

'EXTREMELY DIVERSE' NJ GETTING MORE SO, BUT NOT IN ALL COUNTIES EQUALLY

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New Jersey has built a popular reputation of being the most diverse of the United States, but do hard numbers back up that claim?

John Froomjian, executive director of the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University, said **a newly-published student paper shows the answer is yes**, that the Garden State is "extremely diverse and we are growing in diversity."

Rising Stockton senior Emily Kramer authored the study, "**Changes in Racial and Ethnic Diversity in New Jersey 2000-2020**," for the Hughes Center by measuring data from the last three runs of the United States Census.

Froomjian said the research aimed to determine where growth among select demographic groups is happening fastest, not only to predict how New Jersey may continue to evolve, but also the rest of the country.

After all, he said, New Jersey is a "gateway" state whose overall population growth depends on immigration. Without it, the state would be a net loser in population year after year.

In fact, the research showed that the percentage of white residents has declined in 13 of the Garden State's 21 counties over the 20-year span.

Those who are coming into New Jersey, and therefore the U.S., from other countries tend to skew younger, Froomjian said, which boosts their percentage gains.

"The big story over the last 20 years is growth in the Hispanic population, growth in the Asian population, and in the Asian population itself, large growth in the Asian Indian population," he said. "It's a generally younger population, more likely to have children. In Cape May County and Ocean County, you have a lot of retirees, and that population doesn't really change that much." To further examine those numbers, in Cape May County the white population grew only 1% over the last two decades, but consider that whites already make up 91.2% of the total.

Meanwhile in Passaic County, the white population increased by 16% in the same timeframe, but the Hispanic, Black, and Asian communities increased by a combined 24%, as the county now has 35,000 more people jammed into it than at the turn of the millennium.

"It's not that the white population doesn't increase, it does, it's where it increases as the primary or the major component," Froomjian said.

For much of the time covered in [Kramer's research](#), Froomjian said he has been specifically tracking trends in Asian population growth within the state. He said their current piece of the "population pie" was where non-Black Hispanics had been 20 or 30 years ago.

"One surprise for me was Somerset County," Froomjian said. "I never really thought of Somerset County as being one of the most diverse, but it has a very large growing Asian population."

Kramer categorized each county by creating a "diversity index," which rated Cumberland, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Passaic, Somerset, and Union as the **most diverse**, Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Mercer, and Morris as **moderate**, and Cape May, Gloucester, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Ocean, Salem, Sussex, and Warren as **least diverse**.

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