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Population Growth in Wyoming, 2000–2010

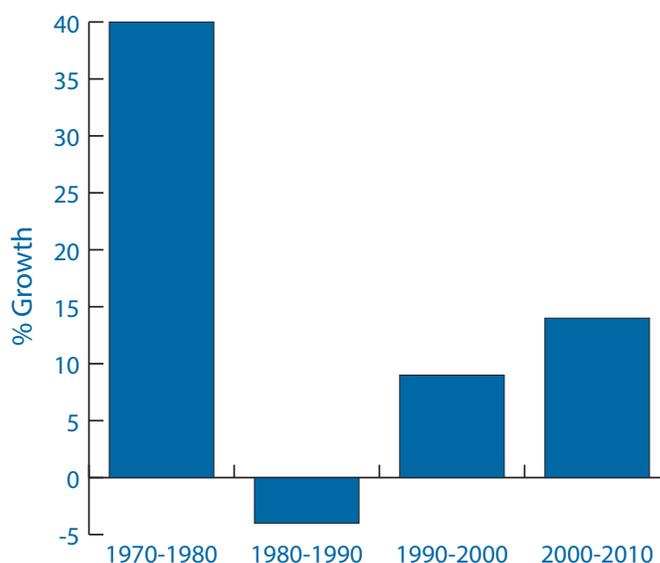
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One of the keys to understanding growth issues in Wyoming is recognizing the changes in population growth patterns at the community, county, and state levels. While the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau population estimates continue to indicate an overall pattern of growth in the Rocky Mountain West, different areas of Wyoming are experiencing either population growth or population decline.

Wyoming's 2010 census numbers indicate that although growth in rural areas accounted for one-third of the total population growth for the state, each county experienced substantially different levels of urban and rural growth. The census numbers also indicate that while the Wyoming population increase was fairly evenly divided between natural increase (births – deaths) and net in-migration (more people moving in than moving out) at the state level, the role of these two contributors to population growth also varied substantially by county.

After increasing by more than 40 percent between 1970 and 1980 and then declining by nearly 4 percent between 1980 and 1990, Wyoming population growth has returned to more moderate growth rates. Between 1990 and 2000, Wyoming population increased by nearly 9 percent (453,588 vs. 493,782) and by more than 14 percent between 2000 and 2010 (493,782 vs. 563,626; Figure 1).

Figure 1. Wyoming population growth rates for the last 40 years. Since 1990, Wyoming has returned to moderate population growth.



Nationally, Wyoming ranked 11th in population growth rate between 2000 and 2010 (up from 32nd between 1990 and 2000; Figure 2). Wyoming’s population growth rate was nearly one and a half times higher than the national average (9.7 percent) between 2000 and 2010.

Although Wyoming has grown substantially since 2000, population growth has not been uniformly distributed throughout the state (Figure 3). Population growth rates for Wyoming counties can be broken down into three groups: 1) counties with higher growth, or growth greater than 20 percent (Sublette, Campbell, Lincoln, Johnson, and Crook); counties with medium growth between 10 percent and 20 percent (Teton, Sweetwater, Converse, Natrona, Albany, Laramie, and Fremont); and 3) counties with low or negative growth of less than 10 percent (Sheridan, Park, Weston, Uinta, Goshen, Niobrara, Washakie, Big Horn, Carbon, Hot Springs, and Platte). Energy-producing counties, such as Sublette and Campbell Counties, were the leaders in population growth. At the other extreme, counties with older populations, such as Hot Springs and Platte Counties, actually lost population between 2000 and 2010.

Most counties in Wyoming had an increase in population growth rates from 2000 to 2010 compared to 1990 to 2000 (Figure 4). Sublette County had the largest increase, going from slightly

Figure 2. Population growth rates for Wyoming and neighboring states (2000–2010). Nationally, Wyoming ranked 11th in population growth rate between 2000 and 2010 (up from 32nd between 1990 and 2000).

