



Metropolitan Policy Program  
at BROOKINGS

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*Immigrants, Politics and Local  
Response in Suburban Washington*

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**Immigration  
Reform:  
the National  
Context**

**National context is important for understanding some of the changes in Prince William County.**

**No movement on federal reform after major Congressional debates in 2006 and 2007**

**Many new areas, with little recent history of immigration have fast growing foreign-born populations**

**Proliferation of state and local laws around the country as local leaders have stepped in to fill the void**

# Hispanic growth rates have been high in outer suburban counties around Washington and other metros.

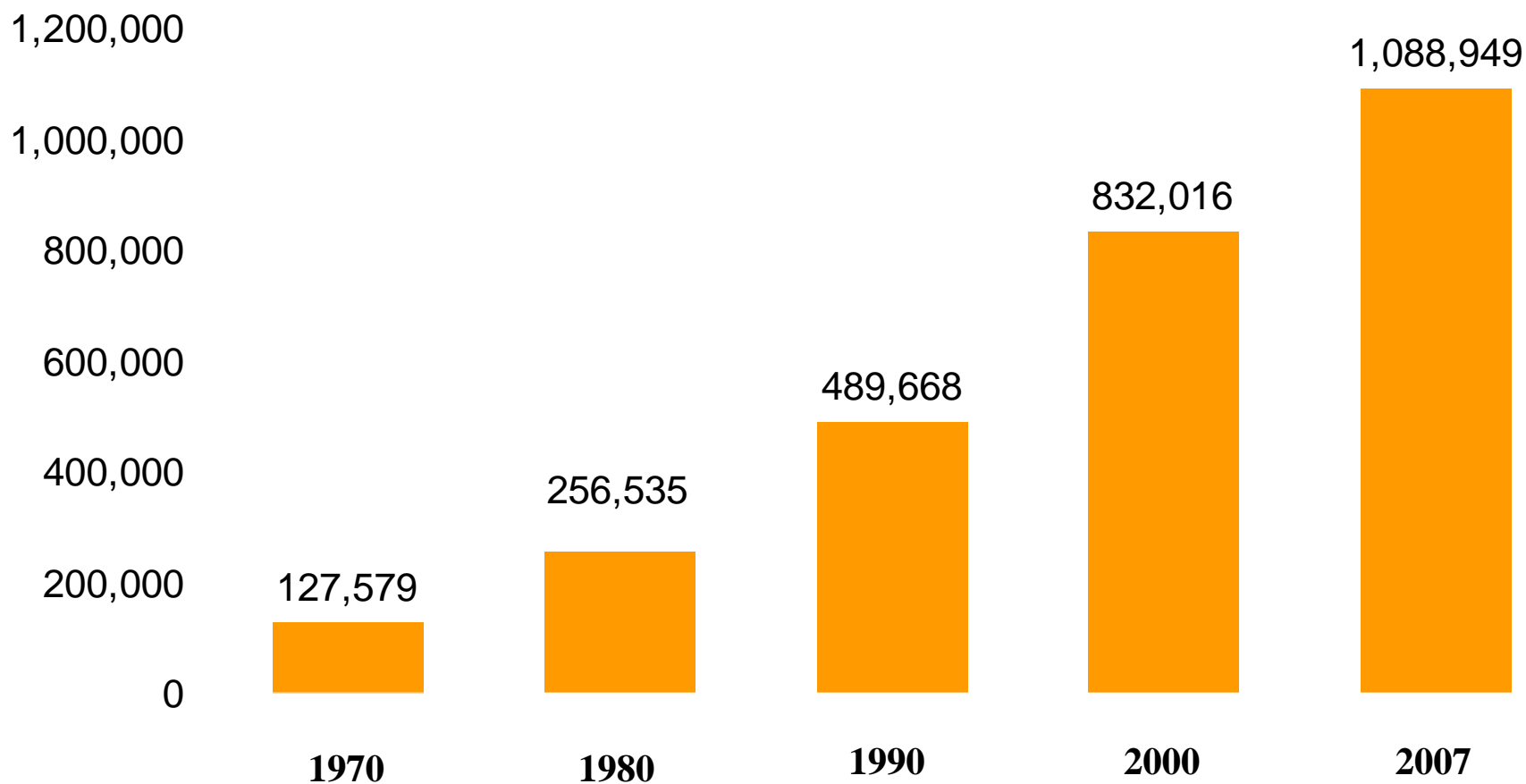
Fastest-growing  
Hispanic counties,  
2000-2006

