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A more diverse Kansas: Racial, ethnic profile dramatically changes

BY FRED MANN
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Wichita and Sedgwick County have grown in population in the past 10 years, and Wichita has retained its position as the state's largest city, according to 2010 census figures released Thursday.

But the racial and ethnic profile of the city and state has changed dramatically.

The non-Hispanic white share of the overall population in Wichita and its four-county area has dropped while Hispanic and Asian populations have grown significantly.

In Wichita and statewide, Hispanics have become the largest minority group, overtaking African-Americans.

Among the influx of Hispanics in the past 10 years is Juan Alejandro, 36, who owns one of Wichita's Poblano Mexican Grill restaurants. He moved from Colorado in 2002 when he bought out his partner's share in the restaurant. His wife, Carmel, works as a cake decorator at a Target store. They have two children.

"We came over to see the city and it was real nice and quiet," Alejandro said. "Also the schools are pretty good for the kids.

"We were kind of tired of the big city from the traffic. Here it is real nice and quiet and clean."

According to the 2010 census, Wichita, with 382,368 people, grew by 11.1 percent since 2000. Sedgwick County's population, now 498,365, increased 10 percent. The county slipped to second among most populous counties, behind Johnson County, population 544,179. Population there grew by 20.6 percent since 2000.

Overall, the state's population grew 6.1 percent since 2000, from 2,688,418 to 2,853,118.

But 77 of Kansas' 105 counties lost residents over the past decade. And the state lost 3,458 non-Hispanic white residents, while the Hispanic population grew by 59.4 percent and the Asian population grew by 44.6 percent.

Although the state has lost non-Hispanic white population overall, the non-Hispanic white population 18 years and older has grown by 93,000.

"That means people who were in the 8-to-17 age bracket in 2000 have aged into the population but aren't being replaced by new ones," said John Logan, sociology professor at Brown University and director of the U.S. 2010 Census Project.

"It represents the aging of non-Hispanic whites. People are aging beyond their childbearing years, so there's not a population replacement from childbirth."

The same trend exists among African-Americans, who gained 14,865 people statewide in the over-18 bracket but overall gained only 11,293.

The youth population in the state is becoming much more rapidly Asian and Hispanic, Logan said.

Statewide, the Hispanic population grew from 188,252 to 300,042 in the past decade, and the Asian population grew from 46,301 to 66,967.

In Wichita, the non-Hispanic white population has stagnated, down about 200 people over the past 10 years. The non-Hispanic black population grew by about 8,000, while the Hispanic population almost doubled, from 33,112 to 58,348. The Asian population grew from 15,397 to 21,000.

The non-Hispanic whites' share of the total city population was 71.7 percent in 2000 and now is 64.5 percent.

In 1980, non-Hispanic whites represented 83 percent of the city's population.

In the four-county metropolitan area, which comprises Butler, Harvey, Sedgwick and Sumner counties, non-Hispanic whites were 79.6 percent of the population in 2000 and now are 73.8 percent.

In 1980, non-Hispanic whites were 87.5 percent of the population.

"If you think of 20 years as a short time, things are changing pretty fast," Logan said.

Hispanic residents have overtaken non-Hispanic black residents as the largest minority group in the past 10 years. In 2000, there were 41,738 African-Americans and 33,112 Hispanics in Wichita. According to the new census, there are 49,113 African-Americans and 58,348 Hispanics.

In the four-county area, the number of non-Hispanic white residents increased by about 5,000, and the number of non-Hispanic black residents rose by 12,700. Hispanic residents increased by more than 30,000.

The 2010 census figures point to an increase in integration among non-Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic blacks in Wichita and the metropolitan area, although segregation remains high, Logan said.

But Hispanics and Asians are not integrating as much, moving into neighborhoods that are more concentrated with people of the same race or ethnicity, Logan said.

"It seems to be a fairly consistent pattern that black-white segregation is falling slowly, but segregation of Latinos is not," Logan said.

"It may be the same language, same grocery stores, same restaurants," he said, "or it may be the jobs they have are in particular economic sectors and they are living near the jobs."

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