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# A Demographic Approach to Race and Ethnicity in Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Regions of Arkansas, 1990 and 1999

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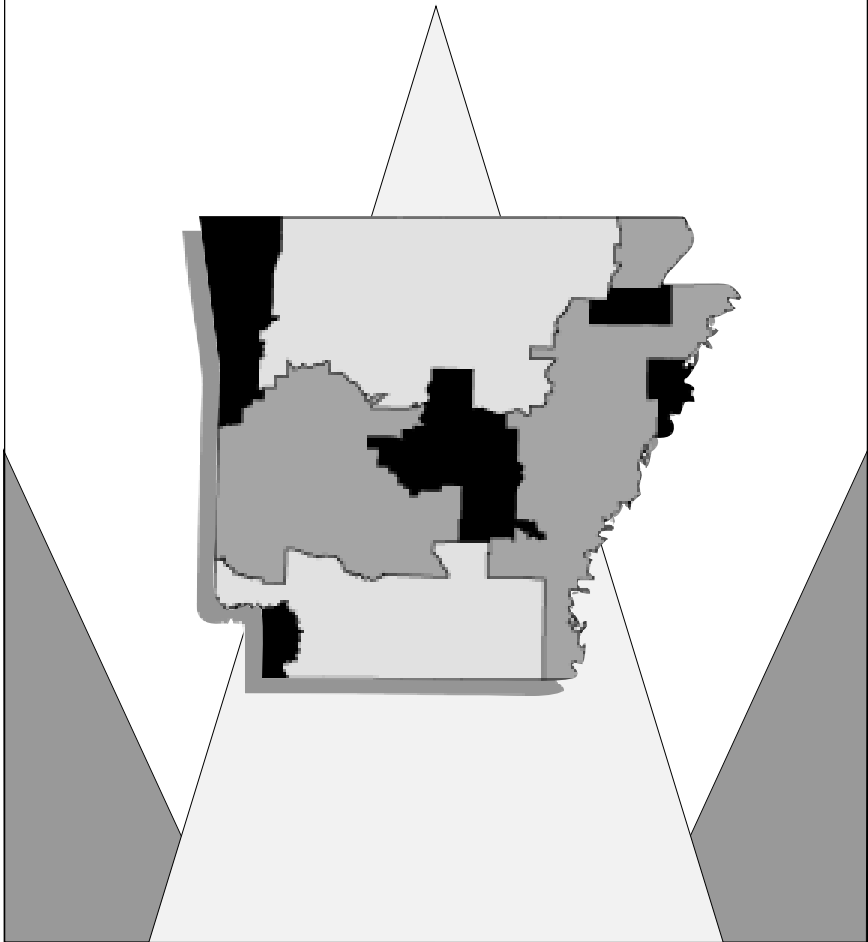
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**A DEMOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO RACE AND ETHNICITY  
IN METROPOLITAN AND NON-METROPOLITAN  
REGIONS OF ARKANSAS, 1990 AND 1999**

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## SUMMARY

This manuscript provides an empirical portrait of emergent trends in the growth, distribution, and racial and ethnic composition of Arkansas' resident population. Particular attention is given to variation in the racial and ethnic composition of the estimated population among different regions of the state. During the 1990's, racial and ethnic diversity increased statewide due in large part to Hispanic population growth in all regions. Black population growth was greatest in central Arkansas while Asian and Native American population growth increased most rapidly in the northwest metropolitan regions of the state. Overall, both metropolitan and non-metropolitan Arkansas communities have a more diverse mix of ethnic populations than has been known in the past.

## KEY WORDS

African American, Arkansas, Black, census estimates, demography, ethnicity, Hispanic, population, race, metropolitan, non-metropolitan, racial diversity, rural population.

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# **A Demographic Approach To Race And Ethnicity In Metropolitan And Non-Metroplitan Regions Of Arkansas, 1990 And 1999**

**Todd W. Hodgson, Frank L Farmer, Wayne P. Miller, and Donald E. Voth**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The United States is experiencing dramatic change in its demographic profile. The aging of the so-called baby boomers is exerting wide-ranging impacts on the social and political landscape. Another dramatic change in the demographic structure of the population is also reshaping the landscape in ways that are not well understood. Specifically, the last decade has seen a profound increase in the racial and ethnic diversity within our national borders resulting from increases in the Hispanic population. Like the rest of the nation, the state of Arkansas is also experiencing shifts in the racial and ethnic composition of its citizens. This change is fueled largely by international and domestic migration.

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide the most recent and currently available demographic data documenting the size, distribution, and ethnic composition of the population in Arkansas. The specific focus is on change in population size and racial and ethnic composition in rural and urban regions of the state. The bulletin is organized as follows. The “Data Issues” section addresses methodological and conceptual issues of race, ethnicity, and population composition and change. It also provides a description of the data sources, types of data, and the geographic areas of the state that are used in this analysis of the Arkansas population. The “Findings” section presents the population data for several geographic categories with a brief description of some of the

more significant demographic trends. The section also contains a brief demographic summary for each race and ethnic group in addition to a synopsis of the changing patterns of minority population growth. The “Conclusion” is a discussion of the implications of growing minority populations for local communities and the state of Arkansas.

