

Metropolitan Washington: A New Immigrant Gateway¹

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to describe the ascent of Metropolitan Washington from an area with low levels of immigration area to a major U.S. destination.

Methodology/approach - Drawing on a growing body of research on immigration to Washington, D.C. and data from the American Community Survey (ACS), trends are examined in detail to illustrate how this immigrant gateway fits into the national historical picture.

Findings - The findings analyze the historical comparative settlement patterns of immigrants to the United States to demonstrate how Washington has emerged as the 7th largest immigrant gateway. It further analyzes metropolitan level data on country of origin and residence to show the diversity of the immigrant population and their dispersal to suburban areas from the central core over the past four decades.

Social implications - The paper also highlights some conflict in new suburban destinations within metropolitan Washington that experienced fast and recent growth. But immigrant incorporation has worked well in the past and Washington can continue to work to be a model of immigrant integration as local organizations, governments, and communities continue to confront the challenges of immigration in productive and sustainable ways.

Originality/value of paper - This paper combines the historical settlement of immigrants across America with an in depth examination of one of the newest and largest immigrant gateways, the U.S. capitol region, Washington, D.C.

Keywords: immigration; Washington, D.C.; immigrant gateways; suburban settlement; local immigration policy

The Washington, D.C. metropolitan area's history is distinctly dissimilar to its East Coast neighbors, New York, Philadelphia and Boston. Never an industrial or commercial center, Washington's history of slavery and the settlement of freed persons kept wages low. Various waves of immigrants generally found better opportunities in cities to the north, which began to industrialize rapidly in the mid-19th century. As Europeans poured into cities in the Northeast and Midwest for manufacturing jobs, Washington developed as the nation's capital, with the consolidation of the federal administration there (Manning 1996).

Thus, until late into the 19th century, newcomers to Washington were largely domestic migrants, particularly Southern blacks (Singer and Brown, 2001). During a time when other cities saw their foreign-born populations skyrocket, Washington's immigrant population remained small in comparison.¹ In 1900, Washington's population was only 7 percent foreign-born, whereas along the East Coast, Boston's population was 35 percent foreign-born, New York's population was 37 percent, and Philadelphia's was 23 percent. In the Great Lakes region, immigrants made up one-third of the population in the cities of Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland. Of the nation's 50 largest cities in that year, only 8 had immigrant shares below 10 percent, and most of those places were in the South (Gibson and Lennon, 1999).

¹ Data from the Census Bureau used in this chapter refer to the *foreign-born* population, however, the terms *immigrant* and *foreign-born* are used interchangeably. The *foreign-born* population encompasses all persons born outside the United States, including legal permanent residents, temporary immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and to the extent to which they are counted, undocumented immigrants.

Fast-forward to the present, and more than one-in-five residents in metropolitan Washington is foreign-born. However, the region has only recently joined the ranks of major metropolitan immigrant destinations. In 1970, only 4 percent of greater Washington's population was born outside the United States. By 1990, 12 percent of metropolitan Washington's population was foreign-born and by 2010 that share had risen to 22 percent. While the entire metropolitan area population has grown by 79 percent between 1970 and 2010, the immigrant population has grown by over 820 percent during the same period. Greater metropolitan Washington now ranks as the 7th largest metropolitan concentration of immigrants in the United States (See Table 1).

Table 1. Metropolitan Areas with the Largest Foreign-Born Population, 2010

	Foreign Born	Percent Foreign Born
1 New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA	5,447,131	28.8%
2 Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	4,408,398	34.3%
3 Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL	2,167,215	38.8%
4 Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	1,669,752	17.6%
5 Houston-Sugar Land-Bayton, TX	1,331,684	22.3%
6 San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA	1,303,159	30.0%
7 Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	1,223,159	21.8%
8 Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	1,123,191	17.5%
9 Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA	932,571	22.0%
10 Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH	767,845	16.8%

Source: Author's analysis of 2010 American Community Survey

Washington fits into a group of metropolitan areas that bloomed as immigrant gateways in the latter half of the 20th century, during a period of high immigration into the United States. While places like New York and Chicago have long held an attraction for immigrants throughout the 20th century (and prior), large metropolitan areas such as

Los Angeles and Houston rapidly gained foreign-born residents only after World War II. Since the 1990s, economic opportunities rose in new areas, particularly the in Sunbelt. Immigrant settlement patterns began to shift away from more traditional zones to many places with little history of immigration. Washington, along with other new destinations such as Atlanta, Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Las Vegas in the last decades of the twentieth century, have become significant destinations due to burgeoning job markets, particularly in the construction, services, and technology sectors. That trend continued right up until the Great Recession when immigration to the United States slowed considerably, and many of the fastest growing metro areas were hit hardest by the financial crisis and collapse of the housing market. Future metropolitan flows will be tied to the uneven pace of economic recovery (Wilson and Singer, 2010).

However, in the period prior to the recession immigration flows had reached historic highs. Although in absolute numbers the majority of immigrants went to the more established gateways, the fastest growth has been in the newest destination areas. The changing metropolitan geography of immigrant settlement has both transformed many new places into immigrant gateways, but it has also had an impact on long established destinations.

