Bureau uses births, deaths, administrative records and survey data to develop estimates of population. For more detail regarding the methodology, see <http://www.census.gov/popest/methodology/>.

  The Office of Management and Budget's statistical area delineations (for metro and micro areas) are those issued by that agency in February 2013. Metro areas contain at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population and micro areas contain at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 (but less than 50,000) population. Both metro and micro areas consist of one or more whole counties or county equivalents. Some metro and micro area titles are abbreviated in the text of the news release. Full titles are shown in the tables.