

# COUNTY PROFILE

## History

Yuma's first settlers were the Native American Tribes whose descendants continue to occupy the Cocopah Reservation in Yuma County, and the nearby Quechan Reservation. Yuma's first recorded historic event was in 1540 when Spanish explorer Hernando de Alarcon became the first European to see the area of the City and County of Yuma. It was clear that Yuma was a great natural crossing of the Colorado River and an ideal location for a city.

In 1701, Father Eusebio Francisco Kino was the first person to recognize the Yuma Crossing as a gateway to California. About a hundred years later, Father Francisco Garces led Juan Bautista de Anza and his pioneering expedition to the Yuma Crossing in their search for a land route to California. Garces founded two missions at the Crossing in 1779, but was killed in the last major Indian uprising shortly after.

Kit Carson rediscovered the Yuma Crossing in the 1850's when Yuma became the major river crossing for California gold-seekers. From 1540 to 1854 Yuma was under Spanish and Mexican control. Through the Gadsden Purchase in 1854, Yuma became a territorial possession of the United States. Yuma County became one of the original four counties in the State of Arizona when it was created in 1864.

In these early years, the City of Yuma held several different names. From 1854 through 1858 Yuma was known as Colorado City. From 1858 to 1873 it was named Arizona City. Finally in 1873 the Territorial Legislature settled on Yuma. The County and City of Yuma's name is derived from the name of the areas original inhabitants—the Yumas. The Yumas consisted of the Indian tribes of the lower Colorado region: Quechan, Cocopah, and the Mohave tribes. These tribes were related because they are all members of the same linguistic group.

The County Seal reflects some of this Indian Heritage along with the Arizona sun, open desert landscape, the areas agriculture, historical sites, Colorado River, near-perfect flying conditions, and other aspects of Yuma County.



There are a few historic sites in Yuma County, most notably the Yuma Territorial Prison State Park and the Yuma Quartermaster Depot State Park. The Quartermaster Depot was used by the US Army to store supplies and distribute them as needed to Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Texas. There was a continuous supply of at least six months worth of clothes, food, ammunition, and other military goods at the Depot.

Yuma Ferry Crossing 1889



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Ocean vessels went around the Baja Peninsula to Port Isabel near the mouth of the Colorado River. There, supplies were loaded and taken up the Colorado via river steamers to Yuma. From here, freight was shipped further upriver on steamers and by land with mule drawn freight wagons.

In 1877, the Southern Pacific Railroad expanded to Yuma and the Quartermaster Depot and Fort Yuma soon came to an end.

Yuma 1886 (railroad bridge built in 1877)



The Signal Corps established a weather station in Yuma in 1875 and the Army officially terminated the Supply Depot in 1883. The Signal Corps remained until 1891 when the United States Weather Service operated the Depot site until 1949.

The Yuma Territorial Prison State Park is also a part of Yuma County's history. In July 1876, the first seven inmates stepped into the cells they had built themselves. During its thirty years of operation, 3,069 prisoners (including 29 women) inhabited the walls of the Territorial Prison. Inmates served sentences for crimes ranging from murder to polygamy. The most common crime was grand larceny.

Since pardons and paroles were easily obtained, many of the prisoners served only a portion of their sentences. There were one-hundred and eleven deaths at the prison—most were due to tuberculosis which was common at the time. Twenty-six people escaped while serving their sentence, but only two of them came from inside the prison walls. The others occurred during work duty and other activities outside of the prison. There were no capital punishment executions at the prison.

Territorial Prison Guard Watchtower & Prison Cells



The Prison's infamous reputation painted a grim picture of the treatment encountered by prisoners while inside. Perpetuating this notoriety were stories published about the prison. Most notably, *Three-ten to Yuma* by Elmore Leonard and its later film adaptations both titled *3:10 to Yuma*—one in 1957 and the other in 2007. In the 1961 western *The Comancheros*, John Wayne also mentions the Prison. However, despite this notoriety, historic evidence says the prison was run humanely. Punishments for inmates were the "Dark Cell" for misbehavior and ball-and-chain for those who attempted to escape.

The Territorial Prison was home to one of the first public libraries in the Arizona Territory. A fee was charged for visitors to tour the institution and proceeds went to purchasing new books. One of the earliest electrical generating plants was used to power the lights in the prison buildings as well as ventilate the cellblock.

By 1907 the Prison was overcrowded and there was no room for expansion on Prison Hill. Prisoners began construction of a new facility in Florence, Arizona and the prison closed on September 15, 1909.