This paper describes this new geography of immigration, and highlights how immigrant destinations in the 1990s and 2000s differ from earlier settlement patterns. Drawing on a growing body of research on immigration to Washington, D.C., and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, including the American Community Survey, trends are examined in detail to illustrate an immigrant gateway that has only recently emerged as

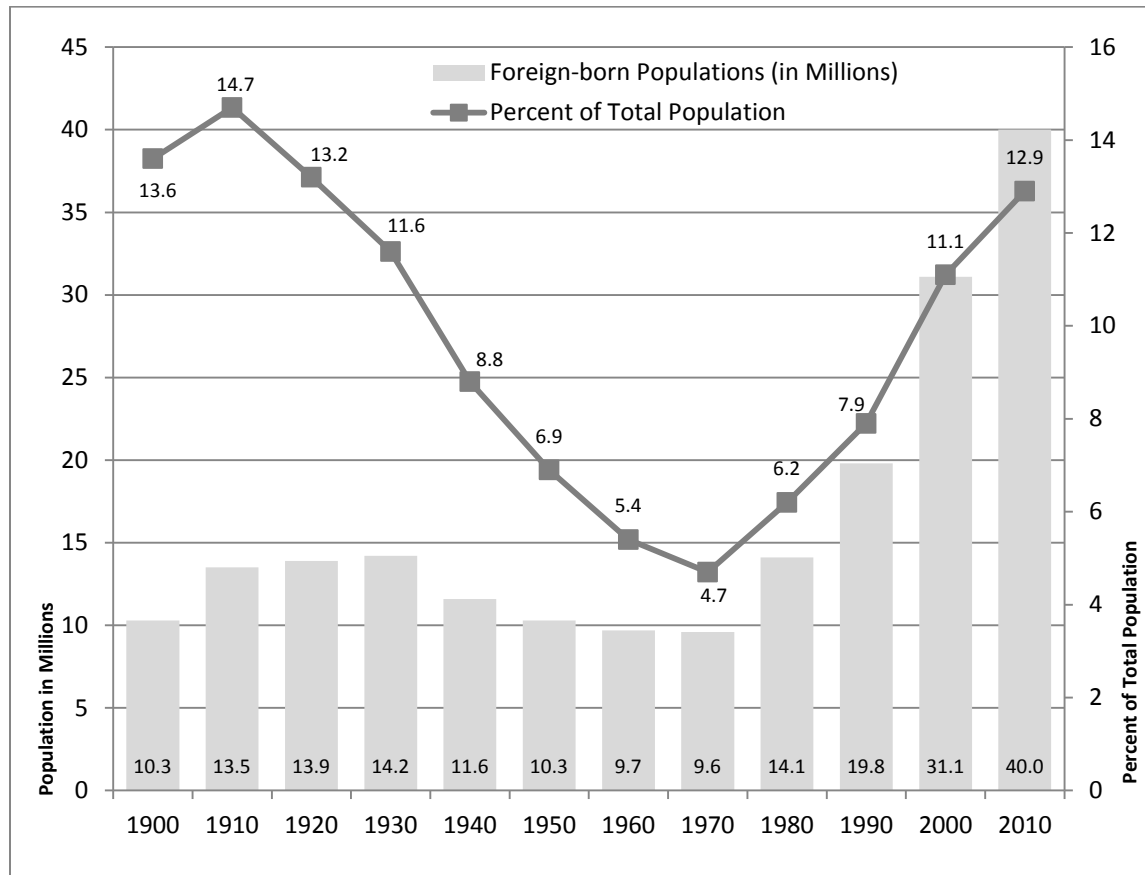
a major destination. Particular attention is given to Latin American immigrants in the region, a diverse and fast-growing group that has experienced a mixed public policy response, mirroring the trends in the country as a whole.

HISTORICAL IMMIGRATION AND URBAN SETTLEMENT TRENDS

Immigration to the United States has varied considerably over the past 110 years (see Figure 1 which shows both the number of immigrants and the share of the population that is foreign born by decade). High levels of immigration were present during the early part of the 20th century, a continuation of trends in the late-1800s. Between 1900 and 1930, the foreign-born population increased, from 10.3 million to 14.2 million; however, as a percentage of the population, the foreign-born peaked in 1910 at 14.7 percent, dropping to 11.6 percent of the total population by 1930. The Great Depression significantly reduced the worldwide movement of people and net immigration to the United States stalled. Net immigration levels were also low during the period between World War II and the late 1960s due to restrictive immigration laws, which led to a tapering off of the number of immigrants from 11.6 million in 1940 to 9.6 million in 1970. At the same time, the lower levels of immigration coincided with the “baby boom” when fertility rates were high, producing higher shares of the total population born inside the United States. Combined, these two factors produced the lowest share of the U.S. population that was foreign-born on record at 4.7 percent in 1970. The immigrant share of the population began to climb again as the less restrictive immigration laws enacted in 1965 brought fresh waves of immigrants,

numbering 4.5 million during the 1970s. This policy change, together with the mobility fostered by economic growth in many developing nations, brought about an immigration boom of unprecedented proportions in the 1980s and 1990s. By 2010, the foreign-born population numbered 40.0 million or 12.9 percent of the population.

Figure 1. Foreign-Born Population and Percent of Total Population of the United States: 1990-2010



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data

In addition to the varying cadence in immigrant flows to the United States, their countries of origin have changed considerably during the course of the 20th century.

Today most immigrants come from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia, but for most of the 20th century they came largely from Europe. For example, during the first two

decades of the century, 85 percent of the 14.5 million immigrant newcomers arrived from Europe, the majority from Southern and Eastern European countries. However, the last two decades saw the reverse: more than 85 percent arrived from non-European countries.

During both periods marking the beginning and the end of the 20th century the national economy experienced great industrial transformation. In the earlier period, the U.S. economy was shifting from an agricultural to an industrial economy. By the end of the century, America's economy had moved away from manufacturing toward "knowledge-based" industries. The demand for workers in high growth sectors during both periods of economic restructuring was met in part by immigrants.

