



Metropolitan Policy Program at BROOKINGS

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A copy of the new Brookings report on the Census is available at: http://www.brookings.edu/metro/census_ethnicity.aspx.

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America's Melting Pot Now Has a Very Different Recipe

New Brookings report on 2010 Census finds American metros more diverse

WASHINGTON, D.C.— A new analysis of 2010 Census data shows America's great demographic changes are picking up momentum, and the impact of those changes is being felt most strongly in America's metropolitan areas.

This new report from the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, *Melting Pot Cities and Suburbs: Racial and Ethnic Change in Metro America in the 2000s*, finds substantial racial and ethnic changes in the populations of both cities and suburbs in metropolitan America. These changes will challenge leaders at all levels to understand and keep pace with our nation's social, economic, and political transformation.

"The face of America is changing, literally, and the rate of change is increasing," said William H. Frey, Senior Fellow with the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program and author of the new report. "As I was looking at the Census numbers, the same pattern kept replicating itself over and over again: overall increases in Hispanics, city decline of blacks, and minority gains in the suburbs."

An analysis of data from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 decennial censuses reveals that:

- **Hispanics now outnumber blacks and represent the largest minority group in major American cities.** The Hispanic share of population rose in primary cities of all 100 metropolitan areas from 2000 to 2010. Across all cities in 2010, 41 percent of residents were white, 26 percent were Hispanic, and 22 percent were black.
- **Well over half of America's cities are now majority non-white.** Primary cities in 58 metropolitan areas were "majority minority" in 2010, up from 43 in 2000. Cities lost only about half as many whites in the 2000s as in the 1990s, but "black flight" from cities such as Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, and Detroit accelerated in the 2000s.

- **Minorities represent 35 percent of suburban residents, similar to their share of overall U.S. population.** Among the 100 largest metro areas, 36 feature “melting pot” suburbs where at least 35 percent of residents are non-white. The suburbs of Houston, Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. became majority minority in the 2000s.
- **More than half of all minority groups in large metro areas, including blacks, now reside in the suburbs.** The share of blacks in large metro areas living in suburbs rose from 37 percent in 1990, to 44 percent in 2000, to 51 percent in 2010. Higher shares of whites (78 percent), Asians (62 percent), and Hispanics (59 percent) in large metro areas live in suburbs.
- **Fast-growing exurban areas remain mostly white, and depended overwhelmingly on whites for growth in the 2000s.** Whites accounted for 73 percent of population growth in outlying exurban counties in the 2000s, several times their 8 percent contribution to national population growth over the same period.

“There’s a developing melting pot in the United States and these shifts hold important implications for both policies and politics,” said Frey. “In policy, metro areas face increasing demands for services relevant to a wide array of new populations, particularly those with different economic circumstances and cultural, linguistic backgrounds.

“Politically, increasing suburban diversity may cause these places to become more ‘purple’ in local and national elections, making them less reliable bases for either Republicans and Democrats who have depended on demographically homogeneous voting blocs,” he added.

The historically sharp racial and ethnic divisions between cities and suburbs in metropolitan America are more blurred than ever. The shifting social, economic, and political structures of these places will challenge leaders at all levels to understand and keep pace with the myriad implications of their continued demographic evolution.

About the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings—*Created in 1996, the Metropolitan Policy Program (MPP) provides decision-makers with cutting-edge research and policy ideas for improving the health and prosperity of metropolitan areas, including their component cities, suburbs, and rural areas. To learn more, please visit: www.brookings.edu/metro*

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