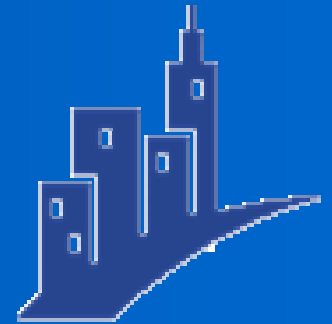# The Brookings Institution

Metropolitan Policy Program
Robert Puentes, Fellow

The Evolution and Current State of the First Suburbs: An Agenda for Action

New Visions of Suburban Life: An Interdisciplinary Conference
Hofstra University
March 18, 2005

What is the context for the discussion of older, inner-ring, "First Suburbs"?

→ Decentralization is still the prevailing trend in metropolitan America.

→ Suburbs are highly diverse.

→ Range of suburban experiences is not reflected in the debate around metropolitan (or Smart) growth.

→ Older, inner ring suburbs seem to be caught in a "policy blindspot."
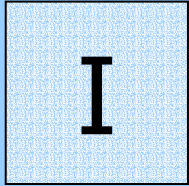
I What are First Suburbs?

Developed first after their central cities

Comprise a significant portion of the country's population

Vary dramatically across regions

These places generally developed first after their central cities
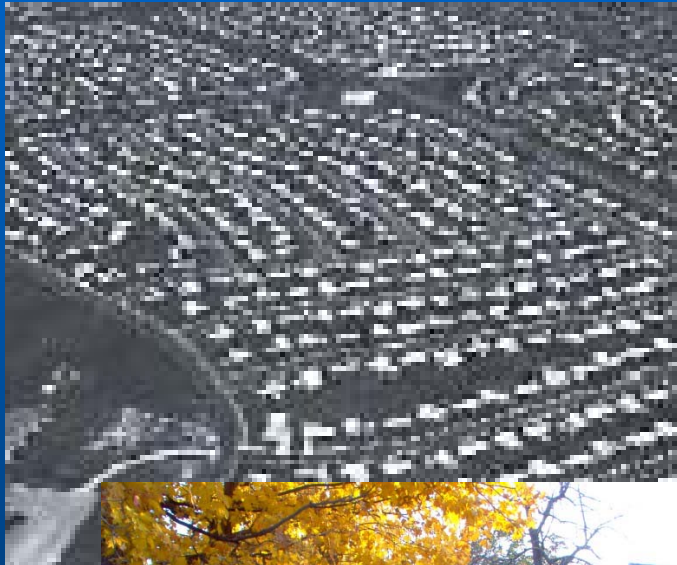
Many date back to the 1920s and 1930s

Thought of as the "inner-ring" of suburbs that developed before the wave of suburban growth of the past 50 years

Also known as close-in suburbs, older suburbs, first-tier communities, trolley car suburbs, industrial boroughs, mature suburbs, and working class suburbs

How were First Suburbs selected for our study?

- Used county level geography

- They existed in 1950 as counties that were part of 1950 'standard metropolitan areas' (SMAs)

- County had to be contiguous with a center city that was ranked in the top 100 in 1950.

- Data for the central city is not included if such existed within the county.

For example, in Cook County the First Suburbs are defined as those outside (or excluding) Chicago.

Chicago

Cook County

Cook County Suburbs
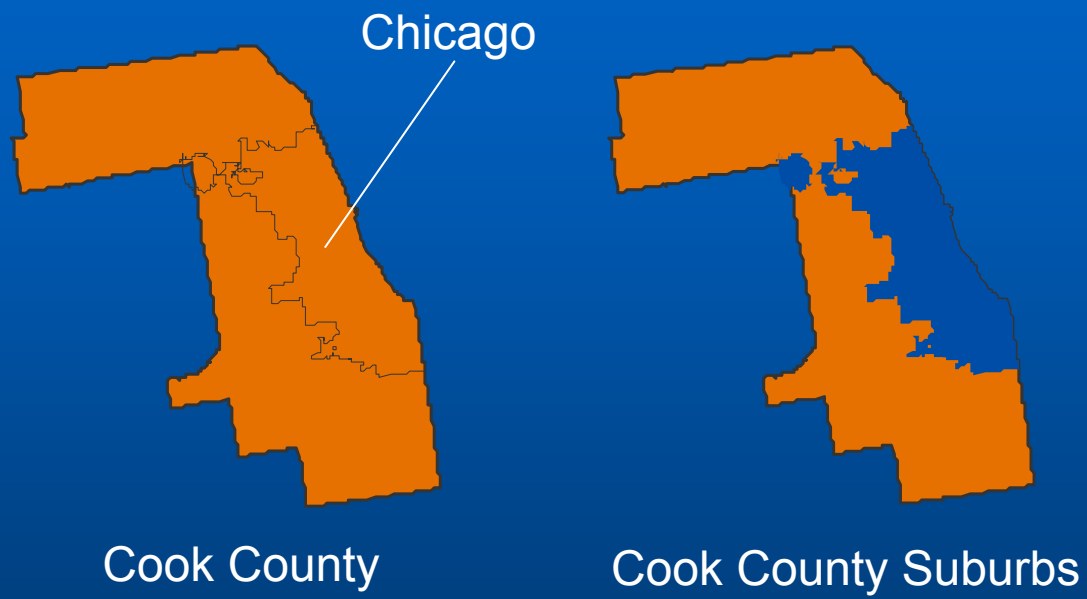
Example:

	2000 Population
Cook County	5,376,741
Chicago	2,896,016
Cook County First Suburbs	**2,480,725**

There are 64 First Suburban counties found throughout the nation.
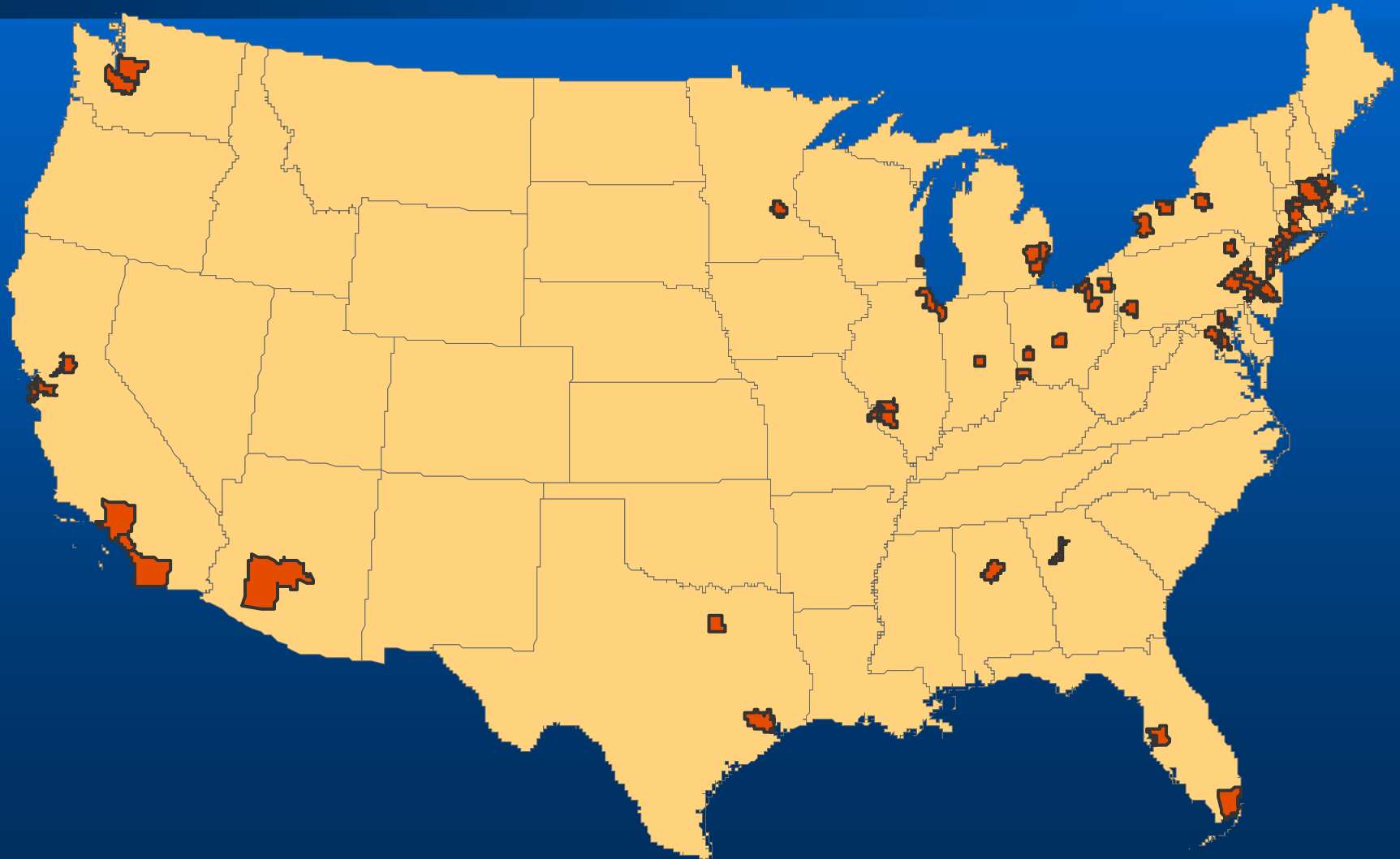
Nine First Suburban counties are located in the West and Southwest

Maricopa County, AZ

San Diego County, CA

Orange County, CA

Los Angeles County, CA

Alameda County, CA

Sacramento County, CA

San Mateo County, CA

King County, WA

Pierce County, WA

Six are found in the South and Southeast

Dallas County, TX   Fulton County, GA

Harris County, TX   Hillsborough County, FL

Jefferson County, AL   Dade County, FL
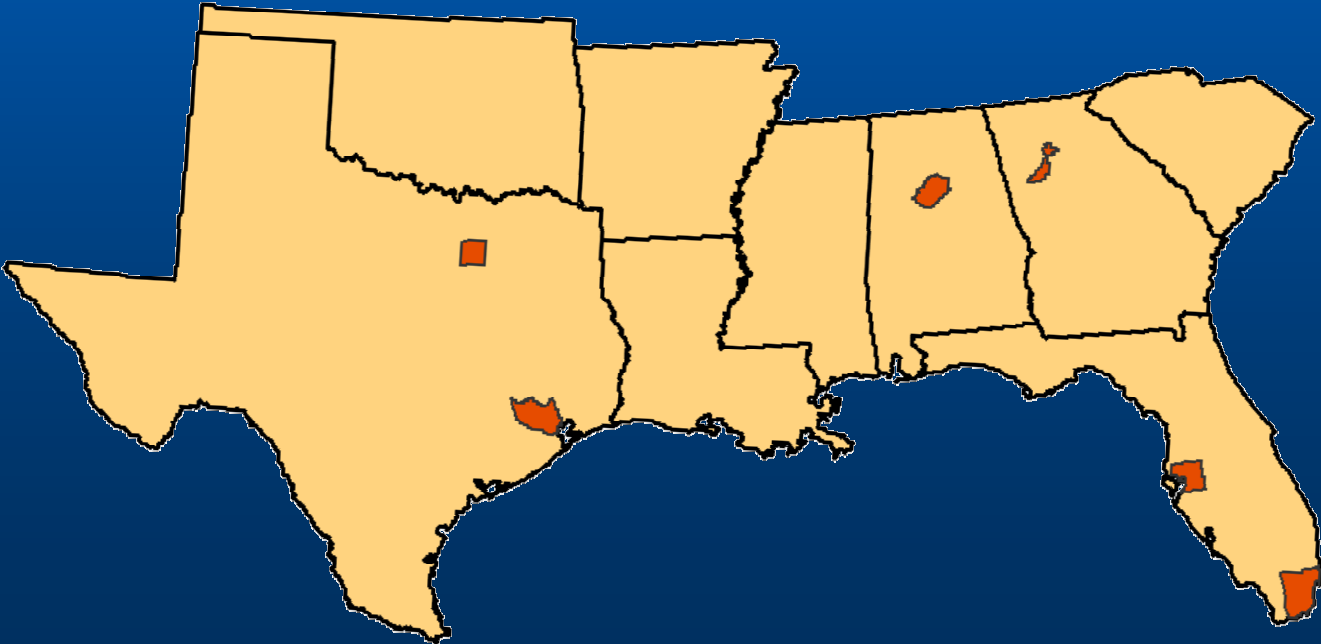
Most are found in the Midwest ....
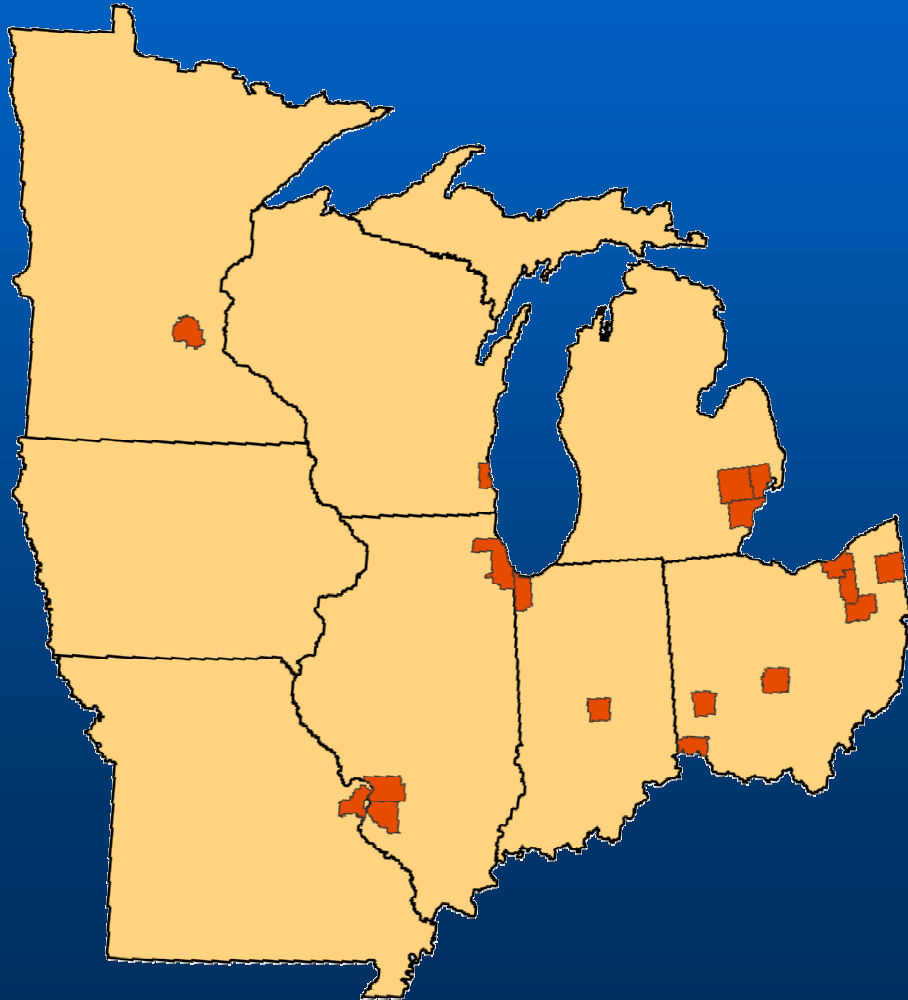
Examples:

Cuyahoga County

Franklin County

Wayne County, MI

Oakland County, MI

Lake County, IN

Milwaukee County, WI

Hennepin County, MN

Cook County, IL

St. Louis County, MO

…. and the Northeast.
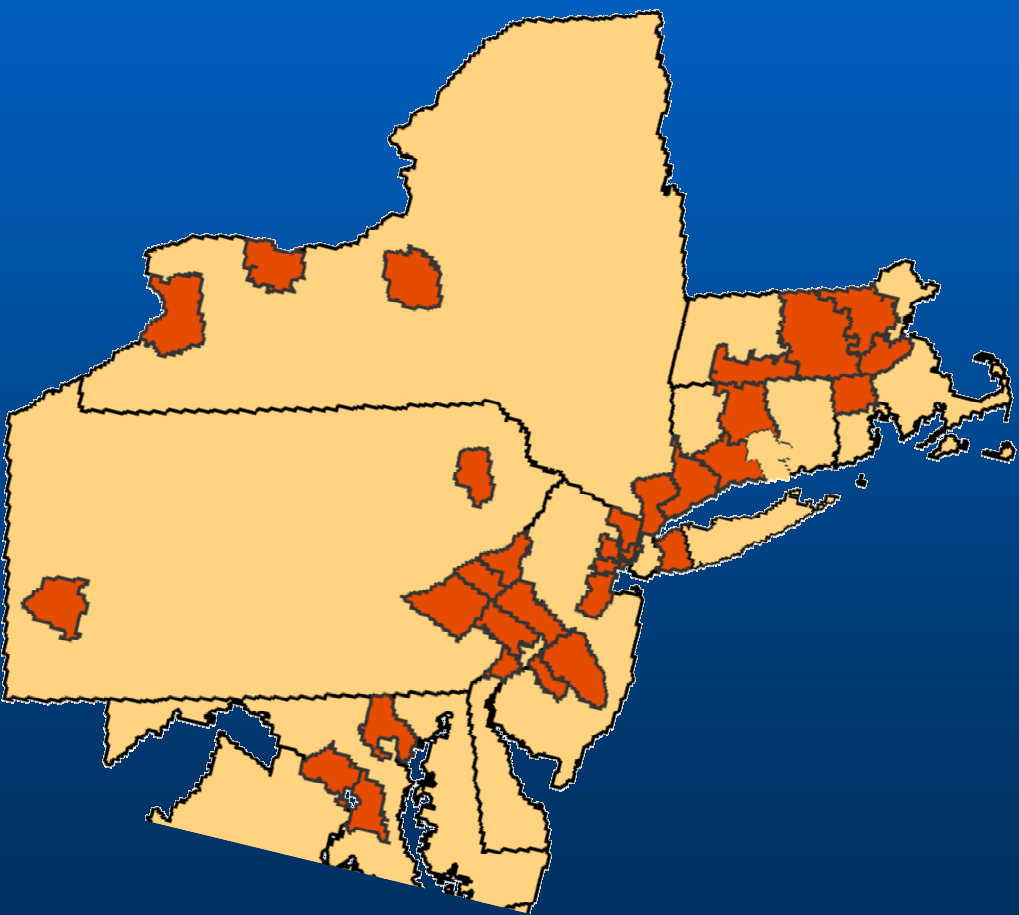
Examples:

Allegheny County, PA

Delaware County, PA

Lackawanna County, PA

Baltimore County, MD

Arlington County, VA

New Haven County, CT

Middlesex County, MA

Providence County, RI

Erie County, NY

Onondaga County, NY

Including 8 in the New York metropolitan area alone.
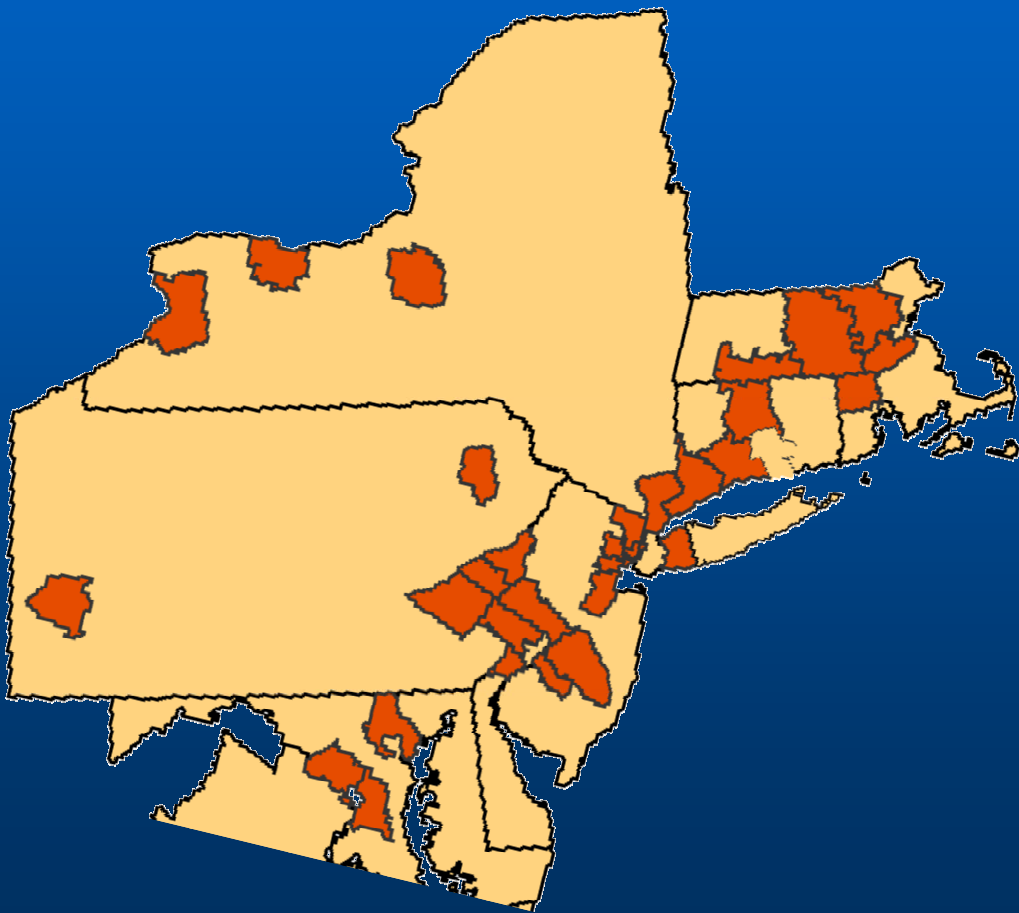
Bergen County, NJ

Essex County, NJ

Hudson County, NJ

Union County, NJ

Middlesex County, NJ

Nassau County, NY

Westchester County, NY

Fairfield County, CT

Including 8 in the New York metropolitan area alone.
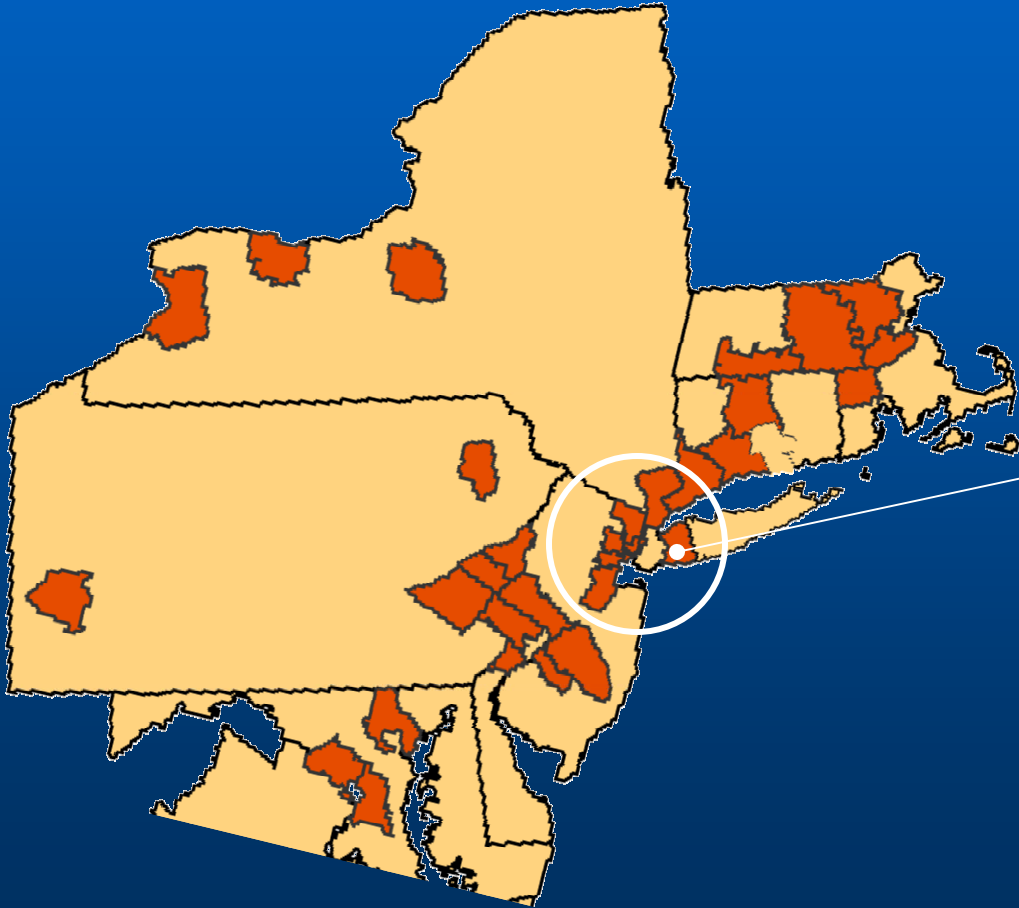
Teaneck, NJ
Paramus, NJ
Secaucus, NJ
Hempstead, NY
Levittown, NY
Tarrytown, NY
Scarsdale, NY
Danbury, CT
Stamford, CT
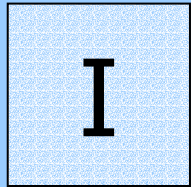
I What are First Suburbs?

Developed first after their central cities

Comprise a significant portion of the country's population

Vary dramatically across regions

First Suburbs account for almost 20 percent of the entire U.S. population

Over 50 million people live in First Suburbs

First Suburbs
52,544,242 people
18.7% of United States
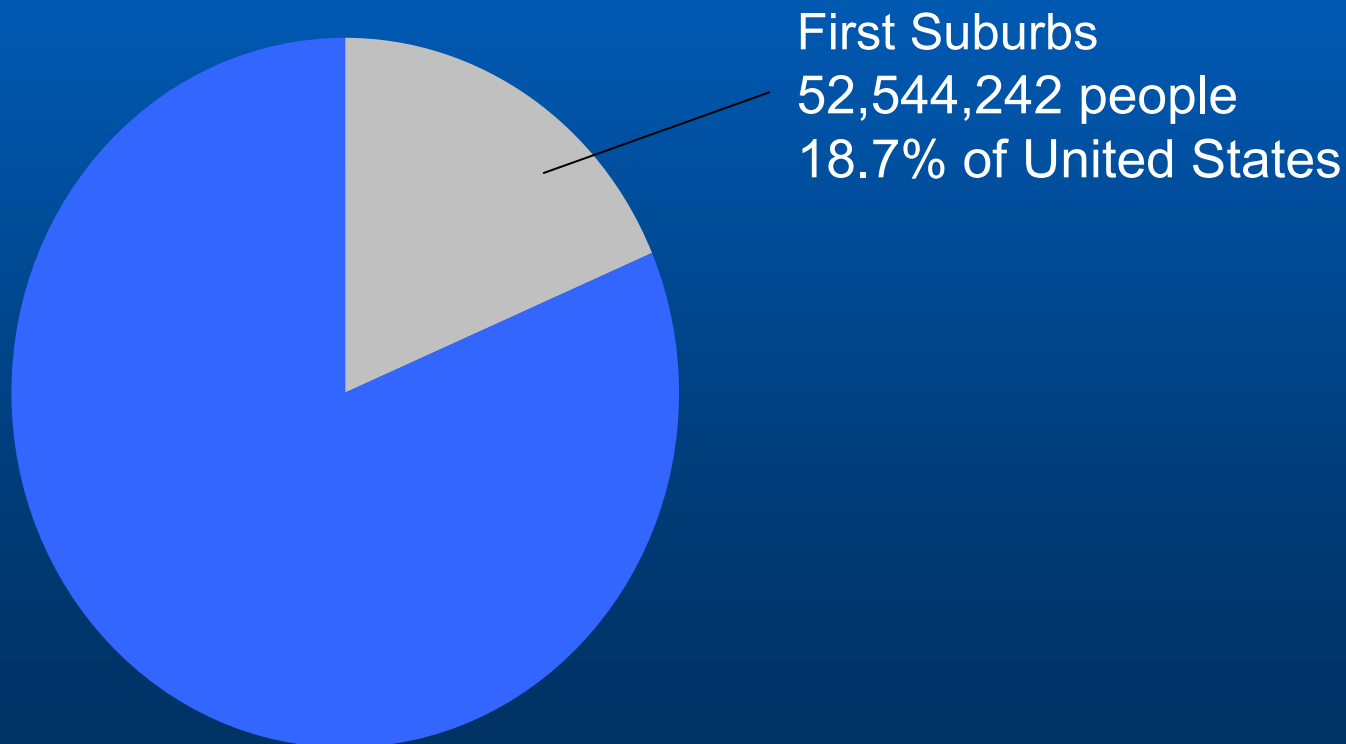
First Suburbs are especially important in New York, where they account for **almost 20 percent** of the state's population