Following World War II, extensive development of highways and the suburban construction boom in housing led to the decentralization of cities. Central cities began to lose population, especially those in the industrial core in the East and Midwest. By the 1970s, the massive deconcentration of economic activity away from central cities and outward to the suburbs led the way for suburban areas to become employment areas in their own right, attractive to both native-born and foreign-born. By the end of the 20th century, two major shifts characterize immigrant settlement patterns that broke with established patterns. Immigrants found many opportunities in new and unexpected metropolitan areas with little history of immigrant settlement and they also made inroads to suburban areas.

Prior research on the changing trends in immigrant destinations have identified eight major types of immigrant gateways among the 100 largest metropolitan areas based on size and change of the foreign-born population between 1900 and 2010 (see Singer 2004 and Hall, Singer, De Jong, and Graefe, 2011). This typology captures broad historical settlement trends and helps place metropolitan Washington's immigration history into a broader geography (see Hall, et al 2011 for a fuller discussion and identification of gateways by metropolitan area).

Former gateways (seven metro areas) are mostly found in old manufacturing areas in the northeast or Midwest such as Cleveland, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh, which once attracted immigrants in the early 1900s but no longer do. *Major-continuous gateways* (four metro areas) include New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Boston, which all have large and sustained immigrant populations and continue to house higher than average shares. *Minor-continuous gateways* (fifteen metro areas) have histories similar to the major-continuous gateways, only more modest levels of immigration. This category includes a distinct set of metropolitan areas in the Northeast such as New Haven, Bridgeport, and Worcester, as well as another group in border states including McAllen, El Paso, Modesto, and Stockton.

Post-World War II gateways (seven metro areas) like Los Angeles, Miami, and Houston began attracting immigrants in large numbers only during the latter part of the 20th century, despite the fact that they are some of the largest gateways today (Table 1). Washington joined this category of metropolitan gateways after several decades of high

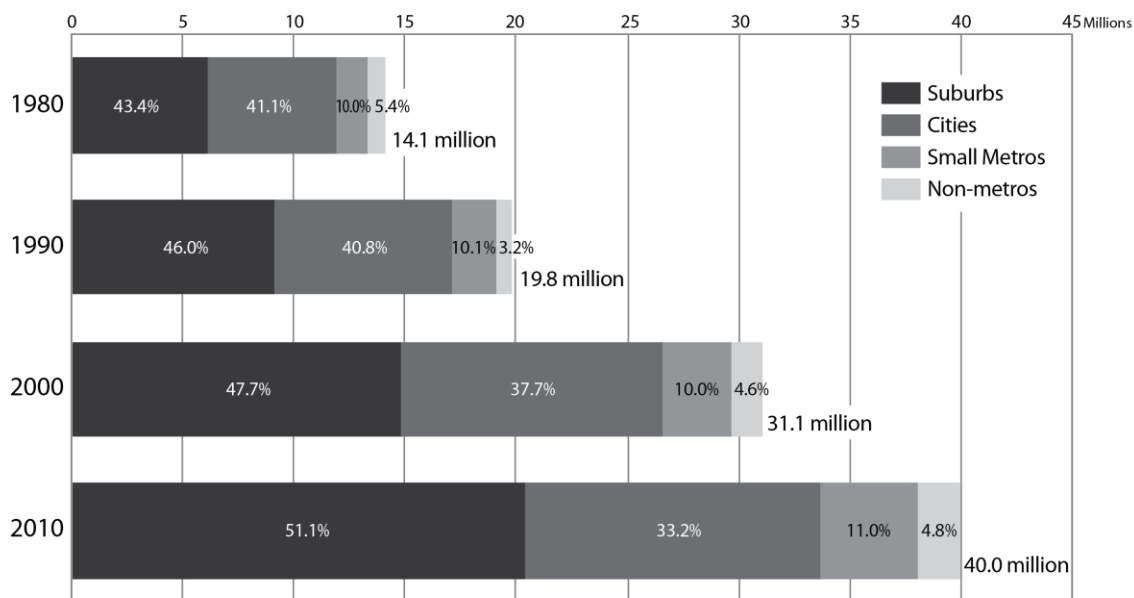
immigration, starting in the 1990s (Singer, 2004). With more than 1.2 million immigrants in 2010, the metropolitan area has emerged as one of the largest metropolitan foreign-born settlements, ranking 7th and just behind the more established destinations Chicago, Houston, and San Francisco.

Places with very fast immigrant growth in the past 20 years alone, such as Atlanta and Phoenix stand out as *emerging gateways* (five metro areas), metropolitan areas that have only recently become major destinations. *Re-emerging gateways* (nine metro areas) include Minneapolis-St. Paul, Denver, and Seattle. These places began the 20th century drawing large numbers of immigrants, but during the rest of the 20th century had low levels of immigration until recent turnarounds. Finally, there are the *pre-emerging gateways* (eight metro areas). These metropolitan areas are the newest, fast-growing immigrant populations with little history of immigration, such as Nashville and Raleigh. These metropolitan areas have relatively small immigrant populations but will likely continue to grow as destinations. In addition, 45 of the 100 largest metropolitan areas have very small immigrant populations or modest inflows and are designated as *low-immigration metro areas*.²

² Singer (2004) developed the typology of immigrant gateways after the 2000 census was released using various thresholds of the size and share of the immigrant population and Washington was classified as an emerging gateway. An updated typology with more recent data and using current metropolitan area definitions was completed by Hall, Singer, De Jong and Graefe (2011). The additional decade results in a few metropolitan areas shifting from one category to another, reflecting the dynamic growth of immigrant populations at the metropolitan level. Most importantly for this analysis, Washington, along with Dallas-Fort Worth, which were originally identified as emerging gateways are re-designated as Post-WWII gateways. Other notable changes

The number of immigrants settling in central cities of large metropolitan areas has also shifted. As recently as 1980, equal shares of immigrants in the 100 largest metropolitan areas lived in cities and suburbs, (41 and 43 percent respectively, see Figure 2). By 2010, that distribution had tipped to suburban areas so that now a slight majority of U.S. immigrants live in the suburbs of major metropolitan areas (Wilson and Singer 2011).

