

# Census shows gains for minorities

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WASHINGTON — Racial and ethnic minorities accounted for roughly 85 percent of the nation's population growth over the last decade — one of the largest shares ever — with Hispanics accounting for much of the gain in many of the states picking up new House seats.

Preliminary census estimates also suggest the number of multiracial Americans jumped roughly 20 percent since 2000, to over 5 million.

The findings, based on fresh government survey data, offer a glimpse into 2010 census results that are being released on a state-by-state basis beginning this week. New Jersey, Mississippi, Virginia and Louisiana were the first to receive the census redistricting data, which will be used in the often con-

tentious process of redrawing political districts based on population and racial makeup.

The state numbers released Thursday reflected much of the racial change as well as the lingering impact of Hurricane Katrina, which devastated coastal populations in the South. For instance:

■ In Louisiana, New Orleans' population last year was 343,829 people, lower than expected as the city struggled to repopulate after Katrina more than five years ago. An interim census estimate last year had put the population at 355,000. The new count was a 30 percent decline from 2000.

■ Mississippi's most populous coastal county, Harrison, saw a small decrease in population following Katrina — the first time officials recall that it didn't grow.

■ The number of Hispanics in Virginia nearly doubled, representing 7.9 percent of total residents. Non-Hispanic whites represented roughly 65 percent of the state's population, down from about 70 percent in 2000. Multiracial Americans also jumped and now make up 2.3 percent of the state's population.

■ In New Jersey, the number of non-Hispanic whites shrunk 6.2 percent since 2000 and now represents 59 percent of the state's population. The Hispanic share of the state's population increased from 13 percent in 2000 to 18 percent.

"There are going to be a lot of additional Hispanic officials elected when redistricting is done," said E. Mark Braden, a former chief counsel to the Republican National Committee who now advises state govern-

ments on redistricting. "But folks in power don't give up control that easily — there will be tension between the ins and outs."

Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa and Maryland are among the states scheduled to receive their data next week. By law, all states must receive their redistricting data by April 1.

Four of the eight states gaining House seats owe roughly half or more of their population gains over the last decade to Hispanics. They include Texas, which picks up four seats; Florida, which will add two seats; and Arizona and Nevada, picking up one seat apiece.

In Georgia and Washington state, which also gain one seat each, Hispanics combined with other minority groups accounted for a majority of their growth since 2000.

Among states losing House seats, Louisiana and New Jersey each would have posted a net population loss, and Michigan would have sustained bigger declines, if it hadn't been for Hispanic growth. Latinos also made up roughly 60 percent or more of the growth in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa and Massachusetts — which each lose a seat — raising questions as to whether remaining districts in those states will need to accommodate emerging Hispanic voting blocs.

Broken down by voting age, minorities accounted for roughly 70 percent of U.S. growth in the 18-and-older population since 2000, and Hispanics made up about 40 percent. Hispanics also represented more than half the growth share of the voting-age population in Texas and

California.

"The growth of the Hispanic community is one of the stories that will be written from the 2010 census," Census director Robert Groves said Wednesday, previewing major demographic trends, including the movement of many minorities from city to suburb. "We should see a big difference from 2000 to 2010."

Thomas Saenz, president and general counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, which successfully challenged the redrawing of a majority Hispanic Texas district that weakened the Latino vote after the 2000 census, said his group was expecting to see "a minimum of nine additional Latino-majority House seats" based on 2010 results, if states comply with federal law.