## **DATA ISSUES**

Although the best available data for examining population structure and change is secondary data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, it is important to recognize the limitations inherent in the use of such data. The data used in this analysis are from the decennial census of population and from estimates of the population of counties by race and Hispanic origin. The manner in which these data are collected and categorized potentially affects its reliability as well as how the data can be presented, compared, and analyzed. There are three key issues that must be considered when using these data to describe the structure and change in the racial and ethnic composition of the state: (1) How are racial and ethnic categories established? (2) What is the unit of geography for which the data are collected? (3) What are the strengths and limitations of the method that is employed to estimate the size of the subpopulations? Each of these issues is addressed in turn.

### **Race/Ethnicity**

The Census Bureau has been collecting data on race since 1790. Initially, there were only two categories of race, “White” and “Other.” With the influx of non-European immigrants, changes in public opinion, and shifting political climates, these two categories were expanded over the centuries to include Blacks (and at one time, part-Blacks), Native Americans, Chinese, Japanese, and a number of other “races.”

Race and ethnic origin categories currently in use were mandated by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1997. OMB requires that all federal record keeping and data presentation now use four categories of race (White, Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Asian/Pacific Islander) and two categories of ethnicity (Hispanic and Non-Hispanic) for tabulating population data. This approach treats race and Hispanic origin as separate and independent data categories, thus the use of two separate questions for race and ethnicity on Census Bureau questionnaires. As such, each individual is classifiable as a member of both a race and an ethnic group. The eight resulting categories of race and ethnicity tabulated by the Census Bureau are 1) White Hispanic; 2) White Non-Hispanic; 3) Black Hispanic; 4) Black Non-Hispanic; 5) American Indian/Alaskan Native Hispanic; 6) American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic; 7) Asian/Pacific Islander Hispanic; 8) Asian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic. These

categories of race and ethnicity are not intended to be scientific, but rather to provide consistency in federal record keeping and data products (U.S. Census Bureau 1999(a)).

It is common for studies that utilize Census data to combine all Hispanic race categories into a single category for Hispanic and rename all non-Hispanic race categories to that of the race (See Albrecht, et al. 1997 for discussion of limitations to this approach). That strategy is adopted in this bulletin. The approach results in four redefined categories of race and one category of ethnic origin. White Non-Hispanic is redefined as “White,” Black Non-Hispanic as “Black,” American Indian/Alaskan Native Non-Hispanic as “American Indian,” and Asian/Pacific Islander Non-Hispanic as “Asian.” “Hispanic” is then the total of White Hispanic, Black Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander Hispanic. The method implies that Hispanic of any race is Hispanic and recognizes Hispanics as a distinct minority population group that can be compared to the OMB recognized races. Although it may not be exactly what the OMB envisioned, it has become an accepted practice in demographic publications, even by the Bureau of the Census.

For the purpose of this bulletin, the following labeling conventions are adopted for the labeling of the race and ethnic categories. First, the Caucasian category is labeled as White. Second, the label of Black is used rather than African American. This decision is based on research that indicates this term is preferred over all other terms by Black Americans (c.f. Smith 1992). The third labeling convention is to combine all Hispanics regardless of color or country of origin into the Hispanic category. The fourth labeling convention uses the label of Asian rather than Asian and Pacific Islander. The final convention is to employ the label Native American (as opposed to American Indian/Alaskan Native or a specific tribal affiliation).

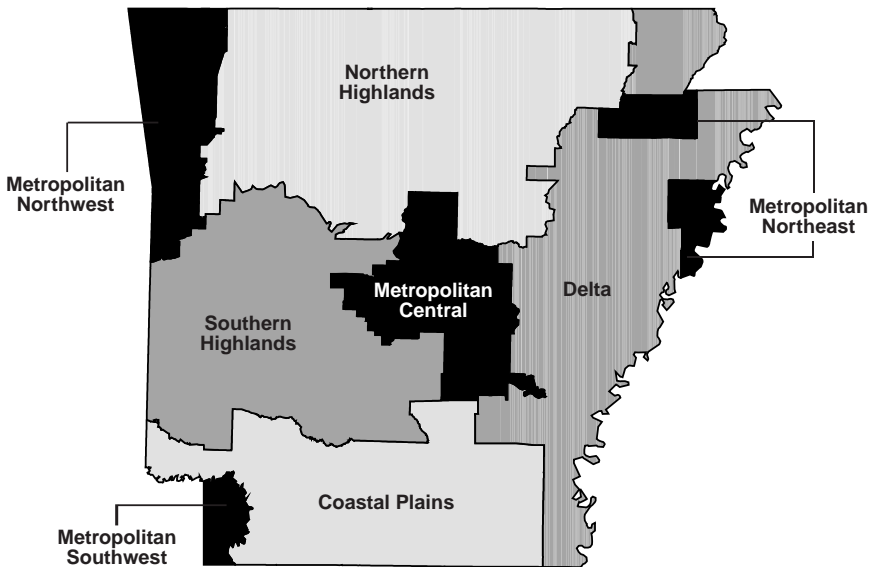
The above efforts to accurately measure race and ethnicity point to one important fact: the categories are driven by societal forces and not through biological determination. Race and ethnicity are socially constructed categories that have changed as American society has itself changed. Additionally, these categories are reductionist and do not capture the intricacies of ethnic diversity that exist within a given category. That said, they do provide explicit recognition of the richness of difference that exists with our society and allow for the documentation of the demographic change that is occurring within society.