Figure 2. Residence of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States, 1980-2010



Note: Cities and suburbs are defined for the 95 largest metropolitan areas based on 2010 population. Primary cities are those that are first named in the metropolitan area title and any incorporated places that had at least 100,000 total population in 2010. The residual of the metro area is defined as suburban. In five of the 100 largest metropolitan areas, foreign-born population data at the city level are not available from the ACS. Thus, metro areas that are not in the top 95 are classified as “small metros.”

Source: Author’s calculations of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data

include Baltimore and Philadelphia changing from former to re-emerging gateways and Austin moving from pre-emerging to emerging gateways.

In the intertwined histories of cities and immigration, this trend marks a new development. In the classic model of European migration and settlement to the United States as described by the “Chicago School” of sociology, immigrants settled close to the factories, shops, and institutions that employed them, often clustered in ethnic neighborhoods (e.g., Park and Burgess, 1921). As they established themselves economically and “moved up the ladder” many immigrants or their second generation offspring were able to improve their living conditions by moving to the more spacious suburbs with more desirable housing and services.

This narrative has been further elaborated by social scientists who have found some empirical support for the “spatial assimilation” of immigrants (see, Massey, 1985; Alba et al., 1999a and 1999b). However, more recent research on the suburban residential patterns among immigrants shows that contemporary settlement patterns are diverging from the traditional pathways (Singer, Hardwick, Brettell, 2008).

Several distinctive patterns of immigrant settlement have emerged across metropolitan areas, some of it due to their historically different development trends. For example, and most notably, although the city-to-suburbs movement among the foreign born has been prevalent in the historically established immigration gateways, the same patterns are not observed in places that began receiving immigrants only recently. The central cities of *major-continuous*, *former* gateways, and *re-emerging gateways* developed their central cities during an era that was before automobiles dominated transportation. Metropolitan areas such as Baltimore, New York, and San Francisco developed dense urban cores earlier in comparison to the more sprawling

nature of many of the *post-World War II* and *emerging gateways*. Houston, Atlanta, and Washington D.C., by contrast, are dominated by highways and extensive suburban and exurban settlement. Thus, immigration to the newer destination metropolitan areas took place entirely in the era of population and job decentralization and suburbanization. Consequently, many immigrants in the contemporary period, particularly in the newest gateways, move directly to suburban areas from abroad, bypassing central cities altogether. The newness of the phenomenon, especially in metro areas absent a history of immigration, can be a shock to schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods (Singer, et al., 2008).

WASHINGTON, D.C.: A CONTEMPORARY IMMIGRANT GATEWAY

In the new geography of immigration, metropolitan Washington is a leading example of newly emerged gateways. In contrast to the current national economic climate, the region's economy has remained relatively stable due in large part to the presence of the federal government and associated institutions. The base economy tends toward "knowledge" industries and attracts large numbers of highly skilled workers, including the foreign-born. The relatively fast population growth has bolstered a healthy construction and service sector, attracting immigrants with skills across the spectrum. Washington's increasing internationalization began largely with professionals and students and has continued to grow through several different processes. In addition to a continuous flow of high-skilled, professional immigrants, the past three decades have brought large waves of refugees that have been resettled in

the region, particularly from Southeast Asia and Africa. Furthermore, social networks entice immigrants to join family members and friends already living in the Washington region. These “pushes” and “pulls” have resulted in the rising flow of newcomers to of various backgrounds to live and work in Washington.

In the central cities of many of the *continuous gateways*, there are perpetual immigrant and ethnic neighborhoods such as the Lower East Side in New York, Chinatown in San Francisco, and Pilsen/Little Village in Chicago. These neighborhoods have housed, employed, and otherwise incorporated immigrants for most of the entire 20th century. Although various waves of immigrant groups have inhabited these neighborhoods, they have served the same function to each wave. They provide a reliable port of entry for immigrant newcomers where they can join others who have common origins, languages, and customs, and to whom commercial establishments orient their goods and service. Immigrant enclaves serve to anchor and establish immigrant groups economically and residentially. However, these neighborhoods also have their limitations and while they are places where immigrants often land, they also become places to launch from. In contrast, residential ethnic enclaves, in the traditional sense, are virtually nonexistent in Washington.

In more established immigrant gateways, these neighborhoods have primarily existed in central cities. Washington did have some early immigrant residential enclaves such as Swampoodle, a neighborhood presently located near the U.S. Capitol and Union Station. This area first housed Irish workers in the 1800s followed by Italian immigrants in the 1900s. However, few traces are left of these ethnic neighborhoods as the work

that brought the immigrants there in the first place eventually diminished and people moved on. These early settlements in Washington tended to be temporary especially due to the fact that workers located there to be close to the job, but housing conditions were poor, overcrowding was a problem, and crime was high (Cary, 1996). Though it was the temporary housing that facilitated the settlement of workers, as they could, people found other more desirable places to live. And in the case of Swampoodle, when projects like the U.S. Capitol finished, immigrants moved on to the next opportunity, whether it was in Washington or elsewhere (Singer and Brown, 2000; Cary, 1996). The lack of long-standing immigrant neighborhoods in Washington has a direct bearing on the contemporary settlement patterns of immigrant newcomers. As a result, factors such as jobs, housing, and transit accessibility determine location decisions by immigrant newcomers and strong social networks promote those areas. In turn, the policies relating to their incorporation at the can vary by the history of settlement within metropolitan areas, as is the case in metropolitan Washington.

