

Influx of minorities adds to Peninsula mix



LUCI S. HOUSTON — MERCURY NEWS

East Palo Alto librarian Martina Torres, left giving assistance to Maria Mendoza, recalls that hers was the second Latino family on her block when she came 20 years ago. Today, that same block is 60 percent Hispanic. The city is making efforts to serve its new Hispanic residents, Torres says.

In the past decade, Peninsula cities have not grown at the same pace as others in the Bay Area, but the region continued to blossom into one of increasing diversity.

By **Truong Phuoc Khanh**

Mercury News

Flip through the directory of a Palo Alto elementary school and the Asian surnames of Cha, Chen and Chow dominate the list. Visit the public library in East Palo Alto and the magazine racks offer no fewer than 20 different Spanish-language magazines and newspapers.

In the past decade, Peninsula cities have not grown at the same pace as others in the Bay Area, but the region continued to blossom into one of increasing diversity.

U.S. Census figures for California released Thursday provide the numbers behind the changing cultural faces that call this swath of the Bay Area home.

East Palo Alto's population, at 29,506 residents, is now 58.8 percent Hispanic, compared with 36.4 percent in 1990. The city's Hispanic population swelled in the past 20 years from 2,568 in 1980 to 17,346 in 2000.

While its cityhood was fought for and won by black leaders in 1983, East Palo Alto has seen its black population drop in recent decades. The 1980 count showed 10,969 blacks; in 1990, 9,727; and in 2000, 6,880. That's a 29.3 percent drop from 1990 to 2000 and a 37.3 percent drop during the past two decades.

Residents are taking the changes in stride.

"It really doesn't bother me," said Trena Shines-Jackson, 29, who is black, on the influx of Hispanics into the traditionally black town.

Martina Torres has called East Palo Alto home for 20 years.

"That's how my parents came here. They were able to buy a

DEFINING TERMS

■ Because the Census Bureau changed the racial categories this year, allowing respondents to select more than one racial identity, it is impossible to make precise racial comparisons between 1990 and 2000. Instead, the growth of each racial group can be most accurately described as falling within a range. The lower percentage in the range designates people who identify with that race alone. The higher percentage includes people who identify with that race in combination with others. In reporting the growth of the Asian and black populations, the Mercury News has used the high end of that range.

■ The Census Bureau considers Hispanic to be an ethnic distinction, separate from race. The Mercury News has counted Hispanic respondents as if they were a separate racial category. Thus, the totals listed here for all other racial groups include only non-Hispanic members of those groups.

house in East Palo Alto because it was the most affordable," said Torres, 31, a circulation supervisor at the East Palo Alto library.

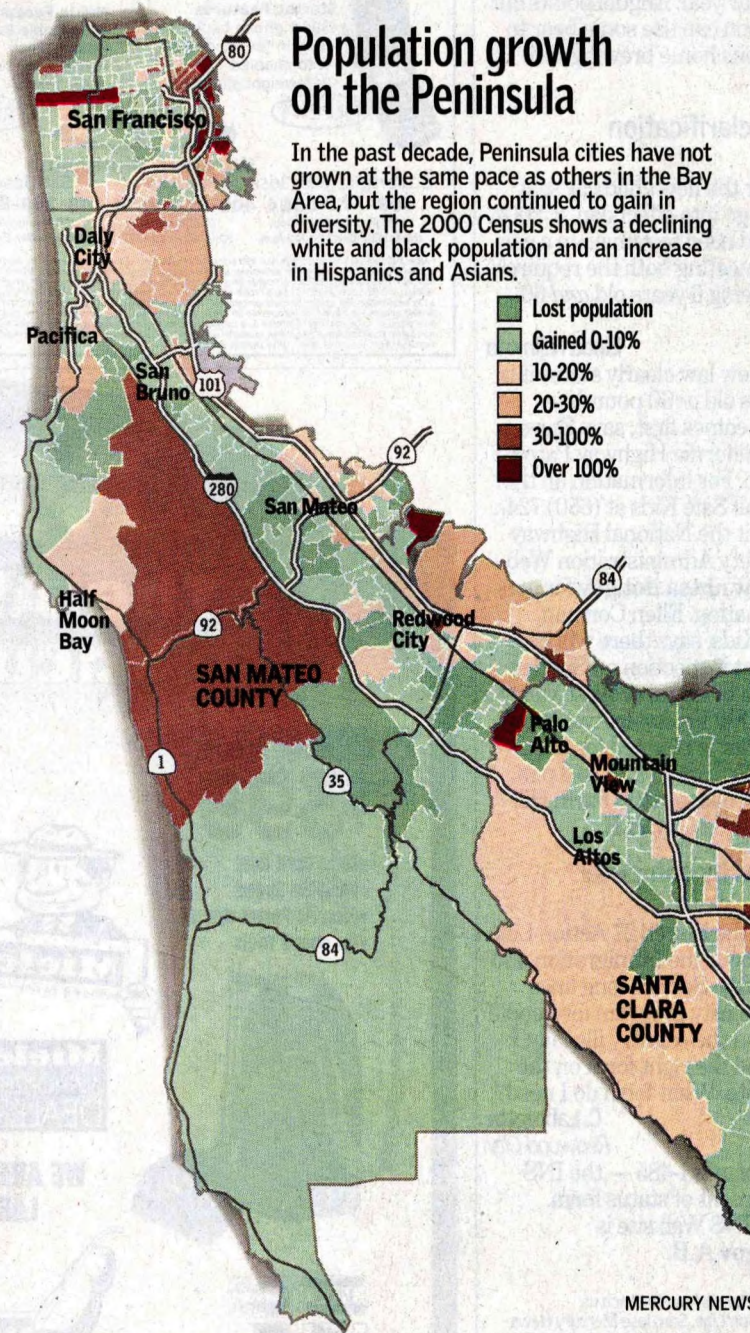
"When we moved here, I think we were like three or four Latinos in school," Torres said. "On our block, we were the second Latino family."