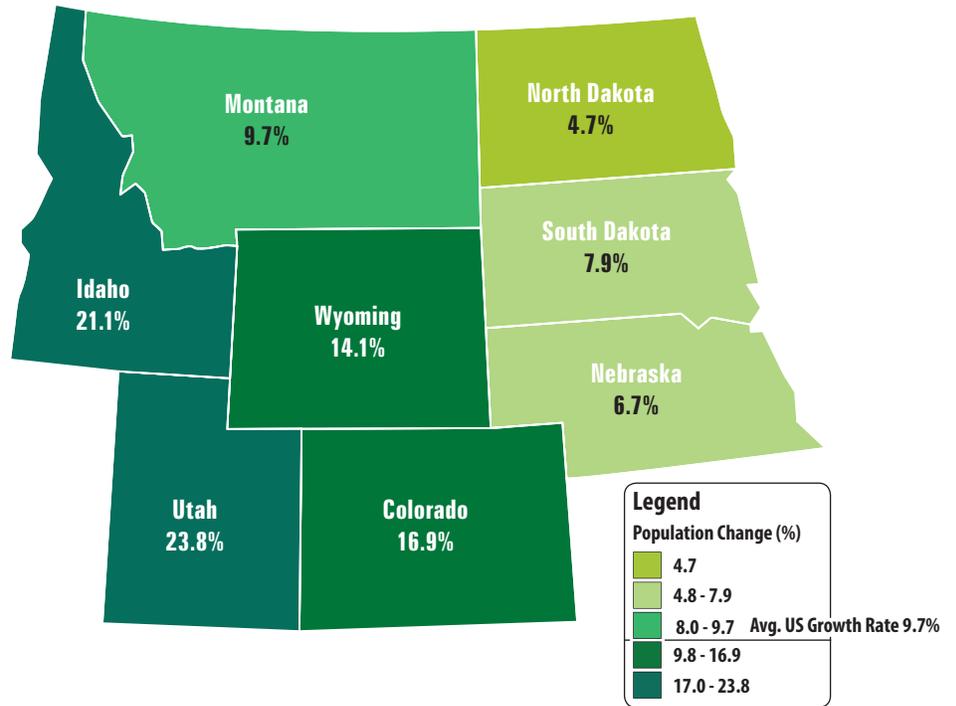
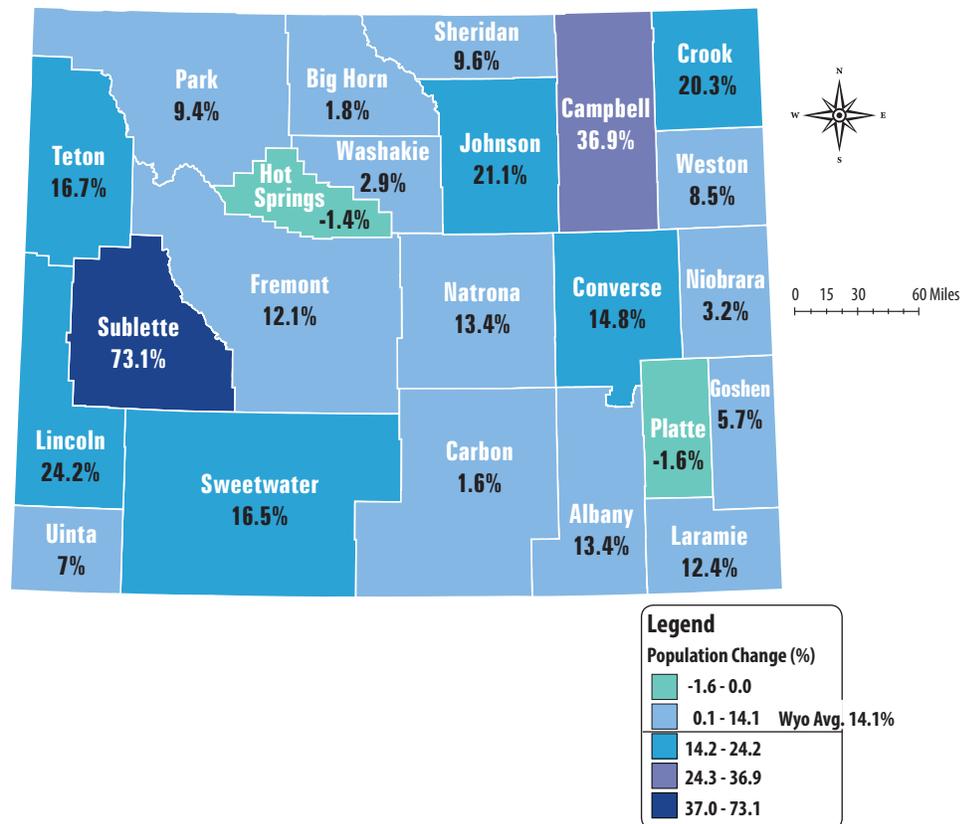


