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Key Metropolitan Areas Growing, but More Slowly

By **SAM ROBERTS**

Correction Appended

Fewer people flocked to the nation's fastest-growing metropolitan regions last year compared with the year before, the [Census Bureau](#) is reporting on Thursday.

As a result, older areas, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest, stanching their losses. Some even recorded small rebounds.

The Dallas-Fort Worth region registered the biggest gain, 162,250, in the year ending July 1, 2007, followed by Atlanta, Phoenix and Houston. Those three also grew more than 100,000 each.

Yet those metropolitan regions grew more slowly than they had the year before. In that year, Houston was followed by Dallas, Atlanta and Phoenix.

Since 2000, metropolitan Atlanta ranked first in growth, adding more than one million people, a 24 percent increase. Dallas was second, with nearly a million more, a 19 percent increase.

"Last year, job growth in Texas was triple that of the nation, so it wouldn't be surprising to find that people are choosing to move here, because there are jobs," said Fiona Sigalla, an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas.

In addition, house prices there have been stable compared with other areas, Ms. Sigalla said, adding, "We have lots of available land and fewer regulations, so we have a homebuilding boom sufficient to keep home prices at bay."

The latest growth pattern of metropolitan regions mirrored census results released last week for the counties. That report showed that New Orleans was slowly beginning to recover from the severe population losses after [Hurricane Katrina](#) and that growth had cooled in a number of previous hot spots, including Florida and the West.

The bursting housing bubble appeared to be the most significant factor affecting growth rates in places like Orlando, Phoenix, Las Vegas and Riverside, Calif.

Twenty-two of the 30 bigger Sun Belt metropolitan regions that grew fastest since 2000 expanded more slowly in the latest year, said William H. Frey, a demographer with the [Brookings Institution](#). In that period, 17 of the 20 slowest-growing Northeast and Midwest metropolitan regions grew faster.

From 2005 to 2006, Metropolitan New York lost 270,000 inhabitants to domestic migration. From 2006 to 2007, the number dropped to 219,000.

Metropolitan Chicago lost 20,000 to domestic migration as of July 1, 2007, half the loss of the prior year. (The overall population increased for both the Chicago and New York metropolitan areas.)

Reduced migration from older metropolitan regions, coupled with the continuing influx of foreigners, decreased the outflows from parts of Connecticut; Providence, R.I.; and Boston and in areas of upstate New York, western Pennsylvania and the Great Lakes that had been hemorrhaging population. Even Buffalo lost fewer people than the year before.

One exception was Detroit, which recorded its greatest domestic migration loss of the decade, more than 58,000.

Like parts of the Northeast and Midwest, coastal California also appeared to be retaining residents who might otherwise have moved to hot housing meccas.

Sun Belt metropolitan regions where government and technology continued to generate jobs — including Austin, Tex., and Raleigh and Charlotte, N.C. — seemed largely unaffected by slower growth. So were Washington, San Francisco and San Jose, Calif., which suffered early in the decade.

In percentage of population, 8 of the 10 fastest-growing metropolitan regions were in the South, topped by Palm Coast, Fla., at 7.2 percent. Four, including Raleigh, Austin and Charlotte, were also among the biggest numerical gainers. St. George, Utah, ranked second, at 5.1 percent.

Gretel C. Kovach contributed reporting.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: March 31, 2008

An article on Thursday about a census report that compared population figures in metropolitan areas for 2005-06 and 2006-07 described shifts in New York and Chicago incorrectly. Both showed a decline in the number of residents lost to domestic migration — not in the overall number of residents. (The overall population increased for both areas.)

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