Census Shows Mexican Population Surpassed 103 Million in 2005

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Mexico’s population reached 103.1 million in 2005, an increase of more than 6 million during the past five years, the government’s statistics agency (Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas, Geografia e Informatica, INEGI) said in a preliminary report released in early February. The figures, based on a census taken in October and November 2005, compare with 97.5 million residents counted in the 2000 census.

The latest census was extended to Nov. 15 because of difficulties in some areas caused by Hurricanes Stan, Wilma, and Otis (see SourceMex, 2005-11-02 and 2005-11-09). The final version of the report is scheduled for release in late May. INEGI said the latest numbers kept Mexico as the world’s 11th most populous country, with China ranking first. In Latin America, Mexico is surpassed only by Brazil.

Population growth limited by emigration, lower birth rates

Even with the population increase, the total was about 2 million below projections, INEGI director Gilberto Calvillo Vives told reporters. Some observers said the numbers came in lower than expected because the projections took into account data from the Consejo Nacional de Poblacion (CONAPO), which underestimated the number of Mexicans who emigrated to seek employment in the US and other countries.

"[CONAPO's statistics] were based on annual emigration estimates of about a half-million Mexicans," wrote Alicia Salgado in the Mexico City daily business newspaper El Financiero. "The results from the census showed those estimates to be erroneous and the number of residents who have left Mexico [in the past five years] to have surpassed 600,000 annually."

Some of the census categories seem to support the high-immigration theory, with more men than women traditionally leaving the country to find jobs in the US. The INEGI figures showed that the total population comprised 53 million women and 50.1 million men, although recent data indicates an increasing number of women are emigrating to the US (see SourceMex, 2004-03-03). Additionally, the census showed zero growth in Zacatecas and Michoacan, two states which account for a high number of emigrants.

Calvillo acknowledged that emigration levels have been higher than projected but he also said that birth rates have declined in Mexico, contributing to a reduction in the population growth. The INEGI director also emphasized that the census is intended to count anyone who resides in Mexico. "The count includes Mexicans and foreigners who live in our country and does not count any Mexicans who have emigrated," said Calvillo.
The INEGI report said 41% of the population is concentrated in five states: the Federal District (which includes Mexico City), Mexico state, Veracruz, Jalisco, and Puebla. In contrast, the four least populated states Nayarit, Baja California Sur, Colima, and Campeche account for 3.4% of the country's total population. The statistics agency said growth rates in the Federal District were only 0.1% in the past five years, but were higher in other areas of metropolitan Mexico City, which now includes several municipalities in surrounding Mexico and Hidalgo states. Mexico state, which borders the capital, has the highest population in Mexico with 14.1 million residents. Calvillo said other world metropolitan areas are growing at a faster rate than Mexico City, including Sao Paulo in Brazil. Tokyo-Yokohama in Japan remains the world’s most populous metropolitan area, he said. (Sources: www.inegi.gov.mx; Agencia de noticias Proceso, Associated Press, 02/13/06; El Financiero, 02/10/06, 02/14/06; La Cronica de Hoy, La Crisis, El Economista, The Herald-Mexico City, La Jornada, El Universal, Reforma, 02/14/06)

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