County	Metropolitan Area	% Hispanic growth, 2000-2006
Frederick, VA	Winchester, VA	276.3
Paulding, GA	Atlanta, GA	228.2
Kendall, IL	Chicago, IL	203.9
Fauquier, VA	<b>Washington, DC</b>	202.3
Spotsylvania, VA	<b>Washington, DC</b>	177.6
Henry, GA	Atlanta, GA	177.2
Luzerne, PA	Scranton, PA	175.9
Newton, GA	Atlanta, GA	169.0
Stafford, VA	<b>Washington, DC</b>	166.8
Loudoun, VA	<b>Washington, DC</b>	151.1
<b>Prince William, VA</b>	<b>Washington, DC</b>	<b>146.9</b>
Frederick, MD	<b>Washington, DC</b>	143.7

**What  
happened in  
Prince William  
County?**

# **Metropolitan Washington Immigration Trends**

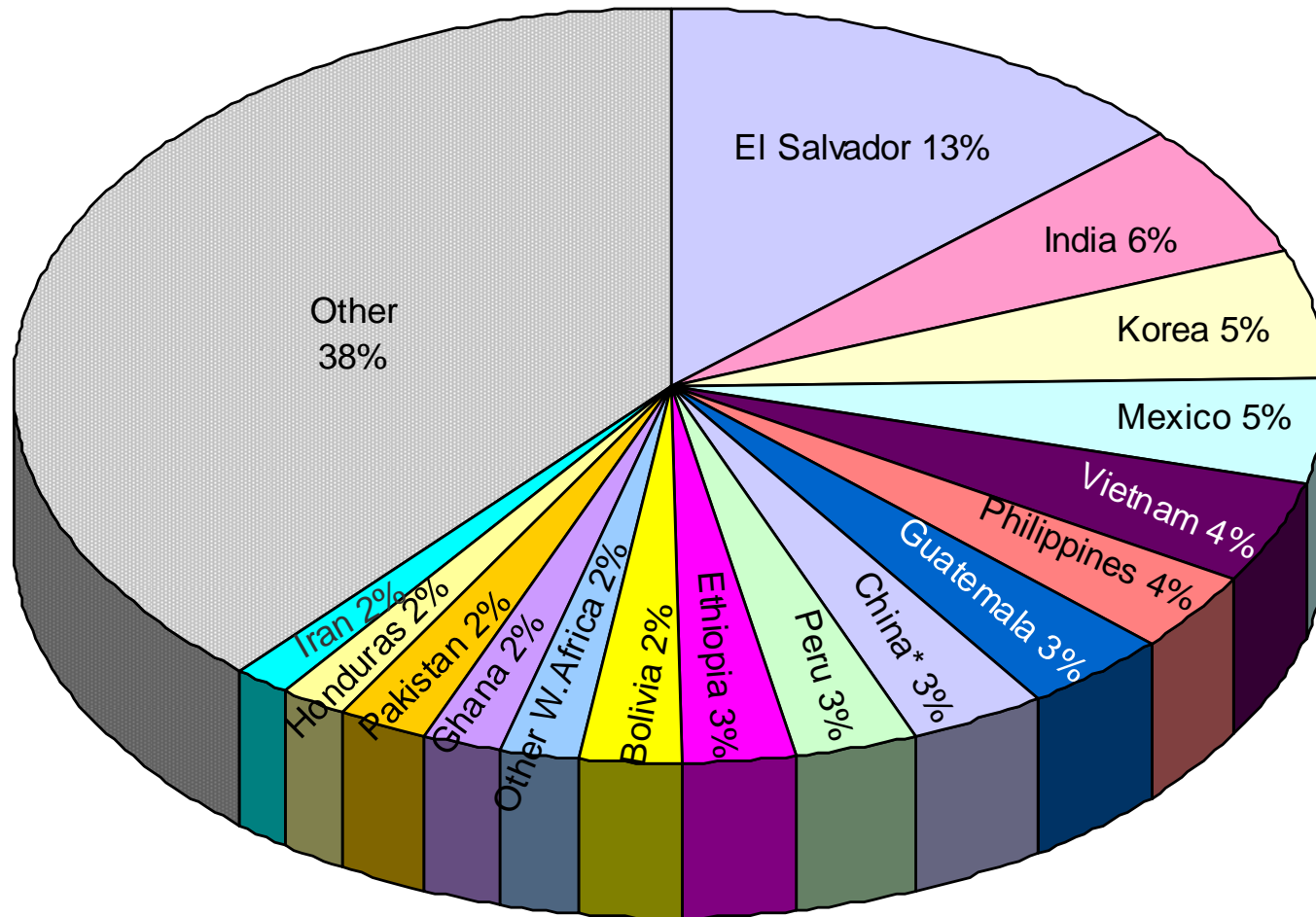
Home to more than 1 million immigrants, the metropolitan area is 20 percent foreign-born and ranks 7th nationally.



