

LOCAL

Ocala metro area is No. 1 in this latest Census Bureau growth ranking



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Ocala Star-Banner

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Key Points AI-assisted summary ⓘ

The Ocala, Florida metro area was the fastest-growing metro area in the U.S. between July 2023 and July 2024.

Ocala's population grew by 4% during this period, reaching 428,905 residents.

This continues a trend of rapid growth for the area, which was the fourth-fastest-growing metro area nationwide from 2022 to 2023.

When the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) releases information about population and growth, The Villages usually is mentioned near or at the top of the list.

But for the latest measuring period, Ocala/Marion County has taken a top spot.

Here's what we know:

What Census report are we talking about?

On March 13, [the U.S. Census Bureau released statistics](#) about population growth between July 1, 2023 and July 1, 2024.

"Population growth in U.S. metro areas as a whole was faster between 2023 and 2024 than in the previous year and outpaced that of the nation," the bureau wrote in a press release announcing the new data. "Additionally, some metro areas that experienced population declines during the COVID-19 pandemic are now observing

population gains, according to Vintage 2024 estimates of population totals and components of change."

In what area did Ocala/Marion County shine?

According to the Census Bureau, in percentage terms, the Ocala metro area — which is all of Marion County — [ranked No. 1 for growth among metro areas nationwide between July 1, 2023, and July 1, 2024.](#)

Ocala's population on July 1, 2023 was 412,338. It rose 4% to 428,905 by July 1, 2024.

[The Panama City-Panama City Beach metro area \(3.8% population growth\) ranked second nationwide.](#) Also in the Top 10 were Lakeland-Winter Haven (No. 4 at 3.5% growth) and Port St. Lucie (No. 7 at 2.9%.)

Another No. 1 ranking: [Ocala ranked first in this part of the 2024 U-Haul Growth Index](#)

Is this kind of ranking new?

Not really. From 2022 to 2023, the Ocala metro area [grew 3.4%](#), according to the Census Bureau. That was No. 4 nationwide in terms of percentage growth among metros.

For that period, The Villages (4.7%) ranked No. 1 among metros in terms of percentage growth.

Didn't Ocala score the top spot in another recent report?

Yes. [U-Haul](#) said Ocala was the top city nationwide, outside the leading growth metros, in terms of the greatest net number of in-migrations.

More information about this latest Census report can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/22rr99yf>.

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