

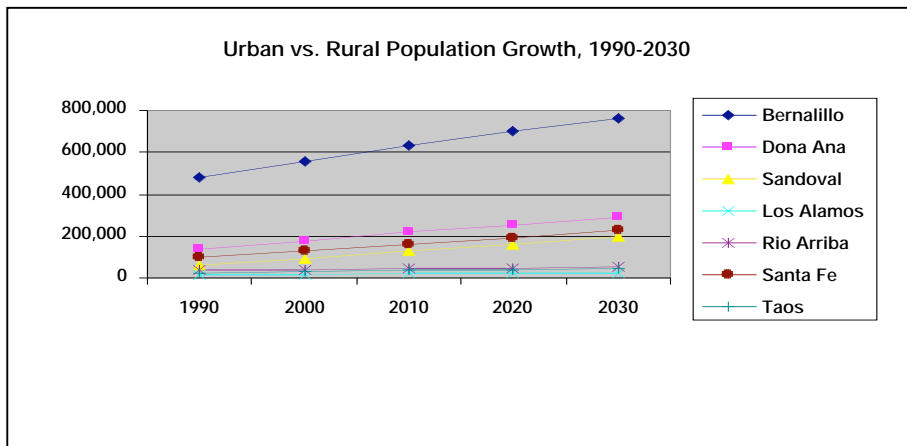
## Socio-Economic Profile

Unlike most geographic regions that pursue regional economic development efforts, northern NM is neither homogenous nor dominated by a single industry. While in the past, diversity has

PRIORITIES FOR NORTHERN NM COUNTIES, BASED ON US CENSUS DATA	Los Alamos	Rio Arriba	Santa Fe	Taos
Retain and attract youth and young families				
Retain and attract greater racial diversity				
Raise incomes				
Lower poverty level				
Provide affordable housing				
Improve graduation rates				
Increase college graduates				

sometimes been a barrier to achieving regional cooperation, it can also be transformed into opportunities for economic success by building upon strengths and targeting weaknesses. Based upon the most recent US census data and projections from the UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER), the following profile provides a snapshot northern NM, its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

**Population.** As shown in the table on page 5, recent population growth varies widely in northern NM, ranging from slight negative growth in Rio Arriba County (-0.59%) to high population growth in Santa Fe County (10.14%). It should be noted that UNM's Bureau of Business and Economic Research projects higher growth than US Census Estimates for all of the northern counties except Taos. Therefore it is conceivable that all northern counties, including Rio Arriba, have experienced positive population growth since 2000.



From 2000 to 2030, BBER projects that NM will grow approximately 7%, but at a declining rate. According to BBER, "Even with a slower population growth rate, New Mexico will become more urbanized. The metropolitan areas will increase their demographic

dominance as they further enhance their economic supremacy. Unless economic development programs address the current imbalance between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in the state, the former will drain population from the latter areas." (*New Mexico County Population Projections, July 1, 2000 – July 1, 2030*, BBER) The much higher growth rates of urbanized counties such as Bernalillo, Sandoval, Doña Ana and Santa Fe are shown in the chart above, in contrast to the nearly flat growth of rural counties in northern NM. Los Alamos County, which is considered an urban county, is also projected to experience relatively flat growth.

Currently, most of northern NM generally follows state and national trends for age cohorts. The extreme exception to this rule is Los Alamos County, whose youth population (12.5%) is half that of NM and the US, and whose senior population (22.7%) is nearly double that of NM and the US. Santa Fe and Taos counties have slightly older populations than the state or the US, with fewer children under 5, less youth under age 18, and slightly more persons over age 65. Rio Arriba County has a different profile, with more children under 5, more youth under age 18, and an average number of seniors, when compared to New Mexico and the US. This is likely due to a high number of Native Americans in Rio Arriba County, who have higher birth rates and younger populations than other racial groups.