Data Sources: decennial censuses and ACS 2007

# No one region or country of origin dominates.

Country of birth  
for foreign born,  
Washington  
metro area, 2007



Data Sources: decennial censuses and ACS 2007

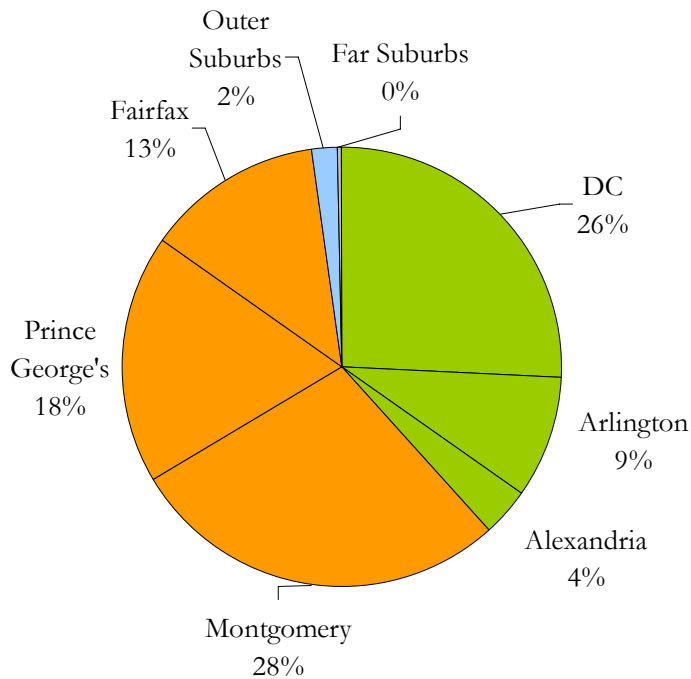


# Since 1970, immigrants have shifted to the outer suburbs.

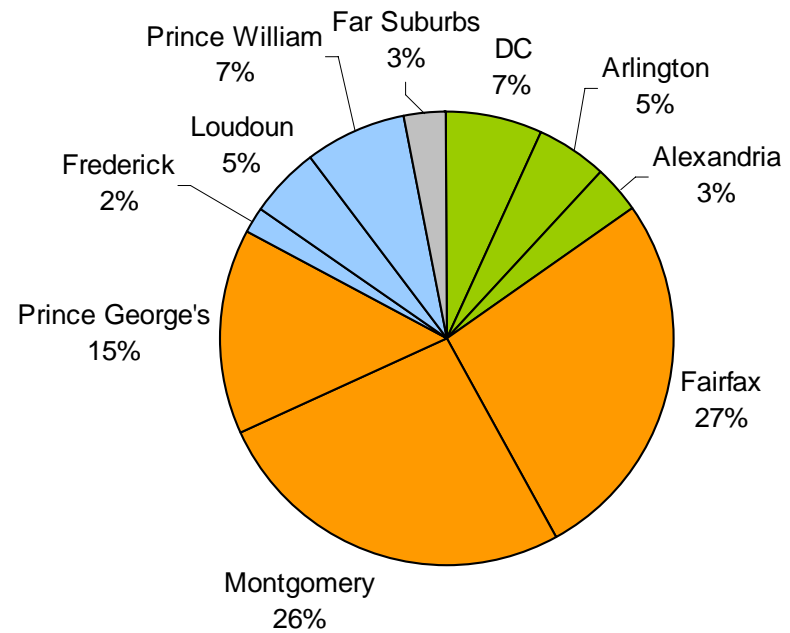
Foreign born  
distribution by county

Inner core    Inner suburbs    Outer suburbs

1970



2007



Source: 1970 Census and 2007 ACS