Almost *3.5 million* New Yorkers live in First Suburbs
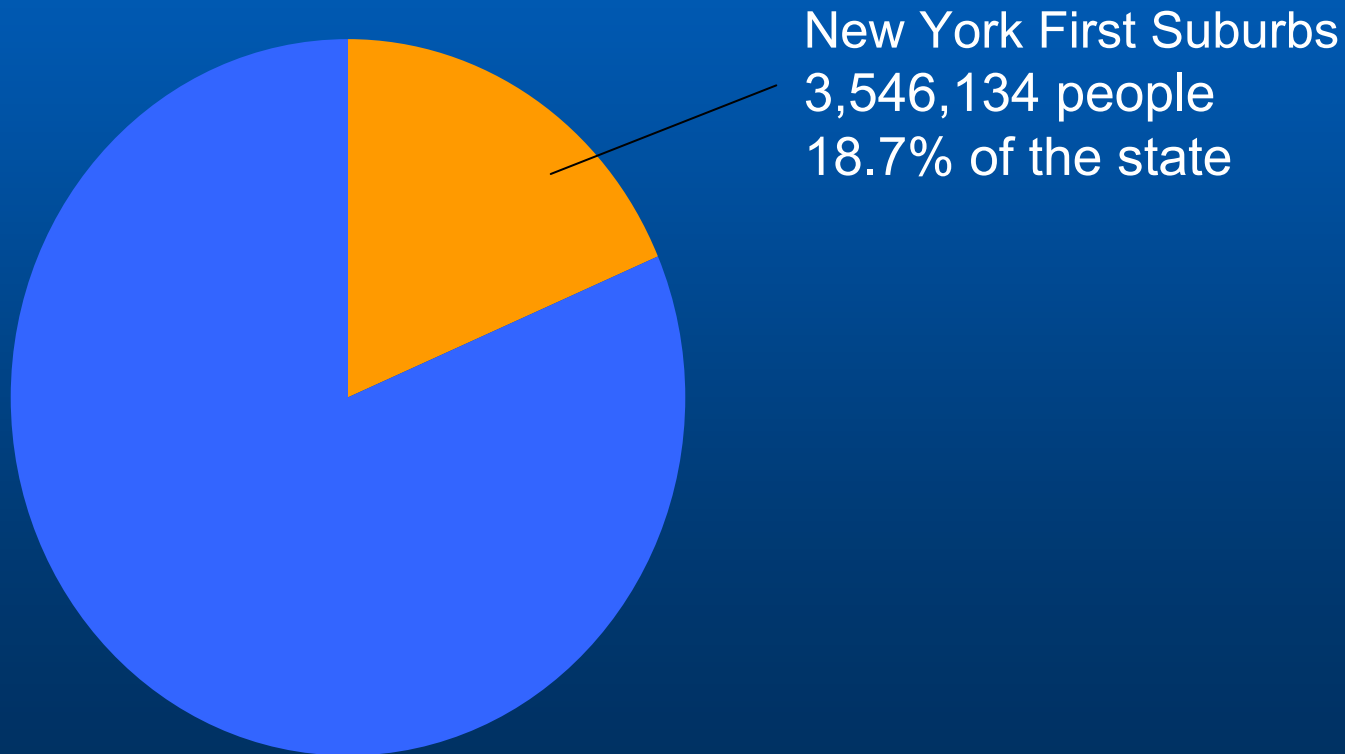
New York First Suburbs
3,546,134 people
18.7% of the state

New York's First Suburbs plus their center cities make up nearly **two-thirds** of the state's population

Over *12 million* New Yorkers live in First Suburbs or their center cities

New York First Suburbs
3,546,134 people
18.7% of the state

Cities within First Suburban Counties (Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers)
8,864,091 people
46.7% of the state
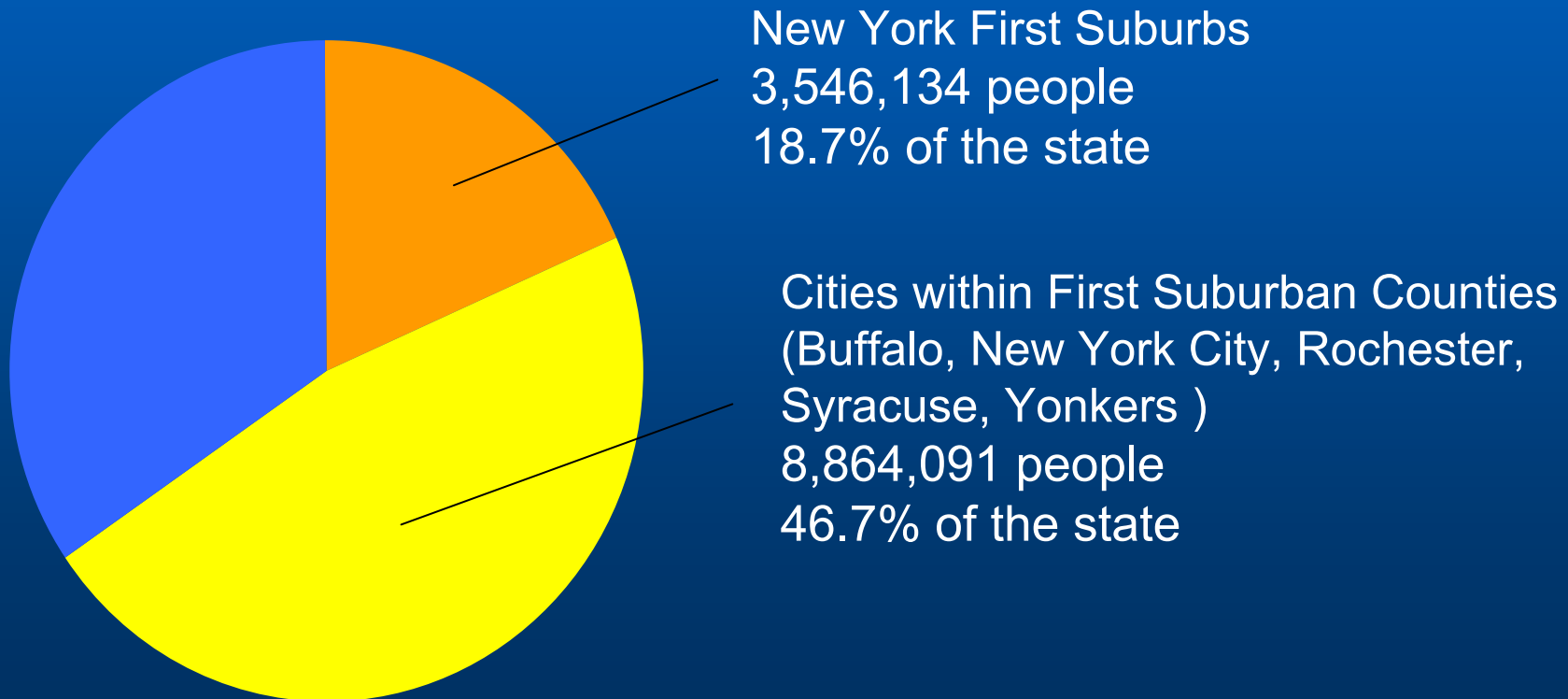
New Jersey's First Suburbs plus their center cities make up over half of the state's population

4.5 *million* New Jerseyans live in First Suburbs or their center cities

New Jersey First Suburbs
3,777,682 people
44.9% of the state

Cities within First Suburban Counties (Camden, Newark, Jersey City, Elizabeth)
714,073 people
8.5% of the state
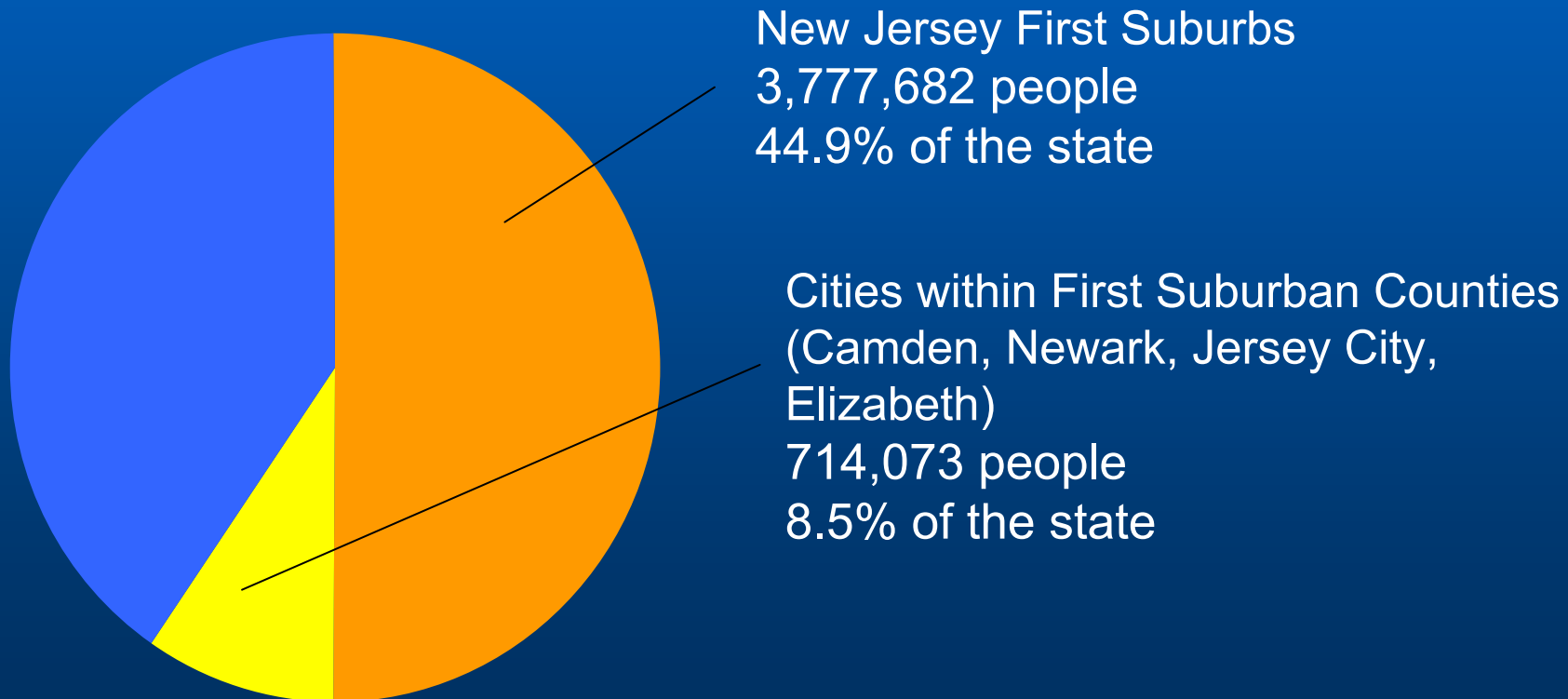
Connecticut's First Suburbs plus their center cities make up over three-quarters of the state's population

Over 2.5 *million* Connecticutians live in First Suburbs or their center cities
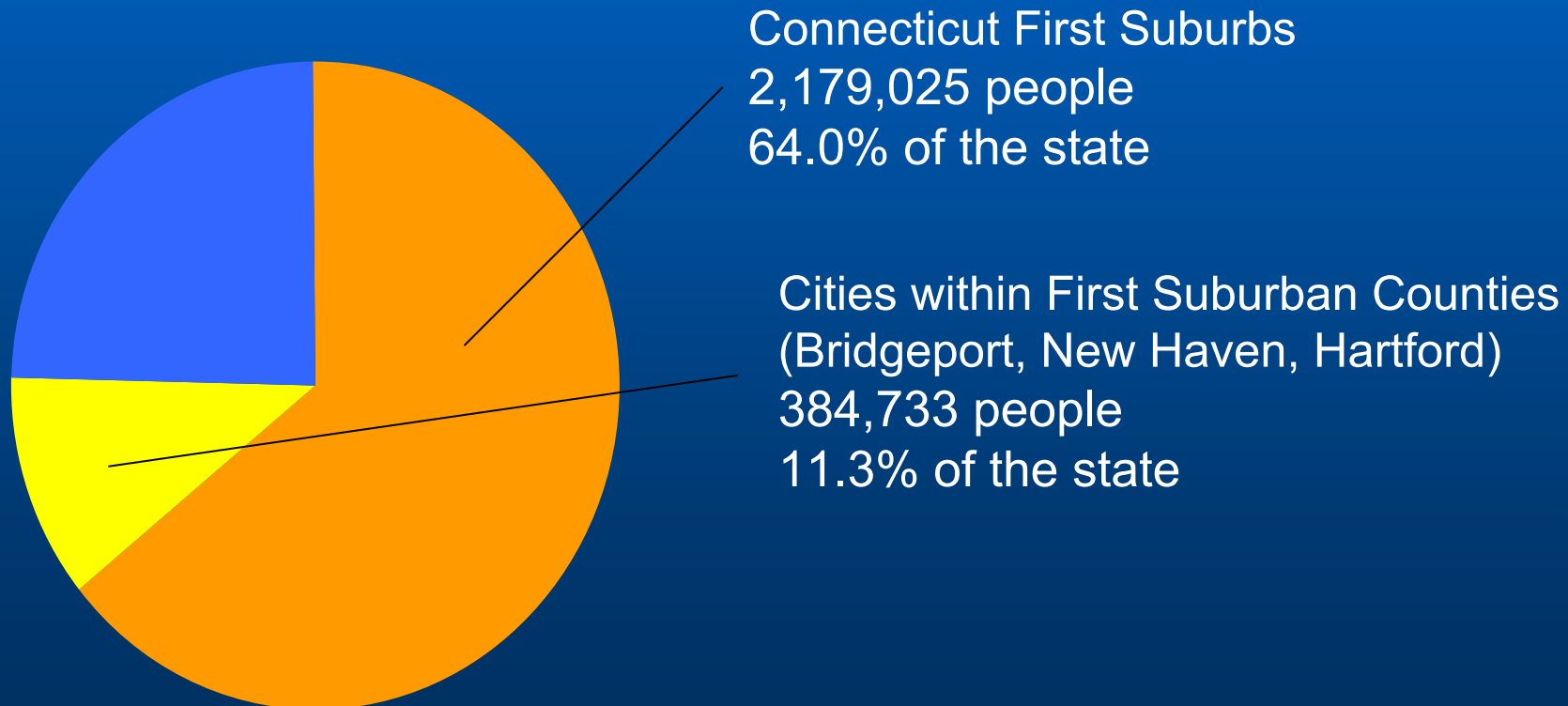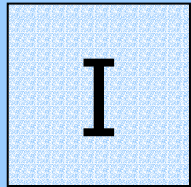
Connecticut First Suburbs
2,179,025 people
64.0% of the state

Cities within First Suburban Counties
(Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford)
384,733 people
11.3% of the state

I What are First Suburbs?