Diversity Abounds: National and Regional Origins

An outstanding characteristic of Washington's immigrant population is the wide variety of national origins from which the foreign born come. One of the earliest studies to note this trend used Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) admissions data for legal permanent immigrants in the 1990s and identified that metropolitan Washington's immigrants came from 193 countries (Singer, Friedman, Cheung, and Price, 2001).

Table 2 uses recent data from the 2010 Census American Community Survey.

These data reveal the 30 largest country of origin groups comprise over three-quarters of the immigrant population. Unlike places with a single large regional or national group such as Los Angeles (41 percent from Mexico), Miami (32 percent from Cuba), and Chicago (40 percent from Mexico), Washington does not have a dominant country of origin group that comprises a large part of the population.

Table 2. Top Thirty Countries or Regions of Birth, Washington Metropolitan Area, 2010

	Number	Percent of Foreign-Born
1 El Salvador	167,105	13.7
2 India	78,523	6.4
3 Korea	60,220	4.9
4 Mexico	49,301	4.0
5 Vietnam	47,697	3.9
6 Philippines	46,418	3.8
7 China, excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan	46,012	3.8
8 Guatemala	39,506	3.2
9 Peru	38,076	3.1
10 Ethiopia	37,074	3.0
11 Honduras	34,230	2.8
12 Bolivia	32,800	2.8
13 Iran	24,017	2.0
14 Pakistan	20,658	1.7
15 Nigeria	19,872	1.6
16 Germany	17,959	1.5
17 Ghana	17,459	1.4
18 Cameroon	16,524	1.4
19 Jamaica	15,859	1.3
20 Colombia	15,191	1.2
21 Canada	13,219	1.1
22 Taiwan	12,364	1.0
23 Other Western Africa	12,069	1.0
24 Other Eastern Africa	11,909	1.0
25 Nicaragua	11,817	1.0
26 Sierra Leone	10,302	0.8

27	Russia	10,105	0.8
28	Bangladesh	10,061	0.8
29	United Kingdom, excluding England and Scotland	9,772	0.8
30	Brazil	9,163	0.7
Total Foreign Born		1,223,159	76.5

Source: Source: Author's calculations of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data

In terms of world regions, however, immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean are the largest group at 40 percent. Latin Americans in Washington have a unique settlement history which sets them apart from many other metropolitan areas. The earliest waves of immigrants were from Cuba and the Dominican Republic in the 1950s and 1960s, who joined a small group from South America, including Peru and Bolivia (Cadaval, 1996). Prior to the 1980s, immigrants from Latin America to the Washington region were more likely to come from South America or Caribbean origins (Singer, 2009). In the 1980s, as civil conflict escalated and natural disasters exacerbated economic and political conditions, Central Americans began an exodus that continues to the present. Earlier migration of Central American women as domestic workers, recruited by diplomatic and international workers in Washington, set the base for what was to become an exodus from the region (Repak, 1995).

Today, the largest of Washington's origin groups is from El Salvador, with more than 150,000 residents, but even as the largest group, they are only 14 of the total. Nationally, Washington's Salvadoran population is second in size only to Los Angeles's. Guatemalans and Hondurans make up another 3 percent each and Nicaraguans 1 percent of the total. Peruvians and Bolivians each contribute another 3 percent each.

Mexicans, relative newcomers to Washington, have grown quickly to become the 4th ranked origin group in 2010, with nearly 50,000 immigrants in the region. The Mexican population has grown rapidly, as it has in other Eastern metropolitan areas, reflecting the Eastward spread of the Mexican population to new destinations outside the traditional Southwestern states.

Many Salvadoran residents, along with Hondurans and Nicaraguans, are permitted to stay in the United States under *temporary protected status* (TPS). TPS allows citizens of specific countries facing civil war, natural disaster, or their aftermath to register to live and work in the United States but does not necessarily lead to a green card. While TPS is not permanent, it has been continually extended; as this book went to press, it has been extended until 2013. This conditional status likely has an impact on their economic, social and civic integration into the region. In addition to those already mentioned, several other groups from various countries can currently qualify for TPS including Haiti, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Syria.

Immigrants from various parts of Asia are represented in the remainder of the top ten groups except for the last one, Ethiopia. Ranked second, immigrants from India represent almost 80,000 immigrants, and Koreans another 60,000 immigrants; the two countries compose 6.4 and 4.9 percent of the foreign-born population, respectively. Immigrants from Vietnam, the Philippines, and China each make up another 4 percent of immigrants. This cluster of immigrant groups is geographically diverse and together comprises about 25 percent of the total. They are also quite varied with regard to their languages, religions, economic status, and reasons for migration. Many of the

Vietnamese, for example, were part of an early refugee wave dating back to the 1970s (Wood, 1997). Others are more mixed and include economic, academic, and political motivations.

Another defining feature of the immigrant population is the large number of immigrants from the African continent. More than 14 percent of Washington metropolitan area's immigrants are from African countries, as compared with just 4 percent of the national foreign-born population. The region's 173,000 Africans are second only to New York, however, New York's African immigrants are less prominent at only 4 percent of the metropolitan area's total. Only Minneapolis-St. Paul and Columbus have higher shares of Africans among their immigrant populations (Brookings, 2012; also see Wilson, 2003; Chacko, 2003). Immigrants from Ethiopia rank 10th among all groups at 3 percent of the total. Also on the list of top origin countries are African immigrants from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone, each contributing less than just one or two percent of the total.³ Like other regions of origin, Africans have a mixture of motivations—economic, political, religious, and academic—that are reflected in the varied groups in the region.