# Data and Methods

## **Quantitative Data Sources:**

- Census Bureau
- Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA)
- Metropolitan Regional Information Systems (MRIS)
- Prince William County

## **Qualitative Data Sources:**

- County documents and presentations
- Interviews and tours
- Board of County Supervisors meetings
- Local and national media coverage
- *9500Liberty* documentary
- Blogs

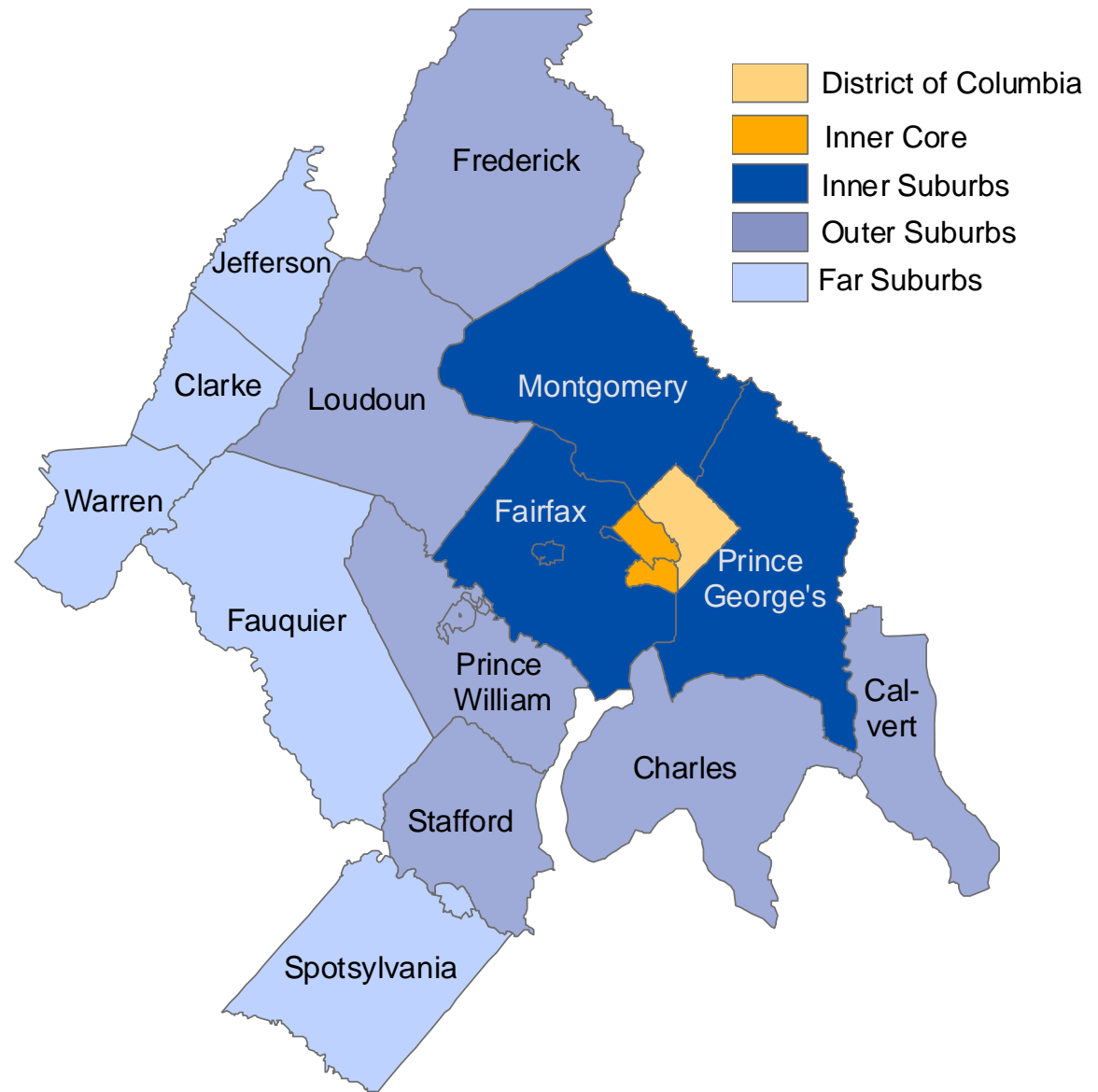
**Demographic  
Change in  
Prince William  
County**

