

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A surging Hispanic population accounted for the largest portion of South Carolina's population growth over the last decade, new census data showed on Wednesday. In the decade spanning 2000 and 2010, Hispanics grew by 148 percent in the state.

Oconee's growth outpaces Pickens

Hispanic population surges 148 percent statewide

BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Oconee County's population surged to more than 74,000 and South Carolina topped the 4.6 million mark, according to 2010 Census numbers for the state released Wednesday.

Oconee's population of 74,273 marks a 12.1 percent increase over the 2000 total of 66,215.

Oconee's increase also improved on the 2009 estimate of 71,514 for the county.

The new figure came under the 75,000-population mark that would have required Oconee County implement new and costly stormwater standards.

Pickens County's population increased at a smaller rate than Oconee's. Pickens' 2010 population improved by 7.6 percent over the past 10 years to 119,224.

Oconee and Pickens failed to keep pace with state's 15.3 growth rate since the 2000 Census.

The state as a whole added more than 610,000 people — a 15.3 percent increase, to 4,625,364 people. The influx makes South Carolina the tenth-fastest growing state in the nation.

Statewide, the Hispanic population surged almost 148 percent since the previous census count. There are more than 231,000 Hispanics living in South Carolina or 5.1 percent of the total population.

County level information on the Hispanic population was not available Wednesday.

MORE CENSUS COVERAGE

The Southeast is seeing major changes in where people of color are living. A5

A good chunk of that growth was near the coast, including Horry County, where the population grew by 37 percent, adding more than 70,000 people in the last 10 years.

Almost all the state's urban and suburban counties saw significant population increases.

But the numbers weren't all about growth. More than a quarter of the state's 46 counties lost population. Four were in the rural textile regions south of Interstate 85 (Abbeville, Laurens, Union and Chester). Another cluster of four sit near the Savannah River between Aiken and Beaufort (Barnwell, Bamberg, Allendale and Hampton).

Greenville remains the biggest county in the state with a population of more than 451,000, an increase of almost 19 percent.

Dorchester in the southeast corner grew at clip of 41.7 percent, the fastest in the state with a population of 136,555. Following in close pursuit are York County at 37.3 percent (226,973), Horry County at 36.9 percent (269,291) and Beaufort County at 34.1 percent (162,233).

Growth along the Interstate 85 corridor linking Anderson, Oconee , Pickens, Greenville and Spartanburg ballooned to more than 1.1 million, an increase of almost 13 percent since 2000.

State and county officials will pour over the 2010 Census numbers to determine whether voting districts have to be redrawn to balance population.

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BY THE NUMBERS

235,000 Hispanics

141,000 new Hispanics in the state; up 148 percent from 2000

105,000 new blacks in the state

15.3 percent state population growth to 4,625,364

3 of the state's fastest growing counties are near the coast

12 counties lost population

129,272 people makes Columbia the largest city

380,000 people makes Greenville the most populated county

80,000 residents identified as mixed-race

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU