

Introduction

ALAN BERUBE, BRUCE KATZ,
AND ROBERT E. LANG

To many, the 1990s probably seem like an innocent bygone era, with twenty-four-year-old dot-com millionaires, governments awash in surplus cash, the discovery of the *grande latte*, and the nation (mostly) at peace. Beyond these historical hallmarks, however, the 1990s brought unparalleled economic and demographic change to the United States, the effects of which will be felt for many decades to come. The nation added more people—32 million—over the decade than in any other ten-year period in its history, fueled by a new wave of immigration to its shores.¹ Between April 1990, when the nation teetered on the verge of an economic recession, and April 2000, when unemployment hit a postwar low of 4 percent, the nation experienced its strongest economic expansion on record. That expansion lifted homeownership to new highs, with lower-income and minority families making especially large gains in the latter half of the decade.

The United States does not require a full census of its inhabitants, of course, to chart these overall trends. Income, employment, and housing trends are followed closely on a monthly or quarterly basis through large federal surveys. Population estimates and projections are updated annually. Moreover, a lot can happen during ten years, and the decennial census provides a simple point-in-time depiction of the nation at the beginning and end of that interval.

1. Indeed, the latest population projections from the Census Bureau show the nation gaining only 27 million people between 2000 and 2010, well short of the increase in the 1990s.

Yet the decennial census stands alone in the breadth, and depth, of its inquiry. In a country of 3.5 million square miles and nearly 300 million people, national trends tell only a small part of the stories experienced by individuals and communities. Most monthly and annual surveys conducted by federal agencies at best provide information down to the state level. Only the census provides detailed demographic and economic information for all metropolitan areas, cities, towns, and neighborhoods—the geographies that define our day-to-day lives. Moreover, the decennial census provides an important benchmark of our nation’s progress during that decade. The trajectories of income and employment trends may shift from year to year, but longer-term changes in the geography of immigration, poverty, and homeownership have likely continued their course.

Using results from Census 2000, volume 1 of *Redefining Urban and Suburban America* showed that population growth and racial or ethnic change in the 1990s varied greatly among metropolitan areas, cities, and suburbs. Not all places shared in the significant population growth occurring at the national level. And while nearly all areas of the nation grew more racially diverse over the decade, changes occurred much more rapidly in some areas than others.

Census 2000 also offers crucial insights into social and economic changes that took place across and within U.S. regions in the 1990s. This second volume of *Redefining Urban and Suburban America* brings several of the most compelling of these changes into sharper focus:

—The number of high-poverty neighborhoods declined dramatically in most U.S. metro areas, even as the overall metropolitan poverty rate remained unchanged.

—After several decades of migration to the North and West, African Americans returned to the South in record numbers.

—Homeownership rose across the nation, but large urban counties, and small towns witnessing new immigration, saw significant increases in household overcrowding.

THE CENSUS “LONG FORM”

These and other findings explored in this volume derive largely from analysis of the census “long form.” The previous volume featured chapters based on the decennial census “short form”—seven survey questions mailed to all households in the United States asking how many people live at the address, their age, gender, race, Hispanic origin, relationship to one another, and whether or not they own their home.

One in six U.S. households, however, received a much longer survey, with more than fifty questions covering a wide range of subjects: migration, education, work, income, commuting, disability, housing—even whether the household has indoor plumbing. The Census Bureau statistically weights these sample data so that the reported results reflect the characteristics of all households. And because the sample is so large, the bureau is able to report long form data that correspond to areas as small as neighborhoods. With such a rich mine of information for small geographic areas, the long form is one of the research community’s most used data sources.

In a nation that values highly the privacy of individuals, however, such a wide-ranging survey distributed to roughly 17 million households can generate its share of controversy. In 2000, as households began to receive the forms in the mail, some members of Congress reported receiving hundreds of angry calls from constituents protesting questions they perceived to be too intrusive. In response, some members—including then Senate majority leader Trent Lott—urged people to answer “basic” census questions but to leave blank questions they felt invaded their privacy (despite the fact that federal law prescribes a penalty of \$100 for failing to answer any question on a decennial census—a penalty rarely, if ever, enforced).² In the end, the percentage of households who mailed back their Census 2000 forms was 9.5 percentage points lower for long form recipients than short form recipients (versus 4.5 percentage points in 1990).

