

# Chapter 5

## POPULATION

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The City of Las Cruces has grown significantly over the last half century. Between 2000 and 2020, the size of the population in Las Cruces, and Doña Ana County, is expected to increase by over 40%. In addition to natural population increases, projects such as the planned expansion at Fort Bliss in El Paso, TX, are expected to bring additional residents to the area, particularly to southern Doña Ana County. The impacts of growth can be either positive or negative depending on how it is managed.

This chapter provides an analysis of current and projected populations within the City of Las Cruces, Doña Ana County and the State of New Mexico. Comparative data are also provided for the El Paso, Texas MSA because of its socio-economic linkages with Doña Ana County. The information provided will serve as a valuable tool to assist the City and County to manage growth within their boundaries.

The primary data sources used in this chapter are the 2000 US Census and the 2006 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a nationwide survey established by the US Census Bureau in 1996 that provides annual socioeconomic, housing, and demographic estimates for areas with a population of 65,000 or more. Population estimates and projections prepared by the Las Cruces Community Development Department and the Department of Economics & Finance at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) are also used.

## 5.1 Historical Population Changes

In 1900, Doña Ana County was an agricultural community with a population of about 10,000 whose market centers were located at Las Cruces (population 3,000); El Paso, Texas (population 16,000); and Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua (population 8,000). By 2000, while these municipalities continued to have cultural and economic linkages, their roles changed.

By 2000, Doña Ana County's population increased to about 175,000. While the northern portion of the county remained rural in nature, the central and southern portions of the county experienced significant growth, especially around the City of Las Cruces (population 75,000). During the same time period, El Paso and Juárez grew at a more rapid pace. The City of El Paso increased to a population of over 560,000, becoming the 22nd largest city in the nation. Across the Rio Grande, its sister city, Ciudad Juárez had a population of over 1,200,000. El Paso and Juárez developed into the population and economic centers of the region.

As indicated in the table that follows, the population in Las Cruces, Doña Ana County and New Mexico grew steadily between 1950 and 2000 but the City and the County grew at a faster rate than the State. Also, while in 1950 Las Cruces accounted for 31% of the County's population; by 2000 that figure had expanded to 42%. Similarly, Doña Ana County accounted for a larger portion of the State's population in 2000 than in 1950 (10% and 6%, respectively).

	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent Change 1950-2000</b>
City of Las Cruces	12,325	29,367	37,857	45,086	62,360	73,539	496.70%
Doña Ana County	39,557	59,948	69,773	96,340	135,510	174,682	341.60%
New Mexico	681,187	951,023	1,016,000	1,302,894	1,515,069	1,819,046	167.00%

Source: US Census Bureau and peter j. smith & company, inc.

## 5.2 Population Estimates and Projections

Estimates and projections are two methods used to determine the population without completing a census. The two methods appear similar but there are distinct differences. Estimates are based on past trends and generally use existing data collected from various sources. Projections illustrate the plausible course of future population change based on assumptions about future births, deaths, international migration, and domestic migration. Demographers use different methodologies to calculate population estimates and projections. Often a demographer will use different methodologies and compare results before selecting one to use.

### 5.2.1 *Population Estimates*

One source of annual population estimates is the US Census Bureau. According to US Census population estimates, between 2000 and 2006, Doña Ana County's population increased at an average annual rate of 2% while the State increased by 1%. During the same time period, Las Cruces increased at an average annual rate of 3% and Sunland Park by 1%; while both Mesilla and Hatch had an average annual decrease of 0.1%.