Stakeholders in the region are concerned about youth and young families leaving the more rural areas of the state for better employment opportunities in the urban areas. This perception is substantiated by BBER's population projections, and by out-migration of college educated New Mexicans to other states. The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions reports that 18% of college-educated people left NM between 1990 and 2000, indicating a weak demand for an educated labor force. (*2007 State of NM Workforce Report*, NM Department of Workforce Solutions)

Finally, substantial shifts in age groups are projected for NM due to the aging of the baby boomer generation. BBER predicts that this will result in new areas of conflict because racial and ethnic groups are aging at different rates. While the Anglos will dominate the elderly population, minorities will be concentrated in the youth population and the labor force. Expectedly, the needs for new nursing homes, assisted living arrangements and the high cost of medical care will compete for limited resources for education, childcare and employment. Ominously, BBER predicts, "[t]he economic implications of an aging population become even more problematic if the labor force is poorly educated and wages are low." (*New Mexico County Population Projections, July 1, 2000 – July 1, 2030*, BBER)

**Income.** In the areas of income and poverty, there is great disparity within the four-county region. New Mexico has lower incomes and a higher poverty rate than the US as a whole, and Rio Arriba and Taos Counties have even lower incomes and higher poverty rates than New Mexico. Santa Fe County has incomes and poverty levels on par with the national average, and better than the state average. Los Alamos County is the extreme exception, with incomes levels that far exceed the national average and a poverty rate of only 3.3%. It should be noted that income estimates for 2006 now place Taos County as the lowest ranking county in northern NM in terms of income, although Rio Arriba County still has the highest percentage of people living in poverty. The informal economy is strong in Taos and Rio Arriba Counties, where subsistence agriculture, livestock raising, timber harvesting, and cash and barter activities are common. This, in part, accounts for the lower incomes and higher poverty rates in these two counties, although wages in formal employment sectors, shown on page 12, are also very low.

Homeownership rates are often used as an economic indicator. A higher percentage of residents own their homes in New Mexico than in the US as a whole, at 70% vs. 66%. Three of the counties in the four-county region have even higher rates of homeownership: 81.5% for Rio Arriba, 79% for Los Alamos, and 75.5% for Taos. Santa Fe County has a homeownership rate lower than the state average, but higher than the national average. The converse is true for renters. New Mexico has a lower percentage of renter-occupied housing units than the national average, and Rio Arriba, Los Alamos and Taos Counties have a lower percentage than the state. Only Santa Fe County has slightly more renters than the state as a whole, but less than the national average. While homeownership rates in the four-county region are encouraging, it should be noted that with the exception of Los Alamos County, they do not correlate with income levels. Rio Arriba and Taos Counties, for example, have very high rates of homeownership but

very low income levels. Homeownership in these counties is more indicative of families that have passed their homes on from generation to generation, rather than of purchasing power.

DEMOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC INDICATORS	United States	New Mexico	Los Alamos County	Rio Arriba County	Santa Fe County	Taos County
<b>Population</b>						
Population (2006)	299,398,484	1,954,599	19,022	40,949	142,407	31,832
Population Growth (2000-06)	6.4%	7.45%	3.7%	-0.59%	10.14%	6.18%
Building Permits (2006)	1,838,903	13,573	44	13	417	318
Persons under 5 years old (2006)	6.8%	7.3%	5.2%	8.1%	5.7%	5.8%
Persons under 18 years old (2006)	24.6%	26.0%	12.5%	27.0%	21.7%	21.4%
Persons 65 and older (2006)	12.4%	12.4%	22.7%	12.4%	12.5%	14.8%
<b>Employment</b>						
Unemployment Rate (12/07)	4.9%	3.1%	1.7%	3.9%	2.4%	4.1%
Civilian Labor Force (12/07)	138,100,000	944,063	10,439	21,233	77,965	17,968
Civilian Work Force per Capita	46%	48%	55%	52%	55%	56%
<b>Income</b>						
Per Capita Income (2005)	\$34,495	\$27,889	\$54,134	\$23,203	\$37,934	\$25,817
Median HH Income (2005, SAIPE)	\$46,242	\$37,603	\$92,439	\$34,364	\$45,786	\$31,100
Poverty Rate (2005, SAIPE)	13.3%	18.4%	3.3%	21.1%	12.8%	19.8%
Retail Sales per Capita (2002)	\$10,610	\$9,880	\$5,060	\$6,090	\$13,484	\$8,389
Federal Spending (2004, \$1000)	\$2,143,781,727	\$19,863,967	\$1,989,896	\$316,435	\$1,180,726	\$213,624
<b>Housing Characteristics</b>						
Owner-occupied housing units	66.2%	70.0%	78.6%	81.6%	68.6%	75.5%
Renter-occupied housing units	33.8%	30.0%	21.4%	18.4%	31.4%	24.5%
Cost burdened home owners	21.8%	21.9%	8.5%	20.8%	26.6%	25.4%
Cost burdened renters	36.8%	37.6%	24.0%	27.5%	41.9%	43.5%
<b>Social Characteristics</b>						
High school graduates	80.4%	78.9%	96.3%	73.0%	84.5%	79.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	24.4%	23.5%	60.5%	15.4%	36.9%	25.4%
White (2006)	80.1%	84.6%	91.8%	82.9%	92.8%	90.5%
Hispanic or Latino (2006)	14.8%	44.0%	13.6%	72.2%	49.5%	55.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native (2006)	1.0%	9.8%	0.8%	15.2%	3.4%	7.0%
Foreign born	11.1%	8.2%	6.7%	3.7%	10.1%	4.1%
Speak Spanish at home	10.7%	28.7%	5.8%	59.8%	33.0%	48.2%