Developed first after their central cities

Comprise a significant portion of the county's population

Vary dramatically across regions

Since 1950, the majority of population growth in First Suburbs has occurred in Sunbelt states

Growth Rank	First Suburb	Percent Growth, 1950-2000
1	Orange County, CA	1216%
2	Maricopa County, AZ	678%
3	Dade County, FL	669%
4	San Diego County, CA	615%
5	Harris County, TX	587%
6	Sacramento County, CA	485%
7	Dallas County, TX	471%
8	Hillsborough County, FL	455%
9	Montgomery County, MD	431%
10	Hennepin County, MN	374%

Population growth, 1950-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

While the slowest population growth has occurred in the Northeast and Midwest

Population growth, 1950-2000

Slow-Growth Rank	First Suburb	Percent Growth, 1950-2000
1	Lackawanna County, PA	3.8%
● 2	Hudson County, NJ	5.9%
● 3	Essex County, NJ	11.3%
4	Allegheny County, PA	13.0%
5	St. Clair County, IL	24.3%
6	Delaware County, PA	33.0%
7	Providence County, RI	37.3%
8	Arlington County, VA	39.9%
● 9	Union County, NJ	40.9%
10	Trumbull County, OH	41.7%

More recent figures reinforce the stark regional differences, with the Sunbelt dominating growth in the last two decades

Growth Rank	First Suburb	Percent Growth, 1980-2000
1	Maricopa County, AZ	143.4%
2	Fulton County, GA	142.3%
3	Hillsborough County, FL	85.3%
4	Harris County, TX	77.7%
5	San Diego County, CA	61.3%
6	Sacramento County, CA	60.8%
7	Dallas County, TX	57.9%
8	Pierce County, WA	55.1%
9	King County, WA	51.3%
10	Montgomery County, MD	50.8%

Population growth, 1980-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

… and population *loss* occurring in the Rust Belt

Slow-Growth Rank	First Suburb	Percent Growth, 1980-2000
1	Allegheny County, PA	-7.70%
2	Trumbull County, OH	-6.92%
3	St. Clair County, IL	-4.28%
4	Wayne County, MI	-2.17%
5	Lackawanna County, PA	-2.08%
6	Cuyahoga County, OH	-0.97%
7	Delaware County, PA	-0.75%
● 8	Essex County, NJ	-0.34%
9	Erie County, NY	0.00%
● 10	Nassau County, NY	0.98%

Population growth, 1980-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Only 1 of the 10 slowest growing First Suburbs has experienced any **positive** population growth since 1980

First Suburban Counties in the Northeast and Midwest are comparatively very small – especially in the New York region.

Rank	First Suburb	Area in Square Miles, 2000
1	Maricopa County, AZ	8,728.3
2	San Diego County, CA	3,875.6
3	Los Angeles County, CA	3,541.4
4	King County, WA	2,042.2
5	Hillsborough County, FL	1,834.0
6	Pierce County, WA	1,628.8
7	Worcester County, MA	1,475.5
28	**Fairfield County, CT**	**609.8**
45	**Westchester County, NY**	**414.7**
54	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**309.7**
55	**Nassau County, NY**	**286.7**
56	**Bergen County, NJ**	**234.2**
60	**Essex County, NJ**	**102.5**
61	**Union County, NJ**	**91.1**
62	Marion County, IN	34.8
63	**Hudson County, NJ**	**31.8**
64	Arlington, County, VA	25.9
	First Suburban Average	828.3
	All others average (excl. AK and PR)	937.0

County size, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

They are also extremely dense near New York City.

Rank	First Suburb	Population per Square Mile, 2000
1	**Hudson County, NJ**	**11,612.2**
2	Arlington, County, VA	7,323.3
3	**Essex County, NJ**	**5,075.5**
4	**Nassau County, NY**	**4,655.0**
5	**Union County, NJ**	**4,413.9**
6	**Bergen County, NJ**	**3,775.5**
7	Orange County, CA	3,605.6
8	Cook County, IL	3,452.4
10	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**2,422.1**
20	**Westchester County, NY**	**1,753.8**
28	Los Angeles County, CA	1,514.4
35	**Fairfield County, CT**	**1,218.5**
61	Berks County, PA	344.4
62	Lackawanna County, PA	315.8
63	Pierce County, WA	311.4
64	Maricopa County, AZ	200.6
	First Suburb Average	991.2

Density, 2000

Source:
Brookings Analysis
of U.S. Census
Bureau data

Several First Suburban counties are characterized as having many local governments……

Rank	First Suburb	Total subcounty governments
1	Cook County, IL	150
2	Allegheny County, PA	128
4	St Louis County, MO	90
5	Los Angeles County, LA	88
8	Berks County, PA	74
11	**Bergen County, NJ**	**70**
12	**Nassau County, NY**	**69**
16	Montgomery County, PA	62
17	Oakland County, MI	60
18	Worcester County, MA	60
34	**Westchester County, NY**	**46**
98	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**25**
105	**Fairfield County, CT**	**24**
126	**Essex County, NJ**	**22**
130	**Union County, NJ**	**21**
185	**Hudson County, NJ**	**12**
	First Suburb Average	38
	All County Average	23

Number of local governments, 2000. Ranked among all 290 counties with populations over 175,000*.

* - Excluding counties coextensive with cities. Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

….and high governmental fragmentation. Especially around New York City

Rank	First Suburb	Residents per Subcounty Government
1	Baltimore County, MD	754,292
2	Hillsborough County, FL	332,983
12	Sacramento County, CA	203,917
14	Arlington County, VA	189,453
20	San Diego County, CA	156,324
25	Maricopa County, AZ	128,006
75	**Hudson County, NJ**	**50,748**
108	**Fairfield County, CT**	**36,773**
110	**Essex County, NJ**	**36,074**
133	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**30,006**
151	**Union County, NJ**	**24,883**
173	**Westchester County, NY**	**20,075**
179	**Nassau County, NY**	**19,341**
213	**Bergen County, NJ**	**12,630**
	First Suburb Average	56,231
	All County Average	48,258

Government frag-mentation, 2000. Ranked among all 290 counties with populations over 175,000*.

* - Excluding counties coextensive with cities. Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

In the 1950s and 1960s First Suburbs grew more rapidly than their large central cities and the nation. Today, their population growth lags the nation.

First Suburbs — **Their Central Cities** — **United States**

Population growth rates, 1950-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s

60.0%
50.0%
40.0%
30.0%
20.0%
10.0%
0.0%
-10.0%
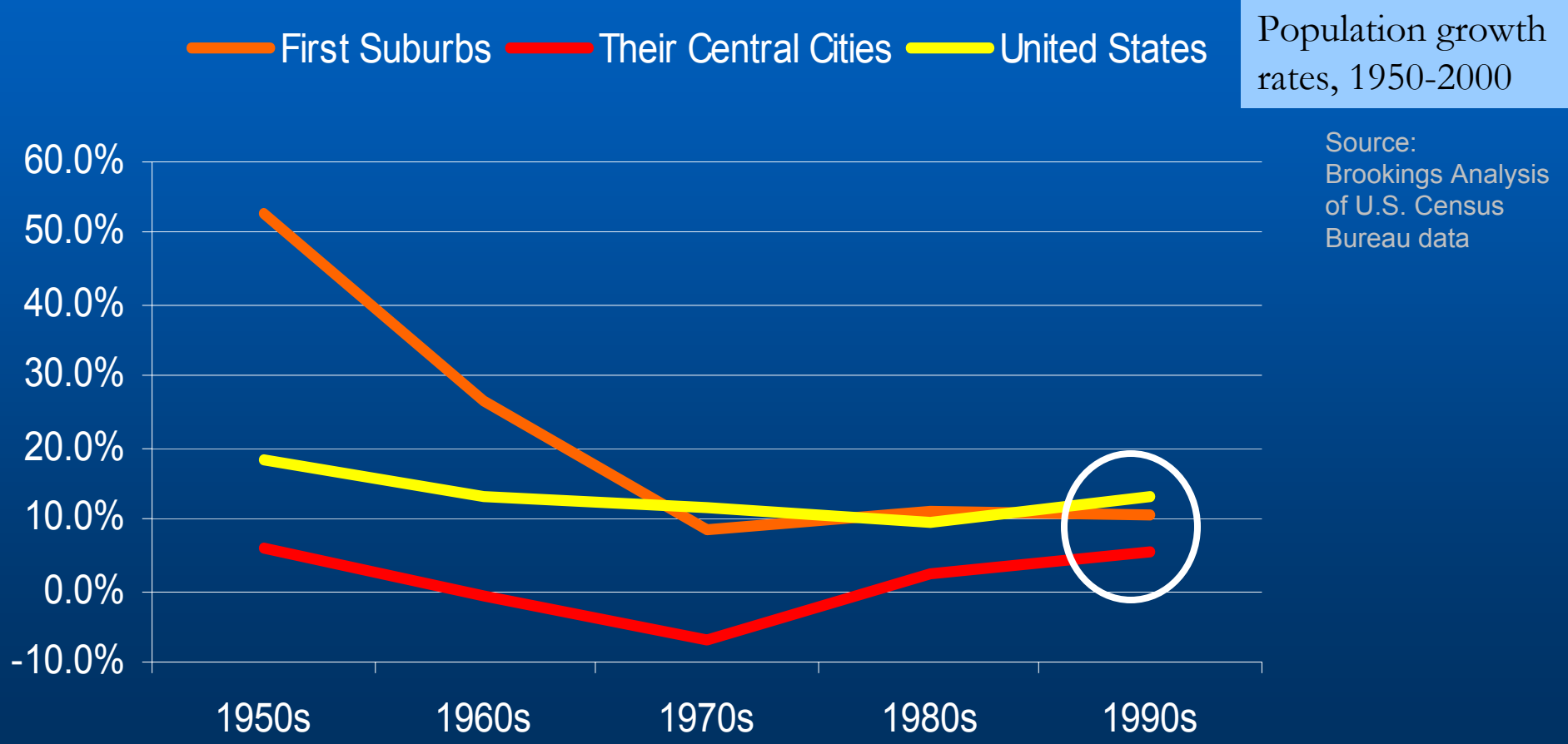
This region's First Suburbs have experienced little growth over the past 20 years (except Middlesex) with 5 ranking below the national average.

Population growth rates, 1980-2000

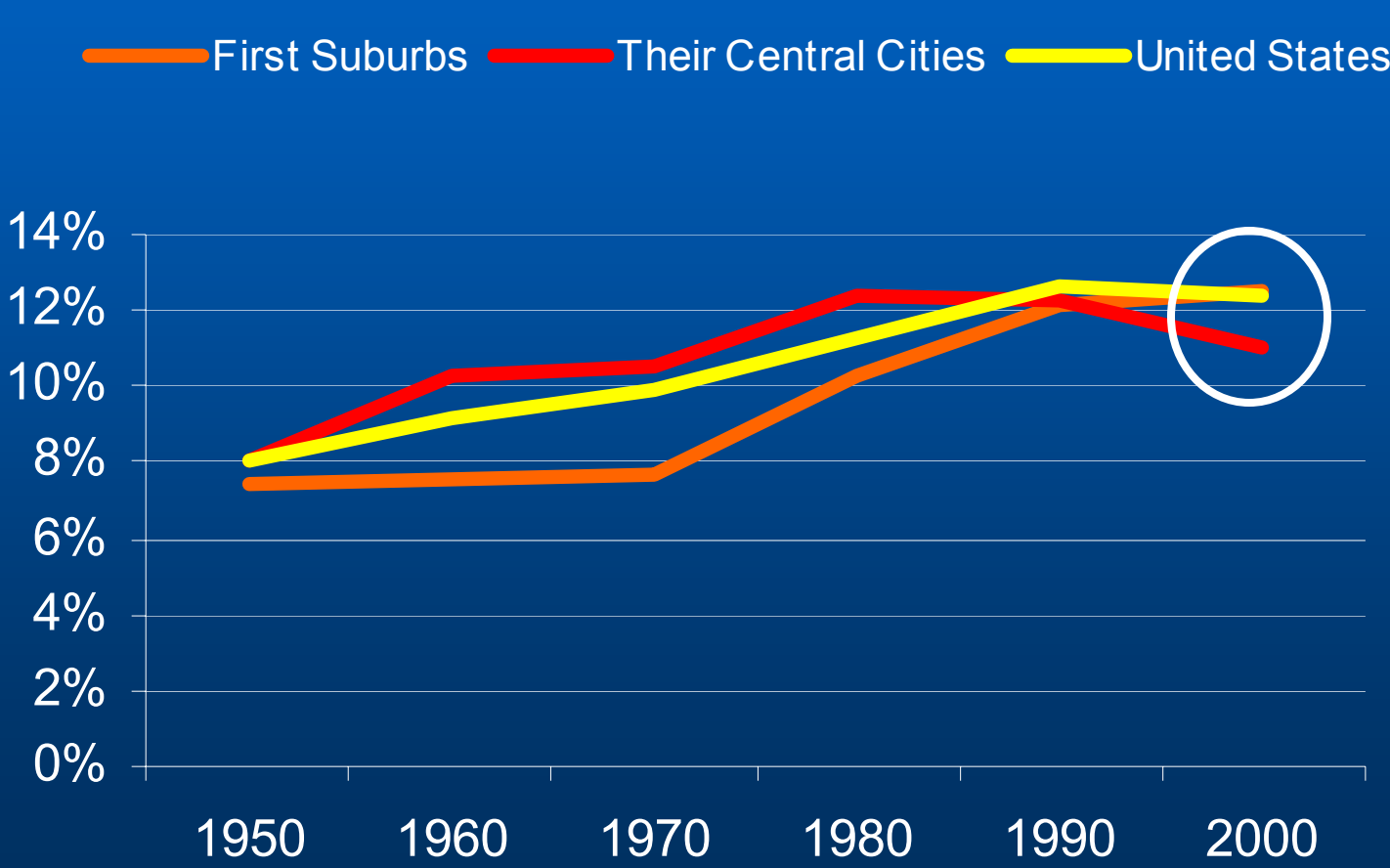Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Growth Rank	First Suburb	Percent Growth, 1980-2000
1	Maricopa County, AZ	143.4%
2	Fulton County, GA	142.3%
3	Hillsborough County, FL	85.3%
14	Los Angeles County, CA	29.3%
15	Hennepin County, MN	28.6%
16	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**25.9%**
33	**Fairfield County, CT**	**11.8%**
35	**Hudson County, NJ**	**10.6%**
39	**Westchester County, NY**	**8.4%**
49	**Bergen County, NJ**	**4.6%**
54	**Union County, NJ**	**1.0%**
55	**Nassau County, NY**	**1.0%**
57	**Essex County, NJ**	**-0.3%**
63	Trumbull County, OH	-6.9%
64	Allegheny County, PA	-7.7%
	All First Suburbs	23.4%
	United States	9.7%

In general the share of First Suburban residents who are older than 65 has been increasing, surpassing that of central cities in 2000

First Suburbs ━━━ **Their Central Cities** ━━━ **United States**

Percent of population age 65 and over, 1950-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

All of this region's First Suburbs have average percentages of the elderly.

