

# *The Press-Enterprise*

## **The Inland area's increasing multiethnic mix**

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Ask just about anyone in Census Tract 42622 in Moreno Valley to describe his or her neighbors, and you'll probably get an answer like this:

"There are three Indonesian families there, a few African-American families there, Latino families there," said Mike Kennedy, who is white, as he stood in his driveway and pointed at the homes within his sight.

Across the street is a black-Asian couple, his wife Yoojin added.

"We're a racially mixed couple, so we fit in here," said Yoojin Kennedy, who is Asian.

The Kennedys and their mixed-race 8-month-old boy are emblematic of their neighborhood, Moreno Valley and, in many ways, the entire Inland area.

They live in the most diverse neighborhood in the most diverse city in one of the most ethnically mixed regions in California, according an analysis of 2010 census numbers. The Inland area became even more ethnically mixed in the 2000s, U.S. Census Bureau data released Tuesday shows. Riverside and San Bernardino counties had by far the biggest percentage growth in Latinos, Asians and African-Americans of the seven Southern California counties.

Only 20 years ago, more than 62 percent of Inland residents were white, non-Hispanic. Today, the numbers have flipped, and more than 63 percent are "minorities," a term that seems increasingly anachronistic for the region and the state.

### **DIVERSE NEIGHBORHOOD**

Census Tract 42622 is the Inland area's most diverse, according to a widely used "diversity index."

The index seeks to measure the probability that two people picked at random in a particular area will be of a different race or ethnicity. It was first developed 20 years ago by academics at the University of North Carolina and reporters at USA Today.

The tract is in eastern Moreno Valley, with most of it between State Route 60 and Alessandro Boulevard and Nason Street and Moreno Beach Drive.

Brown and tan homes -- most built in the past few years -- line streets with names like Summerwinds Road and Misty Meadow Court. A shopping center sits off each of the tract's two freeway exits, with a SuperTarget anchoring one and a Walmart the other.

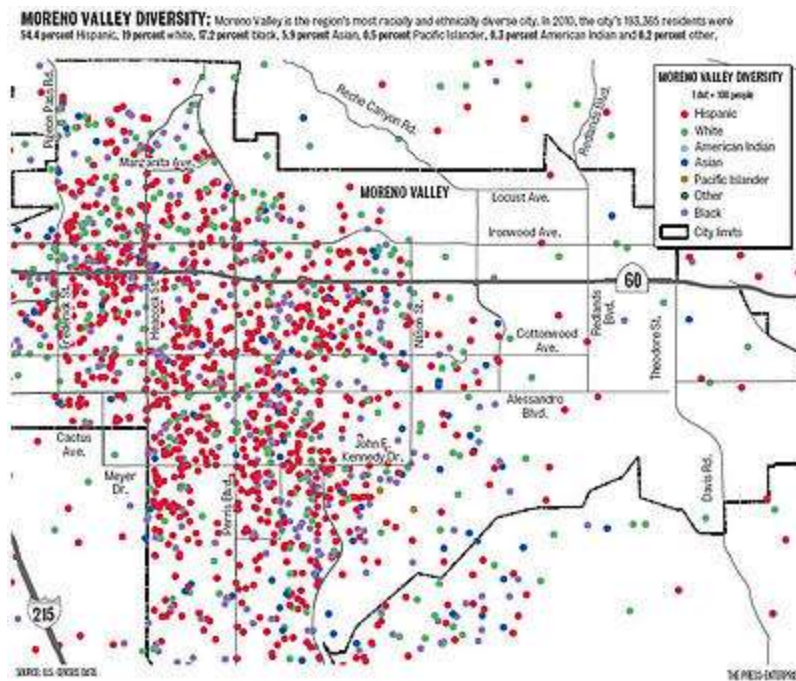
Dirt trails wend through green, boulder-strewn hills that rise throughout the area and preserve a semi-rural feel to a neighborhood that was still largely countryside a decade ago. The population between the 2000 and 2010 censuses skyrocketed from 582 to 4,107.

