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Hispanics' growth rate tops other groups'

By Howard Fischer

CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX — The number of Hispanics in most Arizona counties is increasing far faster than the numbers of other groups.

New figures today from the U.S. Census Bureau show the state added more than 89,000 people who identify themselves as Hispanics in the year that ended on July 1, 2007 — more than double the 42,000 of all other groups combined.

Maricopa County, with 60,671 new Hispanics, gained more people in that group than any other county in the nation.

The additional 60,671 Hispanics in the county, joining the more than 1.1 million Hispanics living there a year ago, translates to a 5.4 percent growth rate.

The increase in non-Hispanics in Maricopa County since last year was 20,432, just a 0.8 percent boost over the 2006 figure of more than 2.6 million non-Hispanic residents.

The net result as that trend played out across the state is that most counties are increasingly Hispanic.

Maricopa County's Hispanic population now is 30.5 percent of the total. That compares with 29.7 percent a year earlier and less than 25 percent at the beginning of the decade.

Pima County follows a similar pattern, although not as pronounced.

There were 9,963 new Hispanics in the past year, up 3.3 percent from July 1, 2006. The county also added 4,128 of those who did not identify themselves as Hispanic, a 0.6 percent increase.

That moved Hispanics to 32.7 percent of Pima County's population, up from 32.3 percent in 2006 and 29.3 percent in 2000.

Pinal County actually recorded a bigger increase, in pure numbers, of non-Hispanics than Hispanics. But Hispanics still posted an 11.9 percent year-over-year increase in population, versus just 5.7 percent for other groups.

[Click here for a database of the census](#)

Snapshot of state, 2006 to 2007

County-by-county gains in population.

Non- Hispanic Growth
Hispanic Growth as total County
gain rate gain rate population

Apache 151 4.4% 190 0.3% 5.1%

Cochise 597 1.5% 143 0.2%
31.4%

Coconino 209 1.4% 568 0.5%
11.9%

Gila 119 1.4% 201 0.5% 16.8%

Graham 376 4.1% 530 2.2%
27.5%

Greenlee 123 3.7% 76 1.9%
44.9%

La Paz -14 -0.3% 71 0.5% 22.3%

Maricopa 60,671 5.4% 20,432
0.8% 30.5%

And that, in turn, edged Pinal County's Hispanic share of total population up a tenth of a point, to 29.6 percent.

Similar patterns turned up elsewhere, as in Coconino County, where the number of Hispanics grew less than half as much as that of other groups. But the percentage of growth of Hispanics was nearly three times as high.

La Paz County posted a higher growth rate of non-Hispanics than Hispanics. In fact, the Census Bureau reported that there actually were 14 fewer Hispanics in La Paz County in 2007 than a year earlier.

Whether it's related or not, La Paz did set itself apart on another front: The Census Bureau reported that 32 percent of its population is 65 or older. Only of 24 counties nationwide had such pronounced senior populations, with nine of them in Florida, four in Texas and three in Michigan.

The Census Bureau does not report what percentage of the state's Hispanic increase is due to migration — legal or otherwise — and how much due to natural growth.

But the figures suggest the latter may be the larger factor.

In Maricopa County, for example, more than 40 percent of the population younger than 15 is Hispanic, compared with just 30.5 percent for the population as a whole.

And the state Department of Health Services reported the birthrate for Hispanics is twice that of non-Hispanic whites.

The indication of how much of Hispanic growth is due to illegal immigration could come next year, when the Census Bureau releases its data for population on July 1, 2008. That will come six months after Arizona enacted what are believed to be the strongest laws in the country against hiring illegal immigrants.

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Mohave 1,250 4.8% 899 0.5% 14.0%

Navajo 242 2.4% 887 0.9% 9.2%

Pima 9,963 3.3% 4,128 0.6% 32.7%

Pinal 9,464 11.9% 10,694 5.7% 29.6%

Santa Cruz 615 1.8% 84 1.0% 80.2%

Yavapai 1,705 6.6% 2,046 1.1% 12.9%

Yuma 3,669 3.6% 434 0.5% 44.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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