Source: 2000 US Census, unless otherwise indicated

Cost burden, defined as households paying more than 30% of their income in housing and associated costs, is slightly higher in New Mexico than for the US. Santa Fe and Taos Counties have ever higher rates of cost burden for both homeowners and renters. Rio Arriba County's cost burden rate is lower than both the state and national averages, due to housing being more affordable in this area. Finally, cost burden is well below state and national averages for Los Alamos County, reflecting the higher incomes in the area.

**Employment.** Per capita, all four counties in northern NM have a higher percentage of people in the workforce, ranging from 52% to 56%, than NM (48%) and the US (46%). However, all counties in northern NM have unemployment rates that are lower than national and state averages, meaning that very few people are available to fill jobs. Unemployment ranges from 1.7% in Los Alamos to 3.9% in Rio Arriba County, figures which are lower than the 4.9% US unemployment rate and the 4.1% NM unemployment rate.

**Educational Attainment.** According to the 2000 Census, New Mexico is slightly below the US in terms of educational attainment. However, three of the four counties in the four-county area outperform the state as a whole. Los Alamos and Santa Fe Counties have higher percentages of high school graduates and persons with a bachelor's degree or higher than the US, and Taos County is consistent with the national average for high school graduates and bachelor's degrees. Only Rio Arriba County ranks lower than both state and national averages, graduating only 73% of its residents from high school and 15% with post-secondary degrees.

**Diversity.** The number of New Mexicans who are Hispanic or Latino (44%) is nearly three times the national average of 14.8%. Three of the counties in the region have even higher percentages of Hispanic population, with Rio Arriba County at 72.2%, Taos County at 55.5% and Santa Fe County at 49.5%. These three counties also rank higher than the state for persons who speak Spanish as their primary language at home. Rio Arriba and Taos Counties have very low percentage of foreign born residents, indicating that Spanish-speakers are long-time residents of Hispanic descent. Santa Fe County, conversely, has a higher percentage of foreign born residents, indicating that some Spanish speakers may be immigrants from other countries. Finally, Los Alamos County's population of Hispanic residents (13.6%) is slightly lower than that for the US as a whole, and its percentage of Spanish-speakers (6%) is much lower than the rate for other counties in the region, the state and the nation. Its percentage of foreign born residents is lower than state and national averages; however, it is higher than the rate for foreign born residents in Rio Arriba and Taos Counties.

The percentage of Native American and Alaska Natives in New Mexico (9.8%) is significantly higher than for the US as a whole (1%). In the four-county region, only Rio Arriba County has a Native American population (15.2%) that exceeds the state average. Rio Arriba County is home to the Pueblos of Santa Clara and Ohkay Owingeh, as well as part of the Jicarilla Apache Nation. Native Americans make up 7% of the population in Taos County, where the Pueblos of Taos and Picuris are located. Santa Fe County is home to several small Pueblos, including Nambe, Tesuque, Pojoaque and San Ildefonso. Native Americans make up only 3.4% of Santa Fe County's population and 0.8% of Los Alamos County's population.