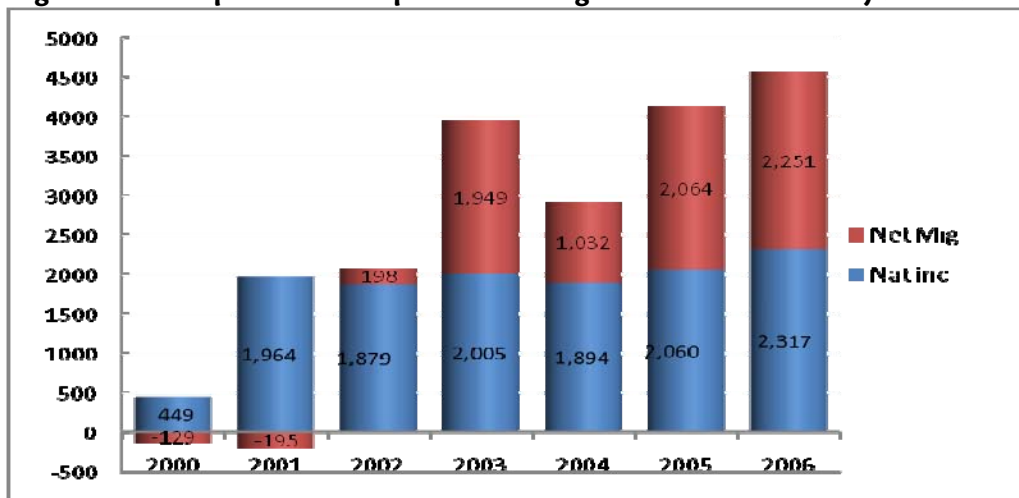
**Table 5-2. Population Estimates July 2000-2006**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Average Annual Rate of Change
Village of Hatch	1,657	1,645	1,649	1,647	1,649	1,653	1,649	-0.08%
Town of Mesilla	2,220	2,191	2,193	2,192	2,197	2,204	2,201	-0.14%
City of Sunland Park	13,334	13,378	13,547	13,650	13,830	14,079	14,234	1.10%
City of Las Cruces	73,539	74,098	75,077	77,666	80,033	82,615	86,268	2.70%
Doña Ana County	175,013	176,668	178,639	182,456	185,298	189,306	193,888	1.72%
New Mexico	1,821,656	1,832,783	1,855,353	1,877,598	1,900,620	1,925,985	1,954,599	1.18%

Source: US Census and peter j. smith & company, inc.

According to Census population estimates, the County’s population growth in 2006 was still primarily due to natural increase (more births than deaths) rather than net in-migration (more people moving in than moving out). However, between 2000 and 2006 net in-migration played an increasing role in the County’s population increase. Natural increase accounted for 100% of the population increase in 2000, but in 2006 that figure had decreased to 51%.

**Figure 5-1. Components of Population Change in Doña Ana County 2000-2006**



Source: US Census Bureau, Population Estimates, [http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/CO-EST2006-compchg2000\\_2006.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/counties/CO-EST2006-compchg2000_2006.html)

Additionally, there was more domestic migration than international migration in the County between 2000 and 2006. In 2000, international migration accounted for 100% of the net migration total, but by 2006 it had declined to 36%, while domestic migration climbed to 64%. Increasing numbers of retirees, growing employment opportunities and increasing enrollment at New Mexico State University (NMSU) have positively influenced the rate of in-migration. The positive influence of these factors on net in-migration is expected to remain for the foreseeable future.

The City of Las Cruces Community Development Department also generates population estimates based on the number of building permits issued annually. City generated population estimates were slightly higher than those generated by the US Census Bureau. While the US Census Bureau estimates that Las Cruces had a population of 86,268, in 2006 (17% higher than its population in 2000) the City estimates the population

at 86,608. The average annual percentage increase for the population in Las Cruces, between 2000 and 2006, was 2.70% based on Census Estimates and 2.77% using the City’s estimates.

### 5.2.2 Population Projections

Continued growth is expected in the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County. Population projection figures for Doña Ana County were obtained from: the Department of Economics & Finance at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of New Mexico and the Economics and International Business Department at New Mexico State University (NMSU). Each entity used a different methodology and had a different ending date but their results were comparable.