## **Geography**

Demographic data for the various races and Hispanics are presented in this bulletin for the state, metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, and eight sub-state regions. The sub-state regions include four metropolitan regions and four non-metropolitan regions. Conceptually, metropolitan regions represent “urban” and non-metropolitan regions represent “rural.” These regions are shown in Figure 1. The four non-metropoli-



tan regions are multi-county groups that are patterned after the groups identified by Fuguitt and Beale (1978) and employed by Arnold, et al. (1980) and Moon, et al. (1997). While there have been numerous classification schemes developed for various analytical and reporting purposes (cf. Fielder 1955; Savage and Gallagher 1977; Pollard, et al. 1985; Gundersen and Ospina 1987), the Fuguitt-Beale approach was one of delineating reasonable homogenous subregions based on economic activities, history, biophysical characteristics, settlement patterns, and culture.



**Figure 1. Metropolitan and non-metropolitan sub-state regions of Arkansas**

The use of non-metropolitan counties to create these regions allows insight into the unique characteristics of various areas of the state that are not solely related to population concentration and/or access to cities. Thus the regions capture some of the diversity within the rural areas of the state (See Farmer 1998 for discussion of the definition of rural).

While the regional approach of this report is patterned after earlier research, it is not identical. Unlike earlier reports and in an effort to capture the difference among the metropolitan areas of the state as well, the current bulletin defines four metropolitan (urban) regions and their county affiliates. Further, the non-metropolitan region previously identified as the Highlands has been bifurcated along the Arkansas River Valley to differentiate between the Ozark (Northern) and Ouachita (Southern) Highlands.

**Table 1. Sub-state regions and number of counties.**

Sub-State Region	Rural-Urban Designation	Number of Counties
Coastal Plains	Rural (Non-MSA)	12
Delta	Rural (Non-MSA)	16
Northern Highlands	Rural (Non-MSA)	21
Southern Highlands	Rural (Non-MSA)	14
Metropolitan Central	Urban (MSA)	5
Metropolitan Northeast	Urban (MSA)	2
Metropolitan Northwest	Urban (MSA)	4
Metropolitan Southwest	Urban (MSA)	1

### **Data Limitations**

All Arkansas data presented in this bulletin were derived from U.S. Census Bureau’s *1990 to 1999 Annual Time Series of County Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin*. The Census Bureau produces population estimates between the decennial censuses. The data are released yearly and provide estimates for population variables at different levels of geography. The *1990 to 1999 Annual Time Series of County Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin* is one such dataset and the only yearly population estimate dataset that contains categories for race and ethnicity at the county level.

These are considered the best available data for tracking yearly population trends within the United States generally and within states specifically. However, there are several important caveats. The data are population *estimates* and not formal population counts (censuses). The estimates for the state and the regions used in this bulletin are aggregated from county-level population estimates produced by the Census Bureau and generated from the most recently available decennial census counts (1990). They are produced using a component change equation of the form:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{POPULATION (TIME TWO)} = \\ \text{POPULATION (TIME ONE)} + (\text{BIRTHS} - \text{DEATHS}) \\ + (\text{IN-MIGRATION} - \text{OUT-MIGRATION}). \end{aligned}$$

The birth and death data for the equation are derived from vital statistics (birth and death certificates). The migration component of the equation is made up of both domestic migration and international immigration. The former is estimated using address matching of federal tax returns and the latter is derived from data obtained from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. For a more complete description of the methods see <http://www.census.gov/population/methods>.

While it is beyond the scope of the current bulletin to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each source of the data for these estimates, it is important to note that a certain amount of error may be introduced at each stage. This error may result in estimates that under-count or over-count the population. For example, there is evidence that in certain locales in Arkansas the number of Hispanics may be greater than estimated by using the above approach. Substantive evidence indicating that the Hispanic population is greater or less than the Census estimates can be seen in the results of Special Censuses that were conducted in Baxter (1997), Craighead (1997), and Washington (1996) Counties.

