

Dallas-Fort Worth area topping the nation in population growth

By ERIC AASEN / The Dallas Morning News

07:04 AM CDT on Wednesday, March 24, 2010

North [Texas](#) continues to be a people magnet.

The Dallas-[Fort Worth](#) area added more new residents last year than any other metropolitan area in the country, according to U.S. [Census Bureau](#) data released Tuesday.

The region attracted nearly 147,000 people during a 12-month period starting in July 2008, topping the [Houston](#) metropolitan area, which ranked second with an additional 141,000 residents.

Helping to fuel the North Texas growth is [Rockwall](#) County, which was the third-fastest-growing county in the country during the last decade. According to the new numbers, its population has nearly doubled since 2000. Not far behind was Collin County, which ranked No. 13, growing more than 60 percent.

"Texas growth has been simply phenomenal this past decade," said Steve Murdock, a professor at [Rice University](#) and a former U.S. Census Bureau director.

Good jobs and a better-than-elsewhere economy are drawing people to Texas, experts say. And newcomers and old-timers alike are moving to suburban counties such as Rockwall and Collin for bigger houses and better schools – and to escape aggravating urban traffic.

Rockwall County was practically rural 10 years ago, with just 43,000 residents.

Now the county east of [Dallas](#) has 81,000 people and every type of shop and restaurant imaginable, County Judge Chris Florance said.

"Once you get out here, all the amenities that people want are here," he said. "No one has to go into Dallas anymore to find what they need."

To help plan for the future, Rockwall County residents recently passed a \$100 million referendum to improve their most congested roads.

"If you don't build it, they're going to come anyway," Florance said.

Several other North Texas counties were home to the biggest county population jumps over the past decade.

On the top 100 list, Denton was ranked 27th, while [Kaufman](#) was No. 40 and Ellis was No. 79. Other Texas counties ranking high include Williamson and Hays near Austin and Fort Bend and Montgomery near Houston.

The state's economy and housing market, which have been better off than other states, are helping to fuel population growth, demographers say.

"We have had a very vibrant economy with a diverse set of industries," Murdock said. "When you have the kind of population growth we've had, you don't have it without having economic growth."

Texas' robust population increase – it's the fastest-growing state – means it's bound to add at least three new seats in Congress after the 2010 census. The state will probably be home to more than 25 million people in the count, Murdock said.

But don't just credit the state's population growth to newcomers moving to Texas.

The state also has high fertility rates and a low mortality rate, said Lloyd Potter, director of the Texas State Data Center, which studies population trends.

"Remove all types of migration from the equation and Texas would continue to grow," he said.

Fastest-growing counties in Texas, U.S.

Several Texas counties (in bold) were among the country's 40 fastest-growing in population over the last decade.

Rank/County	2000	2009	Change
1. Kendall County, Ill.	54,563	104,821	+ 92.1%
2. Pinal County, Ariz.	179,720	340,962	+ 89.7%
3. Rockwall County	43,079	81,391	+ 88.9%
4. Flagler County, Fla.	49,832	91,622	+ 83.9%
5. Loudoun County, Va.	169,599	301,171	+ 77.6%
9. Williamson County	249,979	410,686	+ 64.3%
13. Collin County	491,772	791,631	+ 61%
15. Hays County	97,582	155,545	+ 59.4%
16. Fort Bend County	354,452	556,870	+ 57.1%
24. Montgomery County	293,767	447,718	+ 52.4%
27. Denton County	432,973	658,616	+ 52.1%
37. Comal County	78,021	114,525	+ 46.8%
40. Kaufman County	71,303	103,038	+ 44.5%

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau