

NPR - LINDA WERTHEIMER, host:

The U.S. Census finished a massive rollout of data yesterday that painted a detailed picture of America today. One headline: more than 50 million Hispanics now live in the country. And as NPR's Alex Kellogg reports, that will change the politics and identity of many communities.

ALEX KELLOGG: The Hispanic population in the U.S. is growing by leaps and bounds. More than half of the population growth in the U.S. in the past decade was among Hispanics. Hispanics now account for 16 percent of the population growth of the U.S.

Bill Frey is a demographer and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institute.

Mr. BILL FREY (Demographer; Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute): They also account for half of the gains in 18 of the states. I mean, that's huge.

KELLOGG: These changes will have big implications for the nation moving forward, as well. In 10 states and Washington, D.C., the majority of people under 18 are now minorities. In fact, the date for when the nation will become majority minority keeps moving up. The Census now pegs that year at 2042.

More minorities are moving to the suburbs instead of cities. And another trend: many counties in the Southwest U.S. are now majority minority. Again, Bill Frey.

Mr. FREY: And there has been this backlash, something I call a cultural generation gap - largely white older population, largely Hispanic and other minority younger population. And, you know, it'll take us a while to deal with this. You know, the long term for this is a positive for the United States.

KELLOGG: Japan and much of Europe is aging, Frey points out. But thanks largely to immigrants; the U.S. has a young, vibrant workforce to draw from for years to come. The changes could have political impacts, as well. Congressional districts will change nationwide. In some cases, once-solidly majority white districts could become majority Latino.

That's one of the consequences of the growth in minority populations far outpacing that of whites. Hispanics and Asians grew at roughly 43 percent in the past decade, blacks at 11 percent and whites at just 1.2 percent.

Alex Kellogg, NPR News, Washington.