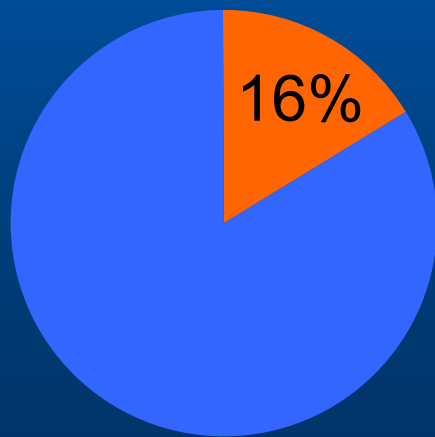| Rank	First Suburb	Percent of Population 65 and Over
1	Lackawanna County, PA	19.1%
2	Allegheny County, PA	18.3%
3	Cuyahoga County, OH	17.2%
4	Erie County, NY	17.0%
5	Milwaukee County, WI	16.5%
14	**Bergen County, NJ**	**15.2%**
15	New Haven County, CT	15.2%
16	**Nassau County, NY**	**15.0%**
17	**Union County, NJ**	**14.9%**
31	**Westchester County, NY**	**13.7%**
32	**Fairfield County, CT**	**13.6%**
36	**Essex County, NJ**	**13.3%**
45	**Hudson County, NJ**	**12.4%**
46	Bucks County, PA	12.4%
47	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**12.3%**
64	Harris County, TX	6.1%
	All First Suburbs	12.5%
	United States	12.4%

Percent of population age 65 and over, 2000
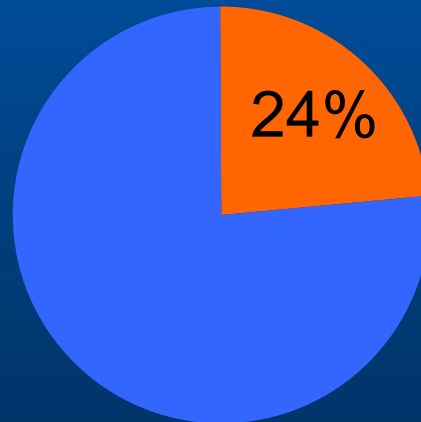
Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

First Suburbs have become much more diverse; racial and ethnic minorities now comprise one-third of the population of First Suburbs
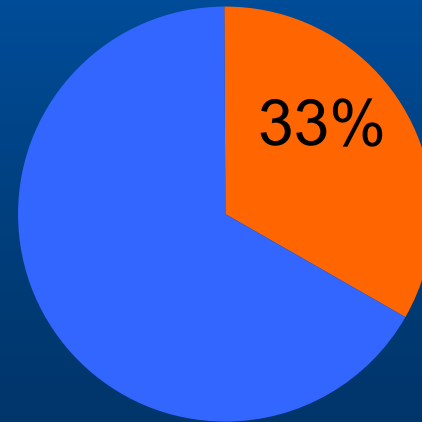
Percent of First Suburban population other than Non-Hispanic White, 1980-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

■ Racial/Ethnic Minorities   ■ Non-Hispanic White

16%

24%

33%

1980

1990

2000

Hudson and Essex Counties are much more diverse than the U.S. and First Suburbs' average.

Rank	First Suburb	Population Other Than Non-Hispanic White
1	Dade County, FL	77.6%
2	Prince George's County, MD	75.7%
3	Los Angeles County, CA	68.2%
4	**Hudson County, NJ**	**57.0%**
5	Alameda County, CA	53.2%
6	San Mateo County, CA	50.2%
7	**Essex County, NJ**	**50.1%**
15	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**38.1%**
16	**Union County, NJ**	**37.6%**
20	**Westchester County, NY**	**32.3%**
22	**Bergen County, NJ**	**27.7%**
24	**Nassau County, NY**	**26.0%**
31	**Fairfield County, CT**	**19.0%**
62	Stark County, OH	6.0%
63	Lackawanna County, PA	5.1%
64	Berks County, PA	4.9%
	All First Suburbs	33.4%
	United States	31.9%

Percent of population other than non-Hispanic White, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

The foreign-born population in First Suburbs grew by 262 percent since 1970, faster than their central cities and faster than the national rate of 225 percent.

Foreign-born population, 1970-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Legend: —— First Suburbs   —— Their Central Cities

y-axis: 0, 2,000,000, 4,000,000, 6,000,000, 8,000,000, 10,000,000
x-axis: 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000
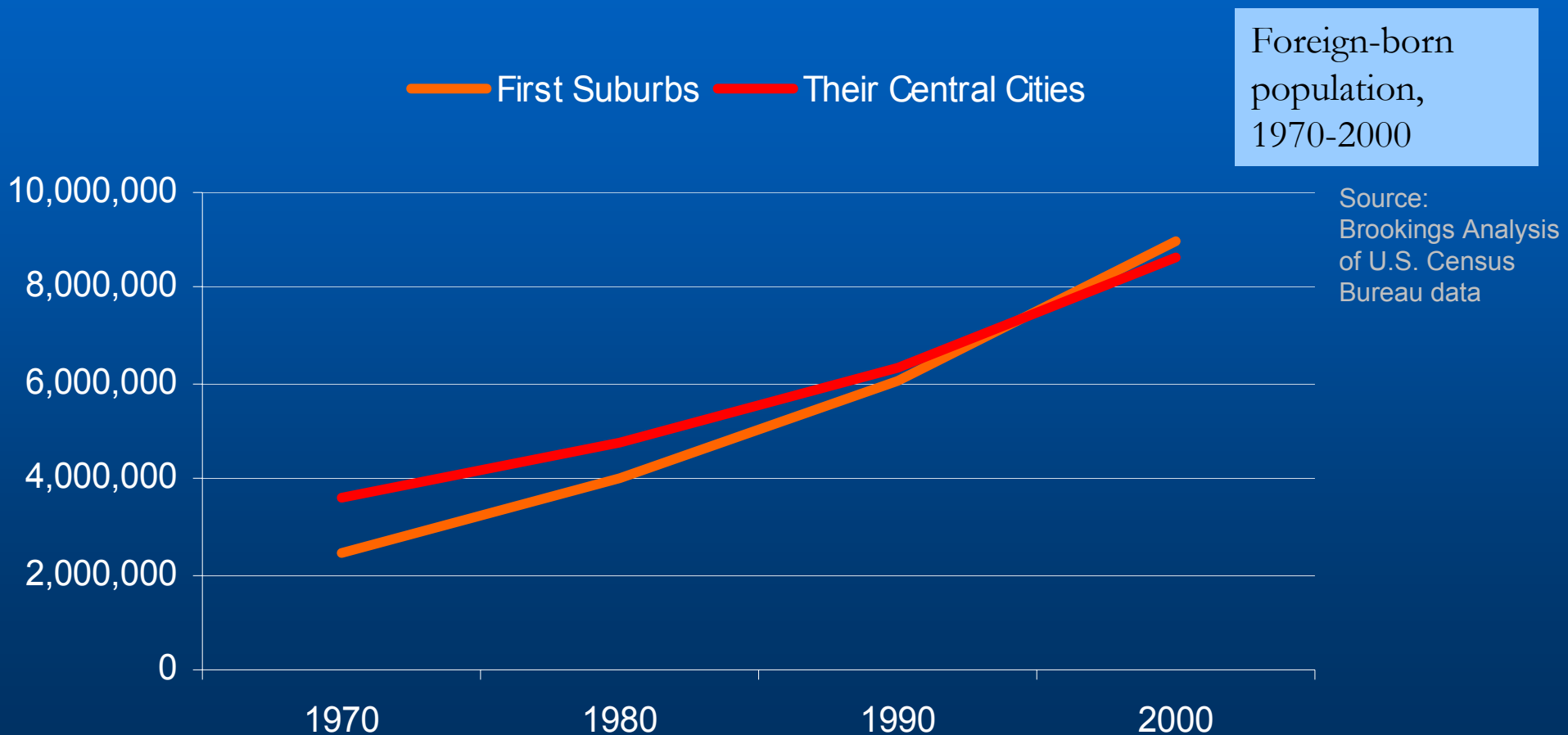
By 2000, over 17% of First Suburban residents were foreign-born, compared to 11% of the national population. Figures for this region's First Suburbs are all over the averages.
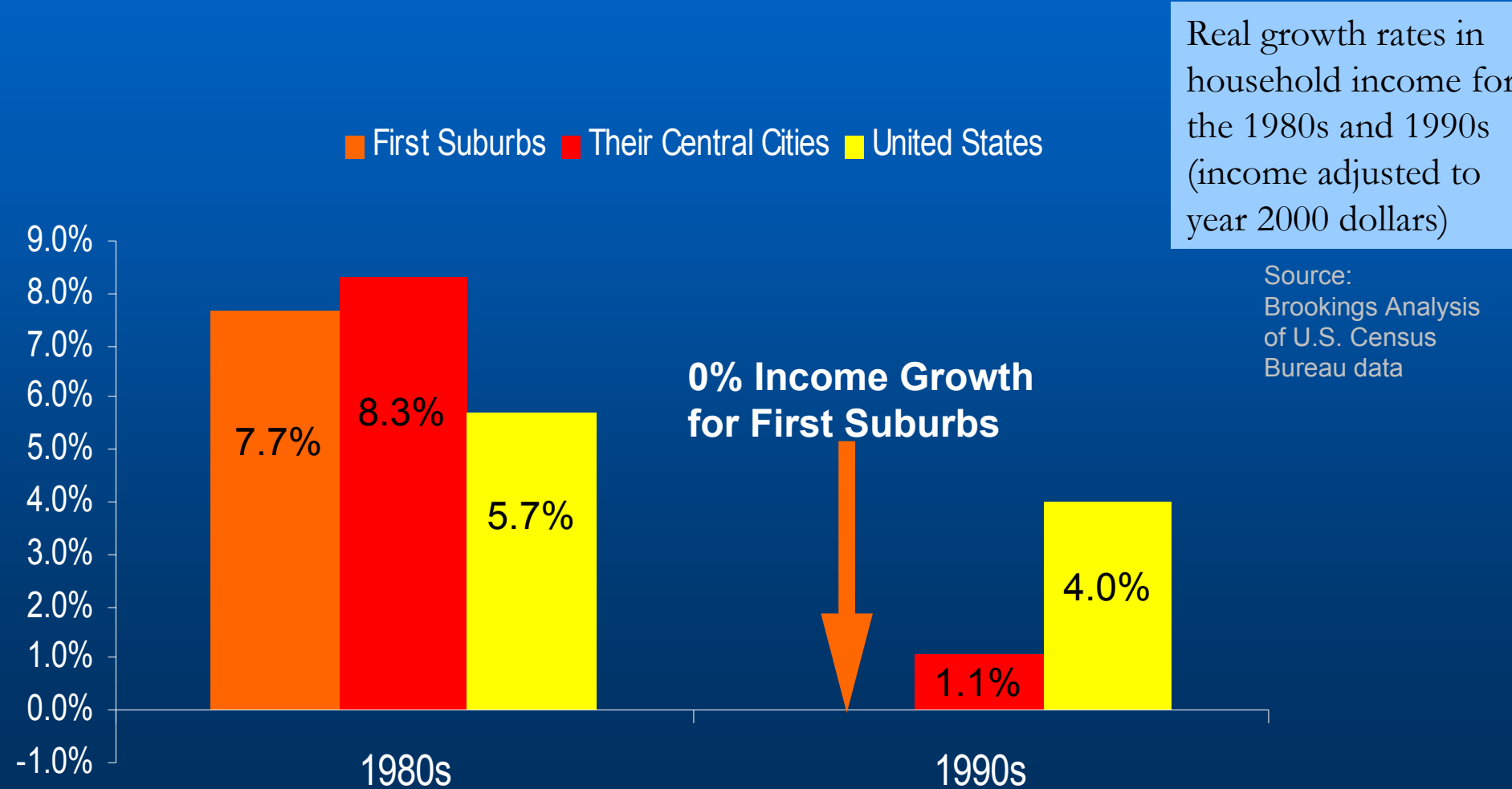
Rank	First Suburb	Percent Foreign-Born
1	Dade County, FL	49.3%
2	**Hudson County, NJ**	**41.5%**
3	Los Angeles County, CA	33.6%
4	San Mateo County, CA	32.3%
5	Orange County, CA	29.9%
9	**Bergen County, NJ**	**25.1%**
10	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**24.2%**
11	**Westchester County, NY**	**21.1%**
12	**Essex County, NJ**	**19.6%**
13	**Union County, NJ**	**19.4%**
14	San Diego County, CA	18.4%
15	**Nassau County, NY**	**17.9%**
18	**Fairfield County, CT**	**16.2%**
62	Lackawanna County, PA	1.8%
63	Stark County, OH	1.8%
64	Madison County, IL	1.3%
	All First Suburbs	17.1%
	United States	11.1%

Foreign-born population, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Real household incomes in First Suburbs remained stagnant in the 1990s; in stark contrast to the 1980s.

