

Watsonville 60 percent Hispanic

By GREG BEEBE
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SANTA CRUZ More than 60 percent of all Watsonville residents are of Hispanic origin, according to newly released figures from the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

The figure is an all-time high for the city's Hispanic population. In the 1980 Census, 48.8 percent of the city was of Hispanic origin.

Meanwhile, 229,734 people now reside in Santa Cruz County, a 22.1 percent population increase over the last Census headcount in 1980. The county's population, however,

is growing substantially slower than it was 20 years ago, when it showed an increase of 51.9 percent from 1970 to 1980.

The number of people of Hispanic origin county-wide also climbed, from 14.6 percent in 1980 to 20.3 percent in 1990.

Hispanics comprised 25.8 percent of California's population in 1990, a marked increase from the last Census in 1980, when 19.2 percent of the state's residents were of Hispanic origin.

The growing numbers of Hispanics is attributable to several fac-

tors, said John Reeder, western regional director for the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

More immigrants are coming to California from South and Central America, he said. "Plus, it's a combination of things. There's a lot more awareness about the Census on the part of Hispanics, and a lot more desire to be counted."

Get-out-the-count Census outreach programs, "almost non-existent in 1970, Reeder said, were very successful in 1990.

"By the year 2000, we don't want there to be anybody who hasn't

heard of the Census," he said.

The latest figures out of Watsonville represent a 20-year trend toward greater Hispanic influence in South County, said City Councilwoman Betty Murphy.

"I'm not surprised. We anticipated that it would be about 60 percent, and in fact some people argued that it would be higher.

"The Watsonville schools that draw from North Monterey County and the Freedom area are now 80 or 90 percent Hispanic," Murphy said.

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Watsonville Mayor Todd McFarren called the results "the definitive side of what everybody's been expecting in terms of the city's new demographics.

"It's going to be important in terms of our redistricting."

A 1988 lawsuit forced the city of Watsonville to change from at-large to district elections for city council seats. The first election with the new districts in 1989 saw Oscar Rios elected as the lone Lati-

no member of the seven-seat Watsonville City Council.

McFarren said hopes the latest Census results should create better Hispanic representation on the council.

"That was certainly the intent of the lawsuit that brought about district elections," he said. "The demographics are there to confirm the correct decision by the courts.

"If there are 60 percent Latino people here in Watsonville, traditionally they have not been ade-

quately represented. Hopefully, we can redraw the lines," McFarren said.

Every local city — and the county's unincorporated area — posted population increases from the 1980 Census. Watsonville, with a 32 percent increase, grew the most; Capitola, at 11.8 percent, grew least.

The number of Scotts Valley residents increased by 25 percent, while population in the county's unincorporated area was up 22.1. The city of Santa Cruz's population grew by 18.2 percent.

Census figures

POPULATION			
	1970	1980	1990
SC County	123,790	188,141	229,734
Santa Cruz	32,076	41,483	49,040
Watsonville	14,569	23,543	31,099
HISPANIC POPULATION			
Watsonville		11,509 (48.8%)	18,927 (60.8%)
SC County		27,648 (14.6%)	46,797 (20.3%)