**Table 2. Special Census population data vs. U.S. Census Bureau population estimates.**

	White	Black	American	Asian	Other	Hispanic	Total
<b>Baxter County (Highland Region)</b>							
Special Census (10/8/97)	36,035	16	258	126	0	369	36,435
Census Estimates (7/1/97)	35,500	25	133	102	N/A	422	36,182
Census Estimates (7/1/99)	35,893	25	128	102	N/A	516	36,664
<b>Craighead County (Metropolitan NE Region)</b>							
Special Census (2/4/97)	69,467	4,925	264	497	838	919	75,991
Census Estimates (7/1/97)	69,804	4,782	190	545	N/A	926	76,247
Census Estimates (7/1/99)	70,862	4,941	200	544	N/A	1,121	77,668
<b>Washington County (Metropolitan NW Region)</b>							
Special Census (12/4/96)	131,909	2,766	1,594	2,294	3,346	8,164	141,909
Census Estimates (7/1/96)	131,099	2,298	1,617	1,598	N/A	3,730	140,342
Census Estimates (7/1/99)	135,699	2,534	1,711	1,681	N/A	4,968	146,593

Sources: 1) Special Census: Prepared by the Census State Data Center, Institute for Economic Advancement, College of Business Administration, UALR, Little Rock, AR. Original counts are from Summary Tape File 1, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, U.S. Bureau of the Census. Revised counts are unpublished data from the Bureau of the Census. 2) Census Bureau Estimates: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties, Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

For any given local area the estimates will have some degree of error. Depending on conditions and events in the local area, these errors may result in under-counts or over-counts for the population as a whole as well as for subcomponents of that population. For example, in Table 2, it appears that in the case of Baxter County there is a very slight under-count; however, in the case of Washington County, the Special Census indicates that the Hispanic population is substantially larger (approx. 4,500) than that estimated by the component method. It is for this reason that we have chosen to aggregate counties into larger regions in the hope that these errors, while potentially substantial at the county level, will be relatively diminished at higher levels of geography. However, it should be noted that the current estimates are likely to be conservative and should not be viewed as "count data."

## FINDINGS

### Diversity within the state

In 1999, the estimated population of Arkansas was more than 2.5 million. Of these, more than 2 million were White and less than one-half million are classified as racial or ethnic minorities. There were more than 400,000 Blacks, over 50,000 Hispanics, slightly over 17,000 Asians, and approximately 13,000 Native Americans. Based on the 1999 numbers, the population of Arkansas has grown by approximately 197,000 residents since 1990. This growth has been the result of increases in all races and ethnic groups in the state with the largest increase (approximately 124,000) in the White population. The estimated growth in the number of Blacks and Hispanics was nearly identical (approximately 33,500) while the increase in Asians was around 5,000. The increase in the Native American population is estimated to be slightly more than 400.

On a proportional basis, in 1990, the population of Arkansas was 82.2% White, 15.9% Black, 0.5% Native American and Alaskan Native, 0.5% Asian and Pacific Islander, and 0.9% Hispanic. By 1999, Whites accounted for only 80.7 % of the total state population. This decrease in the proportion of the White population was countered by slight increases in the proportion of Blacks to 16.0%, Hispanics to 2.1%, and Asians to 0.7%. The Native American population remained proportionately unchanged at 0.5%.

**Table 3. Arkansas state population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	State Total
1990 Estimated Population	1,935,779	373,821	12,444	12,310	19,989	2,354,343
1999 Estimated Population	2,060,075	407,328	12,848	17,393	53,729	2,551,373
Change	124,296	33,507	404	5,083	33,740	197,030
Percent Change	6.4	9.0	3.2	41.3	168.8	8.4
1990 Proportion of State	82.2%	15.9%	0.5%	0.5%	0.9%	100%
1999 Proportion of State	80.7%	16.0%	0.5%	0.7%	2.1%	100%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

During the period 1990 to 1999, the most dramatic percentage increases were in the Asian and Hispanic populations, which increased by 41.3% and 169.8%, respectively. The White population grew by an estimated 6.4%, the Black population by 9.0%, and the Native American population by 3.2% during this same period. While the growth percentages for minority groups are based on relatively small “starting populations” (i.e. the denominators in the calculation of the percentages), the change represents a substantial alteration of historic patterns of race and ethnic diversity within the state.

### Metropolitan and Non-Metropolitan Diversity

Most of the state's population growth from 1990 to 1999 occurred in its 12 metropolitan counties. They accounted for nearly 138,000, or 70%, of the 197,000 state-wide population increase. Conversely, the remaining 63 non-metropolitan counties accounted for approximately 59,000 or 30% of the total increase. Several patterns emerge when population growth is analyzed by race and ethnic composition. One notable trend is the differential growth in the Black population between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. The Black population grew by over 12% in the metropolitan counties and by less than 6% in non-metropolitan counties. It is estimated that between 1990 and 1999, the Black population in the metropolitan counties grew by over 22,000 as compared to an increase of slightly more than 11,000 in the 63 non-metropolitan counties.