# Prince William County has experienced explosive growth recently.

**Part of the fast-growing “outer suburbs”**

**Total population nearly doubled between 1980 and 2006 to 357,000**

**Annual population increases between 2000 and 2006 were nearly double the annual average increase during the 1990s (about 11K)**



# Prince William County has experienced dramatic demographic change.

**Hispanics accounted for 31% of the county's growth between 1980 and 2006 (whites and blacks accounted for 28% and 26% respectively).**

**Majority (63%) of Hispanic growth between 1980 and 2006 has occurred since 2000, putting it in the top twenty counties in the U.S. for recent Hispanic growth rates.**

**Non-Hispanic white share of the population fell from 87% in 1980 to 52% in 2006.**

**Change has been concentrated in certain areas of the county.**

**Immigration was a large part of the rapid and recent change.**

**Prince William experienced an immigration boom since 2000, with 78,000 foreign born as of 2006.**

**By 2006, 22 percent of the county population was foreign born, compared to 12 percent six years earlier.**

**Geographic origins of immigrants also shifted; Latin Americans made up 28 percent in 1990; by 2006, they were a majority.**

# Characteristics of immigrants in Prince William compared to the region

	Prince William County, VA	Washington Metropolitan Area
Percent of foreign-born who are from Latin America	54	39
Percent of immigrants who entered the U.S. between 2000 and 2006	27	31
Percent of immigrants who are Limited English Proficient (LEP)	55	43
Percent of LEP immigrants who speak Spanish	70	50
Percent of immigrants with no high school degree	29	20
Percent of immigrants estimated to be in the country illegally	??	36