Figure 3. Wyoming population growth rates (2000–2010). Energy producing counties, such as Sublette and Campbell Counties, were the leaders in population growth.



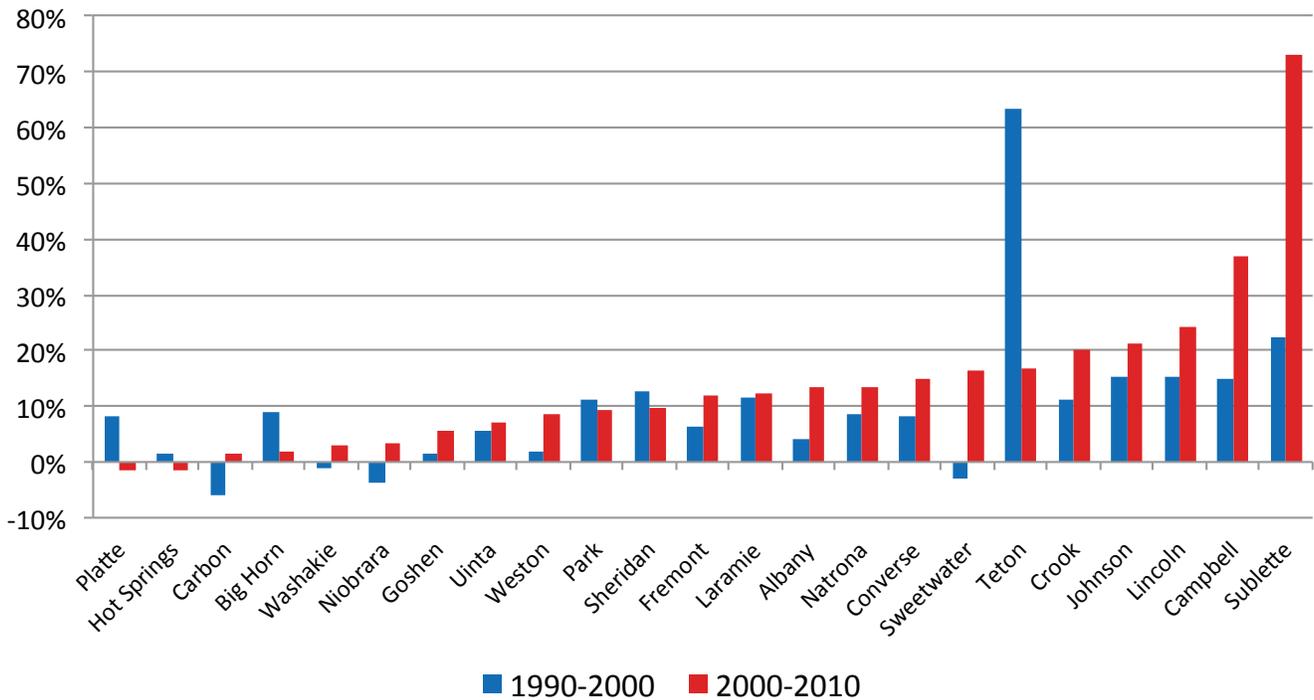
more than 22 percent growth between 1990 and 2000 to more than 73 percent growth between 2000 and 2010. However, population growth rates from 2000 to 2010 decreased when compared to 1990 to 2000 in some counties, including Teton, Platte, Big Horn, Sheridan, Hot Springs, and Park Counties. Teton County had the biggest decrease, going from more than 63 percent growth for 1990 to 2000 to less than 17 percent growth for 2000 to 2010.

Sources of population growth include 1) natural increase of births exceeding deaths, and 2) net in-migration where more people are moving into an area than are moving out. As show in Figure 5, both factors are a source of population growth for Wyoming. At the state level, roughly one-half of the population growth came from natural increase with the other one-half coming from net in-migration. However, the sources of growth varied significantly by counties. Among the high growth counties (greater than 20 percent population growth),

all attributed most of their growth to net in-migration. This was particularly true for Sublette, Johnson, and Crook Counties. Among the medium growth counties (population growth rates of 10 percent to 20 percent), all had much of their growth coming from natural increase. This was particularly true for Teton and Sweetwater Counties. Among the low growth counties (less than 10 percent population growth), all had relatively small or negative net natural increases, with the exception of Uinta County. This may be a reflection of the relatively older populations in these counties.

Whether population growth occurred within urban or rural areas also varied across the state. Slightly more than two-thirds of Wyoming’s 14.1 percent population growth from 2000 to 2010 occurred in urban areas (incorporated cities and towns); however, on a percentage basis, rural areas of the state grew slightly faster than urban areas. In 16 of Wyoming’s 23 counties (Campbell, Sweetwater, Converse, Natrona, Albany, Laramie, Sheri-

Figure 4. Comparison of Wyoming population growth rates (1990–2000 vs. 2000–2010).



dan, Park, Weston, Uinta, Goshen, Niobrara, Washakie, Big Horn, Carbon, and Platte) population growth in urban areas exceed population growth in rural areas (Figure 6). In the other seven Wyoming counties (Sublette, Lincoln, Johnson, Crook, Teton, Fremont, and Hot Springs), population growth in rural areas exceeded population growth in urban areas. In fact, in five of the six fastest growing counties between 2000 and 2010, rural population growth exceeded urban population growth.

Among Wyoming's urban areas, the five largest cities in the state (Cheyenne, Casper, Laramie, Gillette, and Rock Springs) had the largest increase in population in absolute terms (Table 1). These five cities accounted for more than 42 percent of the total population growth in Wyoming between 2000 and 2010. Due to its small population, Lost Springs had the highest population growth rate (300%) among communities in Wyoming, growing from a population of 1 to a population of 4. All the other communities with high growth rate were also relatively small towns, with the exception of Gillette, which increased by nearly 44 percent and grew to more than 29,000 residents in 2010. All cities and towns in Wyoming that experienced population declines or had the slowest growth between 2000 and 2010 were relatively small towns, with Thermopolis, Saratoga, and Pine Bluffs being the most populous among the group (Table 2). Towns with the largest percentage decrease also had relatively small populations.

Among Wyoming's rural areas, the fastest growing counties varied by size and location across the state. Laramie, Sublette, and Lincoln Counties all experienced an increase of approximately 3,000 or more rural residents between 2000 and 2010 (Table 3). Campbell, Fremont, and Teton Counties all experienced an increase of more than 2,000 or more rural residents between 2000 and 2010. Sweetwater, Park, Johnson, and Natrona Counties all experienced an increase of nearly 800 or more rural residents between 2000 and 2010. In terms of percentage growth, large increases in rural populations were seen in Sublette, Lincoln, and Teton Counties in the northwestern part of the state. This was especially true in Sublette County, which saw its rural population almost

double between 2000 and 2010. However, there were also large increases in Johnson, Crook, and Campbell Counties in the northeastern part of the state. Among the slowest growing rural areas, six counties (Platte, Weston, Carbon, Goshen, Niobrara and Big Horn) all lost rural residents between 2000 and 2010 (Table 4). These counties were also among the slowest growing counties in the state in terms of total population.

