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ALERT TOP STORY EDITOR'S PICK

Which Oklahoma counties saw the most population growth after the pandemic?

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According to a new report, Wagoner County has experienced a total net gain of 6,700 new residents since 2020, a large percentage of whom moved to Oklahoma from out of state.

Mike Simons, Tulsa World Archive

By Steve Metzger

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National and in-state population shifts that have occurred since the start of the pandemic have resulted in growth in the Tulsa and Oklahoma City areas and economic gains for Oklahoma.

According to a new **report** released by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, counties bordering Tulsa and Oklahoma counties, like Wagoner County southeast of Tulsa and Canadian County west of Oklahoma City, have added the most residents over the past several years. But population gains have occurred in smaller towns and rural areas across the state.

According to the report, authored by Senior Vice President and Oklahoma City Branch Executive Chad Wilkerson and research associate Chase Farha, migration trends triggered by the pandemic have brought benefits to the Sooner State beyond population increases. Most new

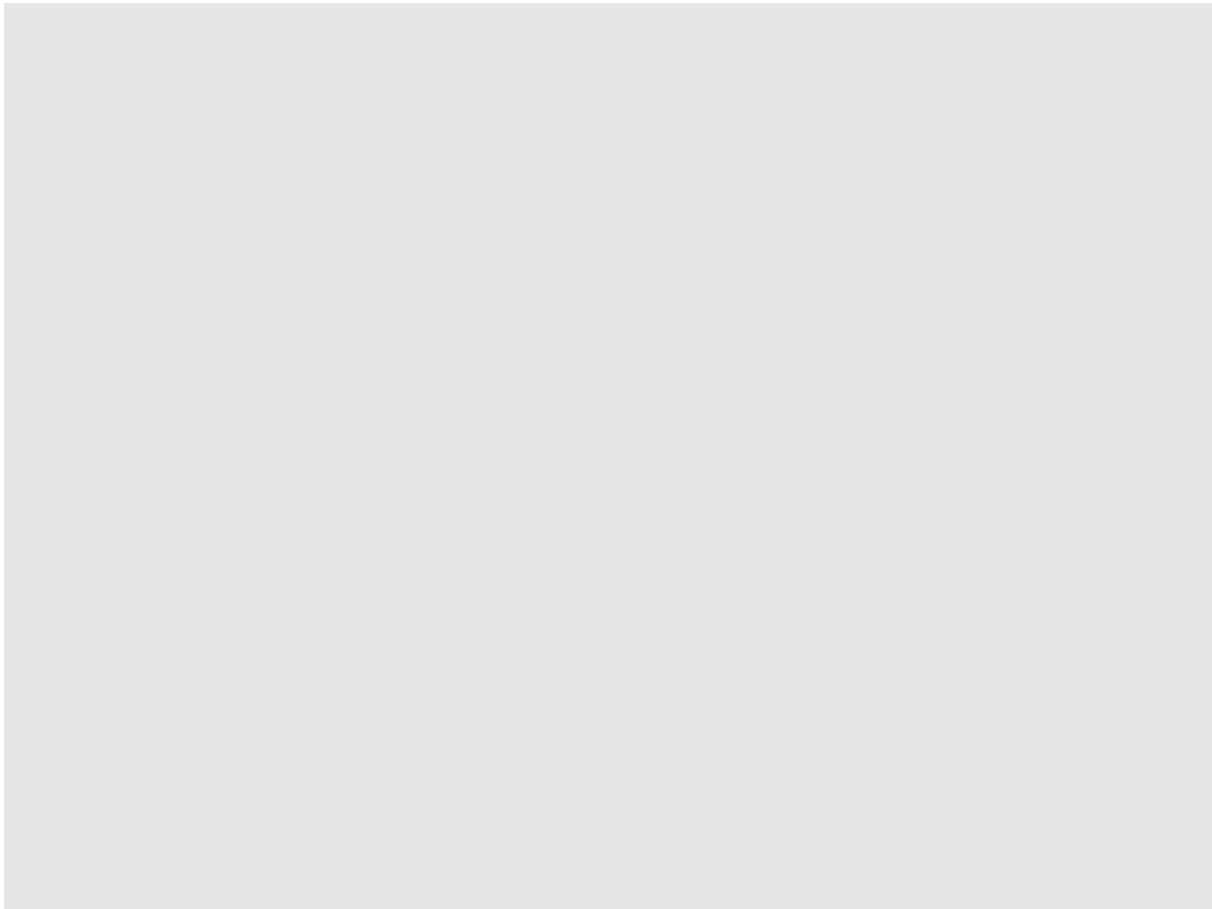
residents in the Tulsa and OKC regions, for example, are in their prime working years, including many with higher incomes representing a healthy range of industries.

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Since about 2020, nearly 85% of Oklahoma's 77 counties have gained more residents than they've lost to other states. Tulsa and Oklahoma counties have witnessed the largest numbers of move-ins from out of state, at 8,700 and 6,300, respectively, while Canadian, Rogers and Wagoner counties each added 2,000-3,000 new residents on net from out of state.

"Of course, people also move to different areas within states," authors of the report noted.



Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City

Oklahoma County lost more than 7,000 residents who made in-state moves, primarily to suburbs like Yukon and Mustang in Canadian County. That county, they noted, has added more than 11,000 residents on net both from inside and outside the state.

Although Tulsa County has gained residents overall due to move-ins from other states, it also has lost around 5,700 residents to moves to other counties. Wagoner County, which has experienced a total net gain of 6,700 new residents, probably was a primary beneficiary. Rogers

County has gained around 3,000 on net, and Creek County has netted close to 1,800.

Other notable findings in the report:

- Oklahoma's new residents have added to its workforce and slightly increased its labor force participation rate. Since 2020, the state has experienced a net gain of more than 30,500 employed residents, far exceeding the cumulative loss of about 17,000 experienced between 2015 and 2019.
- The state has witnessed a net increase in college graduates representing a variety of industries. The influx represents a reversal of "brain drain" reported in previous years.
- Oklahoma also has reversed a troubling trend of losing high earners to other states. According to the report, from 2015 to 2019 most people who moved into Oklahoma were in the bottom two quartiles of the state's income distribution, and most people who left the state were in the top two quartiles. Since 2020, the state has realized gains in the top income quartiles. At peak migration in 2021, 57% of net gains were in the top two quartiles.
- Since 2020, more than 8,000 of the people who have moved into towns and cities across Oklahoma have been between the ages of 25 and 34, more than 9,000 have been 35-44, and more than 10,000 have been between the ages of 45 and 54.
- While Oklahoma saw a net increase of remote workers moving in, they were not the primary driver of domestic in-migration, accounting for only 11% of the total net in-migration from 2020 to 2022.

Migration out of the nation's largest cities to midsized metros has declined over the past couple of years, authors of the report note.

"Even so, net in-migration picked up in 2023 in Oklahoma's small metropolitan and micropolitan areas and its rural areas despite the slowing in OKC and Tulsa," they said.

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