People keep coming to state

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THE GREENVILLE NEWS

South Carolina's population is growing at an approximate rate of 500,000 people every 10 years, driven in part by out-of-state transplants making the Palmetto State their new home.

In April 2010, South Carolina's population was 4,625,364, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In July of this year, it was already nearing 5 million, at an estimate of 4,961,119. Between 2015 and 2016, the Palmetto State gained nearly more than 66,000 new residents, according to Census data, making it the 10th fastest-growing state in the country.

Among all moves, whether in the same state or to a new one, housing was the primary reason for nearly half, according to a 2014 Census Bureau report. Nearly all others moved for employment reasons (19.4 percent) or family reasons (30.3 percent). Moves based on family or employment are often what drive people to new states,, said Jerry Mitchell, a research associate professor of geography at the University of South Carolina.

Two coastal counties, Beaufort and Horry, have the lowest proportions of native born South Carolinians: under 30 percent in Beaufort and under 40 percent in Horry, Mitchell said. The homes of Hilton Head Island and Myrtle Beach are popular retirement destinations, but it's not just retirees migrating across state lines to these counties, Mitchell said.

"The obvious answer is retirement, but those retirees also need services," Mitchell said. "They need servers for restaurants, people to mow the grass ... high end and low end workers are responding to that as well."

Population growth in South Carolina has also occurred during a time of employment growth; in November, more South Carolinians were employed than ever before, Gov. Nikki Haley said. That has led to the "suburbanization" of South Carolina's biggest cities, including Greenville, as well as Rock Hill and Fort Mill, suburbs of Charlotte, Mitchell said.

While weather and "Southern hospitality" are often cited as reasons outsiders move, Mitchell notes that most come from nearby states like Georgia and North Carolina, so work or family may be more realistic reasons.