

**Americans Are Flocking to Boomtowns Far Outside Major Cities, Data Show**

*By Jon Kamp, Paul Overberg and Max Rust*

The future of American cities is in the exurbs.

The latest Census Bureau data show that some of the fastest-growing cities are of--ten sitting in the distant orbit of a larger city and centered on booming master-planned communities.

Take Fulshear, Texas, an affluent community about 35 miles west of downtown Houston. By mid-2025 it had an estimated 64,630 people, the Census Bureau said on Thursday, rocketing up from around 17,000 in 2020. No other American city with more than 50,000 people has grown faster in that span.

Here are some other hot spots and trends from the latest census data, focusing on city populations for the 12 months running through June 2025.

The Dallas area is sprinkled with fast-growing exurbs, even as the city itself—as well as some closer suburbs—lost population in the last measured year.

The biggest standout is Celina, Texas, a boomtown on the metro area's far northern fringes that features masterplanned communities. It added nearly 13,000 people in the year through mid-2025, boosting its population to more than 64,400. Houston, population 2.4 million, added fewer people.

Other fast growers in the region include Fort Worth, the nation's 10th-largest city.

Dallas, meanwhile, was among the top 10 largest cities that shrank slightly in the most recent census-measured year, joining New York City and Los Angeles. The overall U.S. population grew 0.5% in that span, about half the prior year's growth, reflecting tighter immigration restrictions under both the Biden and Trump administrations.

The population of Phoenix, the nation's fifth-largest city, crept up 0.2% in the most recent year. But it is surrounded by much faster-growing cities in its outer orbit.

Places in Arizona like Goodyear, Buckeye, Surprise and Avondale all have topped 100,000 residents and grew at least 4.5%. All of them outgrew Phoenix in sheer numbers. So did Queen Creek, a southeastern suburb of nearly 90,000 people that grew 8.2% in the last measured year.

New England isn't like the West. Massachusetts is steadily losing more domestic movers than it is gaining, and Boston shrank slightly in the last measured year. Some of the nation's priciest real estate often means growth gets pushed out to metro Boston's fringes.

A few of the growing, old industrial cities with generally cheaper housing and lengthy commutes include Manchester and Nashua, the biggest cities in no-income-tax New Hampshire. Worcester, Mass., grew 0.9% to nearly 214,000 in the last measured year, securing its claim as New England's second-largest city.

Boston does have a fast grower on its doorstep: the small city of Everett, Mass., where the population rose 4.6% to more than 53,000 in the latest measured year. The traditionally working-class city has seen a rare-for-the-area housing surge in recent years.

North Carolina remains a growth hot spot. Its famed Research Triangle Park is flanked by Raleigh and Durham, which together had 812,000 residents as of mid-2025, up 9% since 2020. They are surrounded by smaller boomtowns, too,

including Cary, Chapel Hill, Apex and Holly Springs. Collectively, eight of those communities grew 14% in the five years through mid-2025 to nearly 500,000 people.

Charlotte, N.C., with a population of almost 965,000, is near joining an exclusive club with just 12 members (including Austin, Texas, a brand new entrant): cities with more than one million people. Charlotte grew 2.2% in the last measured year, faster than any U.S. city with more than 500,000 people.

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