Arizona Daily Star®
www.dailystar.com® ⊛ www.azstarnet.com®

Published: 03.20.2008

Pinal is nation's fastest-growing county

By Howard Fischer

CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX — Arizona's sluggish economy did not keep Pinal County from having the fastest rate of population growth of any county in the country.

New figures today from the U.S. Census Bureau show the county's 299,246 residents as of July 1, 2007, represent an 11.5 percent increase from the same time a year earlier. And since the 2000 census, the population is up 65 percent.

Technically, two other counties had a faster year-over-year growth rate. But those are exceptions: the parishes of Orleans and St. Bernard, which are finally being repopulated after Hurricane Katrina.

The growth in Pinal County, by contrast, is fueled to a great extent by people who are employed in the state's two large metropolitan areas and who are looking for more affordable housing than may be available closer to where they work.

Virtually all of Pinal's population explosion continues to be from people moving there.

The net "natural increase" — births minus deaths — totaled just 2,606 in the one-year period compared with more than 28,400 people who moved there in the last year.

Figures for individual cities will not be available until later this year. But all indications are that Pinal's population explosion, at one time confined to the areas immediately adjacent to Maricopa and Pima counties, is spreading further.

Pima County's population is up 18,385, or 1.9 percent year-over-year. That includes more than 13,300 people moving from elsewhere, with more than 2,900 of those from other countries.

But the long-term patterns show Pima County's growth is not keeping pace with other areas of the state, and not just Maricopa County.

Both Mohave and Yavapai counties posted larger percentage population increases since 2000 than Pima County. In both cases, the population growth is fueled by people moving there, as the number of births in each county barely exceeded the number of deaths.

On StarNet: For more census information, check the database at azstarnet.com/ special/census-counties.

by the numbers

Here are some noteworthy figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's newly released report:

2 of the figures have greater-than symbols

18,385

Pima County's population increase, or 1.9 percent year-over-year.

>13,300

people moving to Pima County from elsewhere,

>2,900

of the more than 13,300 came from other countries.

4.2

percent Graham County grew by in a single year.

101,583

Maricopa County's population increase, or 2.7 percent in a single year.

In raw numbers, however, both Pima and Pinal growth paled in comparison to Maricopa County.

Maricopa County posted the largest absolute increase in new residents, both for the last year and since 2000. The county added more than 101,000 new residents in a single year, a 2.7 percent increase. Since the census was done, the population is up about 808,000.

Again, migration played a role, with nearly 61,900 of those new residents during last year moving from somewhere else.

That includes almost 22,000 from other countries, though the Census Bureau does not break down how many of those new international migrants came here legally or otherwise.

Different patterns emerge in the rest of the state.

Graham County, boosted by new mining activity in the area, grew by more than 4.2 percent in a single year.

That pattern is mirrored in Greenlee County, which posted a 3.8 percent annual population increase. The pattern, if it continues, may reverse what has been a declining trend, as Greenlee County had 9 percent fewer residents in mid-2007 than it did at the beginning of the decade.

population

County 7/1/07 1-year change

Arizona 6,338,755 173,066

Apache 69,980 492

Cochise 127,866 1,103

Coconino 127,450 1,367

Gila 51,994 543

Graham 34,769 1,417

Greenlee 7,754 285

La Paz 20,172 151

Maricopa 3,880,181 101,583

Mohave 194,944 3,292

Navajo 111,273 2,126

Pima 967,089 8,385

Pinal 299,246 30,930

Santa Cruz 42,845 779

Yavapai 212,635 5,897

Yuma 190,557 4,716

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

On StarNet: For more census information, check the database at azstarnet.com/ special/census-counties.

by the numbers

Here are some noteworthy figures from the U.S. Census Bureau's newly released report:

2 of the figures have greater-than symbols

18,385

Pima County's population increase, or 1.9 percent year-over-year.

>13,300

people moving to Pima County from elsewhere,

>2,900

of the more than 13,300 came from other countries.

4.2

percent Graham County grew by in a single year.

101,583

Maricopa County's population increase, or 2.7 percent in a single year.