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- ▶ [Arlington News](#)
- ▶ [NE Tarrant News](#)
- ▶ [Texas News](#)
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Arlington News

Report shows Hispanic changes

By **ANTHONY SPANGLER**
Star-Telegram Staff Writer

EMAIL
the story

PLAIN TEXT
for printing

Hispanics are the fastest-growing ethnic group in Texas, and the majority are Mexican.

But in Texas and nationwide, Hispanics identifying with Central or South American nationalities grew at a faster rate than those of Mexican descent during the 1990s, according to the latest census figures.

"I think for Texas, there is still a very significant Mexican majority among Hispanics," said John Logan, sociologist and director of the Lewis Mumford Center, a demographic research organization at the State University of New York at Albany.

"There are also new waves of immigration from Central and South America that are strongly affecting what it means to be Hispanic," he said.

In Tarrant County, the number of Central and South Americans increased 254 percent in the 2000 Census.



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Statewide, census figures show about 76 percent of Hispanics are of Mexican descent, down from 90.8 percent 10 years ago. In Tarrant County, census respondents who said they were both Hispanic and Mexican dropped from 88.1 percent in 1990 to 79.8 percent in 2000.

Demographers differ on what caused the statistical shift within the Hispanic population. Some experts speculate changes in the 2000 Census form confused respondents regarding their nationality, and others suggest many Hispanics are abandoning foreign national origins.

Census respondents who marked Hispanic were also asked to check a box for Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or "other Hispanic," followed by a blank space to provide specific ethnic roots. In 1990, the form provided specific directions for "other Hispanics" such as "Dominican."

"If you're just coming into the country, you likely don't think of yourself as Hispanic," said Kelvin M. Pollard, a demographer with Population Reference Bureau, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit research organization.

"People might not have known they could put another group or they might be of more than one Hispanic origin and didn't want to choose, or they just identify with the Hispanic category," Pollard said.

Logan said no statistical data supports the idea that Hispanics are losing national identities, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran or Dominican.

"It is possible for a Pan-Hispanic culture to have developed over the past 10 years, but we think the Census Bureau miscalculated the Hispanic population," Logan said.



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The Murrora Center estimated Texas has 1 million more Mexican Hispanics than were reported by the 2000 Census. It also estimated Texas has twice as many Hispanics from Central and South America than the census reflects.

The Census Bureau first used the term Hispanic in 1980. Some experts say two decades of using the term has eroded nationalism among some groups of Hispanics.

"I don't think there is any backlash against the term Hispanic," said Scott Gunderson Rosa, spokesman for the League of United Latin American Citizens in Washington, D.C. "But there are a lot of people who have grown up only calling themselves Hispanic."

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