

(Editors: The following is analysis of Thursday's **U.S. Census Bureau report** that shows minority population reached an estimated 104.6 million -- or 34 percent of the nation's total population -- on July 1, 2008, compared to 31 percent when the Census was taken in 2000. Nearly one in six residents, or 46.9 million people, are Hispanic, the agency reported. Also in the report, 44 percent of children younger than 18 and 47 percent of children younger than the age of five are now from minority families.)

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West Virginia Population Remains Largely Racially Homogeneous and Not Getting Younger

West Virginia is following the trend shown in today's U.S. Census Bureau's population estimates by age, sex, and race and Hispanic origin, but only slightly for racial diversity -- much more so for age.

The report, issued Thursday, notes that the nation is becoming older and more racially diverse.

"The same trend is found in West Virginia. Unlike the nation, however, minority population in the state is so small that its strong growth hardly affects racial diversity in the state," said Dr. Christiadi, demographer at the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business and Economics, West Virginia University.

Minority population, defined as those belonging to a group other than single-race non-Hispanic white, accounted for 6.5 percent of total population in the state in 2008. This was far below the national average of 34 percent. While minority population grew, its share increased only slightly from 6.4 percent in 2007.

Among minorities, Hispanic population grew the fastest. Between 2007 and 2008 it grew by 4.8 percent, far outpacing the state's population growth of 0.3 percent. Strong growth of Hispanic population is found typically in large or economically growing counties such as Kanawha, Monongalia, and Eastern Panhandle counties.

West Virginia population also remains among the oldest in the nation. The median age was 42.0 years old in 2008, which ranked the state third in the nation behind only Maine (43.0) and Vermont (42.3). The state also had the second largest share of population age 65 and over (16 percent), behind only Florida (17 percent), a state known as a retirement destination.

Similarly, the state had a higher share of older women than the national average. More importantly, of all women at childbearing age (15-44 years old), only 41.6 percent were at their prime childbearing age (20-34 years old). This was far below the national average of 58.7 percent.

“Being predominantly non-Hispanic white, older, and having fewer women at prime childbearing age, the state population is bound to have high death rates and low birth rates at the same time,” Christiadi said. “This is a recipe for low natural increase. Indeed, the rate of natural increase in the state has been around zero percent, the lowest in the nation since at least 2000.”