Yet the long form is not merely an academic exercise conducted by the Census Bureau. Every question ties back to a data need expressed in federal law or program implementation. For instance, questions on household income are required under federal law for rural housing programs, the Community Reinvestment Act, and the Head Start program, among several others. Data collected from migration questions allow the Department of Labor to implement provisions of federal immigration law. Information on indoor plumbing is required to set subsidy levels under the Housing Voucher Choice program. In the end, answers to census long form questions inform the distribution of a significant portion of the \$200 billion in federal, state, local, and tribal funds allocated annually.³ And as with all of its data collection, the Census Bureau vigorously safeguards the privacy of individual respondents to its surveys.

Neither are these social and economic inquiries all that new to the census. Article I of the U.S. Constitution requires an “enumeration” to be per-

2. D’Vera Cohn, “Census Too Nosy? Don’t Answer Invasive Questions, GOP Suggests,” *Washington Post*, March 30, 2000, p. A1.

3. U.S. Census Bureau (2002).

formed every ten years in order to apportion seats in the House of Representatives among the states—a purpose the census still serves today. But as early as 1810 Congress, responding to difficulties it faced importing manufactured goods during the Napoleonic Wars, commissioned a “census of manufactures” alongside the population census to find out what Americans produced. In 1820 Congress collected information on the size of the nation’s growing foreign-born population and the industries in which Americans worked. Between 1830 and 1850, the census added questions concerning the disabled population, educational attainment and literacy, migration, poverty, and wage levels.⁴ While the exact nature of these questions has changed over time, the Census 2000 long form collected information on all of these subject areas.

And yet, Census 2000 could mark the last appearance of the long form as we know it. The Census Bureau has developed the American Community Survey (ACS) to improve the quality and timeliness of data traditionally provided by the long form. The ACS is a continuous version of the long form, collecting very similar data through a series of monthly household surveys. By providing annual long form data at all levels of geography, the survey could greatly enhance the utility of census data for metropolitan areas, cities, suburbs, and neighborhoods. If the ACS is fully implemented on schedule in 2009, Census 2010 will not conduct a long form survey. However, the ACS is subject to an annual appropriations process in Congress, and budget pressures continually threaten to derail its full implementation in time for the next decennial census.⁵

As of today, though, the census long form remains the federal government’s premier instrument for collecting social science data. The range of data available for very small levels of geography helps researchers analyze the spatial nature of many important questions. Sociologists, for instance, use long form data to study the movements of people into the United States from abroad, and across counties and regions within the United States. Economists are able to examine income and poverty dynamics for metropolitan areas, which approximate local labor markets. And long form data enable political scientists to model the relationship between small-area voting behavior and the socioeconomic characteristics (household type,

4. Anderson (1988).

5. Sabety, Reamer, and Clark (2004). For fiscal year 2005, the Census Bureau did receive its full budget request, enough to continue toward full implementation of the ACS. However, the Government Accountability Office has found that to provide small geographic area data consistent with what would be available from the 2010 long form, additional funding will be needed to increase the ACS sample size. Government Accountability Office (2004).

income, education) of the voters who live there. No other survey covers such an exhaustive set of subject areas for as large a number of places as the decennial census.

THIS VOLUME

The contributors to this volume all make use of the geographic specificity of long form census data to adopt a metropolitan frame for their analyses. The first three chapters recognize that metropolitan areas function as migration gateways for individuals entering the United States from abroad, and for those relocating domestically. Household movements reveal the relative economic strength of regions, but also speak to the influence of social ties and the physical manner in which different metropolitan areas are developing.

The second group of chapters examines the divergent economic fortunes of U.S. metropolitan areas and their constituent cities, suburbs, and neighborhoods. These patterns reflect supra-regional employment and productivity trends, as well as population dynamics that affect wealthy and impoverished communities alike.

The third section sheds light on emerging issues in state and regional housing markets, recognizing that policies to promote homeownership and serve the homeless have implicit spatial implications at the neighborhood, city, and metropolitan levels.

