



Northwest Arkansas

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Hispanic immigrants are arriving in Northwest Arkansas in record-setting numbers

Written by [rogersarkansas](#) on Dec-6-09 1:36pm

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FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. - According to research from the University of Arkansas in Northwest Arkansas, Hispanic immigrants are arriving in Arkansas in record-setting numbers.

"The growth rate of the Hispanic population in Arkansas is a real phenomenon," said Gazi Shbikat, a research associate in the Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) of the Walton College of Business. "Arkansas has the number one growth rate in the nation for Hispanics."

Shbikat and Striffler, assistant professor of anthropology, examined U.S. census data from 1990 and 2000. During this period, the population of Arkansas increased by 13.7 percent, with the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers metropolitan statistical area (MSA) in Washington and Benton counties accounting for nearly one-third of that total.

In Benton and Washington counties, the Hispanic population grew nearly 25 percent between 1990 and 2000. While the white population in these counties showed the largest numerical increase, the growth rate was only 3 percent.

"Very soon, Hispanics will be the dominant minority in many areas, if they aren't already," said Shbikat.

The growth in Hispanic population occurred throughout the state. Although 20 counties actually lost population, even the six delta counties that accounted for 65 percent of population loss showed an increase in Hispanic population.

Striffler and Shbikat speculate that economic factors are the driving force in Hispanic migration to Arkansas.

While these data provide useful insights, the researchers point out that they pose more questions than answers. Although the relationship between migration and economic growth is clear, the direction of that effect is not. Is migration driving the economic growth of Northwest Arkansas, for example, or are migrants coming to an area with an economic boom driven by something else?

Our research and analysis indicates immigration into Northwest Arkansas is driven primarily by an abundance of minimum-wage/low-paying jobs, and growth of jobs requiring little formal education. Jobs are being generated by the usual suspects, including chickens, hogs, low-end manufacturing, and growth in businesses facing lax regulation of businesses.

The good news is Hispanic immigrants to Northwest Arkansas are absorbing large numbers of lower-end vacant housing units, either through direct ownership or through rentals. Of course, this hasn't helped higher end housing stocks, but immigration is definitely taking the pinch off the lower end of housing in Northwest Arkansas.

The more important issue facing Northwest Arkansas is the lack of growth in high-wage jobs requiring an educated workforce.

About the Author



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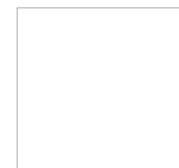
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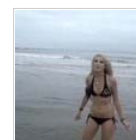
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