The UTEP Borderplex Econometric Forecasting Model, an employment based methodology, generated population projection figures through 2025. According to this methodology, Doña Ana County will have a population of 250,532 in 2020. The BBER used a 5-year cohort component methodology (based on current population, its age distribution, net migration and fertility rates) to generate population projection figures through 2030. According to this methodology Doña Ana County will have a population of 255,057 by 2020.

NMSU used a 1-year cohort component methodology and generated population projection figures through 2050. According to this methodology Doña Ana County will have a population of 241,497 by 2020 and 309,887 by 2040. **This represents a 77% population increase between 2000 and 2040 in Doña Ana County.**

The NMSU population projection figures were selected for use in the Vision 2040 Plan for the following reasons:

- Most government demographers use a cohort component methodology.
- The cohort component methodology is thought to be more appropriate for an area like Doña Ana County than an employment based model because employment is extremely difficult to project outside of major metropolitan areas. Employment models work best for communities with a significant manufacturing component.
- Historically, the BBER has had a better record in estimating population for the northern and central parts of the State than for the southern parts while NMSU has had a better record estimating population in Doña Ana County.

Projection figures from the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County are presented in the table that follows.

	2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	Percent Change 2000-2020	Percent Change 2000-2040
Doña Ana County	174,682	207,402	241,497	274,846	309,887	38.2%	77.4%
Las Cruces	73,539	94,127	109,862	126,821	145,327	49.4%	97.6%

Source: Las Cruces Community Development Department, Department of Economics & Finance at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and the Economics and International Business Department at New Mexico State University (NMSU)

Using a 10-year cohort component methodology, the City’s Community Development Department prepared population projections for the City of Las Cruces and Central Doña Ana County through 2040. Those figures were then adjusted to be consistent with population estimates for 2009. Using this methodology the City of Las Cruces is projected to have a population of 109,862 by 2020 and 145,327 by 2040. This represents a 98% population increase between 2000 and 2040 in the City of Las Cruces.



### 5.3 Population Composition

According to the ACS, females accounted for a similar percentage of the population in 2006 as they did in 2000 within Las Cruces, Doña Ana County and New Mexico. However, at all three geographic levels, median age, educational attainment and the percentage of population of Hispanic origin increased.

The City of Las Cruces had a population that was primarily female (52%) and Hispanic (53%) in 2006. The median age of residents was 32.5 years, compared to 31.2 years in 2000. In 2006, most residents of the City were in the 0-19 years (31%) and the 35-54 years (25%) age groups.

Similarly, Doña Ana County as a whole was primarily female (51%) and Hispanic (65%) in 2006. Both Las Cruces and Doña Ana County had a significantly higher percentage of Hispanics than the State as a whole (44%). The median age of residents in the County was 30.7, which was lower than the median age for the State (35.2). In 2000, the median age in the County was 30.2 and statewide it was 34.6.

<b>Table 5-4. Population Characteristics – 2006</b>				
	<b>City of Las Cruces</b>	<b>Doña Ana County</b>	<b>El Paso MSA</b>	<b>New Mexico</b>
Male	48.2%	49.2%	47.8%	49.3%
Female	51.8%	50.8%	52.2%	50.7%
<b>Race / Ethnicity</b>				
White*	41.8%	32.2%	14.1%	42.4%
Hispanic	53.1%	65.0%	81.4%	44.0%
Black*	1.3%	1.6%	2.4%	1.8%
American Indian*	1.5%	1.0%	0.3%	9.1%
Other	2.4%	1.8%	1.7%	2.7%
<b>Age</b>				
0-19 years	30.8%	32.2%	34.9%	29.1%
20-34 years	22.8%	23.5%	20.7%	20.6%
35-54 years	25.0%	24.1%	25.8%	27.2%
55-64 years	8.3%	8.7%	8.4%	10.8%
65 years +	13.1%	11.5%	10.2%	12.3%
Median Age	32.5	30.7	30.6	35.2
<b>Educational Attainment</b>				
Associate Degree	7.0%	6.2%	6.6%	7.2%
Bachelor's Degree	20.1%	15.2%	11.9%	14.4%
Post Graduate Degree	11.5%	9.7%	5.9%	10.9%
* Not including individuals of Hispanic Origin				
Source: 2006 American Community Survey (ACS) and peter j. smith & company, inc.				

