

Minorities Drive Vermont Population Growth

Recently released U.S. Census data show that Vermont's tepid population growth in the last decade (only 2.8% over the ten years 2000 to 2010) was driven by the growth of the state's minority population. This is surprising in that Vermont's minority population is the second smallest of the fifty states, only 5.7% of the total population. How could such a small part of Vermont's population account for most of its growth?

Census data define the minority population as people who reported their ethnicity and race as something other than non-Hispanic White in the 2010 census.

Vermont's total population increased by about 17,000 this past decade, from 608,827 to 625,741. The growth of the non-Hispanic White population was only about 5,000 people, an anemic 0.8% increase in ten years. The minority population increased by about 12,000 from 2000 to 2010. That was a robust minority population growth rate of 52% in just ten years. (We know that about 10% to 15% of this is from the growth of minority student enrollments at the state's institutions of higher education.)

What is remarkable is that 72% of Vermont's total population growth was from an increase in the minority population of Vermont that makes up less than 6% of the total population. The minority population grew a lot last decade while the non-Hispanic White population hardly grew at all.

Makeup of Vermont Minority Population in 2010

The table above presents 2010 Census data on the racial and ethnic makeup of Vermont's minority population as well as the growth of these groups in the last decade. To understand the data, remember that race includes such categories as White, Black, and Asian. Hispanic is not a race but an ethnicity.

People of Hispanic origin can report their race to the Census as White (66% of Hispanics in Vermont do this), two or more races, or any other racial category. All non-White races are counted as minorities. Whites who report their ethnicity as Hispanic are also counted as minorities.

The minority population in Vermont grew fairly equally in absolute numbers from Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics although the rate of growth differed for Blacks and Afro-Americans.

Vermont's Minority Population (2010)

	Number	Growth
One race	24,765	54%
White, Hispanic	6,069	61%
Black or Afr. Am.	6,277	105%
American Indian	2,207	-9%
Asian	7,947	52%
Native Hawaiian	160	14%
Some other race	2,105	46%
Two or more races	10,753	47%
Total	35,518	52%

What Does this Mean?

What does this mean for the state's economy?

- Several of Vermont's economic sectors now rely on minority workers to remain in business. We believe this is true in construction, some manufacturing firms, and in our lodging and restaurant industry among other businesses. And, of course, Vermont's dairy industry could not survive without the relatively large Hispanic workforce it employs.
- If current trends continue (and *VEN* expects that to happen) more and more of Vermont's workforce will become minority in the near term. By the end of the last decade nearly all the workforce growth was likely from the minority population as the White, non-Hispanic workforce in Vermont likely was shrinking.
- Minorities in Vermont are younger than the non-Hispanic White population as seen in the slightly higher percentage of minority students in our public schools (6.8%) than the percentage of the total population that is minority (5.7%). Near term workforce growth will reflect this.

In sum, minority population growth and in-migration will be key to Vermont's economic growth to a degree not seen before in the state's history.

Next month in *VEN* we will examine Census data to determine how minorities fare from an economic standpoint in Vermont. ■