³ Due to small numbers of Africans from some countries present in the United States, the Census Bureau collapses all but the largest countries together to form sub-regional groups, for example, as shown on Table 2, Other Western Africa and Other Eastern Africa.

Geographic settlement and expansion

Over one million immigrants settled in the Washington metropolitan area since 1970, when only 133,000 foreign-born residents called the nation's capital home. In 1990, 12 percent of the metropolitan population was foreign-born. By 2000, 17 percent of the metropolitan population was foreign-born, rising to 22 percent by 2010.

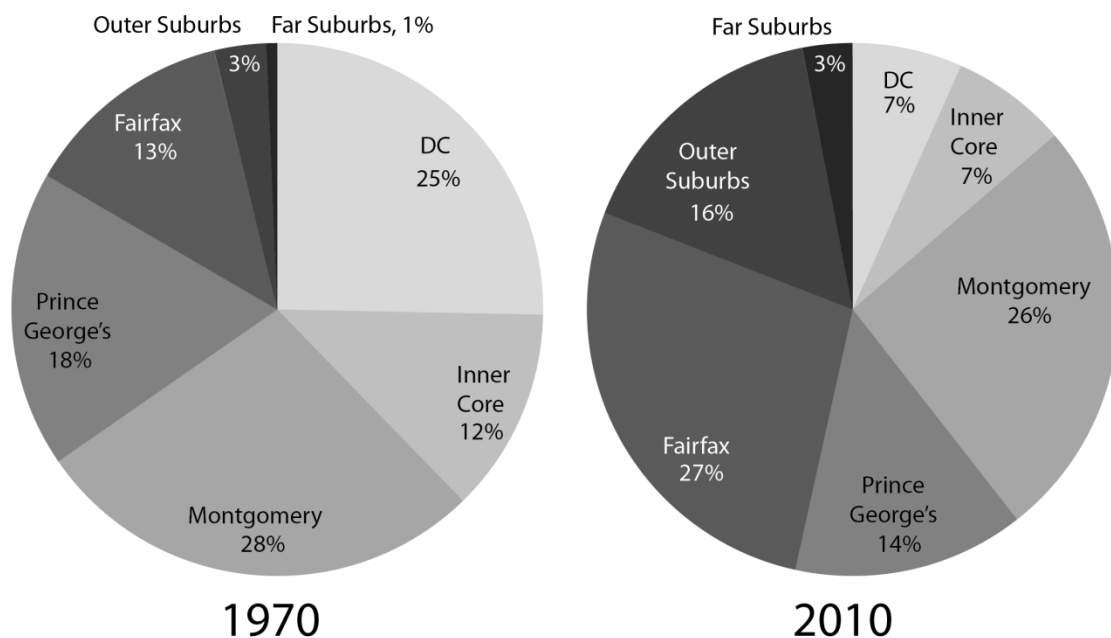
Washington's foreign-born population does not yet approach the scale of the largest metropolitan immigrant destinations; indeed metropolitan New York has 5.5 million and Los Angeles has 4.4 million. However, Washington, Houston, San Francisco, and Dallas-Fort Worth are all in the ballpark range of 1.2 million (see Table 1). Although these metropolitan areas all have a similar number of immigrants, it is the differential growth within them that can have consequences for many local jurisdictions.

The Washington metropolitan region is large (includes 22 separate jurisdictions) and politically complex because it includes counties in three states, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, as well as the capital city of Washington, D.C.⁴ The region's outward growth and change in the distribution of immigrant residence is shown in Figure 3. The foreign born have shifted from being highly concentrated in the inner core jurisdictions of the District of Columbia (25 percent) and Arlington and Alexandria (12 percent)

⁴ The Washington D.C. metropolitan area used for this study is the 2003 census-defined Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): the District of Columbia; the "inner core" (Arlington County and Alexandria City); the "inner suburbs" (Fairfax County, VA (including Fairfax City and Falls Church City) and Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, MD); the "outer suburbs" (Calvert, Charles, Frederick Counties, MD and Loudoun, Prince William (including Manassas and Manassas Park Cities), Stafford Counties, VA); and the "far suburbs" (Clark, Fauquier, Spotsylvania, Warren Counties and Fredericksburg City, VA and Jefferson County, WV).

during low levels of immigration in 1970 to a much more regionally dispersed population. Whereas the core area housed 37 percent of the foreign-born in 1970, by 2010 only 14 percent of all immigrants resided in these same areas, even though during this period the absolute numbers rose rapidly. During this same period, the proportion of the region's immigrants residing in the inner suburbs (the three largest inner counties of Fairfax, VA, Montgomery, MD, and Prince George's, MD) increased from a combined 59 percent to 67 percent.

Figure 3. Share of Foreign Born by Jurisdiction, Washington Metropolitan Area, 1970 and 2010



Source: Author's calculations of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data