From 1910 to 1914 the Yuma High School occupied the prison buildings. The football team was scheduled to play a favored-to-win football team in Phoenix. The Phoenix team dubbed the Yuma High School team “the criminals.” When Yuma unexpectedly won, Yuma adopted the nickname and mascot with pride and thereby earned the unique nickname “The Criminals.” This continues to be their mascot and team name to this day. Empty cells also served as a makeshift hotel for hobos riding the freights in the 1920s and as housing for families displaced by the Great Depression.

## Climate

Yuma is one of the hottest cities of any kind in the United States. The average July high temperature is 107 degrees Fahrenheit compared to Death Valley’s 115 degree July average high. The average high temperature in January is 69 degrees. The Guinness Book of World Records notes that Yuma is the sunniest place on earth. There are around 4,456 hours of possible daylight annually and Yuma is sunny for about 4,050 hours—a little more than 90% of the time. The moderate winter temperatures and abundance of year-round sunshine attract many winter-visitors.

## Recreation/Sites of Interest

Other than the aforementioned State Parks, there are some interesting sites/recreation available in and near Yuma County. Downtown Yuma is historic and maintains its charm despite the area’s growth. In addition, the Kofa Mountain Range and wildlife refuge area, Mittry Lake, Martinez Lake, and the nearby Imperial Sand Dunes in California provide recreation to visitors and locals.

Imperial Sand Dunes



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Glamis\\_Presidents\\_263.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Glamis_Presidents_263.jpg)

Many people enjoy the hunting and fishing opportunities provided by the vast uninhabited areas and the Colorado River. Dove and Quail season bring hunters to Yuma County every fall. The annual Colorado River Crossing Balloon Festival attracts many unique hot air balloons and spectators.

Colorado River & River Crossing Balloon Festival



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The Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) and Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) bring a military presence to the community. MCAS performs an annual air show with large-scale military exercises. The Army's YPG base provides a testing venue for new military equipment.



## Yuma's Location

Yuma County is Arizona's southwest border county. To the west is the State of California and to the south is Mexico. The Colorado River forms the County's western border. Arizona's two largest cities, Phoenix and Tucson, are in the 2 counties immediately east of Yuma. From the City of Yuma, the drive to Phoenix is about 3 hours. The drive to Tucson is about 4 hours. San Diego and the Southern California beaches along the Pacific Ocean are a 3 to 4 hour drive.



Yuma County consists of approximately 5,522 square miles. Much of the area is open desert. The County's population is concentrated in the vicinity of the City of Yuma, which is located on the Colorado River and is about a 30 minute drive to Mexico.

## Population and Demographics

When compared to Arizona, Yuma County is small and rural. In July 2006, Arizona's population was 6,305,210 and Yuma County's population was 195,449. The City of Yuma, Arizona's 11th largest city had 91,015, or 46.6% of the County population. When we look inside Yuma County we get a picture of a region with impressive growth in its population.

- Yuma County grew 22.7% between 2000 and 2006
- The City of Yuma grew by 18.9%
- Somerton grew by 39%
- San Luis on the U.S.-Mexico border grew by 54.7% between 2000 and 2006





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The following table gives an estimate of what Yuma County's population is and will be in the future:

Population Estimates	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
City of Yuma	91,015	93,241	95,442	97,610	99,757
San Luis	24,485	26,018	27,534	29,027	30,506
Somerton	10,258	10,758	11,253	11,741	12,224
Wellton	1,998	2,026	2,054	2,081	2,108
Foothills	28,827	30,224	31,605	32,966	34,313
Unincorporated	38,917	39,168	39,416	39,661	39,903
<b>Total Yuma County</b>	<b>195,499</b>	<b>201,435</b>	<b>207,305</b>	<b>213,086</b>	<b>218,810</b>

Source: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Research Administration, Population Statistics Unit, 12/01/06.

## Household Size

Whereas the "typical" household in Yuma County averaged 2.86 persons in 2006, place-to-place differences are substantial. For example, the retirement oriented Foothills had only 2.11 persons per household, while the average household size in San Luis was more than twice as large (4.31 persons).

## Ethnicity and Age of Population

Yuma County is heavily Hispanic; 55.8% of its residents are Hispanic or Latino (the Arizona figure is almost one-half that of Yuma County at 29%). Non-Hispanic white residents represent 39.8% of the County's population. The sum of these two percentages is 95.6%, which means that there are relatively small numbers of Asians, Blacks, and other non-Hispanic ethnic groups in Yuma County.