These analyses add texture to the short form population and racial/ethnic trends analyzed in volume 1 of *Redefining Urban and Suburban America*. The chapters in this volume “get behind” those trends to examine how migration contributed to population growth and decline across different areas of the country, how economic trends related to those changes, and how these demographic and economic dynamics reverberated in the housing market. As with the first volume, most authors focus their attention on the country’s largest metropolitan areas, and the cities, suburbs, and neighborhoods therein.

MIGRATION RESHAPES DESTINATION REGIONS

America is a mobile society. Between 1995 and 2000, 46 percent of U.S. residents changed address. This far exceeds residential mobility in Europe, and even that in relatively mobile nations like Canada and Australia, where about 42 percent of households moved in the late 1990s.⁶ Moreover, the United States

6. Long (1991); Statistics Canada (2002); Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002).

remains an immigrant-rich nation, with about 11 percent of its residents born abroad. The first three chapters of this volume show that destinations for domestic migrants and immigrants—and the places from which they came—have undergone significant transition in recent decades. These migration patterns helped to drive overall population gains and losses in different regions of the country. And the varying locational preferences expressed by different groups of migrants help explain the changing racial and ethnic makeup of cities and suburbs nationwide.

Important features separate the movements of immigrants and domestic migrants, who often have different reasons for moving and thus choose different destinations across—and within—regions. In chapter 1, William Frey identifies distinct metropolitan destinations for these two groups. He shows that in the 1990s immigrants headed mostly for large coastal metropolitan areas, like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, sustaining population growth by offsetting the out-migration of existing residents. Meanwhile, domestic migrants headed in large numbers for Sun Belt locales, contributing to significant population growth throughout that region. Within metropolitan areas that attracted both types of migrants, Frey finds that the two groups selected distinct county destinations—immigrants tended to settle closer to the urban core, while domestic migrants more often chose outlying suburban areas. These parallel migration trends pinpoint the demographic forces responsible in part for the “dualistic” economies that have materialized in large, multiethnic urban areas like Los Angeles, where workers increasingly cluster at the low and high ends of the skills spectrum. They also reveal the importance of domestic migrants in fueling the rapid, low-density metropolitan growth occurring throughout the South and in fast-growing suburbs and “exurbs” nationwide.

Beneath these distinct international and domestic migration trends lies a subtle, more recent shift in where immigrants are heading. In chapter 2, Audrey Singer charts the historical metropolitan destinations of immigrants, highlighting how the last two decades have seen an upsurge in immigration reminiscent of the turn of the twentieth century. She shows that while international migrants still populate historical centers of immigration like New York, Chicago, and Boston in large numbers, they are also heading for a new set of “emerging gateways” in the South, such as Atlanta, Dallas, and Washington, D.C. Not only are more immigrants moving to a new set of metro areas, they are also increasingly heading to suburbs, a decided shift from past preferences for cities. The recentness of immigration to these metropolitan areas means that many of their suburban communities are for the first time grappling with how to provide public services like schools, health care, and safety to new populations.

Immigrants were not the only group who shifted their destinations in the late twentieth century. In chapter 3 William Frey turns his attention to a group of domestic migrants whose movements turned a long-term trend fully on its head in the 1990s. For the better part of the last century, blacks moved from the South to cities throughout the North in what was termed the “Great Migration.” But Frey shows that between 1995 and 2000, blacks returned on net to the South from every other region in the country. Metropolitan areas such as Atlanta, Charlotte, and Memphis led the way, attracting blacks from northern and western metro areas, including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. And in further contrast to the historical pattern, which saw less-skilled black workers move northward largely for manufacturing jobs, the most highly educated African Americans are now moving southward, contributing to a “brain gain” throughout the region. Frey cites a number of factors that may account for this “New Great Migration,” including blacks’ long-standing cultural and family ties to the South, a much improved racial climate in the region, and the economic boom the South enjoyed during the late 1990s. Whatever its drivers, this shifting locus of growth in the black middle class carries major social and economic implications not only for the South, but also for the places blacks are increasingly leaving behind.

