

NOTEWORTHY

CENSUS BUREAU

Immigration drives U.S. population growth to highest rate in 23 years

Immigration in 2024 drove U.S. population growth to its fastest rate in 23 years as the nation surpassed 340 million residents, the Census Bureau said Thursday.

The 1% growth rate this year was the highest it has been since 2001, and it was a marked contrast to the record low of 0.2% set in 2021 at the height of pandemic restrictions on travel to the United States, according to the annual population estimates.

Immigration this year increased by almost 2.8 million people, partly because of a new method of counting that adds people who were admitted for humanitarian reasons. Net international migration accounted for 84% of the nation's 3.3 million-person increase in 2023 and 2024.

Births outnumbered deaths in the United States by almost 519,000 in 2023 and 2024, which was an improvement over the historic low of 146,000 in 2021 but still well below the highs of previous decades.

Immigration had a meaningful impact not only nationally but also for individual states, accounting for all of the growth in 16 states that otherwise would have lost population from residents moving out of state or from deaths outpacing births, William Frey, a demographer at The Brookings Institution, said in an email.

“While some of the surge may be attributed to border crossings of asylees and humanitarian migrants in an unusual year, these numbers also show how immigration can be an important contributor to population gains in a large swath of the nation that would otherwise be experiencing slow growth or declines,” Frey said.

As it has been throughout the 2020s, the South was the fastest growing region in the United States in 2024, adding more new residents — 1.8 million people — than all the other regions combined. Texas added the most people, at 562,941 new residents, followed by Florida, with an additional 467,347 new residents. The District of Columbia had the nation's fastest growth rate, at 2.2%.

Three states — Mississippi, Vermont and West Virginia — lost population this year, although by tiny amounts ranging from 127 to 516 people.

The group of people being included in the international migration estimates are those who enter the country through humanitarian parole, which has been granted for seven decades by Republican and Democratic presidential administrations to people unable to use standard immigration routes because of time pressure or their government's poor relations with the U.S.

— *The Associated Press*

