

IdahoWest

Only 3 other states grow faster than Idaho

Nevada, Arizona and Utah top the list in percentage of newcomers.

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Idaho is the nation's fourth fastest-growing state, according to population estimates released Thursday by the Census Bureau.

Nevada, Arizona and Utah are Nos. 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

Nevada regained the title of fastest-growing state, having increased in population by 2.9 percent, to 2.6 million.

Nevada had held that title for 19 years in a row before being bumped off by Arizona last year. Arizona is the second-fastest-growing state according to the current estimate, with a population increase of 2.8 percent, to 6.3 million.

Utah is third, and Colorado and Wyoming are eighth and ninth, respectively.

Another region with rapidly growing states is the Southeast.

In the Southeast, Georgia was fifth nationally, North Carolina was sixth, and South Carolina was 10th.

Texas, meanwhile, had the seventh-fastest growth by percentage and tops numerically, having drawn about 500,000 new residents.

The population of Louisiana fell by a quarter-million people after Hurricane Katrina tore

through New Orleans in August 2005. The damage was so bad that some worried whether anyone would ever come back. Some did.

In the year ending July 1, the state saw a net increase of about 50,000 people, a 1.2 percent increase. Total population in the state is 4.3 million, an increase, but still a long way from the 4.5 million who lived there before the storm.

The Census Bureau estimate is reached by measuring births, deaths and migration into and out of each of the 50 states, the

District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

In Louisiana, the bureau estimates a net increase of 29,000 people moving into the state from other states, accounting for more than half the jump.

Earlier this week, Rigamer's firm, GCR & Associates, released a report estimating the New Orleans population at 300,000, or about 65 percent of its pre-Hurricane Katrina size of 455,000.

Rigamer said people have been coming back to the city at a rate of 3,000 to 4,000 per month,

which includes in-state migration.

Only two states lost population. Michigan's population dipped by three-tenths of a percent and Rhode Island saw a decrease of four-tenths of a percent. Ohio's growth was virtually flat.

California remains the nation's most populous state with about 37 million people. It gained about 300,000 new residents, second to Texas numerically, but 25th fastest by rate of growth, the same ranking as last year.

The total U.S. population was estimated at 301.6 million last July 1.

The Constitution requires the Census Bureau to count the population every 10 years.

The results are used to allocate seats in the U.S. House of Representatives as well as electoral votes.

This year's state population estimates are consistent with previous years that show high-growth states like Texas will likely gain seats in Congress, while slow-growth states such as Ohio may lose seats.