POVERTY AND INCOME TRENDS REVEAL VARIABLE METROPOLITAN ECONOMIC FORTUNES

The decennial census, by its very nature, is a “snapshot” of the nation at one moment in time. As an economic portrait of the United States, the census captures places at somewhat different positions in their own economic cycles, yet it nonetheless offers a regular point at which to assess how larger trends have affected smaller locales. The chapters in this second section point to shifting poverty levels across regions between 1990 and 2000, with the South and Midwest performing better than West and Northeast; and shifting poverty within regions, as inner cities witnessed dramatic declines in the spatial concentration of poor households. While these trends may reflect changes specific to the 1990s, longer-term movements are apparent as well: the growing suburbanization of poverty nationwide, exemplified by the Los Angeles region; and a loss of higher-income households in most large cities. The economic downturn of the past five years has likely altered some of the trends witnessed in the last decade, but the longer-term shifts highlighted in this section no doubt persist.

In chapter 4, Alan Berube and William Frey begin by surveying the location of poverty across and within metropolitan areas. They find that central

cities still exhibit an overall poverty rate double that of their suburbs, although the gap did narrow slightly in the 1990s. At the same time, rapid suburban growth, in combination with increasing suburban population diversity, meant that by 2000 in the nation's largest metropolitan areas the numbers of poor individuals living in cities and in suburbs were nearly identical. But even as the overall metropolitan poverty rate remained unchanged at 12.5 percent, Berube and Frey show that U.S. regions diverged dramatically on this measure. Poverty rates rose in northeastern and western cities and suburbs, while they declined in southern and midwestern areas. These trends related not only to regional differences in economic growth in the late 1990s, but also to differing regional impacts of the economic recession of the early 1990s. Berube and Frey's analysis raises a number of questions about the demographic, economic, and policy forces driving changes in poverty, and whether the nation can hope to achieve widespread reductions in poverty during the present decade, given its inauspicious start.

It is well known not only that the level of poverty affects outcomes for places and people, but also that the spatial organization of poverty—especially severe concentrations—may impose significant costs on families, neighborhoods, and society as a whole. So it is remarkable that amid the decade's "mixed blessings" on overall metropolitan poverty identified by Berube and Frey, Paul Jargowsky finds in chapter 5 that the 1990s produced a stunning decline in a seemingly intractable social problem—long-term growth in the concentration of poor households in inner-city neighborhoods.

Jargowsky demonstrates that after doubling in the 1970s and 1980s, the share of poor individuals living in high-poverty neighborhoods (where the poverty rate exceeds 40 percent) declined by nearly one-quarter in the 1990s—most dramatically in inner cities in the Midwest and South, like Detroit, Chicago, and San Antonio. He finds especially striking declines in concentrated poverty for African Americans and children. Jargowsky also notes some warning signs, including an increase in concentrated poverty in the West (owing to an increase in predominantly Hispanic high-poverty neighborhoods) and rising poverty rates in many inner suburban neighborhoods. His analysis suggests several factors that may account for these changing patterns of neighborhood poverty, including metropolitan economic performance, federal policy changes to promote work and residential mobility among the poor, and broader patterns of residential decentralization that increasingly affect the nation's older suburbs.

Shannon McConville and Paul Ong effectively take Jargowsky's research "to ground" in chapter 6 with their analysis of the Los Angeles region, one of the few areas that actually experienced an *increase* in concentrated poverty during the 1990s. Between 1990 and 2000, the proportion of poor individ-

uals in the five-county Los Angeles region who lived in neighborhoods of high poverty rose from 7 percent to 12 percent. The authors show how that rise represented an acceleration of longer-term trends toward increased concentration of poverty in the area, especially in the suburbs, where most of the region's poor live today. McConville and Ong examine in particular how significant international migration to the region may have contributed to rising concentrated poverty, and they find a complicated and changing relationship between the two phenomena over time. They conclude that these worrying trends signal a need for a broader approach across the region to promote economic opportunity, and emphasize the role for education in catalyzing upward economic mobility for the children of the region's immigrants. Their findings should hold lessons for the growing number of metropolitan areas now receiving immigrant workers in record numbers as Los Angeles did in the 1970s and 1980s.

