

## More Latinos call Oregon home

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SUMMARY: Asian American numbers also rise as the state grows more diverse, census shows

Latinos continue to be the fastest-growing population in Oregon --five to six times faster than whites in the Portland metropolitan area, new U.S. Census Bureau figures show.

In Multnomah and Clark counties, the number of Hispanics climbed the most, by 7 percent in 2007, while Washington and Clackamas counties each saw a 6 percent increase last year. Asian Americans also posted steady increases, especially in Washington County.

Data show that in Multnomah County a trend of losses in the non-Latino white population since 2000 has reversed itself for the past two years. But experts say they need more time to determine if the reversal is an actual trend.

"Oregon is becoming more diverse," said Risa Proehl, a demographic analysis coordinator at Portland State University's Population Research Center. "Latinos and Asians are moving here for many of the same reasons as everyone else: a good quality of life, a fairly mild climate, cleaner air, decent working wages and family."

Analysts say new arrivals to Oregon account for only part of the growth among Latinos. And a lot of Latinos come from other states, not just from south of the border.

A second significant factor is increasing births among the second generation of Latino immigrants, said Gloria Wiggins, executive director of El Programa Hispano, a social service agency. "If you go to the schools, you see the increase among Latino kids, especially elementary and middle school. . . . Latinos are a very young group of people."

The number of whites in the metro area grew on average by 1 percent in 2007. The Asian population grew steadily across the Portland area, the census shows, by 4 percent in Washington County, 3 percent in Multnomah County and 5 percent in Clackamas County.

In Washington County, the number of African Americans and other blacks increased by 7 percent, the largest increase in the metro area. This increase is in line with previous years, when that group increased in Washington County by an average of 8 percent.

Total population rose in 2007 to: 376,251 in Clackamas County; 701,986 in Multnomah County; 522,514 in Washington County; and 414,234 in Clark County.

Among Latinos, the birth rate is typically higher than for the overall U.S. population. So the Latino population can be expected to rise, Proehl said, as births outpace deaths at a greater rate than for other groups.

Carmen Flores, a stay-at-home mom, gave birth to three of her four children after moving to the Portland area seven years ago from the Mexican state of Puebla.

"I love living here," said Flores, who was shopping for shoes Wednesday at Gresham's Boutique 5 de Mayo with her three children, 2-year-old Angel, 4-year-old Jasmine and 14-year-old Alejandra. Flores' fourth child stayed at home, in Gresham. "The climate, the schools are great. Our family plans to stay here for good."

Wiggins said the children of emigrants from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America are starting to have children of their own. While whites tend to wait to start a family until they are in their late 20s or 30s, many Latinos marry and

have kids when they are between 18 and 25, Wiggins said. As a result, the coming years should see more increases in the population, she said.

Meanwhile, fewer people are coming to Oregon from Mexico, Wiggins said, because they have heard it's difficult to get a state ID and crossing the border is getting harder.

The most notable growth among Latinos in the state was in Deschutes County, where census figures say Hispanics grew by more than 9 percent and now make up 6 percent of the population. Jackson County saw growth of 6 percent, while Marion County's Latino population increased by 5 percent. Two out of three new residents in Marion County were listed by the census as Hispanic.

While the trend of losses in the non-Latino white population since 2000 seems to have reversed itself in Multnomah County, Proehl said she would be cautious to assume this is true until data in the coming years become available.

If the trend has halted or is reversing, she said, it could be because housing is more affordable outside Portland, such as in Washington and Clackamas counties, and more minorities are moving there.

Oregon and the metro area will continue to diversify with mostly Latinos, followed by Asian Americans, Proehl said, due to in-migration and births. But, she said, the rates at which the Latino and Asian American populations will increase will slow over time.

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