Since 2000, the Rocky Mountain West, including Wyoming, has seen strong increases in its population. This growth has not been evenly distributed across Wyoming, ranging from a more than 73 percent increase in Sublette County between 2000 and 2010 to a nearly 2 percent loss in Platte County during the same time period. About one-half of the population growth in Wyoming between 2000 and 2010 came from natural increases in the population, while the other half came from net in-migration of new residents. However, in the fastest growing counties the majority of growth tended to come from in-migration. About two-thirds of Wyoming population growth occurred in urban areas of the state between 2000 and 2010, with the other one-third occurring in rural areas. The fastest growing counties tended to have more growth in rural areas than in urban areas. Population growth and the location of that growth (urban vs. rural) has significant implications for wildlife habitat, scenic views, and local government budgets. Understanding changing population patterns is a key step in understanding growth issues in Wyoming.

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Figure 5. Wyoming population growth by source (2000–2010). Among high growth counties (greater than 20 percent population growth), all attributed most of their growth to net in-migration.

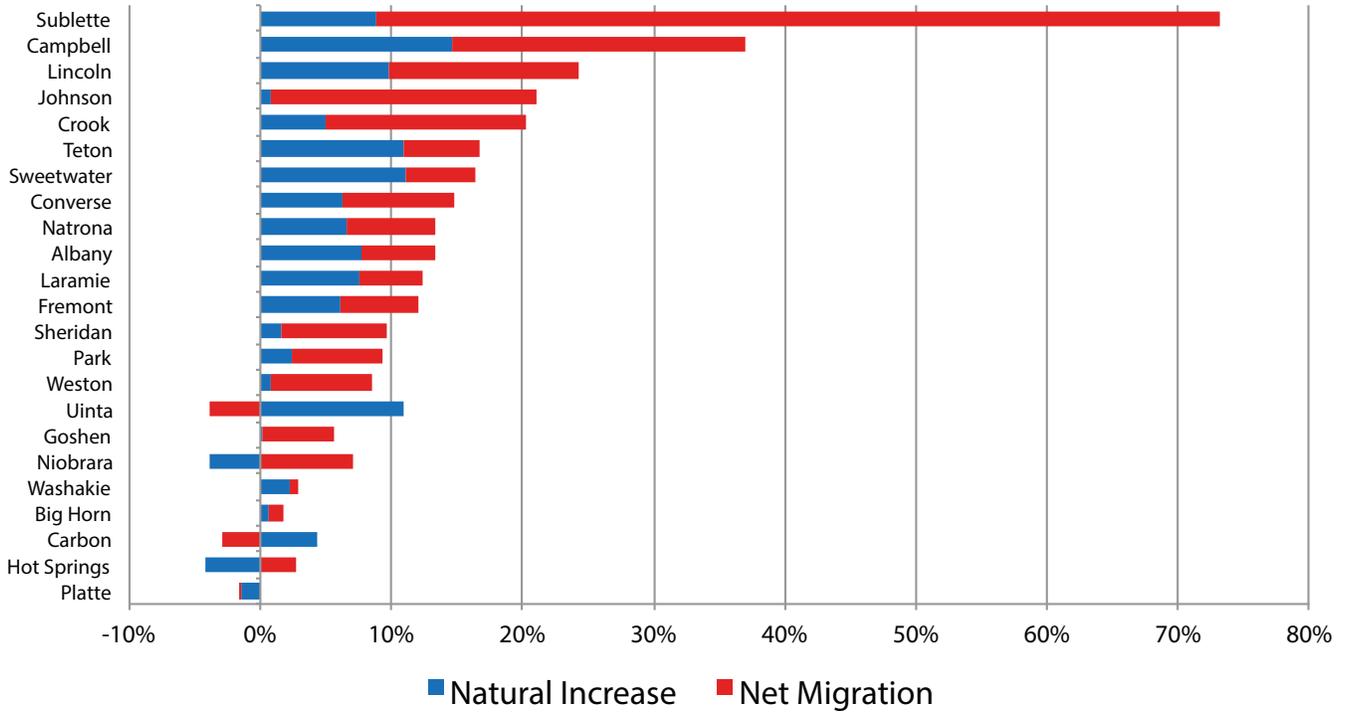


Figure 6. Wyoming population growth by location (2000–2010). Slightly more than two-thirds of Wyoming’s 14.1 percent population growth from 2000 to 2010 occurred in urban areas (incorporated cities and towns); however, on a percentage basis, rural areas of the state grew slightly faster than urban areas.

