

Census 2020:

Will Texas' changing population be reflected in redistricting?

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Last week, the U.S. Census Bureau released population enumerations to be used for political redistricting.

The story throughout the country is that of a rapidly growing population of color and a declining or very slow growing white population. The bottom line is the U.S. is increasingly becoming even more racially and ethnically diverse. It is projected that by 2044 whites will represent less than half the country's population.

This reality has been long in motion in Texas. The white population became the numerical minority here in 2004. Today, white residents

in the state barely outnumber Latinos at 39.7 percent of the state's population, compared with 39.3 percent for Latinos. It is expected that in 2022, or even later this year, Latinos will surpass whites.

Let's take a look at some key findings for Texas from the 2020 census. Texas was the big winner, adding approximately 4 million people between 2010 and 2020, which resulted in it being the only state to gain two new congressional seats.

However, this benefit was due almost exclusively to the state's nonwhite population. The white population posted a slight growth of less than 2 percent between 2010 and 2020, compared with a growth of 19 percent among Black people, 21 percent among Latinos, 65 percent among Asians, and the remainder of the population — largely composed of multiracial individuals — more than doubling at a growth rate of 146 percent. People of color accounted for 95.3 percent of the 4 million people Texas gained and whites for only 4.7 percent.

Let me illustrate the significance of this. Over the last decade, Texas gained 3.8 million people of color, which represents slightly more people than the combined populations of Houston and San Antonio. The state gained a little more than 187,000 whites, which is roughly the same number of people living in Brownsville.

The state's growth is concentrated in the Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio metropolitan areas, with 86 percent occurring across the 34 counties that make up this region. Harris County added 639,000 people, Tarrant County 302,000, Bexar County 295,000, Collin County 282,000, Travis 266,000 and Dallas County 245,000.

The most rapid growth occurred in 16 suburban counties of



New census data show how minorities drove population growth in Texas, which gained two congressional seats. But will redistricting reflect this reality?

the four metropolitan areas, led by Hays County with an increase of 53 percent, Comal County 49 percent, Williamson County 44 percent, and Kaufman and Fort Bend counties each at 41 percent. Even across these 34 counties, whites accounted for a smaller share of the growth (11.5 percent) than each of the other nonwhite racial and ethnic groups, which together were responsible for 88.5 percent of the gain.

Outside of these metropolitan areas, population decline was common, with 142 counties losing population and 198 counties seeing

reductions in their white populations.

What does this all mean for the political redistricting that is already underway?

Over the past three decades, Republicans have used a variety of tactics, including some of the most aggressive voter ID laws in the country, voter suppression policies — the current proposal is being held up by Texas House Democrats holed up in Washington, D.C., thus denying Republicans a quorum in the second special legislative session — along with gerrymandering, among other maneuvers.

One thing is different from the last two redistricting rounds, however. While people of color accounted for the massive amount of the state's population growth then, the white population was growing at a faster pace than today. Between 2000 and 2010, the white population grew by 4.2 percent, compared with 1.6 percent now; a decade earlier, whites accounted for 10.8 percent of the state's population growth but now only 4.7 percent. The evidence is overwhelming and even more difficult to conceal and dilute than in earlier times.

Texans often claim that democracy is one of their most cherished ideals. People of color, particularly Latinos, Blacks, Asians and multiracial individuals, are responsible for the two additional seats that Texas gained. Political redistricting needs to reflect the changing Texas. Without such alterations, we will continue to be hamstrung by politicians who are not looking after the well-being of all Texans.

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