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# Nelson growth rate fastest in region, estimates show

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Nelson County had the fastest growth rate in Central Virginia between 2007 and 2008, but once sleepy Fluvanna County still has seen the greatest percentage growth since 2000, new statewide population estimates show.

Nelson's population grew by 459 people between July 1, 2007, and July 1, 2008, climbing to a total of 15,575, according to the estimates. That gave it the fastest growth rate in the region, though other localities saw more new residents. Albemarle County, for example, saw its population increase by 1,356, while Louisa's increased by 816.

Compiled by the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, the new estimates show that Fluvanna's 31.6 percent growth rate since 2000 ranks it No. 8 among all Virginia localities in that period.

The trend was already in place. Fluvanna's population spurted by roughly 60 percent between 1990 and 2000.

G. Cabell Lawton IV, Fluvanna's county administrator, attributes the strong growth partly to Fluvanna's competitive housing prices and the county's proximity to Charlottesville and Albemarle, where housing prices are higher.

In Fluvanna the population increased by an estimated 321 people from 2007 to 2008, putting the county's population at almost 26,400.

Between 2000 and 2008, Virginia's population as a whole is estimated to have grown by 9.7 percent, or by about 690,000 people. In the last year, the state's population is estimated to have grown just shy of 1

percent.

Mike Spar, a research associate at Weldon Cooper, believes the ailing housing and job markets have slowed what until the last couple of years has been a healthy migration to Virginia, where the current population estimate is 7.8 million.

“They’ve both been functioning to kind of nail people in place,” Spar said of people hesitating to move even if they get new jobs because of concern about how long their current house will sit on the market.

Greene County saw 178 new residents between 2007 and 2008. County Administrator Barry Clark said he expects the growth to continue, especially as the Army’s Rivanna Station development — which is expected to bring hundreds of new jobs — builds out in adjacent Albemarle County in 2010.

Charlottesville was the only Central Virginia locality to lose population between 2007 and 2008. Its population fell by 13 people to 39,638.

Between 2000 and 2008, the city’s population fell by 1.2 percent. In Albemarle, meanwhile, there was an 11.3 percent increase, representing roughly 9,500 people.

Nelson and Buckingham counties saw population growths at 8 percent and 6 percent, respectively, from 2000 to 2008. From 2007 to 2008, Buckingham snagged 43 new residents, the estimates show.

All the estimates are available online at <http://www.coopercenter.org>.