

N.J. is increasing diversity. See how your town stacks up in this map.

By [Riley Yates | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com](#)

New Jersey is one of the most diverse states in the nation, and year after year it has only gotten more so.

That growth helped the state exceed expectations in the most recent once-in-a-decade Census, when New Jersey's [population rose](#), though many analysts were predicting stagnation. Instead, the new count found that nearly 9.3 million people call New Jersey home, a 6% percent increase from 2010 that was driven by immigration and soaring Hispanic and Asian communities.

The Garden State now ranks [seventh in the U.S.](#) for diversity, behind only Hawaii, California, Nevada, Maryland, the District of Columbia and Texas. By comparison, New Jersey was ninth in 2010.

But across New Jersey's 564 cities and towns, some communities are more integrated than others, even as Hispanics represent 22% of the the state's population, Blacks 15% and Asians 10%

And it is now possible to chart just how diverse each community is, thanks to a new metric included in the 2020 Census.

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The diversity index is a 0 to 100 score that measures the likelihood that two people chosen at random in a given community will be from different racial and ethnic groups. The higher the number, the more diverse a place is, with

New Jersey as a whole scoring a 66, compared to a low of 19 for Maine, the country's most homogenous state.

Community by community, some of what the index shows isn't surprising: New Jersey's most diverse places are often its urban centers, as well as towns close to New York City or along the Interstate 95 corridor.

But the changing demographics are being broadly seen, with 512 of the state's municipalities — 90% — gaining diversity compared to 2010.

"The suburbs are far more diverse today than they were 25 years ago," said James Hughes, a professor and a former dean of Rutgers' Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, though he noted that many remain whiter than the state as a whole.

"They certainly aren't as diverse as Jersey City," Hughes said.

The state's second largest municipality, Jersey City tops New Jersey in diversity, with a population that is 28% Asian, 25% Hispanic, 24% white and 19% Black, according to the 2020 Census.

It is followed by Franklin Township in Somerset County, North Brunswick, Union Township in Union County, Atlantic City, Englewood and Carteret.

Some towns are more receptive to those changes than others, said Adam Gordon, the executive director of the Fair Share Housing Center, which won a landmark 1975 court ruling that seeks to bar discriminatory zoning practices that keep affordable housing out of communities.

Among those Gordon singled out for praise was Franklin Township, which he contrasted with others that continue to fight their obligations "tooth and nail."

"There are still a lot that resist it, but we're still a very segregated state," Gordon said. "It is always great that we see these counterexamples."

The state's growing diversity has also prompted examinations of whether its institutions reflect its population. Data released in April by the state Attorney General's Office showed that some police departments across New Jersey [are whiter](#) than the communities they serve, though some agencies have made strides in bridging the gap.

Likewise, white men [continue to dominate](#) the state's boards and commissions. The Statehouse also remains [largely white and male](#), though not as dramatically as it traditionally was.

Whether the state's diversity will translate to further political gains for those growing groups remains to be seen, both in the Legislature and in town halls across New Jersey, said Peter Chen, a senior analyst at New Jersey Policy Perspective.

"The question of how do we allow for this diverse number of voices to be heard and to have a say in the society they live in is a broad one," Chen said. "Ensuring those voices are going to be heard is challenging and it doesn't have easy answers."

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