

Census reports slow growth in states

By Dennis Cauchon and Paul Overberg, USA TODAY

Population growth nearly ground to a halt this year in many longtime boom states, a sign the recession has taken a toll on the migration habits of Americans.

The Census Bureau's new state population estimates released today reported that more people moved from [Florida](#) and [Nevada](#) to other states this year than moved in. Both states experienced modest population growth this year because of births. [California](#) had its fourth-lowest growth rate since 1900.

The U.S. population grew to 307 million, up 0.86%, the slowest growth rate this decade.

The new population estimates, for July 1, are the first to show the full effect of the economic recession, which began in December 2007.

"People are staying put. They're just not moving," says Kenneth Johnson, a demographer at the University of [New Hampshire](#)'s Carsey Institute, which studies families.

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Texas was a key exception among boom states, gaining 478,000 residents, more than any other state.

"We're still showing strong population growth in spite of the fact that Texas entered the recession in late 2008," says Texas state demographer Karl Eschbach.

Eschbach says there's a lag between when job growth ends and when people stop moving in. Texas' unemployment rate is 8%, relatively high but below the 10% U.S. rate.

The new population estimates provide an indication of which states may gain or lose seats in the U.S. House of Representatives after the official 2010 Census.

If congressional seats were assigned based on the July 1 estimates, Texas would be the big winner, gaining three seats, said Kimball Brace, president of Election Data Services a consulting firm that specializes in election administration.

Gaining one seat each would be Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington.

Ohio would lose two House seats. Losing one each would be Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, [Massachusetts](#), Michigan, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania.

The new estimates are a change from last year when Illinois had enough population to keep all its House seats and Ohio had enough people to lose just one seat.

The Census also reported:

•**Population losers:** Michigan, Maine and Rhode Island were the only three states to lose population. Michigan has lost population for four consecutive years.

•**Katrina rebound:** Louisiana added 40,563 residents, a 0.9% increase, virtually even with the level before Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

•**Growth from births:** Births are driving population growth, rather than the arrival of new residents. The people who arrived in Florida, Nevada and other boom states are having babies, creating an echo of the earlier population boom.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey
Credit: Paul Overberg and Juan Thomassie, USA TODAY

Courtesy of JB Goodwin