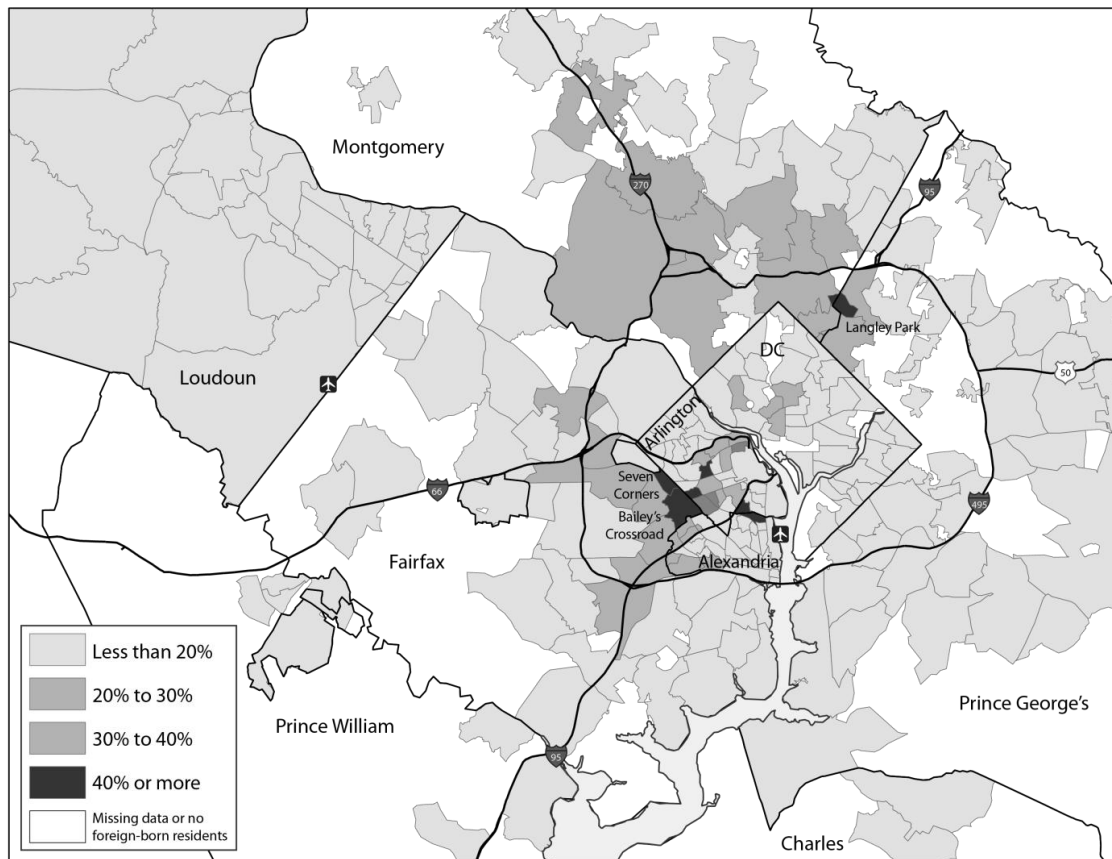
Even more impressive is that the outer suburbs house 16 percent of the region's immigrants in 2010, up from only 3 percent in 1970. Immigrants also began settling in far suburbs, which housed 3 percent of immigrants in 2010 and less than 1 percent in 1970. Thus during this period, the immigrant population became more residually

dense in the inner suburbs while also expanding to the outer suburbs. While the closer-in jurisdictions in the region have had little problem integrating immigrants despite their rapid growth and diverse origins, languages, religions, and cultures, some outer suburban jurisdictions have proposed or enacted restrictive legislation in response to fast changes on the ground (Singer, Wilson, DeRenzis, 2009; Svajlenka, 2010).

More detailed spatial trends are shown in Maps 1 and 2, which display the share of the total population of the region that is foreign born in 1990 and 2005-2009 by place within the metropolitan area.⁵ In 1990, immigrants were relatively residentially concentrated in the inner core of D.C., Alexandria, and Arlington County spreading west into the inner suburbs of Fairfax and north of the District line into Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, particularly in areas inside the Capital Beltway (see Map 1).

⁵ With the elimination of the long-form decennial census, these data are not available for 2010. The American Community Survey 5-year estimates are used to provide greater geographic detail.

Map 1. Percent Foreign Born, Selected Places, Washington Metropolitan Area, 1990



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Decennial Census, Geolytics normalized Neighborhood Change Database, Neighborhood Info USA. Note: Foreign-born percentage is measured at the tract level in Arlington, Alexandria, and Loudoun Counties, neighborhood cluster level in the District of Columbia, and Census Designated Places, cities, towns, and villages for the remaining jurisdictions. 1990 tract level data is normalized to 2000 U.S. Census Bureau geographies using Geolytics Neighborhood Change Database.

The remainder of the region's residents were primarily native-born. Only a few key places stand out with a high concentration of immigrants, namely Langley Park (60 percent) in Prince George's County as well as Seven Corners (48 percent) and Bailey's Crossroads (43 percent) in Fairfax County. Several neighborhoods in Arlington, as well, were densely populated by foreign-born residents.

By 2005-2009, immigrant residents were even more densely concentrated in the inner areas, and over the same period, they also fanned out more deeply in the three

large counties surrounding the core: Fairfax, Montgomery and Prince George's (see Map 2). Most noteworthy are the deep concentrations in suburban areas such as Wheaton-Glenmont, Gaithersburg, Herndon, Langley Park/Adelphi, and Annandale, places profiled by Price and Singer (2008) as "edge gateways." Edge gateways are localities that have experienced fast growth in their foreign-born populations, "transforming those areas from native-born white suburbs into identifiable places where a diverse mix of immigrant groups cluster" (Price and Singer, 2008: 138).

In the outer suburban counties of Loudoun and Prince William, where the friction has been the strongest in the region, immigrant residents are clustered near Sterling and Manassas. These trends notwithstanding, it is important to note that the residential growth patterns shown in these maps also reflect the general population trends of outward growth in the 1990s.

Map 2. Percent Foreign Born, Selected Places, Washington Metropolitan Area, 2005-2009



Source: Author's analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2005-2009, NeighborhoodInfo DC. Note: Foreign-born percentage is measured at the tract level in Arlington, Alexandria, and Loudoun Counties, neighborhood cluster level in the District of Columbia, and Census Designated Places, cities, towns, and villages for the remaining jurisdictions.