**Table 4. Arkansas metropolitan area population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	903,914	180,676	7,373	9,530	10,446	1,111,939
1999 Estimated Population	996,176	202,785	7,851	13,543	29,365	1,249,720
Change	92,262	22,109	478	4,013	18,919	137,781
Percent Change	10.2	12.2	6.5	42.1	181.1	12.4
1990 Proportion of Region	81.3%	16.2%	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	79.7%	16.2%	0.6%	1.1%	2.4%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Table 5. Arkansas non-metropolitan area population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	1,031,865	193,145	5,071	2,780	9,543	1,242,404
1999 Estimated Population	1,063,899	204,543	4,997	3,850	24,364	1,301,653
Change	32,034	11,398	-74	1,070	14,821	59,249
Percent Change	3.1	5.9	-1.5	38.5	155.3	4.8
1990 Proportion of Region	83.1%	15.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.8%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	81.7%	15.7%	0.4%	0.3%	1.9%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

Another notable population pattern is the concentration of the Asian population in the metropolitan areas, with 78% (approximately 13,500) of the Asian population residing in metropolitan counties and with 22% (approximately 3,800) living in non-metropolitan Arkansas in 1999. Likewise, most Native Americans (61%) reside in metropolitan counties with only about 5,000 living in non-metropolitan counties.

The dramatic growth of the Hispanic population, however, has been relatively equal between the metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas of the state. The Hispanic

population grew by about 15,000 in the non-metropolitan counties and increased by nearly 19,000 in the metropolitan counties. The rate of Hispanic population growth was 155% in the non-metropolitan counties and 181% in the metropolitan counties.

**Regional Population Diversity**

Metropolitan and non-metropolitan information provides a broad overview of differences and similarity in population structure and change within the state. A more detailed portrait is painted by presenting demographic information for sub-state regions.

**Metropolitan Northwest.** This region has experienced explosive growth from 1990 to 1999. The population has increased by nearly 88,000 or nearly 25%. The magnitude of this growth is brought into perspective when it is compared to statewide growth; the population increases in the region’s four counties has accounted for almost 45% of the total population growth that has occurred within the state. In terms of numbers of residents, the increase has largely been in the White population. Of the approximately 88,000 additional residents in the region, 72,000 are White. The Hispanic population expanded by more than 10,000 during this period, representing a growth rate exceeding 200%. Based on these estimates, the Metropolitan Northwest Region accounted for nearly a third of the Hispanic population growth in the state.

**Table 6. Arkansas Metropolitan Northwest Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	332,059	7,910	4,914	5,142	4,774	354,799
1999 Estimated Population	404,433	10,167	5,522	7,677	14,879	442,678
Change	72,374	2,257	608	2,535	10,105	87,879
Percent Change	21.8	28.5	12.4	49.3	211.7	24.8
1990 Proportion of Region	93.6%	2.2%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	91.4%	2.3%	1.2%	1.7%	3.4%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Metropolitan Southwest.** This region is made up of one county (Miller), with the population center being Texarkana. As shown in Table 7, population growth in the county has been flat. The estimates indicate that over the nine-year period the population increased by approximately 900 residents. This slight increase was the result of the loss of White population (approximately -800) being offset by growth of the Black (approximately +1,200) and Hispanic (approximately +450) populations. In terms of percentages, the White population decreased by nearly 3% while the Black and Hispanic populations increased by 14% and 148%, respectively. It should be reiterated that the city of Texarkana is divided by the Arkansas-Texas border. These population numbers include only those that are counted as Arkansas residents.

**Table 7. Arkansas Metropolitan Southwest Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	29,224	8,667	145	135	310	38,481
1999 Estimated Population	28,416	9,891	128	174	768	39,377
Change	-808	1,224	-17	39	458	896
Percent Change	-2.8	14.1	-11.7	28.9	147.7	2.3
1990 Proportion of Region	75.9%	22.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.8%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	72.2%	25.1%	0.3%	0.4%	2.0%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Metropolitan Central.** This region of the state, composed of Pulaski, Faulkner, Lonoke, Saline, and Jefferson counties and the cities of Conway, North Little Rock, Little Rock, and Pine Bluff, is home to approximately 25% of the state's population. During the period under consideration, this part of the state grew by approximately 40,000 residents or nearly 7%. In 1990, the racial and ethnic mix was 75.1% White, 23.2% Black, and 0.8% Hispanic. In 1999, it is estimated that these percentages changed to 72.9%, 24.2%, and 1.8%, respectively. The increase for the White population was just over 16,000, while the increase in the Black population is estimated to be just under this amount (15,687). The Hispanic population is estimated to have grown by over 7,000 or more than 150%. The Asian population in the region also increased substantially, with a percentage gain of 34% or approximately 1,200 people.