# What drove growth in the County?

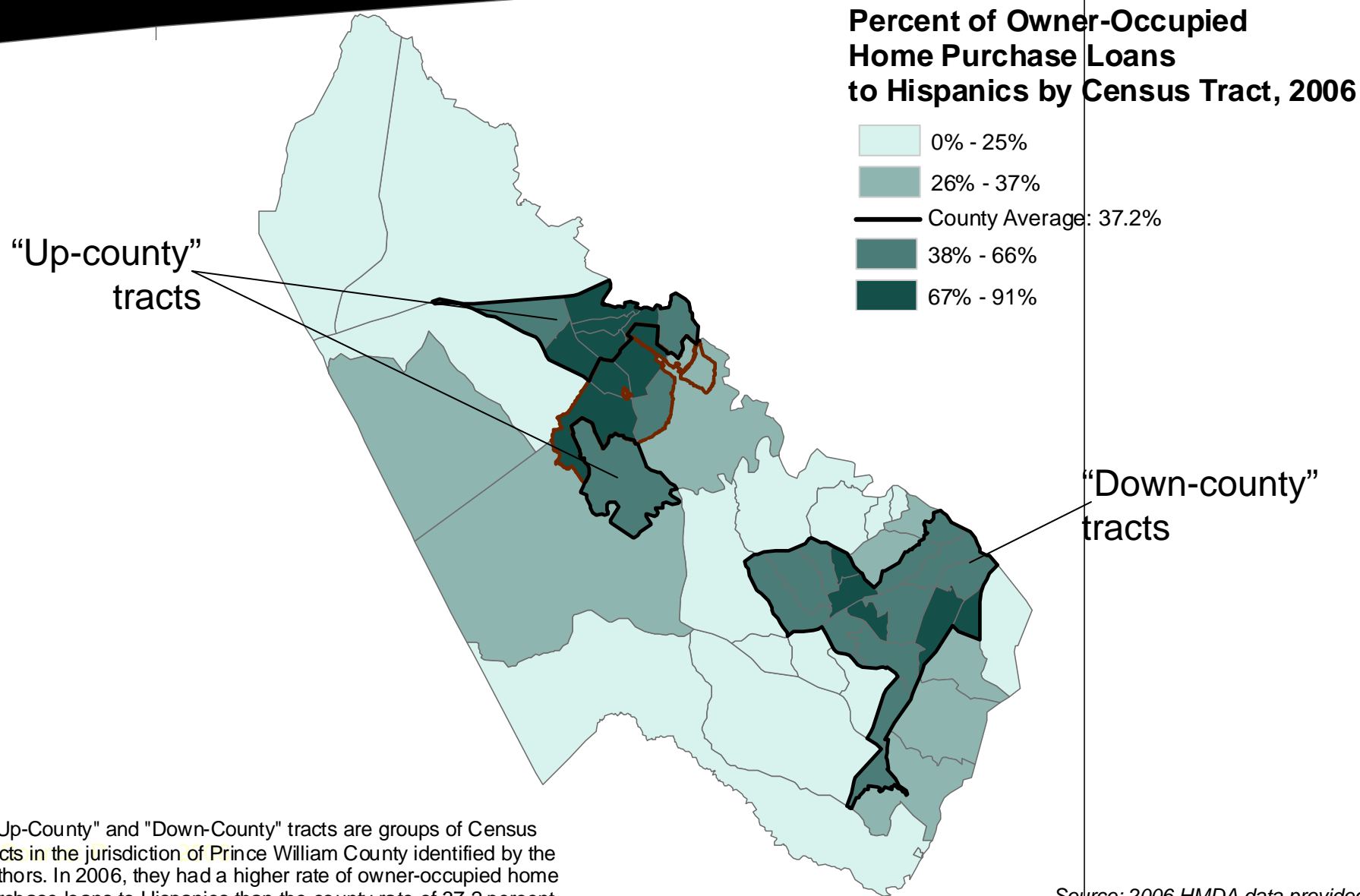
**Jobs: regional decentralization and growth in Prince William**

**Housing: amid soaring prices, the county remained relatively affordable**

**Quality of life: low crime, good schools, low cost of living**



# Recent homeowner trends among Hispanics concentrated in Manassas & Woodbridge.



\* "Up-County" and "Down-County" tracts are groups of Census tracts in the jurisdiction of Prince William County identified by the authors. In 2006, they had a higher rate of owner-occupied home purchase loans to Hispanics than the county rate of 37.2 percent.

Source: 2006 HMDA data provided by DataPlace at [www.dataplace.org](http://www.dataplace.org)

# What were the challenges associated with this growth?

**Traffic congestion, demand on schools, services**

**Homeownership among Hispanics residentially clustered**

**Physical/visible changes to property and perception of decline in quality of life**

**Rising anxiety among long-term residents**

**What other  
factors  
contributed to  
the policy  
changes?**

# What other factors contributed to the policy changes?

**Lack of federal immigration reform**

**Media “buzz” around immigration, including from talk radio, cable news, blogs, and web videos**

**Examples from other localities and assistance from outside legal consultants**

**Local election politics**

**Lack of service and advocacy infrastructure**

# What can we learn from the case of Prince William County?

**Facts are important for effective policymaking.**

**Officials should communicate policy changes clearly.**

**Local policies should address local problems.**

**Elected officials set the tone.**

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