Some of the dwindling number of fields have "For Sale" placards, presaging future development. But the real estate signs stuck in the lawns of vacant homes that dot the neighborhood reveal how hard the foreclosure crisis hit Moreno Valley.

The tract is 44.2 percent Hispanic -- nearly mirroring the percentage of Latinos in Riverside County as a whole -- 18.2 percent white, 18 percent black and 15.6 percent Asian and Pacific Islander. Ten years ago, its much smaller population was majority white.

Hans Johnson, a senior fellow at the San Francisco-based Public Policy Institute of California and lead author of a 2008 demographic study of the Inland region, said he isn't surprised that almost all the residents of the Inland area's most diverse neighborhood arrived in the past 10 years. A report that Johnson co-authored several years ago found that California neighborhoods of new, affordable homes are generally more diverse than long-established areas.

"The new neighborhoods reflect the new demographics of California," he said.



Older neighborhoods, he said, often "reflect the old historical patterns."

Karthick Ramakrishnan, an associate professor of political science at UC Riverside, said the Inland neighborhoods that are largely a single ethnicity -- such as the mostly Latino Casa Blanca in Riverside -- are usually older.

"These are long-established areas that take on certain identities, or are where there is a legacy of housing discrimination that lingers," he said.

Ramakrishnan said people often move where they perceive people are like them, whether in race, ethnicity or political ideology. That helps perpetuate housing patterns.

"Once a place establishes a certain identity, people are more likely to move there if they share the identity of the people already there," he said. "People who don't share that identity will be less likely to move in, and if they're already there, they're more likely to move out."

For some, a neighborhood's diversity is seen as negative, he said. For others, it is viewed as a plus.

Areas that are diverse today may become less so if one group gains a large enough majority that some residents of another group begin feeling uncomfortable, he said.

"If a smaller groups start feeling, 'This is no longer my neighborhood,' there can be not only white flight, but Latino flight or black flight," he said.

Johnson said that as the Inland area's Latino population continues to surge, there will be fewer possibilities for the type of mixing that occurs in Tract 42622.

"When we look to the future, we'll see decreasing diversity" as Latinos become an ever greater percentage of the Inland area's population, he said.

The area's Latino population is increasing because of immigration, a higher percentage of childbearing-age women, higher natural-birth rates among Latinos and continued migration from heavily Latino places like Los Angeles County.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Academic researchers and Inland Latino, black and Asian community leaders say the main reason people of all ethnic backgrounds migrate to the Inland region from coastal counties is the same: Bigger homes for less money.

The story of Ernesto Perez is typical. The Salvadoran immigrant moved his family from a rental apartment in a rough Los Angeles neighborhood to Moreno Valley in 1998. The first home the family bought was in an older neighborhood in the central part of the city. In 2006, they purchased a newly built house in Tract 42622.



Like other residents of Tract 42622, the Kennedys said they barely know their neighbors and don't see them outside their homes often. Mike Kennedy believes it is because the homes are so new and everyone arrived from elsewhere.

"As the kids get older and start playing together, the adults will come together," he predicted.

Marie Rice, 30, who is black, grew up in Pasadena. She misses the sense of community in her old neighborhood: the kids who play in the streets after school and the adults who sit outside at night and greet neighbors taking a stroll. Most of her friends are in Pasadena, but it's cheaper to live with her parents in Moreno Valley.

A few blocks away from Rice's house, the ethnically diverse groups of students who leave Valley View High School every day and cross Nason Street into Tract 42622 are a walking symbol of the area's diversity.

Chloé Scott, 15, said students mix easily.

Chloé, who is half Asian and half white, said the presence of students of so many backgrounds helps encourage interaction and prevent social segregation.

"I'm pretty much friends with everyone," Chloé said she said as she walked home from Valley View on Thursday. "There are so many types of people around you, and you might as well get along."

Staff writer Michelle L. Klampe contributed to this report.