Today, that same block is 60 percent Hispanic.

The city is showing some efforts to serve its new Hispanic residents, Torres said. The local library in 1998 started a bilingual children's reading hour every Tuesday night that is very popular. Every December, San Mateo County librarians are dispatched

Population growth on the Peninsula

In the past decade, Peninsula cities have not grown at the same pace as others in the Bay Area, but the region continued to gain in diversity. The 2000 Census shows a declining white and black population and an increase in Hispanics and Asians.



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to a book fair in Guadalajara, Mexico, for "massive purchases of Spanish books," Torres said.

While East Palo Alto's population grew by 25.8 percent, much of the rest of the Peninsula — such as Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills and Atherton, which grew at 4.8 percent, 5.2 percent and 0.4 percent respectively from 1990 to 2000 — inched up at only single-digit rates or less.

Half Moon Bay's population outpaced every other city on the Peninsula, growing by 33.3 percent with a population count today of 11,842.

Fewer whites

One other change is also clear from the census: There are fewer white people populating the Peninsula in 2000 than a decade ago.

"I read that for the first time, Caucasians will be the minority," said Kathryn Lodato, 46, of Palo Alto. "Maybe it's good for us to see what it's like to be a minority for a change. It certainly doesn't frighten or upset me."

One racial group showed consistent growing trends throughout the Peninsula: Asians. Redwood City's Asian population more than doubled, growing by 109.6 percent, to a present count of 8,393. From Palo Alto to East Palo Alto to Portola Valley, the region witnessed a mini-to-major Asian boom during the past 10 years.

U.S. letter carrier Richard Hebble doesn't need the census to tell him how Palo Alto's neighborhoods have quietly changed. Delivering mail in the city for 30 years affords Hebble an intimate view of the tree-lined streets and who lives there.

"I'd say there's slightly more Asians and people from India," Hebble said.

Hebble is right.

Palo Alto's Asian population grew by 97.6 percent, from 5,715 in 1990 to 11,292 in 2000. Today, nearly one in five people in Palo Alto is Asian.

When Chun Chang and his wife June Liu were looking to move to the Bay Area from Pasadena in 1994, the couple checked with two friends from college who had bought houses in Palo Alto.

"They said don't look anywhere else but Palo Alto," Liu said.

Chang is a software programmer and Liu is a statistician. The couple, both 39, settled into Barron Park and enrolled their two children in the acclaimed Palo Alto public school district.

"School was the first thing that influenced our decision," Chang said. "School, neighborhood and that it's close to Stanford."

Influx leads to growth

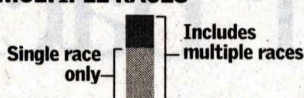
San Mateo County, which kept its spot as 13th most populous county in the state in 2000, has a population now of 707,161, a nearly 8.9 percent increase from 1990. Census data shows the growth came mostly from an influx of Hispanics and Asians and that the white and black population moved out of the county during the past decade.