**Table 8. Arkansas Metropolitan Central Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	450,142	138,949	2,033	3,671	4,632	599,427
1999 Estimated Population	466,626	154,636	1,926	4,915	11,756	639,859
Change	16,484	15,687	-107	1,244	7,124	40,432
Percent Change	3.7	11.3	-5.3	33.9	153.8	6.7
1990 Proportion of Region	75.1%	23.2%	0.3%	0.6%	0.8%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	72.9%	24.2%	0.3%	0.8%	1.8%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Metropolitan Northeast.** This region is composed of the cities of Jonesboro and West Memphis and includes Crittenden and Craighead counties. The 1990 total population count for this region was 119, 232. The latest (1999) population estimates show an increase of approximately 8,500 people for a total population of almost 128,000. This represents a 7% increase during the nine-year period. In terms of the racial com-

position in 1990, Whites made up 77.6% of the population with a decline of approximately 2% since 1990. While there was an increase in the White population during the period, the rate of increase was less than that of other race/ethnic groups and consequently Whites account for a smaller proportion of the population. The Black population increased during the period by nearly 3,000 (11.7%) while the Hispanic population rose by approximately 1,200 (168.8%).

**Table 9. Arkansas Metropolitan Northeast Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	92,489	25,150	281	582	730	119,232
1999 Estimated Population	96,701	28,091	275	777	1,962	127,806
Change	4,212	2,941	-6	195	1,232	8,574
Percent Change	4.6	11.7	-2.1	33.5	168.8	7.2
1990 Proportion of Region	77.6%	21.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.6%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	75.7%	22.0%	0.2%	0.6%	1.5%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Delta.** In 1990, the Census population for this non-metropolitan region was 338,628. This was approximately 14% of the total population of the state. According to the 1999 estimates, the population was just over 325,000 for a loss of over 13,500 people. As a result of the decline in population in the region and an increase in other regions, the proportion of the state population residing in the 16 counties making up this region declined from 14.4% to 12.7%. The change in the population in the region can be clearly accounted for by the difference in population growth among the race/ethnic groups. Specifically, the change is a result of a decline in the White population of over 17,000 (-7.4%) and very slight gain in the Black population (less than 1,000) and, as with the other regions, a Hispanic population that more than doubled in the period (from around 2,500 in 1990 to over 5,700 in 1999).

**Table 10. Arkansas Delta Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	238,382	96,097	773	872	2,504	338,628
1999 Estimated Population	220,701	96,914	682	1,036	5,717	325,050
Change	-17,681	817	-91	164	3,213	-13,578
Percent Change	-7.4	0.9	-11.8	18.8	128.3	-4.0
1990 Proportion of Region	70.4%	28.4%	0.2%	0.3%	0.7%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	67.9%	29.8%	0.2%	0.3%	1.8%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233



**Coastal Plains.** As is the case with the Delta Region, the non-metropolitan Coastal Plains Region of Arkansas experienced a decline in total population. The population for the region declined by more than 6,500 residents during the period. Further, the general pattern of race/ethnic population change seen in the Delta Region is also observed in the Coastal Plains. Similar to the Delta Region, the decline is the result of a large decrease in the White population (approx. -13,000) not matched by increases in the Black (approx. +4,300) or Hispanic (approx. +2,000) populations. It is notable that the increase in the Black population was a fairly robust 6% while the increase in the number of Hispanics represents a 130% increase.

**Table 11. Arkansas Coastal Plains Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	155,117	67,590	497	357	1,555	225,116
1999 Estimated Population	142,136	71,939	446	429	3,578	218,528
Change	-12,981	4,349	-51	72	2,023	-6,588
Percent Change	-8.4	6.4	-10.3	20.2	130.1	-2.9
1990 Proportion of Region	68.9%	30.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%	100.0%
1999 Proportion of Region	65.0%	32.9%	0.2%	0.2%	1.6%	100.0%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Southern Highlands.** Unlike the Delta and Coastal Plains regions, the non-metropolitan Southern Highlands Region experienced an overall population increase of 23,789 or 9.0% from 1990 to 1999. More than 15,000 of this increase was among Whites and the proportion of Whites in the region was approximately 88% in 1999. However, minorities accounted for about 36% of the region's population increase in the 1990's. The Hispanic population grew by nearly 4,500 to over 7,000 current Hispanic residents, a 164.0% increase. The Black population of the region grew by nearly 4,000 to a current population of over 26,000. The Asian population grew by nearly 300 to over 900 current residents.

**Table 12. Arkansas Southern Highlands Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	236,357	22,288	1,624	647	2,690	263,606
1999 Estimated Population	251,486	26,280	1,603	925	7,101	287,395
Change	15,129	3,992	-21	278	4,411	23,789
Percent Change	6.4	17.9	-1.3	43.0	164.0	9.0
1990 Proportion of Region	89.7	8.5	0.6	0.2	1.0	100%
1999 Proportion of Region	87.5	9.1	0.6	0.3	2.5	100%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

**Northern Highlands.** In 1999, over 470,000 people resided in the 21 counties comprising the non-metropolitan Northern Highlands Region. This region represents nearly 19% of the state’s overall population and it is estimated that nearly 150,000 or 97% are White. The regional population increase from 1990 to 1999 was more than 55,000, or 13.4%, and accounted for nearly 30% of the total state population increase. The White population increased by 47,567 or 11.8%. Although White population growth was substantial, notable growth was also observed in the minority populations, namely Hispanics. From 1990 to 1999, the Hispanic population of the region grew by more than 5,100 to nearly 8,000 current Hispanic residents, a 185.2% increase. The rate of Black population growth in the region was relatively high at 31.2%, though the numeric increase was only 2,240 or a mere 4.0% of the total population increase in the region. The Asian population grew by more than 500 to over 1,400 current residents, an increase of 61.5%. The increase of 89 Native Americans makes this the only non-metropolitan region in the state with an estimated Native American population increase.