Real growth rates in household income for the 1980s and 1990s (income adjusted to year 2000 dollars)

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

First Suburbs ■ **Their Central Cities** ■ **United States**

0% Income Growth for First Suburbs

	1980s	1990s
First Suburbs	7.7%	0%
Their Central Cities	8.3%	1.1%
United States	5.7%	4.0%

With the slight exception of Middlesex, none of this region's First Suburbs saw some real income growth in the 1990s.

| Rank	First Suburb	Percent Real Income Growth
1	San Mateo County, CA	13.2%
2	Maricopa County, AZ	12.6%
3	Pierce County, WA	11.5%
4	Marion County, IN	10.3%
38	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**0.2%**
40	**Union County, NJ**	**-0.1%**
43	**Westchester County, NY**	**-0.4%**
45	**Essex County, NJ**	**-0.5%**
47	**Fairfield County, CT**	**-1.4%**
48	**Nassau County, NY**	**-1.4%**
51	**Bergen County, NJ**	**-1.8%**
58	**Hudson County, NJ**	**-3.3%**
61	New Haven County, CT	-4.6%
62	Prince George's County, MD	-4.6%
63	Hartford County, CT	-6.8%
64	Los Angeles County, CA	-7.2%
	All First Suburbs	0.0%
	United States	4.0%

Real growth rates in household income for the 1990s (with incomes adjusted to year 2000 dollars)

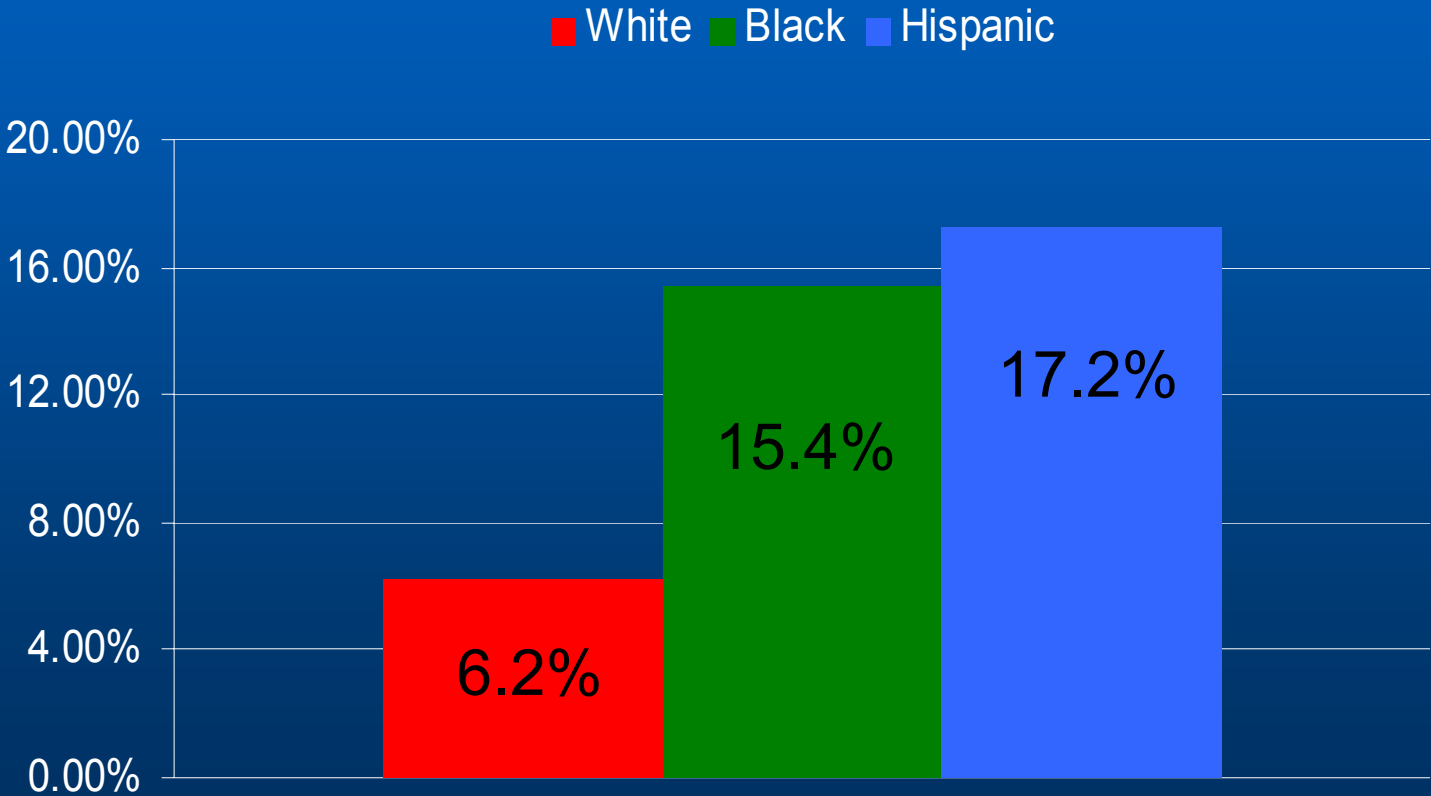Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Poverty

While low, poverty rates in First Suburbs have been steadily rising despite a slight decrease in the rates of their metro areas.

Percent of people below poverty line, 1970-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

First Suburbs — Their Central Cities — Their Metro Areas
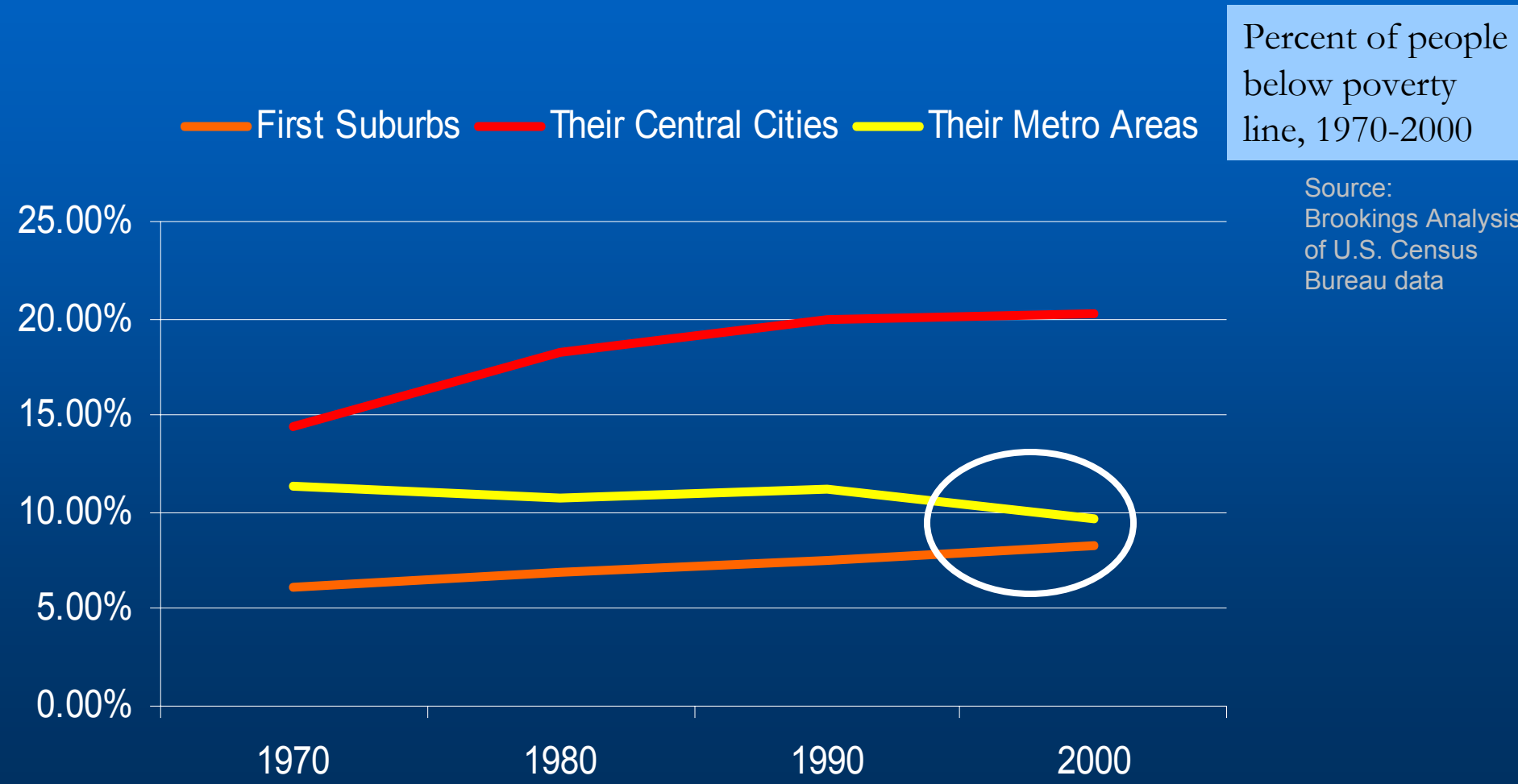
But poverty rates in First Suburbs vary by race and ethnicity; blacks and Hispanics are two and three times more likely to be poor than whites.
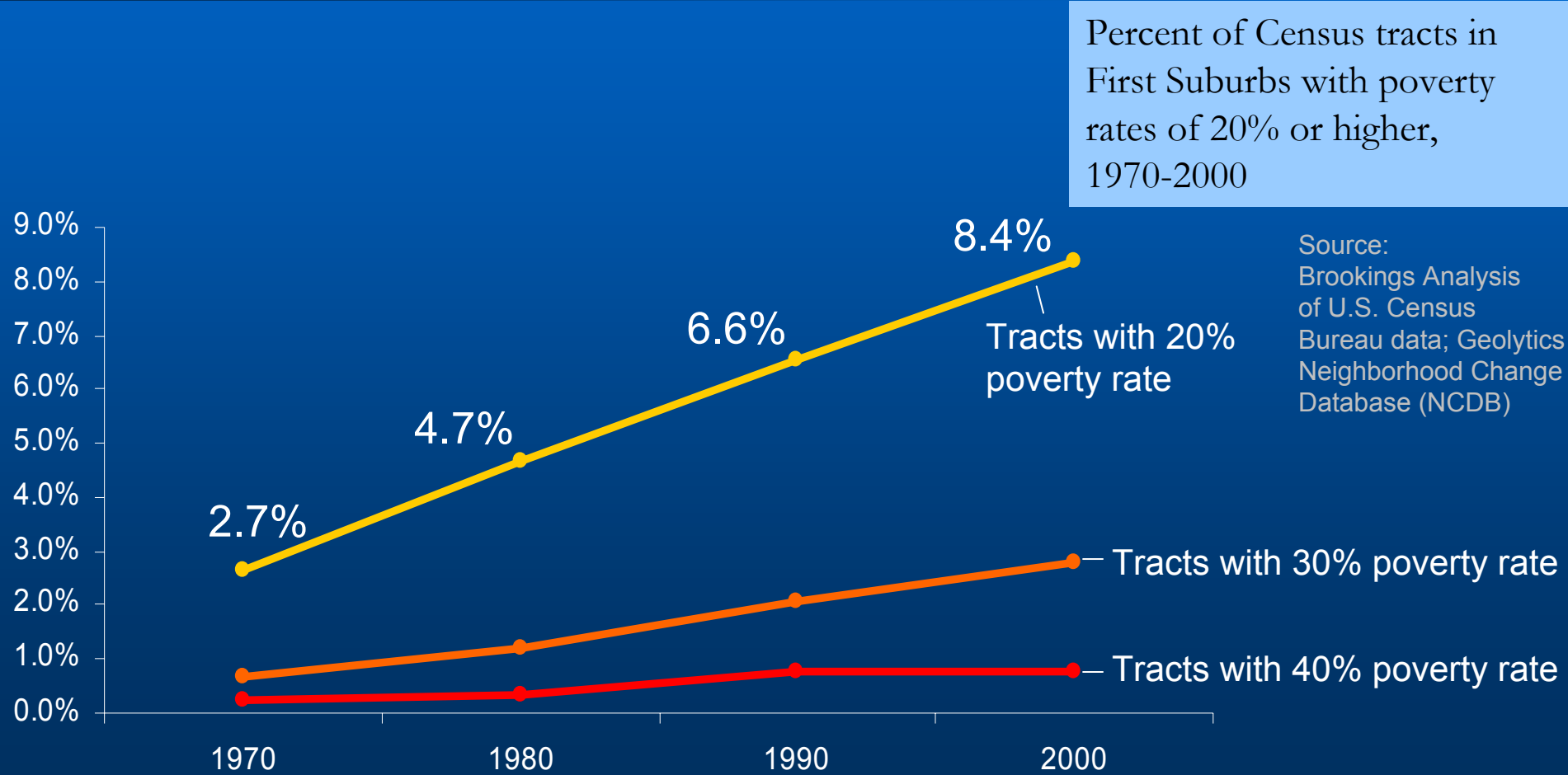
Percent of people below poverty line, 1970-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

■ White ■ Black ■ Hispanic

17.2%	
15.4%	
6.2%	

20.00%
16.00%
12.00%
8.00%
4.00%
0.00%

Neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have been increasing in First Suburbs, especially those with poverty rates of 20 percent of higher.

Percent of Census tracts in First Suburbs with poverty rates of 20% or higher, 1970-2000

8.4%

6.6%

4.7%

2.7%

Tracts with 20% poverty rate

Tracts with 30% poverty rate

Tracts with 40% poverty rate

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data; Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB)

Only Hudson and Essex counties have concentrated poverty rates above the First Suburban average. A few are well below.

Rank	First Suburb	Percent of Tracts with Poverty Rate of 20% or More
64	St. Clair County, IL	30.9%
63	Miami-Dade County, FL	30.5%
62	Los Angeles County, CA	26.9%
61	Hampden County, MA	19.3%
60	Lehigh County, PA	19.1%
58	**Hudson County, NJ**	**18.7%**
48	**Essex County, NJ**	**9.8%**
38	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**6.2%**
37	**Westchester County, NY**	**5.9%**
24	**Union County, NJ**	**2.4%**
20	**Fairfield County, CT**	**1.8%**
15	**Nassau County, NY**	**1.4%**
8	**Bergen County, NJ**	**0.6%**
1	San Mateo County	0.0%
1	Hennepin County, MN	0.0%
1	Franklin County, OH	0.0%
1	San Mateo County, CA	0.0%
1	Lackawanna County, PA	0.0%
1	Arlington County, VA	0.0%
	All First Suburbs	8.4%

Percent of Census tracts in First Suburbs with poverty rates of 20% or higher, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data; Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB)
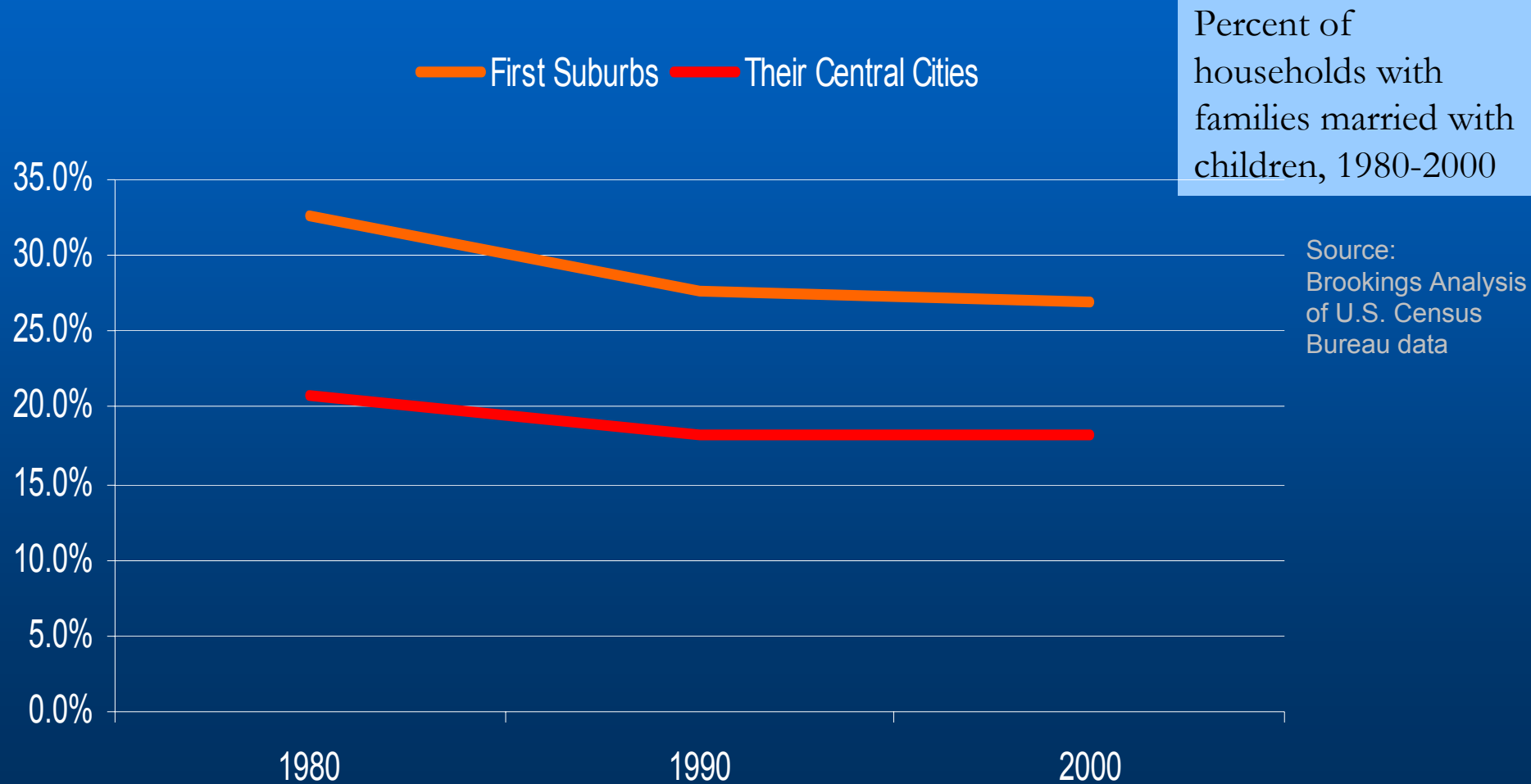
The percent of married households with children is only lower than the First Suburban and national averages in Hudson County.