The age distribution of Yuma's population is different for different ethnic groups. The Hispanic population in Yuma County is young, and it is more-or-less the same as the Statewide picture. In Yuma County 22.3% of the Hispanic or Latino population is 9 years of age or younger (the Statewide figure is 23.0%) and only 5.4% of this segment of the population is 65 years of age or older. Compare these figures to the data for Non-Hispanic white residents. In Yuma County only 8.7% of these people are 9 years of age or younger; statewide the figure is 11.2%. But what really cements Yuma's image as a place for retirees is the proportion of Non-Hispanic white residents age 65 and older. The figure for Yuma County is 34.7% compared to just 14.3% Statewide.

## Foreign-Born Population

One out of every four Yuma County residents (24.0%) is foreign born. Statewide the foreign-born group is only one out of every eight residents (12.8% of the State's population). Further, Yuma's foreign-born group is more likely to be long-term residents. About 65% of Yuma's foreign-born residents came to Yuma before 1990. Statewide there is more of a bias toward newcomers; 48.4% of the foreign-born entered the State after 1990.

## Household Incomes

Household incomes throughout Yuma County tend to be relatively low compared to the statewide average. Statewide, 26.3% of all households have an income less than \$25,000. In Yuma County the figure is 33.9%. At the other end of the spectrum outcomes are similar. Statewide, 14.5% of all households have incomes of \$100,000 or more.

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In Yuma County the figure is 7.7%. The City of Yuma makes slightly more than the County as a whole with 9.3% of households in the \$100,000 plus income range. The percentages for the Foothills and San Luis are 5.0% and 1.1%, respectively.

## Economy & Workforce

As you can see from the table below, per capita income in Yuma County is less than the State of Arizona as a whole—similar to the Household Income figures.

Per Capita Income	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Yuma (MSA)	\$18,201	\$19,861	\$19,171	\$20,265	\$21,005
Arizona	\$26,197	\$26,472	\$26,975	\$28,564	\$30,019

The tables below and to the right illustrate employment-related information for Yuma County. Reported unemployment rates have historically been very high in Yuma County, most likely associated with the economy's heavy reliance on agriculture and the seasonal nature of its employment. However, the rate is slowly moving downward.

Unemployment	2005	2006	2007
Total Civilian Labor Force	75.7	76.9	78.9
Total Unemployment	11.9	11.1	10.9
Rate	15.7%	14.4%	13.8%
Total Employment	63.7	65.8	68.0

The chart to the right shows that in non-farm employment, most jobs are in the Service Providing sector (using the NAICS classification system), with State and local government being the largest employers in this sector. Not shown on this table but also important to Yuma's economy is the military.

The Yuma Marine Corps Air Station and the Army's Yuma Proving Ground are important employers. Indicative of the role the military plays in Yuma County is that for every 1000 civilian jobs there are 64 military jobs, and Statewide there are 9 military jobs for each 1000 civilian jobs (Year 2000 data).

Employment by NAICS Sector			
	2005	2006	2007
<b>Total Non-farming</b>	50.9	52.7	53.5
<b>Total Private</b>	37.2	38.4	39.1
<b>Goods Producing</b>	7.8	8.0	7.6
<b>Mining and Construction</b>	5.0	5.2	4.7
<b>Manufacturing</b>	2.8	2.8	2.9
<b>Service-Providing</b>	43.1	44.7	45.9
<b>Private Service-Providing</b>	29.4	30.3	31.5
<b>Trade, Transportation, &amp; Utilities</b>	10.3	10.6	10.8
<b>Information</b>	1.1	1.2	1.6
<b>Financial Activities</b>	1.6	1.6	1.6
<b>Professional &amp; Business Services</b>	3.5	3.7	4.2
<b>Educational &amp; Health Services</b>	6.0	6.1	6.1
<b>Leisure and Hospitality</b>	5.4	5.5	5.5
<b>Other Services</b>	1.6	1.7	1.7
<b>Government</b>	13.7	14.4	14.5
<b>Federal Government</b>	3.0	3.2	3.3
<b>State and Local Government</b>	10.7	11.2	11.2



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The tables below show Yuma County's Top Ten Employers and Principal Sales Taxpayers. Reflected in these numbers are the strong agricultural, military, service, and production sectors.

