

Wake County remains one of the fastest growing counties in North Carolina, but population growth has sped up more in some of the Triangle's collar counties, according to the latest estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. In the year ending last June 30, an estimated 1,072,203 people lived in Wake, the state's second most populous county after Mecklenburg. Since 2010, Wake's population has grown by more than 170,000, making it the second fastest growing county in the state during that time after Brunswick County. But in the most recent year, population growth in Chatham, Franklin and Johnston counties outpaced Wake. Johnston was the third fastest growing county in the state, at 2.94 percent; Wake was ninth at 2.2 percent.

You don't have to travel far from Raleigh, though, to find counties that continue to lose population, including Caswell, Greene, Nash, Vance and Warren. Thirty-four of North Carolina's 100 counties had fewer residents last June 30 than on the same day a year earlier. In contrast, 13 counties have logged double-digit population growth since the last census in 2010, including Wake, Johnston, Durham, Harnett and Chatham. The state's two largest metropolitan areas -- Charlotte and Raleigh -- have accounted for about two-thirds of the state's growth since 2010.

Brunswick County has grown 21.8 percent since April 2010, the largest percent growth of any county in the state, according to estimates released this month by the U.S. Census Bureau. The county also was the fastest growing in the state for 2016-17, increasing its population by 3.6 percent or 4,544 residents. Brunswick County is part of the Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, metropolitan area, which was the second fastest-growing metro area in the country from 2016 to 2017, according to the Census.

Brunswick wasn't the only county in the Cape Fear region to see a population boom. Pender County was the second fastest-growing county in the state between July 2016 and July 2017, increasing its population by 3.5 percent or 2,061 residents.

*Source – The News & Observer and Wilmington Star-News*