Rank	First Suburb	Households, Married with Children, 2000
1	Harris County, TX	36.4%
2	Dallas County, TX	32.2%
3	**Nassau County, NY**	**31.4%**
4	Los Angeles County, CA	30.9%
5	Orange County, CA	30.6%
8	**Fairfield County, CT**	**29.5%**
9	**Westchester County, NY**	**29.3%**
10	Pierce County, WA	29.0%
11	San Diego County, CA	28.9%
12	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**28.8%**
17	**Bergen County, NJ**	**28.0%**
18	**Union County, NJ**	**27.5%**
32	Dade County, FL	26.4%
35	Hennepin County, MN	25.9%
46	**Essex County, NJ**	**24.3%**
62	**Hudson County, NJ**	**20.4%**
63	Lackawanna County, PA	19.7%
64	Arlington County, VA	15.4%
	All First Suburbs	27.0%
	United States	23.5%

Percent of households with families married with children, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data; Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database (NCDB)

More than half of the housing currently in First Suburbs was built from 1950 to 1970.
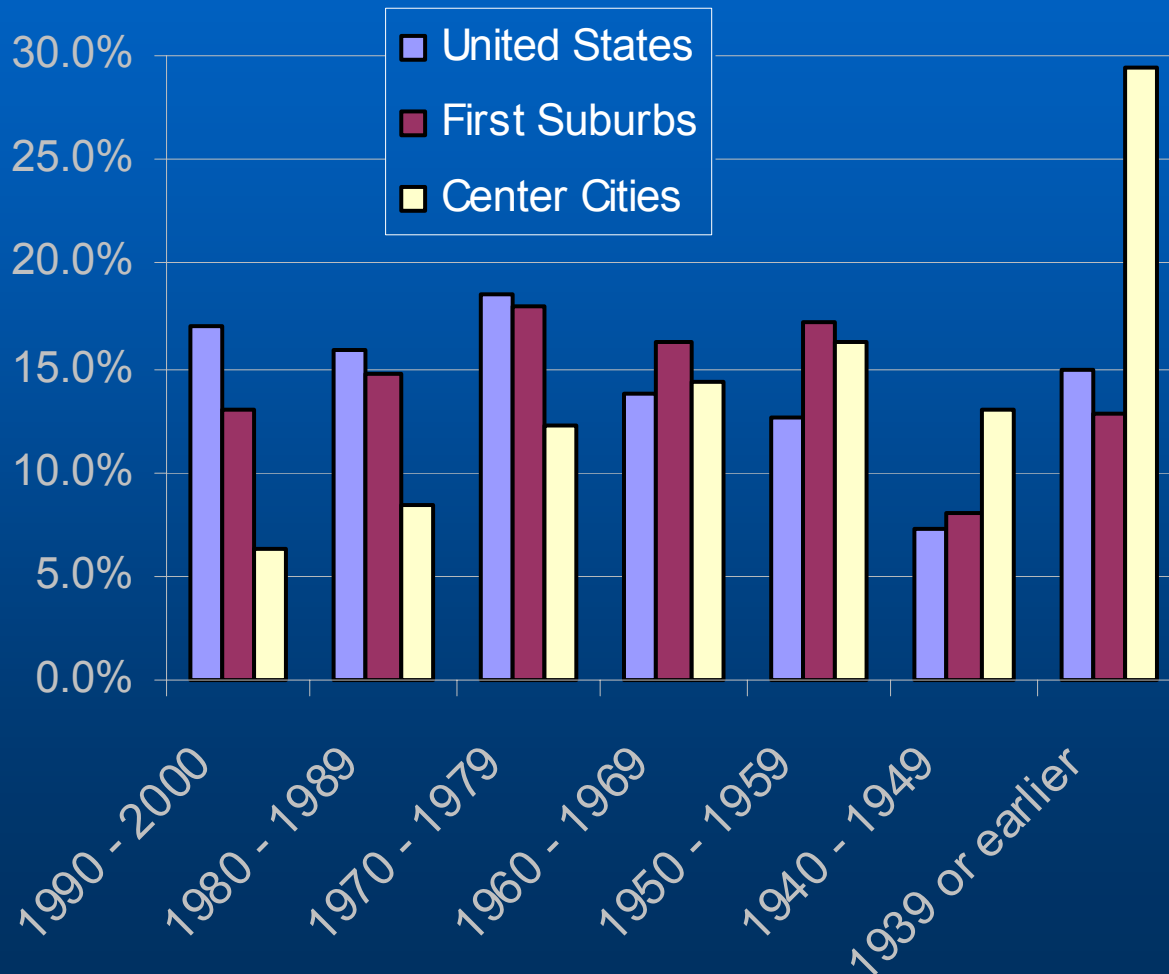
Percent of housing units by decade structure was built.

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

All the First Suburbs in the New York have a percentage of their housing built before 1960 higher than the national average. Several are much higher.
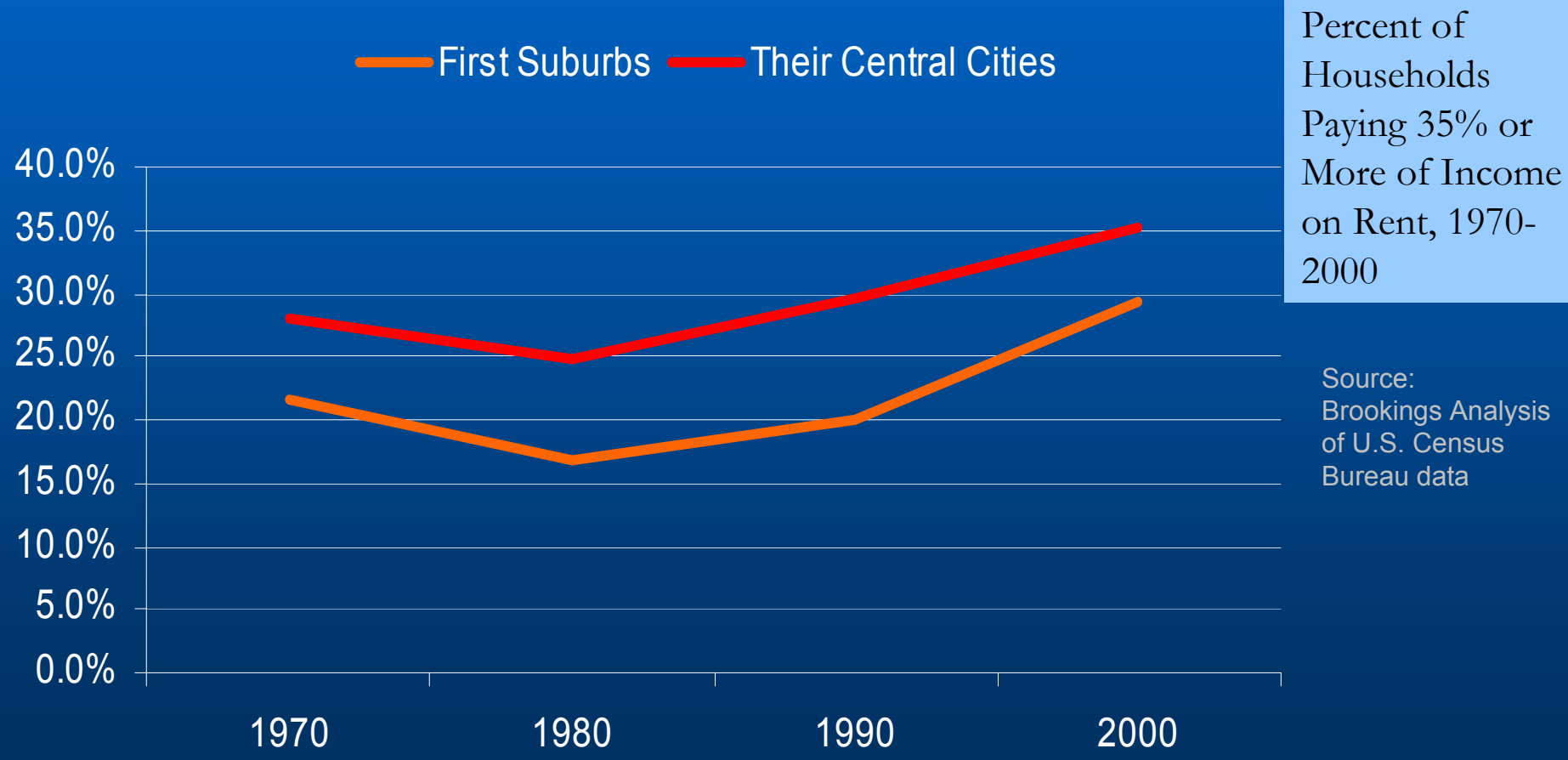
Rank	First Suburb	Percent of Housing Units Built Before 1960
1	**Nassau County, NY**	**72.9%**
2	**Union County, NJ**	**69.5%**
3	**Essex County, NJ**	**68.4%**
4	Delaware County, PA	65.9%
5	**Hudson County, NJ**	**64.7%**
6	**Westchester County, NY**	**61.5%**
7	**Bergen County, NJ**	**61.2%**
22	**Fairfield County, CT**	**47.2%**
29	Los Angeles County, CA	44.3%
40	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**37.9%**
61	Harris County, TX	10.7%
62	Hillsborough County, FL	7.5%
63	Fulton County, GA	6.2%
64	Maricopa County, AZ	5.1%
	All First Suburbs	38.0%
	United States	35.0%

Percent of current housing units built before 1960

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

All the First Suburbs in the New York except Middlesex have rent burdens higher than the average.

Rank	First Suburb	Percent of Households with rent burdens, 2000
1	Dade County, FL	41.3%
2	Los Angeles County, CA	36.1%
3	San Diego County, CA	35.7%
4	**Nassau County, NY**	**34.7%**
5	Orange County, CA	34.6%
9	**Westchester County, NY**	**32.7%**
13	**Essex County, NJ**	**31.5%**
16	**Bergen County, NJ**	**31.1%**
20	**Hudson County, NJ**	**30.2%**
21	King County, WA	30.2%
22	**Fairfield County, CT**	**31.2%**
31	**Union County, NJ**	**29.0%**
44	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**27.6%**
63	Berks County, PA	24.8%
64	Arlington, County, VA	23.9%
	All First Suburbs	29.2%

Percent of Households Paying 35% or More of Income on Rent, 2000

Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Use of public transportation for commuting among all First Suburban residents has declined over 30 years from already low levels

Percent of workers 16 and over who commute using public transportation, 1970-2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

First Suburbs — Their Central Cities — Their Metro Areas

35.0%
30.0%
25.0%
20.0%
15.0%
10.0%
5.0%
0.0%

1970   1980   1990   2000
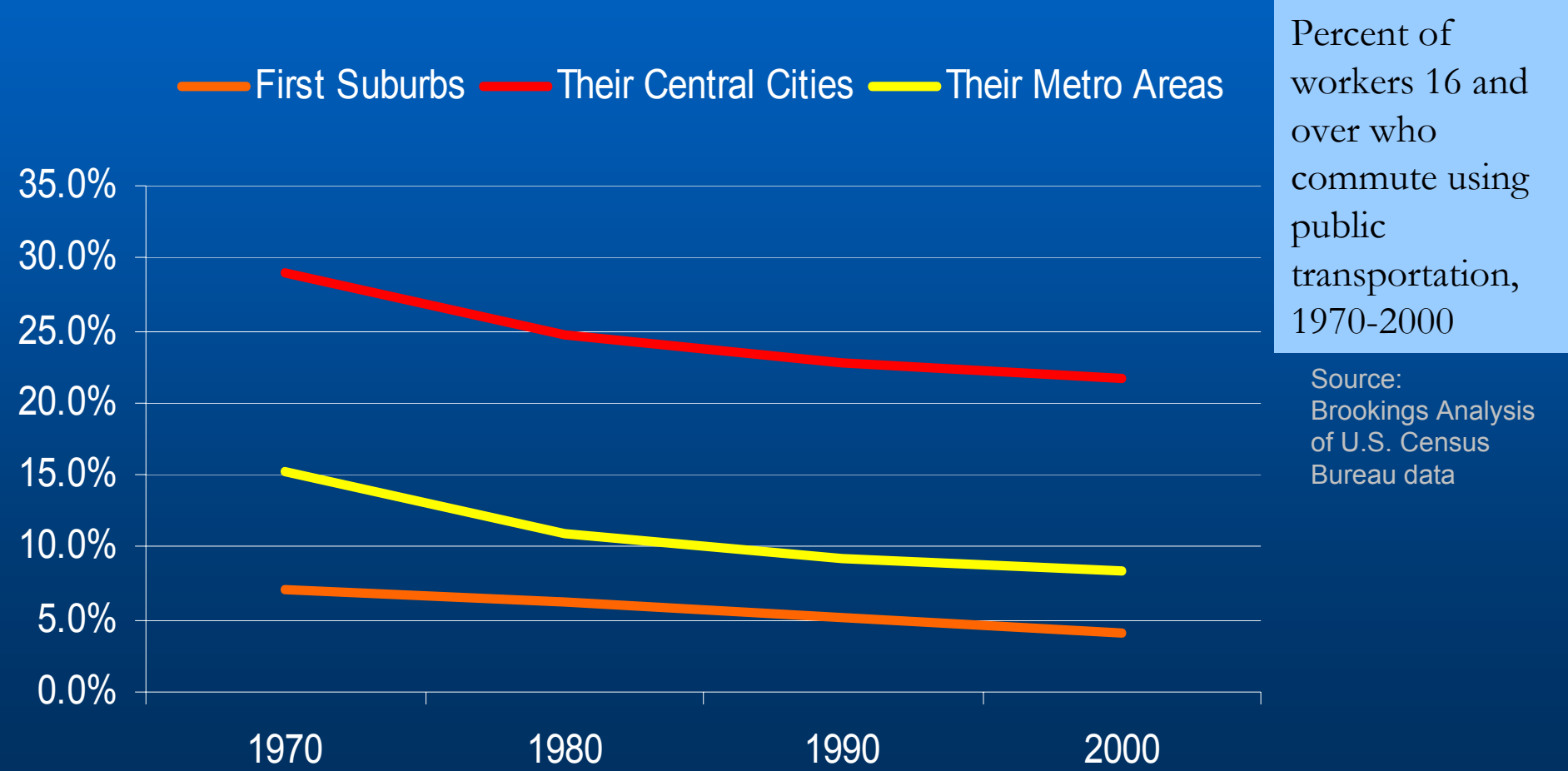
However, public transit use in all First Suburbs in the New York region is far above the national and First Suburban average.