**Table 13. Arkansas Northern Highlands Region population data, 1990 and 1999.**

	White	Black	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	Region Total
1990 Estimated Population	402,009	7,170	2,177	904	2,794	415,054
1999 Estimated Population	449,576	9,410	2,266	1,460	7,968	470,680
Change	47,567	2,240	89	556	5,174	55,626
Percent Change	11.8	31.2	4.1	61.5	185.2	13.4
1990 Proportion of Region	96.9	1.7	0.5	0.2	0.7	100%
1999 Proportion of Region	95.5	2.0	0.5	0.3	1.7	100%

Source: (CO-99-10) Population Estimates for Counties: Race By Hispanic Origin Annual Time Series, July 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999. Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC 20233

### **Summary of Changes in Racial and Ethnic Groups**

This section summarizes the general trends for each of the races and Hispanics. Trends within the White category are considered first, followed by the Black population, Hispanic population, Asian population, and finally the Native American population. This is followed by a brief overview of the changing patterns of growth.

**Whites.** The White population experienced extraordinary growth in the Northern Highlands Region and Metropolitan Northwest Region, but decreased sharply in the rural Coastal Plains Region and Delta Region during the 1990’s. Census Bureau estimates indicate that one-half of the state’s White population growth and one-third of the state’s total population increase from 1990 to 1999 occurred in Benton and Washington counties of the Metropolitan Northwest Region. By 1999, the two counties accounted for nearly 15% of the total White population in the state. The Northern Highlands Region had the second highest White population growth rate of all the regions.

White population growth in the Metropolitan Central Region was only one-fourth that of the Metropolitan Northwest Region and non-metropolitan Northern Highlands Region. Much of this difference in White population growth might be attributed to the dramatic outflow of the White population from urban Pulaski County, which experienced a decrease of more than 15,000 Whites.

**Blacks.** The geographic distribution of the Black population in Arkansas has historically been confined to the Coastal Plains, Delta, and Metropolitan Central regions. In the non-metropolitan Northern Highlands Region, the Black population has remained very small, even nonexistent in some counties, for more than 150 years. Recently, the Black population in Arkansas appears to be gravitating toward the Metropolitan Central Region. At the same time, the Black population is tapering in many rural counties and thereby seems to be clustered throughout the rural Coastal Plain and Delta regions. From 1990 to 1999, nearly one-third of the statewide Black population increase occurred in Pulaski County. The Metropolitan Central Region, which includes Pulaski County, accounted for nearly one-half of the total increase in the Black population. In the Coastal Plains and Delta regions, the Black population growth was small, even negative in several counties, especially in the Delta Region. These population estimates are suggestive of a rural to urban migration by the Black population from the Coastal Plains and Delta regions to the Metropolitan Central Region.

**Hispanics.** In 1990, there were fewer than 20,000 Hispanics living in Arkansas. It is estimated that there are now more than 50,000 Hispanic residents statewide. Further, there is substantial evidence that the number of Hispanics living in the state substantially exceeds the Census estimate of 50,000. Special censuses conducted in a few counties in 1995 indicate that the growth in the Hispanic population is well beyond that of the census estimates. The increase in the Hispanic population is a statewide phenomenon. While the Metropolitan Northwest Region is experiencing the greatest increase in the Hispanic population, it is also the fastest growing region of the state regardless of race or ethnic origin. Notably, Hispanic population growth was more evenly distributed between metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties than that of any of the races. If the current trend continues, there will soon be a substantial Hispanic component of the minority population base in both urban and rural communities statewide.

**Asians.** The Asian population in Arkansas remains concentrated in the counties of the Metropolitan Northwest and Metropolitan Central regions, chiefly in Sebastian County. In 1999, the Asian population accounted for less than one percent of the total county population in every non-metropolitan county. The Asian population growth rate of many non-metropolitan counties is high, but the number of Asians remains very low.

**Native Americans.** The Native American population in Arkansas is the smallest racial group. The proportion of Native Americans is not greater than one percent in any

Arkansas county. Interestingly, there were more than 50 but less than 100 Native Americans living in most non-metropolitan counties throughout the state in the 1990's, but most Native Americans live in counties of the Northwest Metropolitan Region, Washington, Benton, and Sebastian counties. Native American population growth in Arkansas was the lowest of all listed minority groups in the 1990's. It decreased in all of the sub-state regions, except the Northern Highlands and Metropolitan Northwest regions.