Top Ten Employers		
Rank	Top Employers	Employees
1	US Marine Corps Air Station	6156
2	US Army - Yuma Proving Ground	2400
3	Yuma Regional Medical Center	1844
4	Yuma School District #1	1700
5	Grower's Company	1400
6	Yuma County	1311
7	Sayler American Fresh Foods	1000
8	Yuma City Government	985
9	Yuma Union High School District	921
10	Dole Corporation	850

\*\*all #'s from FY 2007 CAFR except Army & Marine which came from each organization directly

Principal Sales Taxpayers, per FY 2007 CAFR		
Rank	Taxpayer	% of Total Sales Tax
1	Gowan Co, LLC	6.88%
2	Bill Alexander Ford Lincoln Mercury, Inc	5.75%
3	KYMA	5.67%
4	Gowan Milling Co, LLC	5.57%
5	Shay Oil Company, Inc	4.69%
6	JV Farms, Inc	3.95%
7	Western Newspapers	3.91%
8	Bill Alexander Automotive Center, Inc	3.58%
9	Fisher Chevrolet, Inc	3.56%
10	JLG Harvesting, Inc	3.13%
	<b>Top Ten % of Total Sales Tax</b>	<b>46.69%</b>

As you can see from the table below, Yuma County is known nationally as the provider of winter vegetables such as lettuce, cauliflower and broccoli. These are captured in the category of principal vegetables in this table. The table also shows Yuma County is the State's leading producer of citrus as well as four other crops.

Crops in Yuma County, with state comparisons Year 2000				
	Acres harvested	Yield per acre	Production	Rank in AZ
Upland cotton	25,300	1,385 lbs	73,000 bales	3
Pima cotton	1,300	886 lbs	2,400 bales	1
Durum wheat	38,600	6,100 lbs	117,690 tons	1
Other wheat	1,800	6,020 lbs	5,420 tons	2
Barley	1,000	5,420 lbs	2,710 tons	6
Corn for grain	4,000	11,200 lbs	22,400 tons	2
Alfalfa hay	30,000	8.7 tons	260,000 tons	3
Other hay	20,000	4.1 tons	81,400 tons	1
Principal vegetables	83,500	323 cwt	26,965,000 cwt	1
Citrus	17,600	408 ctn	7,187,000 ctn	1

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The following two tables demonstrate that livestock plays a substantial role in Yuma's agricultural economy, but crops are clearly the dominant component.

Livestock in Yuma County, with some state comparisons Year 2000		
	Livestock Inventory	Rank in AZ
All cattle & calves	93,000	3
Sheep and lambs	24,000	2

Cash Receipts in Yuma County, with some state comparisons Year 2000			
	Cash receipts	Yuma as % of AZ	Rank in AZ
Crops	\$595,147,000	48.50%	1
Livestock	\$70,437,000	6.60%	4

Lettuce Field



Photo taken by Bianca Acosta

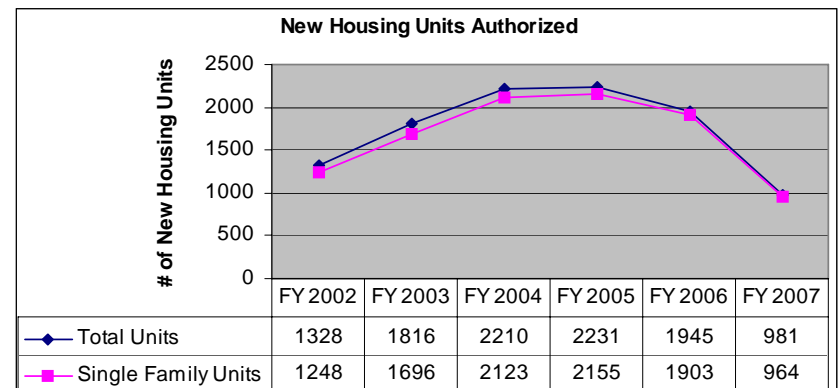
The following chart shows gross sales in the Yuma Metropolitan Region in thousands of dollars. As you can see, sales in all sectors are growing at a steady pace except for the highlighted contracting numbers.

Yuma Metropolitan Region Sales (in thousands of dollars)

