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Oregon's 2010 Census shows striking Latino and Asian gains

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By **Nikole Hannah-Jones**, *The Oregonian*

Latino population in Oregon

450,062

11.7% of total population

UP FROM **8%** IN 2000

Roll over counties
to see Latino population

Latinos as percentage of population

- 0%-2.9%
- 3%-6.9%
- 7%-11.9%
- 12%-19.9%
- 20%+

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Oregon's Latino population surged 63 percent in 10 years, largely fueling the state's 12 percent growth since 2000, according to **U.S. census** figures released Wednesday.

The robust gains of Oregon's Latino population is a story repeated across the country. Joined by a 41 percent increase in the state's Asian population, the trend is helping turn what was once a starkly white state into an increasingly diverse one.



Overall, Oregon grew by 419,000 residents, with Latinos accounting for about 43 percent of that growth. The state's white population increased 5 percent, its black population 22 percent and its Native American population 6 percent.

People identifying as more than one race grew 33 percent, making the number of Oregonians --



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Faith Cathcart/The Oregonian

Irma Sanjuan (right) of Tigard and her mother, Irma Cervantes, shop for a dress for Sanjuan's almost 3-year-old daughter, Haidy Estrella, at Boutique La Doncella in Hillsboro. Oregon's Latino population has surged 63 percent in 10 years, according to new census figures.

about 110,000 -- choosing the multiracial category larger than both black and Native combined.

Just 20 years ago, more than nine of 10 Oregonians were white. Today, it's fewer than eight in 10. And **Washington County** has eclipsed **Multnomah County** as the metro area's most racially diverse, with people of color accounting for

three of 10 residents.

"It certainly represents a tremendous opportunity for the state," said Michael Hames-Garcia, head of the **University of Oregon's ethnic studies department**. "One of the disadvantages Oregon has faced economically and in competing for businesses in trying to attract top talent is that we don't offer a diverse environment and diverse work force."

Washington, like Oregon, also saw huge gains in its Latino population, with 71 percent growth since 2000, according to results released Wednesday. **Clark County** had the second-highest population growth rate among Washington counties, adding 80,125 residents for a total population of 425,363.

Latino growth

Latino residents now account for about 12 percent of Oregonians -- a trend that tracks other states with historically

small Latino populations.

"It's been going up very, very quickly over the past decade," Hames-Garcia said. "In Oregon, a large number of the Latino population is from migration internal to the U.S., from California."

Carmen Rubio, executive director of the advocacy group **Latino Network**, said the census figures confirm what people in the community have been seeing.

"It's something we talk about anecdotally, so it's not surprising," she said. "We hope these numbers will propel our institutional leadership to respond in a way that is more reflective of our community."

Much of the state's Latino population is also concentrated in the metro area, with about 43 percent calling Multnomah, Washington or **Clackamas counties** home. Still, elected leadership doesn't reflect that change and probably won't for a while, Hames-Garcia said.

New immigrants often don't participate much politically, he said, as they learn a new system and often work long hours and multiple jobs. He pointed to Arizona, where the northern part of the state, with a Latino population in place for generations, asserts much more political sway than the southern part, which is flush with new immigrants.

Karen Gibson, an urban studies professor at **Portland State University**, said many Latinos, particularly in **Hillsboro**, live in segregated communities. Rubio said that's why efforts last year to improve census participation rates for communities of color were important, ensuring Latinos get resources in schools and elsewhere. She said that work paid off, and that part of the growth among Latinos and other racial minorities came from more accurate counts, not growth.

Asian, black communities

Oregon's Asian population also spiked in the past 10 years, growing by 44,000. Much of that population is concentrated in Washington County, particularly in **Beaverton**.

David Tam, president of the Chinese American Benevolent Association of Eugene-Springfield and an international business consultant, said Oregon's green economy and technologies such as solar power are drawing Chinese and Korean immigrants. Oregon's high-tech industry has brought Indian immigrants, and the many Vietnamese who settled here attracted others.

"A lot of growth in Oregon occurred because of opportunities in Oregon that Asian people have been taking advantage of," Tam said.

Oregon's African American population, meanwhile, has grown larger but more dispersed. Once heavily concentrated in Portland, black Oregonians have moved to surrounding suburbs.

"It's a mixed story," Gibson said. "In some ways you could look at it as the walls of segregation coming down and

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(black) people are integrating, but some of them were pushed out to Gresham, and it doesn't mean they are doing better."

Some of the growth in Washington County's black population comes from professionals who moved there to work at places such as Intel and Nike, she said.

Overall state numbers

Oregon's population shot up to roughly 3.8 million people, making it the 27th most populous state -- up from 28th in 2000.

Kanhaiya Vaidya, the state's senior demographer, said the figures carry a caveat: "Most of the state's growth happened in the first seven years of the decade," before the recession sapped momentum.

The state's 12 biggest counties in 2000 remained the biggest a decade later, and with few surprises in the metro area: Multnomah is still the big brother, topping Washington and Clackamas counties with a population of 735,334, an 11 percent jump from a decade ago. Still, Washington saw the biggest growth spurt of the three, at nearly 19 percent.

Surprises came from smaller areas: **Polk County**, smaller than **Klamath** and **Coos** in 2000, jumped ahead of both, to become Oregon's 14th biggest county.

"Now this is surprising to me," Vaidya said. "Polk is growing faster than Clackamas and Marion counties. We have no reasoning for that right now, but we will be looking into this."

Among cities, Portland, Eugene, Salem and Gresham remain the top four. But Hillsboro leapfrogged Beaverton to nab the fifth spot.

-- **Nikole Hannah-Jones**

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