

Nevada continues to be a state of immigrants

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

Almost one in five Nevadans were born in another country, while about one in four were born in the Silver State, according to recent U.S. Census Bureau data.

Nevada handily retains its title of having the fewest native-born residents of any state in the latest American Community Survey data from the census bureau.

Nevada's 24.3 percent estimated native-born population is almost 11 percentage points behind Florida, which has the second lowest native population at 35.2 percent.

Nevada's native-born population increased from the 2000 census, when 21.3 percent of the state's population reported being born here.

Former Nevada state historian Guy Rocha said this is pretty much how it's always been for the Silver State.

"This state has always been about immigration," Rocha said.

And it's not just people who move here from other places in the country; they come from all over the world.

From the state's beginning in 1864 through about the 1920s, it was the boom-and-bust cycle of mining that drove the state's population growth.

Mining drew an Irish and Cornish population from Great Britain and also Italians and Slavs.

Agriculture drew Portuguese to Lovelock, Fallon and Yerington; Germans and Danes to Carson Valley; and Italians to Dayton and

Reno, Rocha said.

The Silver State can't even mint it's own governors, Rocha said. Out of 30 governors, only seven were born here. Paul Laxalt, who was in office from 1967 to 1971, was the last native-born governor.

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