

TEXAS VS VERMONT

A comparison of Texas and Vermont illustrates the diversity of states within the United States. Vermont, a northeastern state, got its start when Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys rebelled against attempts by New York and New Hampshire to exert control over the region after the American Revolution. On January 15, 1777, the independent Republic of New Connecticut was declared; later, the name was changed to the Republic of Vermont. Vermont sent ambassadors to France, the Netherlands, and the United States. In 1791 Vermont entered the United States as the fourteenth state to balance the admission of slaveholding Kentucky as the fifteenth state.

While both Texas and Vermont share a history of independence before joining the United States, the similarity ends there. Geographically, Vermont is quite small, at 9,250 square miles. Vermont's size is smaller than the combined area of the largest two Texas counties (10,957 square miles is the combined area of Brewster and Pecos counties in West Texas). Vermont's landscape is dominated by the Green Mountains, abundant forests, and plentiful rivers and streams. As the second-largest state by area, Texas covers a vast territory that varies tremendously in land formations, water resources, and natural resources.

The demographics of the two states are also strikingly different. Settled by the English and some French colonists from nearby Quebec, Vermont remains among the most homogeneous states in the United States. In 2012 Vermont held the distinction of being one of the "whitest" states in the United States, with 94 percent of its residents describing themselves as white and not of Hispanic origin; Texas, in contrast, was among the most racially and ethnically diverse states.

Vermont also consistently ranks as one of the smallest states in population. In 1850, the first census in which Texas participated, Vermont had a slightly larger population than Texas. Immigration over the following decade saw Texas surpass Vermont in population by the 1860 census, at which point Texas already had over 600,000 residents. It would take Vermont 140 years to reach that level of population. By the time it did, in 2000, Texas recorded over 22 million residents.

Large cities are found throughout Texas; three of the nation's ten largest cities are located in Texas. Vermont's largest city,

Burlington (42,282 in 2012), is so small that it would rank seventy-fifth in city size in Texas. Even the images of the two states generate contrasts. Texas is the land of open plains, oil wells, cattle, gunslinging cowboys, and big-time football. Vermont is the land of maple syrup, ice cream, fall foliage, and quaint towns.

Texas versus Vermont: Ethnic Makeup

Population Group	Texas	Vermont
White alone, not of Hispanic origin	44.5%	94.0%
Hispanic/Latino	38.2%	1.6%
African American	12.3%	1.1%
Asian American	4.2%	1.4%

Sources: Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Texas" and "Quick Facts: Vermont," 2013, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html> (accessed August 27, 2014).

Obviously, to govern a diverse population spread over a vast geographic area with extensive mineral wealth, Texas requires a fundamentally different approach than Vermont. In many instances, Texas politics is vastly different in practice than Vermont's political system. However, these differences may not be exactly what we expect.

THINKING Critically

In several places, this textbook presents discussions, tables, and figures to offer comparisons between Texas and other states. At this point, think about the heritage and demographics of your community or hometown.

- ★ Is your community more like a typical Texas or Vermont community?
- ★ What have your experiences in politics been like?
- ★ How would they compare to those in a state like Vermont?