

# Census shows U.S. is diversifying, white population is shrinking

BY MIKE SCHNEIDER

Associated Press

The U.S. became more diverse and more urban over the past decade, and the non-Hispanic white population dropped for the first time on record, the Census Bureau reported Thursday as it released a trove of demographic data that will be used to redraw the nation's political maps.

The new figures offered the most detailed portrait yet of how the country has changed since 2010, and they are sure to set off an intense partisan battle over representation at a time of deep national division and fights over voting rights. The numbers could help determine control of the House in the 2022 elections and provide an electoral edge for years to come. The data will also shape how \$1.5 trillion in annual federal spending is distributed.

Americans continued to migrate to the South and West at the expense of the Midwest and Northeast, the figures showed. The share of the white population fell from 63.7% in 2010 to 57.8% in 2020, the lowest on record, driven by falling birthrates among white women compared with Hispanic and Asian women. The number of non-Hispanic white people shrank from 196 million in 2010 to 191 million.

White people continue to be the most prevalent racial or ethnic group, though that changed in California, where Hispanics became the largest racial or ethnic group, growing from 37.6% to 39.4% over the decade, while the share of white people dropped from 40.1% to 34.7%. California, the nation's most populous state, joined Hawaii, New Mexico and the District of Columbia as a place where non-Hispanic white people are no longer the dominant group.

"The U.S. population is



A building sits abandoned Thursday near Suches, Georgia. The Census Bureau has issued its most detailed portrait yet of how the U.S. has changed over the past decade.

much more multiracial and much more racially and ethnically diverse than what we have measured in the past," said Nicholas Jones, a Census Bureau official.

Some demographers cautioned that the white population was not shrinking as much as shifting to multiracial identities. The number of people who identified as belonging to two or more races more than tripled from 9 million people in 2010 to 33.8 million in 2020. They now account for 10% of the U.S. population.

People who identify as a race other than white, Black, Asian, American Indian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander — either alone or in combination with one of those races — jumped to 49.9 million people, surpassing the Black population of 46.9 million people as the nation's second-largest racial group, according to the Census Bureau.

But demographers said that may have to do with Hispanic uncertainty about how to answer the race question on the census form, as well as changes the Census Bureau made in processing responses and how it asked about race and ethnicity.

Asians were the next most populous racial group, reaching 24 million people in 2020, a jump of more than a third.

The Hispanic population boomed over the decade, growing by almost a quarter to 62.1 million residents in 2020 and accounting for almost half of the overall U.S. population growth, which was the slowest since the Great Depression. By comparison, the non-Hispanic growth rate over the decade was 4.3%.

The data "demonstrates that the Latino community is a huge and increasing part of our nation's future," said Thomas Saenz, president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Almost all of the growth of the past 10 years happened in metropolitan areas. About 80% of metropolitan areas saw population gains as more people in smaller counties moved to larger, more urban counties.

The share of children in the U.S. declined because of falling birth rates, while the share of adults grew, driven by aging baby boomers. Adults over age 18 made up more than three-quarters of the population in 2020, or 258.3 million

people, an increase of more than 10% from 2010. However, the population of children under age 18 dropped from 74.2 million in 2010 to 73.1 million in 2020.

In addition, there is now no majority racial or ethnic group for people younger than 18, as the share of non-Hispanic whites in the age group dropped from 53.5% to 47.3% over the decade.

"If not for Hispanics, Asians, people of two or more races, those are the only groups under age that are growing," said William Frey, a senior fellow at Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program. "A lot of these young minorities are important for our future growth, not only for the child population but for our future labor force."

The data comes from compiling forms filled out last year by tens of millions of Americans, with the help of census takers and government statisticians to fill in the blanks when forms were not turned in or questions were left unanswered. The numbers reflect countless decisions made over the past 10 years by individuals to have children, move to another part of the country or to come to the U.S. from elsewhere.

It also provides the first opportunity to see, on a limited basis, how well the Census Bureau fulfilled its goal of counting every U.S. resident during what many consider the most difficult once-a-decade census in recent memory. Communities of color have been undercounted in past censuses. The agency likely will not know how good a job it did until next year, when it releases a survey showing undercounts and overcounts.

"The data we are releasing today meet our high-quality data standards," acting Census Bureau Director Ron Jarmin said.

## COVID-19

# States that had a grip now seeing a crush of cases

BY JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER AND ANDREW SELSKY

Associated Press

The COVID-19 surge that is sending hospitalizations to all-time highs in parts of the South is also clobbering states like Hawaii and Oregon that were once seen as pandemic success stories.

After months in which they kept cases and hospitalizations at manageable levels, they are watching progress slip away as record numbers of patients overwhelm bone-tired health care workers.

Oregon — like Florida, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana in recent days — has more people in the hospital with COVID-19 than at any other point in the pandemic. Hawaii is about to reach that mark, too.

This, despite both states having vaccination levels higher than the national average as of last week. Arkansas and Louisiana were significantly below average, while Florida was about even. Mississippi, meanwhile, ranks at the very bottom for vaccination rates.

"It's heartbreaking. People are exhausted. You can see it in their eyes," said Dr. Jason Kuhl, chief medical officer at Oregon's Providence Medford Medical Center, where patients are left on gurneys in hallways, their monitoring machines beeping away. Others needing treatment for cancer or heart disease are being turned away.

In other developments, the Food and Drug Administration is expected to authorize a third COVID-19 shot for certain people with weakened immune systems, such as cancer patients and organ transplant recipients, to give them an extra dose of protection.

The U.S. is seeing the vi-

rus storming back, driven by a combination of the highly contagious delta variant and lagging vaccination rates, especially in the South and other rural and conservative parts of the country.

New cases nationwide are averaging about 123,000 per day, a level last seen in early February, and deaths are running at over 500 a day, turning the clock back to May.

For the most part during the pandemic, Hawaii enjoyed one of the lowest infection and death rates in the nation. In recent days, though, it reported record highs of more than 600 new virus cases daily.

On its worst day in 2020, Hawaii had 291 patients hospitalized with the coronavirus. Officials expect to hit 300 by the end of this week.

Despite the promising demand for COVID-19 shots early on, it took three weeks — much longer than expected — to get from 50% to 60% of the vaccine-eligible population fully vaccinated. Vaccinations have since plateaued. Nationally, the rate is about 59%.

The biggest hospital on Hawaii's Big Island is feeling the pressure. Out of 128 acute beds, 116 were taken Wednesday at Hilo Medical Center, and the hospital's 11 intensive care unit beds are almost always full these days, spokeswoman Elena Cabatu said.

"If someone out there has a heart attack or a sepsis or gets into a bad accident that requires intensive care, we will have to hold that person in the emergency department," Cabatu said.

"I'm surprised we landed here," she lamented. "The hope during the mass vax clinics was just so high."

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