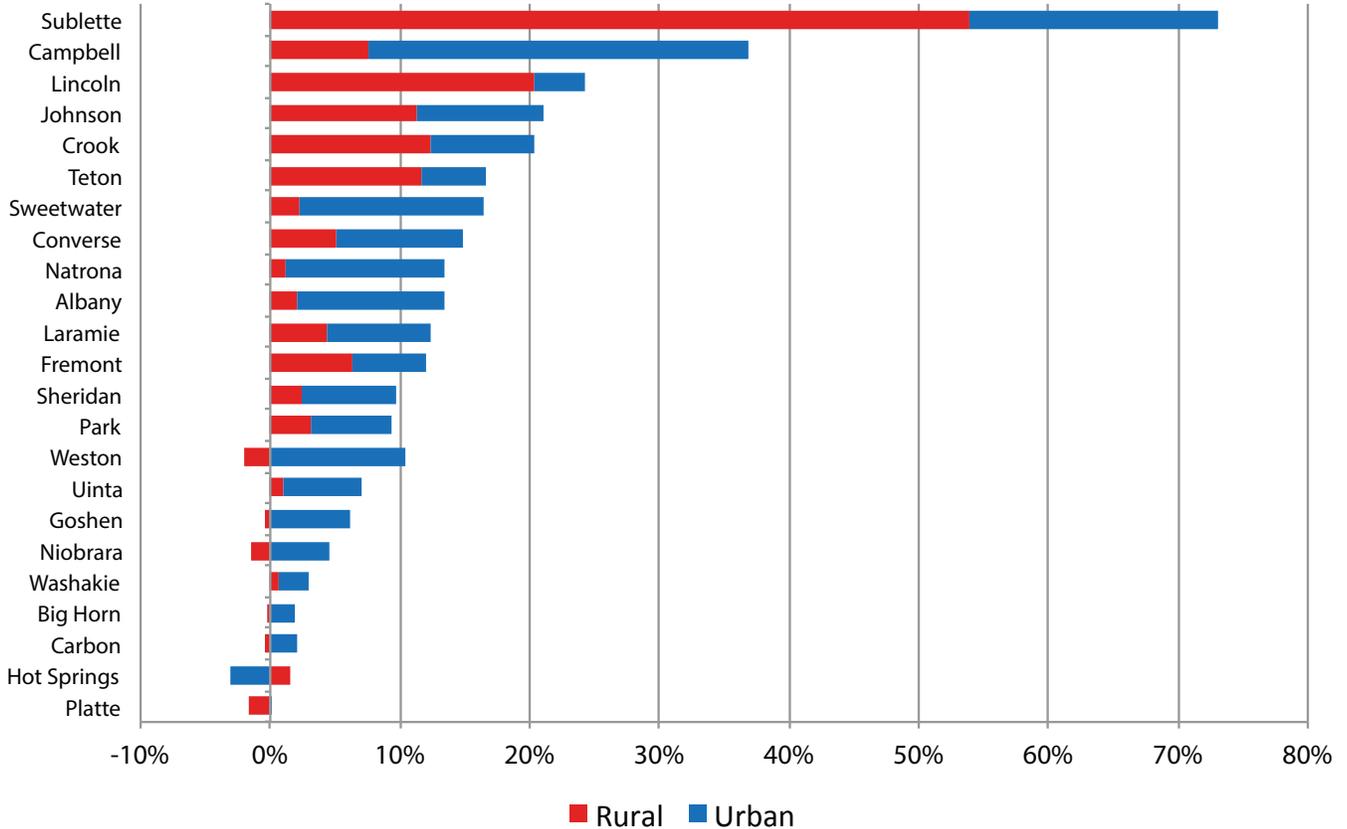


Table 1. Wyoming's Fastest Growing Cities and Towns (2000-2010).

Place	Population Change	2010 Population	Place	Percent Growth	2010 Population
Gillette	9,441	29,087	Lost Springs	300.0%	4
Cheyenne	6,455	59,466	Bar Nunn	136.4%	2,213
Casper	5,672	55,316	Pine Haven	120.7%	490
Rock Springs	4,328	23,036	Wamsutter	72.8%	451
Laramie	3,612	30,816	Kirby	61.4%	92
Sheridan	1,640	17,444	Marbleton	51.9%	1,094
Riverton	1,305	10,615	Albin	50.8%	181
Bar Nunn	1,277	2,213	Alpine	50.5%	828
Powell	941	6,314	Gillette	48.1%	29,087
Jackson	930	9,577	Pinedale	43.8%	2,030

Table 2. Wyoming's Slowest Growing Cities and Towns (2000-2010).

Place	Population Change	2010 Population	Place	Percent Growth	2010 Population
Thermopolis	-163	3,009	Frannie	-24.9%	157
Frannie	-52	157	Hartville	-18.4%	62
Ten Sleep	-44	260	Van Tassell	-16.7%	15
Lingle	-42	468	Ten Sleep	-14.5%	260
Saratoga	-36	1,690	Chugwater	-13.1%	212
Hanna	-32	841	Riverside	-11.9%	52
Chugwater	-32	212	Yoder	-10.7%	151
Hulett	-25	383	Glendo	-10.5%	205
Pine Bluffs	-24	1,129	Lingle	-8.2%	468
Meeteetse	-24	327	Thermopolis	-7.3%	254
