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## Soon you'll be 1 of 300 mil.

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**BY SHARON JAYSON**

The Census Bureau's U.S. Population Clock is ticking toward October, when demographers say America's population will hit 300 million.

Population change includes any movement, such as returning military or civilians who were overseas, says Howard Hogan of the Census Bureau. But in trying to pinpoint when the population reaches 300 million, what matters are births, deaths and immigration.

More than 11,000 babies are born a day, and since the 1990s, more than 2,870 immigrants a day enter the United States. The 300 millionth American need not be a U.S. citizen.

Latinos -- immigrants and those born in this country -- are driving the population growth, accounting for almost half the increase last year, more than any other ethnic or racial group. White non-Hispanics, who make up about two-thirds of the population, accounted for less than one-fifth of the increase.

When the population reached 200 million in 1967, there was no accurate tally of U.S. Hispanics. The first effort to count Hispanics came in the 1970 census, and the results were dubious. The Census Bureau counted about 9.6 million Latinos, a little less than 5 percent of the population, but the bureau acknowledged that figure was inflated.

The Census Bureau says the Population Clock ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) will roll over to 300 million in mid-October.

But Peter Francese, founder of American Demographics magazine and a demographic trends analyst for New York ad agency Ogilvy & Mather, says Oct. 27 is the statistically likely date, as well as the 300th day of the year.

"This is not a matter of opinion," Francese says. "It is a matter of mathematical calculations."

The United States, which ranks third in population behind China (1.3 billion) and India (1.1 billion), is still gaining people while many other industrialized nations aren't. Japan's population, for example, has begun shrinking, as has Russia's.

### 'Volatile mixture'

Not all are celebrating, though.

In an upcoming report by the Center for Environment and Population, the Connecticut-based research group concludes that "America's relatively high population growth and high rates of resource consumption and pollution make for a volatile mixture resulting in the largest environmental impact per capita . . . in the world."

Americans occupy about 20 percent more developed land per capita than they did 20 years ago, partly because the average number of people per household has dropped while the average size of homes has grown, the report found. About 40 percent of the nation's rivers and 46 percent of its lakes are too polluted for fishing and swimming. Wetlands are decreasing by 100,000 acres a year, mainly because of development.

"The scientific data pretty much across the board shows that we in the U.S. are reaching many of the nation's ecological limits, one by one, and that many [limits] are linked to population trends," Vicky Markham, the center's director, told the San Diego Union-Tribune.

*Gannett News Service with AP contributing*

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