Mixed Local Policy Response: Demographic Change and Politics

Mirroring the national picture in many ways, the Washington region has had its own uneven geography of immigrant settlement, with some areas having a more established pattern and others popping up in unexpected places. The District of Columbia, Arlington, and Alexandria, in the heart of the region, over time developed the skills and infrastructure to accommodate and incorporate immigrants with little notable

public conflict. However, as regional outward growth attracted more immigrants, places with rapid increases in immigration had very little experience in integrating immigrants and virtually no infrastructure to do so. Recently, and over a short time, areas in the far reaches of Fairfax County, along with parts of Loudoun and Prince William Counties, have experienced significant neighborhood change. Schools, residential neighborhoods, healthcare delivery services, and worksites, were affected by rapid growth combined with demographic change. This change was most visible to the public in the form of informal day labor sites, many of which cropped up as immigrants found plenty of opportunity to work, especially in the burgeoning construction sector.

New settlement areas within existing metro areas as in the Washington case—just like immigrants in newer destinations nationwide—break fresh ground by making residential choices that are based on opportunities related to housing, transportation, public goods, and services. Eventually social and familial networks can shape the perception of the warmth of reception associated with particular locations (Price and Singer, 2008). In metropolitan Washington, this was the case in several localities which experienced conflict and political pressures that induced policy crackdowns, including one (in Prince William County, VA) that at the time it passed, was the most restrictive local policy in the nation aimed at controlling unauthorized immigrants. Since then, state laws around the country have been passed that have gone even farther, first in Arizona in 2010 and then in Alabama in 2011. These strategies have succeeded at the state and local level, in part because Congress has been at a contentious stalemate on

immigration reform since they last debated changing immigration policy in 2007 (Varsanyi, 2010).

Price and Singer (2008) described local policy response in five suburban “edge gateways” and showed the variation of local policy response in Washington. In some places there has been a positive reception, including policies and practices that support immigrants and even marketing of the localities as a celebration of diversity (Wheaton and Annandale). In others there has been conflict and policymaking around controlling immigrants, often related to day labor sites and the presumptive legal status of Latin American residents, particularly in Herndon and Gaithersburg (Svajlenka, 2010).

Most notable, Prince William County has received national attention for its crackdown on unauthorized immigrants. The County approved a resolution that required police to check the immigration status of anyone detained for violating a state or local law, including a traffic violation, if there was probable cause to believe the person was not legally present in the United States. In addition, the county police department signed a 287(g) Memorandum of Understanding with Immigration and Customs Enforcement giving federal authority to some local law enforcement staff (Singer, et al., 2009).

While at the time, the policy change seemed to come out of the blue in a region that generally had a great capacity to absorb immigrants, the in-depth study of the case of Prince William County by Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzis (2009) emphasized that rapid demographic change was a key component spurring the action that County officials took, but that several additional factors explain the restrictionist policy change. These

factors include federal-local debates on the responsibility for the presence of unauthorized immigrants, media attention to immigration issues— especially new forms of media, high profile examples from other local governments, and the availability of “boilerplate” legislation by an outside organization. In addition, the electoral calendar played a lead role in that immigration became a hot button political issue at the time when all but one of the County supervisors was up for re-election. The confluence of these inter-related contexts, along with the absence of immigrant advocacy groups and service providers, led to the highly publicized restrictionist action.

Soon after the County implemented its policy the Great Recession took hold, wreaking havoc on the local economy, including the housing and construction industry as well as commercial establishments. An independent evaluation of the policy changes noted a decrease in illegal immigrants, a reduction of some crimes, and an amelioration of neighborhood problems, but stressed that it is difficult to disentangle the direct effects of the policy from the effects of the downturn in the economy. Moreover, the report noted that despite serious efforts to implement the policy with an education and communication campaign, many residents are still confused by the policy change and the police department suffered a significant shift in satisfaction of local law enforcement by the local Latino community (Gutterbock et. al., 2010).

CONCLUSION

The long and sustained wave of immigration since mid-century, interrupted only recently by the Great Recession, coincided with the growth and outward expansion of metropolitan areas. Many immigrant newcomers, particularly beginning in the 1990s, settled in areas outside the traditional zones, transforming local social landscapes and elevating immigration issues that had affected just a handful of places in a few states to a multiplicity of places in most states across the country. The rise of the suburban metropolis and pace of economic growth in many new communities has drawn immigrant newcomers in large numbers so large that there are now more immigrants residing in suburbs than in central cities. Washington, D.C. is a leading example of a newer destination with a largely suburbanized immigration population.

The growth and change of the immigrant population in the Washington metropolitan area has been nothing less than profound during the past several decades. The sheer size of the immigrant population notwithstanding, the diversity of the origins of Washington's immigrants, and the relative success of their integration make it stand out relative to other metropolitan areas (Hall et al., 2011). Within the region, some areas are becoming immigrant-dense, but they are generally and tend to be quite mixed in terms of national origins and more uniform in terms of economic status (Price and Singer, 2008; Singer et al., 2001).

It is also clear from their dispersion around the region that many immigrant newcomers may not be able to rely on established immigrant enclaves, because there are few. Part of the dispersion observed may be due to the fact that most foreign-born

newcomers are making residential choices based on the housing market, access to transportation, school choices, and family and social ties, just as the native born largely do.

At this point, most local jurisdictions and school districts are dealing with the challenges brought on by such rapid and heterogeneous change, some better than others. New residents come with widely varying educational backgrounds, experiences and skills, and English language ability.

Although the Washington region relative to many other U.S. metropolitan areas has suffered lower job loss since the recession, economic anxiety is still present, and immigrants will continue to bear some targeting of blame, as has been the case historically during economic downturns. But Washington can continue to work to be a model of immigrant integration as local organizations, governments, and communities continue to confront the challenges of immigration in productive and sustainable ways.

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