Rank	First Suburb	Percent of Commuters Using Public Transit, 2000
1	**Hudson County, NJ**	**30.0%**
2	Arlington County, VA	23.3%
3	**Westchester County, NY**	**19.8%**
4	**Essex County, NJ**	**15.8%**
5	**Nassau County, NY**	**15.7%**
6	Montgomery County, MD	12.6%
7	Norfolk County, MA	12.3%
8	Prince George's County, MD	11.9%
9	**Bergen County, NJ**	**11.0%**
10	**Union County, NJ**	**9.6%**
12	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**8.7%**
14	**Fairfield County, CT**	**8.1%**
25	Los Angeles County, CA	4.1%
57	Wayne County, MI	0.8%
	United States	4.7%
	All First Suburbs	4.2%

Percent of workers 16 and over who commute using public transportation, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

Like the U.S. as a whole, the share of college graduates has steadily increased in First Suburbs over the last 30 years; and the share remains larger than that of their central cities and metros.

Percent of those age 25 and over with a BA, 1970-2000

— First Suburbs — Their Central Cities — Their Metro Areas

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data
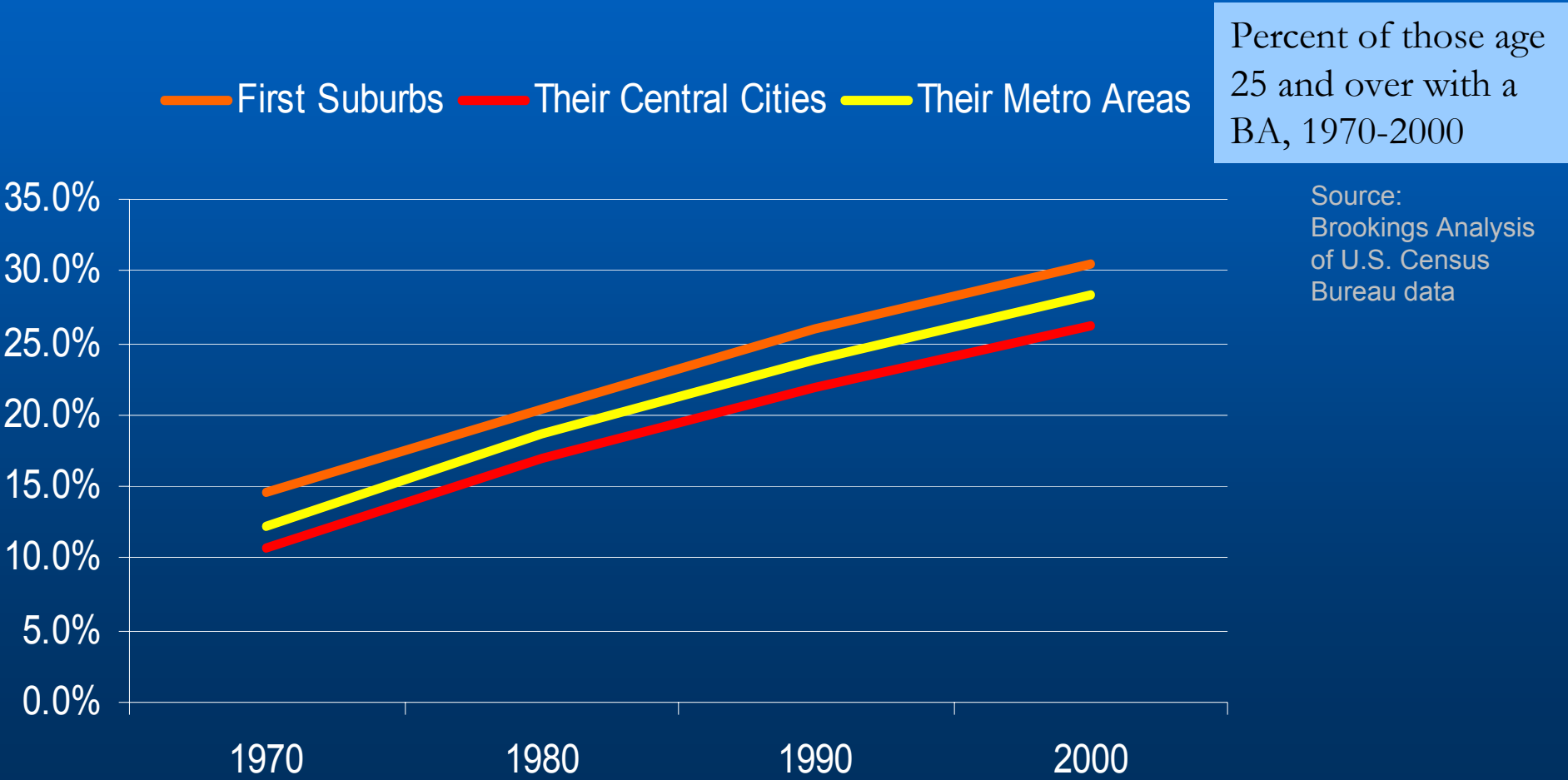
The percent of adults with college degrees is only lower than the First Suburban and national averages in Hudson County.

Rank	First Suburb	BA Attainment Rate, 2000
1	Arlington County, VA	60.2%
2	Montgomery County, MD	54.6%
3	Fulton County, GA	48.4%
4	**Westchester County, NY**	**45.1%**
5	**Fairfield County, CT**	**44.4%**
11	**Bergen County, NJ**	**38.2%**
14	**Essex County, NJ**	**36.2%**
18	**Nassau County, NY**	**35.4%**
20	**Middlesex County, NJ**	**33.0%**
21	**Union County, NJ**	**33.0%**
50	**Hudson County, NJ**	**24.0%**
61	Madison County, IL	19.2%
62	Lake County, IN	17.7%
63	Macomb County, MI	17.6%
64	Trumbull County, OH	14.5%
	All First Suburbs	30.6%
	United States	24.4%

Percent of those age 25 and over with a BA, 2000

Source: Brookings Analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data

The Evolution and Current State of the First Suburbs: An Agenda for Action

I   What are First Suburbs?

II   What has happened in First Suburbs nationally and in the New York metro area over the last 50 years?

III   What does this mean for this region?

IV   What is the role of current federal and state policies and what is a First Suburban policy agenda?

In general, First Suburbs in the New York region face a number of challenges.

1. Anemic population growth

2. A relatively high share of older Americans

3. Declining household incomes with some increases in concentrated poverty

4. Older housing stock and potentially severe rent burdens
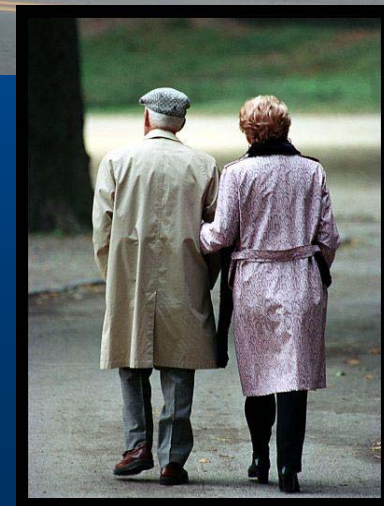
The region's First Suburbs also face some other threats to their ability to remain competitive.

1. Aging and obsolete infrastructure

2. Struggling business and retail corridors

3. Fiscal stress and high tax burdens

4. Underutilized and unassembled commercial land

5. Fragmented governance

But these and other First Suburbs posses many important assets and opportunities

1. Home to a large share of the state's population and a good share of educated workers.

2. Mixed use often high quality design

3. Convenience and central location

4. Established infrastructure: transportation, water, sewer, schools

5. Potential for collaboration

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Current state and federal policies generally don't help First Suburbs

First Suburbs in Policy "Blind-Spot"

→ The focus is often on central cities or newer suburbs, particularly exurbs or newly developing places

→ Sometimes policies that set the rules of development and governance actually undermine First Suburbs

Current state and federal policies generally don't help First Suburbs

First Suburbs in Policy "Blind-Spot"

1. States do not provide enough fiscal support to First Suburbs

2. Federal housing policy is not designed to meet the housing maintenance and redevelopment needs of first suburbs

3. Federal and state policies neglect a vital element of First Suburbs' population: working families

4. Federal and state policies facilitate sprawl, outmigration and the concentration of poverty

A federal and state policy agenda for First Suburbs

2 Level the Fiscal Playing Field

4 Grow the Middle Class

1 Fix the Basics

3 Create Neighborhoods of Choice and Connection

5 Curb Sprawl and Promote Reinvestment
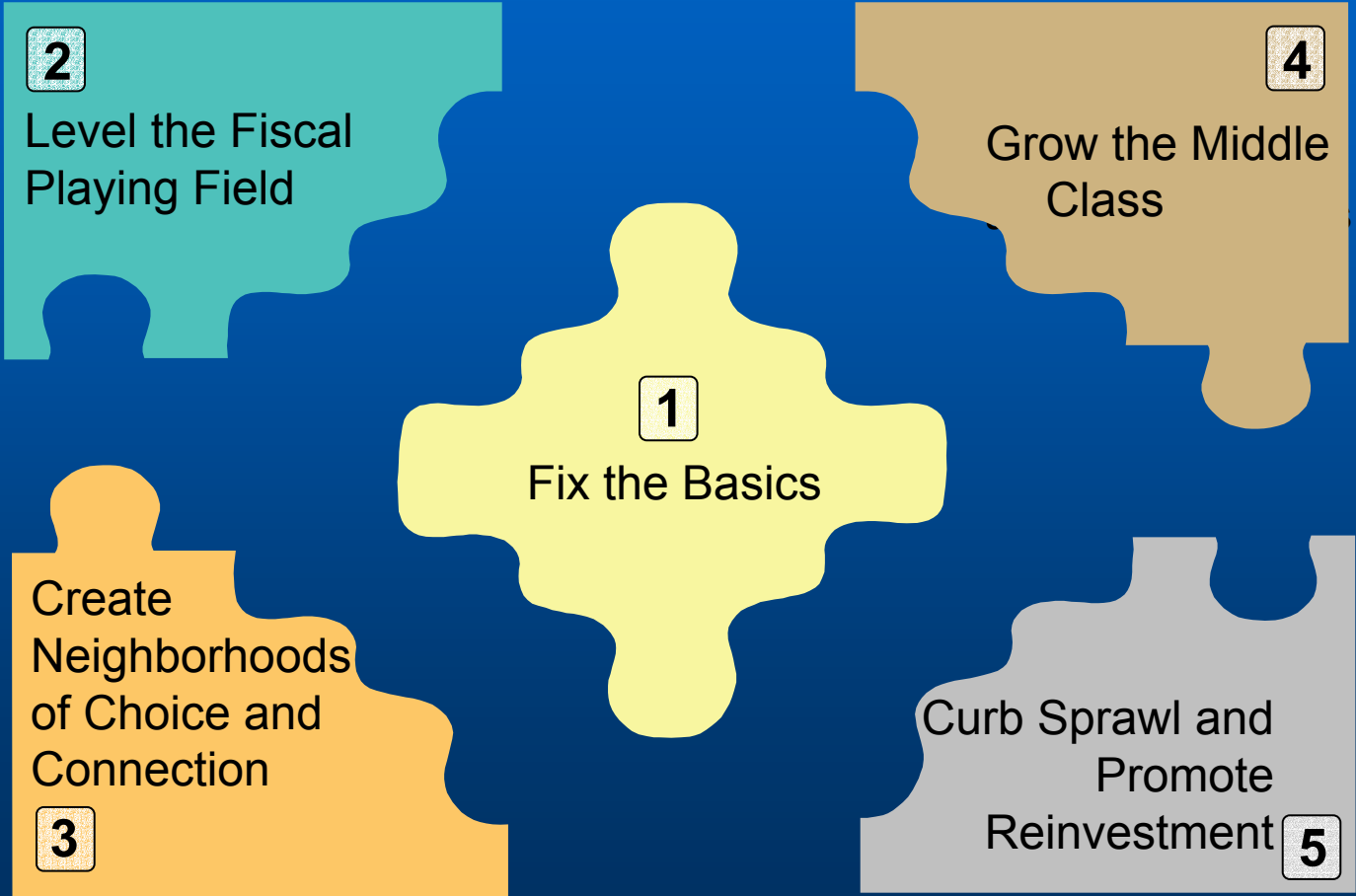
A federal and state policy agenda for First Suburbs

FIX THE BASICS: Good schools, safe streets, competitive taxes and services, 21st century infrastructure, functioning real estate market

LEVEL THE FISCAL PLAYING FIELD: Ensure fiscal equity for basic services.

CREATE NEIGHBORHOODS OF CHOICE AND CONNECTION: Improve neighborhoods and expand opportunities for all.

EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKING FAMILIES: Attract middle income families, retain upwardly mobile individuals (from immigrants to maturing professionals), build the incomes of existing population from within

CURB SPRAWL AND PROMOTE REINVESTMENT: Transportation policies, building codes, reinvestment strategies.

First suburbs need to organize coalitions around state reform and local practices

Organize for success

→ Build regional and statewide political coalitions that reflect their unique set of issues and challenges

→ Identify funding to staff and support coalitions

→ Partner with university and research organizations for independent research analysis and policy positions

Building on the success of Ohio's First Suburbs consortia, other groups have organized throughout the U.S.

Examples of First Suburban Coalitions

Atlanta, Cleveland, Chicago, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, Detroit, Minneapolis, Kansas City, and Philadelphia have established some form of coalition.

A dozen other metropolitan areas have organized initial meetings.

Constituent groups like the National League of Cities are also organizing First Suburbs.

www.brookings.edu/metro