

Idaho now third-fastest growing state in U.S.

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The Gem State surpassed the Sunshine State to become the third fastest-growing state in the U.S.

Idaho's population grew by 2.4 percent — 33,956 people — from July 1, 2004, to July 1, 2005, for a total population of 1,429,096, according to estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau today.

"Our strong economy continues to attract people and investment into the state," Idaho Commerce and Labor Director Roger Madsen said in a statement.

The majority of Idaho's population growth resulted from people moving to the state — 14,522 people came from other countries and 61,273 came from other states, the release says. Idaho's birth rate was sixth highest in the nation, with 7,776 births per 100,000 residents, more than offsetting its death rate — sixth lowest, with 3,656 deaths per 100,000 people.

The Census Bureau said that Nevada and Arizona were the two fastest-growing states, both at 3.5 percent.

Florida, the third fastest-growing state last year, dropped to fourth, growing by 2.3 percent.

The South and West monopolized the list of the fastest-growing states; Utah, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, Delaware and Oregon rounded out the Top 10.

California remained the most populous state in the nation with 36.1 million people, followed by Texas (22.9 million) and New York (19.3 million). Even though Idaho is one of the nation's fastest-growing states, it ranks only as 39th in population.

Three states (New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts) and Washington, D.C., had their populations actually decline.

Overall, the United States grew by 0.9 percent in the past year, to a total of 296.4 million people.

The new population numbers do not reflect shifts following Hurricane Katrina, which occurred after the July date.

Idaho's strong population growth, however, isn't going to translate into more political clout.

Every 10 years, the 435 seats in the House of Representatives are divided among the states based on population. The numbers also are used to divvy up votes in the presidential Electoral College. Idaho's portion of the nation's population qualifies the state for two seats in the House.

When Congress is next reapportioned in 2010, Idaho's estimated population of 1,534,719 would not be enough to qualify the state for a third seat, according to a Census data analysis by the American City Business Journals.

Fastest, slowest growing states

Ten fastest-growing states:

1. Nevada 3.5
2. Arizona 3.5
3. Idaho 2.4
4. Florida 2.3
5. Utah 2.0
6. Georgia 1.7
7. Texas 1.7
8. North Carolina 1.7
9. Delaware 1.6
10. Oregon 1.4

Ten slowest-growing states (and district)

1. Washington D.C. -0.7
2. Rhode Island -0.3
3. New York -0.1
4. Massachusetts -0.1
5. Ohio 0.1
6. North Dakota 0.1
7. Michigan 0.2
8. West Virginia 0.2
9. Pennsylvania 0.3
10. Vermont 0.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau data, July 1, 2004-July 1, 2005