

N.Y. suburbs lead in minority population growth

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In recent years, the diversification of New York's affluent suburbs, including the Lower Hudson Valley, represents some of the largest ethnic shifts in the Northeast, a Journal News analysis of census estimates released Thursday found.

In all three counties, younger age groups are heavily Hispanic while older groups have smaller minority populations, mostly African-American.

- “The whole country is diversifying,” said David Kallick of the Manhattan-based Immigration Research Initiative. “The white population is growing older, and the younger population is much more multicultural and multi-ethnic than the older generation. That’s our future, ready or not.”

Growth among Hispanics, African-Americans and Asians is pushing minority populations higher in Westchester, Rockland and Putnam counties and other nearby suburbs.

Many immigrant Hispanics have difficult lives, even if they’re living in affluent places like Westchester, said Graciela Heymann, director of the Westchester Hispanic Coalition in White Plains.

“Many of my clients are very poor,” she said. “There are pockets of poverty around really rich places. That’s the way I see it ... the Hispanics I know who are buying homes are doing it in Carmel and Mahopac and places like that — they’re not doing it in Westchester.”

Minorities grew from 42 percent to 44 percent of Westchester’s population since Census 2010, the 2012 estimates show, among the highest shifts of any kind in the region. Minority populations also grew in Rockland and Putnam, while the largest changes were in northern New Jersey, Long Island and suburban Connecticut.

Rockland’s minority population grew from 35 percent to 36 percent. The growth in Putnam was from 17 percent to 18 percent.

Most of the counties in the Northeast with those levels of minority growth were New York suburbs, including Nassau and Suffolk on Long Island; Bergen County, N.J.; and Fairfield County, Conn. The highest shift, though, was in Jefferson County, north of Syracuse.