

Bucking trend, Texas cities keep growing, with Dallas-Fort Worth in the lead

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Fastest-growing

Metropolitan area	Population	Change
Dallas-Fort Worth	6,447,615	146,530
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown	5,867,489	140,784
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana	12,874,797	106,402
New York-Northern New Jersey	19,069,796	101,295
Washington, D.C.-Arlington-Alexandria, Va.	5,476,241	98,305
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta	5,475,213	89,627
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale	4,364,094	76,771
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet	9,580,567	64,931
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont	4,317,853	57,617
Denver-Aurora	2,552,195	51,811
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue	3,407,848	51,211
Austin-Round Rock	1,705,075	50,975
Riverside-San Bernardino, Calif.	4,143,113	50,282
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach	5,547,051	45,299
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, Mass.	4,588,680	43,975
San Antonio	2,072,128	41,437
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, N.C.	1,745,524	39,055
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, Ore.	2,241,841	38,096
Raleigh-Cary, N.C.	1,125,827	35,419
San Diego-Carlsbad	3,053,793	34,519
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington	3,269,814	32,202
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, Calif.	1,839,700	29,054
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington	5,968,252	27,756
Sacramento-Arden-Arcade, Calif.	2,127,355	26,217
Nashville-Davidson-Franklin	1,582,264	25,896

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BY STEVE CAMPBELL

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Even as the recession put the brakes on mobility across America, Dallas-Fort Worth led the nation in population growth for the 12 months that ended July 1, according to new census estimates released Tuesday.

The Metroplex added 146,530 people. The Houston area wasn't far behind, adding 140,784, the second-highest increase. Los Angeles (106,402), New York City (101,295) and Washington, D.C. (98,305) rounded out the top five.

Austin (50,975) was 12th and San Antonio (41,437) was 16th.

The [Texas](#) metropolitan areas stand out, demographers say.

"Texas is the bright light in this very dim decade," said William Frey, a demographer at Brookings Institution who analyzed the data.

"In this economy, any growth is good," he said, noting that Texas has fared considerably better as the housing meltdown, financial crisis and skyrocketing unemployment blanketed the country, dropping migration to the lowest level since World War II.

"There is something magical happening down there," echoed Mark Mather, associate vice president of the Population Reference Bureau, who also crunched the new numbers.

"It's a combination of things happening in Texas," Mather said. "You've got a diverse economy with lots of jobs in high tech and industry. I think the fact that the bottom dropped out of the housing markets in formerly hot areas like Florida and California made Texas look more attractive. I would guess Texas' low unemployment rate also played a part.

"And you've still got fairly high levels of immigration driving growth."

The recession intensified in Texas in the second half of last year, with the state's jobless rate reaching 8.2 percent by December, still lower than the nation, which hit 10 percent. And even in Fort Worth, city leaders are grappling with a decline in tax revenue, leaving a huge budget shortfall.

Fort Worth Mayor Mike Moncrief said the Metroplex's affordability, job opportunities and status as "the best place to ride out the recession" are the keys to the continued growth.

"We have been affected, but I think we'll recover first," Moncrief said. "It intensifies our challenge to be able to provide the infrastructure. It's not sexy, it's not glitzy, and it's all very expensive.

"It's also very difficult to address. We've got to plan carefully about how we grow," Moncrief said. "It must be sustainable, and we must have transportation options. We can't just build our city around cars and trucks."

The housing meltdown was a big factor in limiting mobility across the country and slowing growth in places like Las Vegas, Atlanta and Phoenix, Frey and Mather said.

In Las Vegas, for the first time in decades, more people moved out than moved in. The casino capital is suffering a double whammy from the housing bubble and the slowdown in tourism.

"In places like Nevada, growth was linked to the housing market and all the demand for infrastructure and services that went along with that bubble and then it just collapsed," Mather said.

Nationally, people are being more cautious as they try to just hold onto their jobs, Mather said.

Baby boomers, who just a few years ago might have been considering moves to retirement towns, are hunkering down in big cities where jobs are more plentiful.

"There's a lot of people who might want to retire who are unable to do so now because they lost money in home prices and stock prices," Mather said. "So a lot of people are continuing to work and staying put.

"A growing number of baby boomers want to continue working after age 65, and many are choosing to live closer to cities to keep their options open.

"Baby boomers helped fuel housing and population growth in retirement areas earlier in the decade, and now they are playing an important role in the decline."

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