



West side of Michigan grew faster than central, NE portions

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Michigan's west side grew faster than the central and northeastern portions of the state, according to census figures released Tuesday.

The seven counties around Grand Rapids grew 6%, and the counties surrounding Traverse City grew 5.8%.

"On the west, it's largely the economy; in the northwest, it's largely retirees," said state demographer Ken Darga. "Traverse City and Petoskey are a big part of that equation."

Counties in the center of Michigan fell 4.2%. The area stretching roughly from I-75 to Lake Huron dropped 3.2%. The Upper Peninsula dropped 2%.

Much of northern Michigan is aging as well, said Kurt Metzger, director of Data Driven Detroit, a nonprofit data research group.

"If you look at the numbers in those counties, nobody's moving in," Metzger said. "When you look at the vital statistics,

you'll see that deaths outnumber births."

The seven counties of southeast Michigan, including metro Detroit, dropped 4.4% overall, but there were some winners beyond Macomb and Oakland.

Livingston County was southeast Michigan's biggest population winner, in percentage terms, over the past 10 years, according to the census data. It added 24,016 people -- a 15% increase from its 2000 figures.

Washtenaw County also grew, adding 21,896 people -- a 6.8% increase.

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