### **Changing Patterns of Population Growth**

If future population growth follows the pattern of the 1990's, the composition of the minority population in Arkansas could become clustered into three somewhat distinctive areas. Communities in the Metropolitan Northwest Region and the non-metropolitan Northern Highlands Region would have a strong Hispanic minority influence. Rural and urban communities in the eastern and southern areas of the state would have a very strong Black influence and moderate Hispanic "minority" influence. The total population of the Metropolitan Central Region would become more racially and ethnically mixed.

The greatest amount of Black and Hispanic population growth has not coincided geographically. The Black population remained geographically clustered in the Delta, Coastal Plains, and Metropolitan Central (Little Rock and Pine Bluff) regions of the state. The rural Hispanic population grew somewhat evenly statewide with concentrated geographic clustering in the largest urban areas, the Metropolitan Northwest Region, and the Metropolitan Central Region.

As inner-city minority populations increase, White populations tend to relocate to the suburbs, a nationally recognized phenomenon that has been referred to as "White Flight" (Frey, 1997). In Arkansas, the pattern of "White Flight" is most noticeable in Pulaski County where Black population growth was the highest of all counties in the state while the White population decreased substantially. However, "White Flight" is not necessarily motivated by racial differences. In the Metropolitan Central Region, there is a substantial increase in both the Black and White populations in the "suburban" metropolitan counties surrounding Pulaski County. In the case of northwest Arkansas, much of the White (and Hispanic) population increases are largely the result of economic opportunity. Likewise, both the White and Hispanic populations exhibit concurrent population growth in the region.

The Black population in Arkansas is well established while the Hispanic population is very new. In 1990, there were a few Hispanics living in every county of Arkansas. By 1999, those populations doubled or tripled in every county. In 1990, the Black population of Newton and Polk Counties was zero while many other Northern Highlands counties had Black populations of fewer than one hundred. By 1999, the Black population had only slightly increased in many of these counties while the Hispanic

populations grew rapidly throughout the northwest corner of the state. Likewise, Black population growth was slow in the Delta Region during the 1990's, but the Hispanic population grew at a substantial rate. In fact, Hispanic population increase was greater than Black population increase in the Delta Region during that time. This suggests that communities in the non-metropolitan Delta Region of the state are becoming more racially mixed.

## **CONCLUSION**

As noted at the outset of this bulletin, the United States is experiencing profound changes in its racial and ethnic composition. Clearly the state of Arkansas is sharing in this change. Since gaining statehood in 1836, and in spite of the existence of relatively small pockets of Chinese, Italian, and other ethnic groups, the term "minority population" in Arkansas has been considered synonymous with the Black population. Now the in-migration of Hispanics to the state is significantly changing the racial and ethnic landscape. Simultaneous with this in-migration has been a significant growth in the Asian population. So, unlike the past, Arkansas is no longer biracial, but is rapidly moving towards being a much more complex, multiracial population.

Both metropolitan and non-metropolitan communities are affected by this change. Large and small communities alike are becoming multiracial, with greatly increased linguistic, cultural, and demographic diversity. Functioning effectively in such a multi-cultural milieu and recognizing and responding to the strengths and needs of such a diverse array of people, cultures, and experiences are among the great challenges facing both the institutions and the citizens of the state and its communities.

Whereas racial attitudes concerning the Black population, though very dynamic, are relatively well known, the majority population's response to the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity resulting from the increasing Hispanic and Asian populations, is new ground. To date, integration into the local economy and institutions seems to be occurring without much conflict or hostility. Major efforts to facilitate integration have emerged in some communities and sectors, such as the development of the Multi-Cultural Center in the Jones Family and Community Center in the city of Springdale. Similar developments have emerged elsewhere. Clearly, there have been major impacts upon the social and governmental institutions of some of the most heavily affected communities involving primarily the schools, churches, and health and welfare institutions, such as hospitals, clinics, and health departments. The Spanish language and the ability to communicate effectively with speakers of Spanish have become important issues in local hospitals, schools, and businesses. Other social institutions are also being profoundly impacted. Two diverse examples are religious institutions and local area athletics. The state previously had relatively few Catholics. Lately, local

Catholic parishes have experienced explosive growth, doubling and sometimes tripling in size. In many communities, soccer complexes are filled to capacity with the Hispanics substantially adding to the number of participants. (Some would also say adding to the quality of the play, as well.)

The full impact of minority population growth remains to be seen. An increasingly diverse minority population already contributes to economic and social growth in communities statewide. The minority labor force has accommodated employment requirements of the numerous growing Arkansas companies. Many minorities are themselves proprietors of small businesses in communities statewide. As Arkansans work to resolve the unique challenges of multi-cultural integration, the state's minority citizens will be more likely to contribute to social growth and improvement through voting, politics, public service, and other forms of community involvement.

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