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The Imperial Republican

Chase County's bucking the trend. When more than two-thirds of Nebraska's counties have lost population since the last census, Chase County has grown.

According to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau earlier this month, Chase County climbed back above the 4,000-mark with 4,064 residents.

The data compares population totals on April 1, 2010 and estimates as of July 1, 2012.

In the 27-month span, Chase County grew from 3,966 to the 4,064 mark, or an increase of 2.5 percent.

Chase County ranks among 30 counties in Nebraska that showed an increase during that same time frame and is among 18 counties whose growth was one percent or higher.

Of those 30 counties, 14 are west of Kearney in Buffalo County.

Chase County's neighbor to the south, Dundy County, showed a 0.6 percent increase in population to 2,021.

Several other counties in western Nebraska showed growth from 0.1 to 0.7 percent growth.

Those counties included Box Butte, Cherry, Logan, Phelps, Sioux and Cheyenne.

Counties west of Buffalo County showing one percent or more growth included Chase, Blaine, Thomas, Grant, Arthur, Duell and Banner.

As a state, Nebraska grew 1.6 percent, with much of that growth occurring in the eastern Nebraska areas of Lincoln and Omaha.

Lancaster County (Lincoln) grew by 8,000 residents, Sarpy (Papillion) 7,013 and Douglas County (Omaha) 14,155 people.

One in three U.S. counties decline

A record number of U.S. counties—more than one in three—are showing decreasing population where deaths outnumber births. Factors include an aging population and weakened local economies that are spurring young adults to seek jobs and build families elsewhere.

The census estimates highlight the population shifts as the U.S. encounters its most sluggish growth levels since the Great Depression.

Census data shows 1,135 of the nation's 3,143 counties are now experiencing "natural decrease," where deaths exceed births. That's up from roughly 880 U.S. counties, or one in four, in 2009.

Already apparent in Japan and many European nations, natural decrease is now increasingly evident in large swaths of the U.S.

Among the 20 fastest-growing large metropolitan areas last year, 16 grew faster than in 2011 and most of them are located in previously growing parts of the Sun Belt or Mountain West.

Among the slowest-growing or declining metropolitan areas, most are now doing worse than in 2011 and they are all located in the Northeast and Midwest.

New York ranks tops in new immigrants among large metro areas, but also ranks at the top for young residents moving away.

In contrast, the Texas metropolitan areas of Dallas, Houston and Austin continued to be big draws for young adults, ranking first, second and fourth among large metro areas in domestic

migration due to diversified economies that include oil and gas production. Phoenix, Las Vegas and Orlando also saw gains.

By region, growth in the Northeast slowed last year to 0.3 percent, the lowest since 2007; in the Midwest, growth dipped to 0.25 percent, the lowest in at least a decade. In the South and West, growth rates ticked up to 1.1 percent and 1.04 percent, respectively.

(Associated Press reports were also used to compile this story.)

30 counties in Nebraska showing growth from 2010-12

Pop.

County/County seat	growth	%
Box Butte — Alliance	9	0.1
Washington — Blair	18	0.1
Cherry — Valentine	14	0.2
Saunders — Wahoo	43	0.2
Adams — Hastings	95	0.3
Logan — Stapleton	2	0.3
Phelps — Holdrege	27	0.3
Sioux — Harrison	4	0.3
Madison — Madison	155	0.4
Dundy — Benkelman	13	0.6
York — York	81	0.6
Cheyenne — Sidney	70	0.7
Howard — St. Paul	62	1.0
Seward — Seward	185	1.1
Thurston — Pender	80	1.2
Colfax — Schuyler	138	1.3
Platte — Columbus	444	1.4
Deuel — Chappell	31	1.6
Grant — Hyannis	15	2.4
Chase — Imperial	98	2.5
Saline — Wilber	357	2.5
Douglas — Omaha	14,155	2.7
Lancaster — Lincoln	8,000	2.8
Buffalo — Kearney	1,361	3.0
Hall — Grand Island	1,738	3.0
Sarpy — Papillion	7,013	4.4
Thomas — Thedford	29	4.5
Arthur — Arthur	26	5.7
Blaine — Brewster	36	7.5
Banner — Harrisburg	70	10.1