

Thousands of out-of-staters flock to Texas for jobs

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WASHINGTON – When the Census Bureau announces its first results from the 2010 count today, Texas will probably come in with over 25 million residents – an increase of more than 4 million people over the last decade.

About half of that growth came from babies born to state residents. Texas state demographer Lloyd Potter at the University of Texas at San Antonio says the others came from two migration waves.

The first was international migrants, mostly from Mexico. In the last five years, however, the new Texans came mainly from other states.

Between 2006 and 2008, an average of 80,471 Californians moved to Texas. That was nearly twice the number of Texans moving to California, giving Texas a net gain of 37,166 Californians a year.

The numbers are estimates. They were generated by the bureau for its 2006-08 American Community Survey from mailed questionnaires and interviews with more than 138,000 Texans. Those in the survey were asked where they lived a year ago. Surveys done in other states provided estimates of who had moved there from Texas.

Potter's staff at the Texas State Data Center sifted the data for *The Dallas Morning News* to provide estimates for migration into and out of the state.

There's a debate under way among urban planners and economists about whether people move for jobs or jobs move where the people are. Potter says the latest numbers show jobs are the Lone Star magnet.

"Unquestionably, when they move, the bulk of those people that are moving are moving either to find work or because they have found work," Potter said. "They're moving to places where they believe opportunity exists."

Most of them are not coming on hope alone. For the last 20 years, job growth in Texas has exceeded that in every other region of the nation, according to labor data sifted by the Federal Reserve. Employment grew 20 percent nationally during the last two decades, while growing more than 50 percent in Texas.

"Very few people that are moving, when they get here, are unemployed," Potter said.

Between 2000 and 2004, Texas was gaining more than 100,000 residents a year from international migration, while the net population gain from other states was less than 50,000 a year. Between 2000 and 2009, about 938,000 people from other nations moved to Texas.

Between 2004 and 2006, however, state-to-state migrants to Texas increased fourfold.

Potter said the surge could be related to Hurricane Katrina's impact on New Orleans in 2005.

More than 62,500 Louisianians moved to Texas, on average, each year between 2006 and 2008. About 37,000 moved from Texas to Louisiana each year during that period, giving Texas a net annual gain of 25,494 from its neighbor to the southeast.

Throughout the country's history, Americans have been willing to move across the country in search of jobs, schools, retirement homes or for other things. Labor mobility has been an economic strength for the U.S. over places like Europe, for example, in aligning workers and jobs.

Texans are as footloose as any. Between 2006 and 2008, an average of 433,888 Texas residents a year moved to other states. The numbers coming in, however, were greater – an average of 577,299 a year.

Lots of people move every year between Texas and its neighbors Oklahoma and Arkansas. But California has sent the most new residents to Texas. More than one in four new Texans from other states came from California.

The explanation seems obvious. The Texas Public Policy Foundation reported in October that Texas created 129,000 jobs in the last year, while California lost 112,000.

The manufacturing belt around the Great Lakes, which has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs in the last decade, has been the third-largest source for new residents of Texas. Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Wisconsin lost more than 27,000 residents a year to Texas.