Glendo	-24	205			

Table 3. Wyoming's Fastest Growing Rural Areas (2000-2010).

County	Population Change	2010 Population	County	Percent Growth	2010 Population
Laramie	3,623	91,738	Sublette	94.4%	10,247
Sublette	3,191	10,247	Lincoln	39.8%	18,106
Lincoln	2,968	18,106	Johnson	27.2%	8,569
Campbell	2,534	46,133	Crook	22.2%	7,083
Fremont	2,254	40,123	Teton	22.0%	21,294
Teton	2,113	21,294	Campbell	19.9%	46,133
Sweetwater	874	43,806	Converse	14.9%	13,833
Park	824	28,205	Albany	14.5%	36,299
Johnson	795	8,569	Sweetwater	13.8%	43,806
Natrona	787	75,450	Laramie	13.4%	91,738

Table 4. Wyoming's Slowest Growing Rural Areas (2000-2010).

County	Population Change	2010 Population	County	Percent Growth	2010 Population
Platte	-149	8,667	Weston	-4.8%	7,208
Weston	-131	7,208	Platte	-4.2%	8,667
Carbon	-68	15,885	Niobrara	-4.0%	2,484
Goshen	-57	13,249	Carbon	-3.1%	15,885
Niobrara	-34	2,484	Goshen	-1.0%	13,249
Big Horn	-6	11,668	Big Horn	-0.1%	11,668
Washakie	51	8,533	Washakie	1.9%	8,533
Hot Springs	78	4,812	Uinta	4.2%	21,118
Uinta	214	21,118	Hot Springs	5.7%	4,812



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