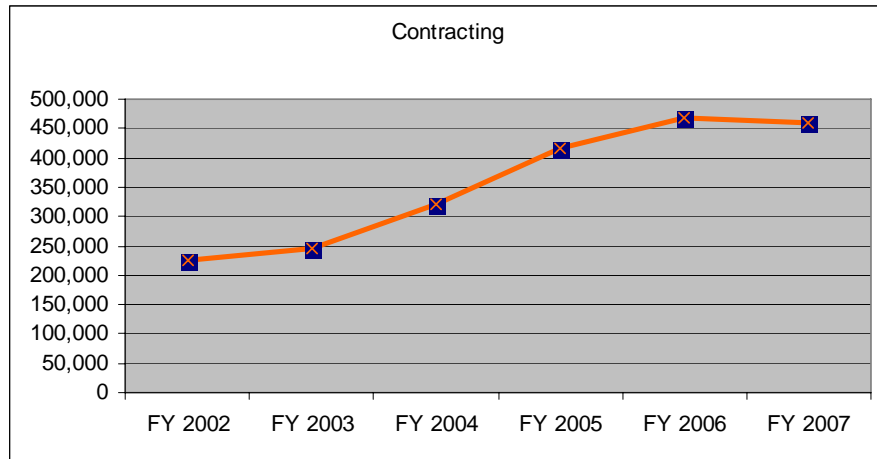
Sales (\$000's)	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Gross					
Retail	1,203,846	1,216,690	1,533,511	1,712,669	1,775,002
Retail	930,427	930,254	1,173,707	1,279,958	1,341,418
Restaurants & Bars	128,479	129,767	159,119	184,237	193,975
Gasoline	144,940	156,670	200,685	248,112	362,605
Gallons	94,404	86,774	97,801	98,202	92,663
Contracting	244,794	282,771	417,081	468,482	459,591
Hotel/Motel	NA	32,087	38,100	44,728	49,356

\*\* Source: Arizona Department of Revenue

There was a very significant boom in contracting sales from FY 2004 to FY 2005 that continued into FY 2006, but in FY 2007 this number dropped. This was likely linked to the slowing of the housing market which can also be referenced through the chart below. The drop in contracting likely corresponds to the significant decrease in the number of new housing units authorized.







The chart above illustrates the impact of the decrease in new housing units on the contracting industry.



\*\*Photo taken by Bianca Acosta

## Education

### School Districts

As a whole, Yuma County School Districts have seen a 3% growth rate in their enrollment numbers. Yuma County consists of nine School Districts:

- ❖ Antelope Union High School District - Wellton, AZ
- ❖ Crane Elementary District - Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Mohawk Valley Elementary District - Roll, AZ
- ❖ Somerton Elementary District - Somerton, AZ
- ❖ Wellton Elementary District - Wellton, AZ
- ❖ Yuma Elementary District - Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Yuma Union High School District - Yuma, AZ
- ❖ Gadsden Elementary District - San Luis, AZ
- ❖ Hyder Elementary District - Dateland, AZ

### Institutions of Higher Learning

Arizona Western College (AWC), Northern Arizona University, and The University of Phoenix are all established features on Yuma's educational landscape. Additionally, Southern Illinois University offers a Bachelors degree in Aviation Management at the Marine Corps Air Station in Yuma.

The most substantial campus is Arizona Western College (AWC). This community college offers transfer degrees in subjects ranging from Administration of Justice to Theater; Occupational degrees; AGECE or Arizona General Education Curriculum certificates; and different Occupational certificates.

Northern Arizona University offers degree programs including; Bachelors level, Masters level, and at the Doctoral level. The University of Phoenix offers several Bachelors and Masters Programs – mostly in education and business.

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## Transportation Systems

### Highways

- Interstate 8
- U.S. 95
- Highway 80

### Rail

- Union Pacific Railroad
- Yuma Valley Railway Tourist Railroad

### Air Service

- Yuma International Airport

Source: Arizona Department of Commerce, Community Profiles

## Transportation Providers

### Bus Lines

- Greyhound Bus Lines



\*\*Photo Taken by Bianca Acosta

## Trucking Service

- Con-Way Western Express
- Central Freight Lines
- Consolidated Freightways
- Gale Transfer
- LA Yuma Freight Lines Inc.
- Pacific Scales
- Roadway Express
- San Luis International Freight Service
- Yellow Freight Systems Inc.

## Public Transportation Services

- Greater Yuma Dial-A-Ride
- Yuma County Area Transit (YCAT)
- Taxicabs (Various)

## Airlines

- America West Express/US Airways
- Skywest/United Express
- Delta
- Wings Inc. (Charter)
- Diamond Air, Airlines Inc. (Charter)

Data for this County Profile is largely drawn from the Yuma Data Bank web site located at <http://www.yumadata.com/>, the US Census Bureau <http://www.census.gov/>, Arizona Workforce Informer <http://www.workforce.az.gov/>, the US Bureau of Economic Analysis <http://www.bea.gov/interactive.htm>, wikipedia.com [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), the Arizona State Parks Website <http://www.pr.state.az.us/>, the Economic & Business Research Center <http://www.ebr.eller.arizona.edu/> and several photos were taken by Bianca Acosta.