



IMMIGRATION DROVE WHITE, ASIAN POPULATION GROWTH IN US LAST YEAR - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Photo: People recite an oath during a naturalization ceremony Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, in San Diego

Without immigration, the white population in the U.S. would have declined last year.

Immigration also propelled the expansion of the Asian population, which was the fastest-growing race or ethnic group last year in the U.S., while births outpacing deaths helped propel growth in Hispanic, Black, tribal and Hawaiian populations.

Population estimates released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau show what drove changes in different race, ethnic and age groups last year, as well as since the start of COVID-19's spread in the U.S. in April 2020. The country had grown to 333.2 million people by the middle of last year, a 0.4% increase over the previous year, according to the 2022 population estimates.

For white residents in the U.S., immigration drove the expansion. Without it, the white population, including those who identify as more than one race, would have dropped last year by more than 85,000 people instead of growing meagerly by more than 388,000 residents, or 0.1%.

When the focus is narrowed to white people who aren't Hispanic and identify only with a single race, there was a decline of more than 668,000 people in the white population since the number of immigrants couldn't overcome the steep drop in natural decrease that came from deaths outnumbering births last year.

Population growth is propelled in two ways: through immigration and natural increase, when births outpace deaths. The data released Thursday speak to the complexity of the nation's ever-shifting population patterns and reinforce a level of nuance not always reflected amid the political debate over immigration.

"Immigrant and refugee communities bring talent, culture and a set of skills that are needed in our community," said Arrey Obenson, president and CEO of the International Institute of St. Louis, which helps newcomers adapt to life in the U.S.

Since the start of the pandemic in April 2020, the white population has grown by 391,000 people, all of it driven by immigration.

Hamdullah Hamdard immigrated to St. Louis in September 2021 from Afghanistan, where he had run a media production company, after

threats from the Taliban and deteriorating conditions made it unsafe for his wife, son, brothers and parents. He started a production company in St. Louis, runs a news outlet for the local Afghan community and is a communications manager for the International Institute of St. Louis.



"I could start my own business once again, and I could pursue the dreams that I had in Afghanistan," Hamdard, 31, said Wednesday.

The United States last year had 260.5 million people who identified as white, including those who identify as more than one race. Maricopa County, home to Phoenix, had the biggest jump in the white population of any county, gaining more than 35,000 new white residents last year. Arizona's largest county also had the biggest gain in the overall population of any U.S. county, with a jump in 2022 of almost 57,000 new residents due to domestic migration.

Immigration also drove Asian growth last year, accounting for two-thirds of the 577,000-person increase in people who identify as Asian, including those who identify with more than one race. That 2.4% bump was the largest of any race or ethnic group, and there were 24.6 million Asians in the U.S. last year.

King County, Washington — home to Seattle — added almost 21,500 Asian residents, the most of any U.S. county last year.

The Hispanic population in the U.S. grew by more than 1 million people last year, the biggest jump in pure numbers of any race or ethnic group. Two-thirds of that expansion was driven by natural increase, or births outpacing deaths. More than 63.3 million people identified as Hispanic last year, a 1.7% increase over the previous year.

The biggest Hispanic growth in pure numbers was in Harris County, Texas, home to Houston, which added almost 35,000 Latinos last year.

Natural increase also drove almost two-thirds of the 436,000-person jump in the Black population last year, a 0.9% increase from the previous year. The Black population stood at 50 million residents in 2022. Harris County, Texas, had the largest numeric gain of Black residents of any U.S. county, with almost 23,000 residents.

The American Indian and Alaska Native population stood at 7.2 million residents last year, an increase of more than 93,000 people, or 1.3%. Maricopa County, Arizona had the biggest numeric gain, with more than 3,100 new residents.

There were more than 1.7 million Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders in the U.S. last year, an increase of 1.2% over the previous year. Clark County, Nevada, home to Las Vegas, had the biggest increase, with almost 1,500 new residents.

The median age in the U.S. last year increased 0.2 years to 38.9 years between 2021 and 2022, fueled by aging baby boomers and millennials getting older. Sumter County, Florida, home to a large retirement community, had the highest median age in the U.S. at 68.1.

"Without a rapidly growing young population, the U.S. median age will likely continue its slow but steady rise," said Kristie Wilder, a Census Bureau demographer.

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