From 1990 to 2000, the Hispanic population of San Mateo County grew by 35 percent and the Asian population increased by 57 percent. At 154,708, Hispanics now make up 22 percent of the county population. Asians, at 166,123, make up 24 percent of the county.

The white population declined

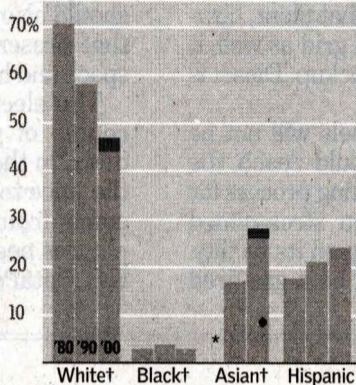
County population by race, 1980-2000

MEMBERS OF MULTIPLE RACES

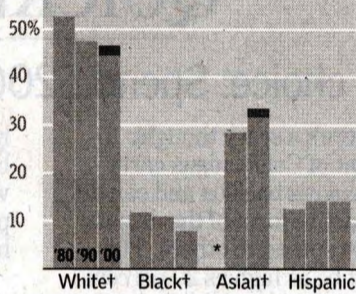


In 2000, for the first time, the U.S. Census let people claim membership in multiple races. To represent this, 2000 population percentages are shown here as a range: The low percentage only includes people who listed one race. The high percentage includes all those who said they were partly of that race. There is no range for Hispanics, because the census treats Hispanic as an ethnic group, not a race. Hispanics here may be of any race.

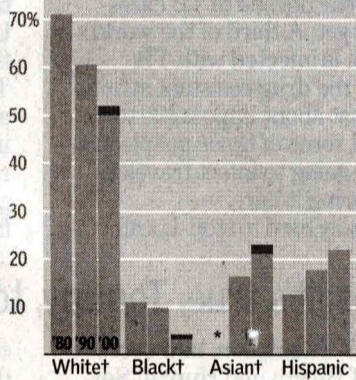
SANTA CLARA COUNTY



SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY



SAN MATEO COUNTY



† Non-Hispanic only
* 1980 data not available

Source: U.S. Census

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by 10 percent while the non-Hispanic black population dropped by almost 21 percent. Whites, at 352,355, now make up barely 50 percent of the county, while blacks, at 26,951, now make up 4 percent.

Non-Hispanic American Indians grew by 92 percent to 4,509 by 2000.

"We have for a long time said there is an increase in the Latino population in San Mateo County that has been invisible, and all of a sudden, it's becoming a part of the schools, the businesses and the non-profit sectors," said Ortencia Lopez, director of El Concilio of San Mateo County, an umbrella organization of service providers dedicated to improving the quality of life for Latinos.

Mercury News database editor Griffin J. Palmer and Mercury News database analyst Seth Hemmelgarn contributed to this report. Contact Truong Phuoc Khanh at tkhanh@sjmercury.com or (650) 688-7505.

POPULATION CHANGES

Here are the populations of area cities and how they have changed since 1990, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau:

	1990	2000	CHANGE
San Mateo County	649,623	707,161	8.9%
Atherton	7,163	7,194	0.4%
Belmont	24,127	25,123	4.1%
Brisbane	2,952	3,597	21.8%
Burlingame	26,801	28,158	5.1%
Colma	1,103	1,191	8.0%
Daly City	92,311	103,621	12.3%
East Palo Alto	23,451	29,506	25.8%
Foster City	28,176	28,803	2.2%
Half Moon Bay	8,886	11,842	33.3%
Hillsborough	10,667	10,825	1.5%
Menlo Park	28,040	30,785	9.8%
Millbrae	20,412	20,718	1.5%
Pacifica	37,670	38,390	1.9%
Portola Valley	4,194	4,462	6.4%
Redwood City	66,072	75,402	14.1%
San Bruno	38,961	40,165	3.1%
San Carlos	26,167	27,718	5.9%
San Mateo	85,486	92,482	8.2%
South San Francisco	54,312	60,552	11.5%
Woodside	5,035	5,352	6.3%
Santa Clara County	1,497,577	1,682,585	12.4%
Los Altos Hills	7,514	7,902	5.2%
Los Altos	26,303	27,693	5.3%
Mountain View	67,460	70,708	4.8%
Palo Alto	55,900	58,598	4.8%
San Jose	782,248	894,943	14.4%
San Francisco	723,959	776,733	7.3%