In 2006, the City of Las Cruces had a more highly educated population than both the County and the State. Roughly 38% of the population 25 years or older in Las Cruces was estimated to hold an associate's degree or higher, 31% in the County and 32% in the State. Similarly, in 2000 those figures were 35%, 28% and 29%, respectively.

## 5.4 Population Migration

Migration patterns were determined by the 2000 US Census by comparing place of residence in 2000 with place of residence five years earlier for the population that was five years old or older. As indicated in the table that follows, entitled Place of Residency, the population in Las Cruces was relatively stable between 1995 and 2000. In 2000, approximately 45% of the population aged five years and older in Las Cruces lived in the same house as they did in 1995. An additional 29% lived in a different house within the same county.

Between 1995 and 2000, Doña Ana County and the State had more stable populations than the City of Las Cruces. In 2000, 53% of the County's population lived in the same residence as they did in 1995 and 24% lived in a different house within in the same county. Within the State as a whole those figures were 54% and 24%, respectively.

The ACS measured population mobility by comparing place of residence in the current year with place of residence the previous year for residents one year or older. Based on ACS criteria, in 2006, the City of Las Cruces continued to have a less stable population than both the County and the State. In 2006, Las Cruces had 70% of its population one year or older living in the same residence as they did one year earlier, 19% lived in a different house in the same county, 4% a different county in the same state, 5% from another state and 2% from abroad. For Doña Ana County those figures were 78%, 14%, 3%, 4% and 2% respectively. For the State of New Mexico those figures were 83%, 10%, 3%, 4% and 1%.

### 5.4.1 *County to County Migration Patterns*

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Statistics of Income (SOI) data were used to identify county to county migration patterns and assess migration impacts on county income. According to that data, between 2002 and 2006, most individuals moving to Doña Ana County came from the states of Texas, New Mexico and California. In 2006, 6,621 individuals moved to Doña Ana County. Of this amount, 38% came from Texas, 33 % from New Mexico and 13% from California. The specific county within each of those states that provided the most immigrants were El Paso, TX (19%), Bernalillo, NM (4%) and Los Angeles, CA (2%).

The average per capita income of individuals who moved to Doña Ana County from Texas in 2006 was \$12,370. For New Mexico and California the numbers were \$15,726 and \$21,060 respectively. Doña Ana County had a per capita income of \$15,859.

## 5.5 Findings

- The population in the City of Las Cruces and Doña Ana County has increased steadily for the past five decades. This pattern is expected to continue through 2040. Between 2000 and 2040, the population within Las Cruces is projected to grow by 98% and the population within Doña Ana County by 77%. By 2040, Las Cruces is expected to have a population of about 145,327 and the County is expected to have a population of 309,887. The significantly larger population for the City and the County means there is also a potential for increased demand for services in both jurisdictions.
- Population growth within Las Cruces and the County has been primarily due to natural increase rather than net in-migration. However, in-migration increased between 2000 and 2006 and has the potential for continued growth due to increasing numbers of retirees, growing employment opportunities and increasing enrollment at New Mexico State University (NMSU).
- Hispanics accounted for a higher percentage of the population in Las Cruces and Doña Ana County than in the State as a whole in 2006.
- Median age and educational attainment at the City, County and State levels increased between 2000 and 2006. Changes in the age and other characteristics of residents can influence the types of public services that will be required in the future. A more elderly population tends to increase demands for health and alternative transportation system.
- Within Las Cruces, Doña Ana County and the State, over 70% of the measured population either maintained the same residence or relocated within the same county between 1995 and 2000 and between 2005 and 2006. According to IRS data, between 2002 and 2006, most individuals moving to Doña Ana County came from the states of Texas, New Mexico and California. The average per capita income of individuals coming from California was significantly higher than the other two states and Doña Ana County.