Of course, poverty is only one important barometer of the economic health of a region. In chapter 7 Alan Berube and Thacher Tiffany look at the distribution of household incomes in urban areas as an indicator of cities' fiscal capacity and social health. Focusing on the nation's 100 largest cities, they find a significant overall decline between the 1980 and 2000 censuses in the proportion of city households with high incomes. They note, however, that the household income profiles of large cities vary widely, and identify six predominant types of distributions. While some growing cities, like Columbus and Nashville, boast a healthy middle-class profile and a balance of low- and high-income households, most lack the nation's full spectrum of incomes. Many, like New Orleans and Buffalo, contain highly disproportionate shares of low-income households. A handful, like Atlanta and Washington, D.C., have a relatively small middle class. Berube and Tiffany argue that the varying "shape of the curve" among big cities suggests the need to look beyond poverty to fully understand urban income dynamics, and that individual cities need to pursue very different strategies to achieve greater income diversity, secure their fiscal health, and promote economic mobility.

GROWING HOUSING ISSUES ACCOMPANY HOMEOWNERSHIP BOOM

Housing attracts a great deal of attention in the census. The Census Bureau's two principal releases of Census 2000 data to the public (Summary File 1 and Summary File 3) contained a total of 385 tables on housing topics alone.

Researchers have many compelling reasons to be interested in the state of housing. Housing provides shelter, a basic necessity. For most homeowners,

housing is the largest asset they hold—and increasingly, many use that asset to finance their consumption of other important goods, such as education, health care, or improvements to the home itself. In macroeconomic terms, strong house price growth in the late 1990s continued into the current decade, helping boost consumption during the recent recession and otherwise sluggish recovery. For policymakers in Washington, increased homeownership is one of the few goals on which Democrats and Republicans agree. And housing—or a lack thereof—dictates one’s access to opportunity in terms of schools, jobs, amenities, and a safe neighborhood. The contributors to this section examine both the upside and the downside of the homeownership boom in the 1990s, and two housing issues that affect some groups and places disproportionately: sheltered homelessness and overcrowding.

In chapter 8 Dowell Myers and Gary Painter present the first of two analyses of homeownership trends in the 1990s. They highlight widespread increases in homeownership for young households over the decade, most notably gains made by African Americans. These increases helped make up for declines in homeownership among young age groups in many states during the 1980s. Myers and Painter note, however, that this particular trend was not uniform across the country. Metropolitan areas with large populations of young black or Latino households showed greater advances in homeownership among those groups than did other places. For instance, New York, Washington, and Atlanta all boasted large increases in black homeownership, while Latinos made more significant gains in California and Texas metro areas.

These increases may have come at a price, however: the increasing number of homeowners severely burdened by housing costs—those paying half or more of their income on housing. In chapter 9, Patrick Simmons finds that the number of homeowners facing severe affordability problems shot up by more than half over the 1990s. Just as with growing homeownership, the affordability problem was widespread. The proportion of homeowners with severe affordability burdens increased in forty-seven out of fifty states, and forty-three out of the nation’s fifty largest cities. Simmons demonstrates that those burdens fell heavily on urban minorities, especially blacks, who were more than twice as likely to have severe affordability problems as homeowners generally. He warns that efforts to expand homeownership in the 1990s could leave many new homeowners in the red over the longer term, particularly given the economic downturn that occurred after Census 2000. Simmons argues that supplemental efforts are surely needed to sustain the benefits of these gains, and to put cost-burdened homeowners on more solid long-term financial footing.

The ups and downs of homeownership affect a large proportion of the U.S. population, and the economy as a whole. In chapter 10 Barrett Lee and Chad Farrell remind us, however, that a large number of homeless Americans face a much more dire situation. Lee and Farrell use a special tabulation of census data to examine the types of metropolitan neighborhoods that house the sheltered homeless. They find that even in neighborhoods with significant sheltered populations (at least 100 persons), the homeless constitute a visible but rarely dominant group—about 10 percent of population on average. In line with historical patterns, central cities still contain the vast majority of these neighborhoods, despite the suburbanization of larger shelters in some Sunbelt metro areas, like Atlanta and Fort Lauderdale. Neighborhoods with large shelters exhibit high levels of disadvantage generally—suggesting that current siting decisions are driven largely by neighborhood acceptance of, or resistance to, these facilities. The degree to which shelters remain in and around inner city neighborhoods will, the authors argue, depend on the willingness of localities to invoke “fair share” principles to spread human service facilities more widely, and efforts to build more permanent assisted housing for homeless families.

Patrick Simmons returns in chapter 11 to round out the volume’s housing analyses by examining an area of growing concern in cities, suburbs, and rural areas alike: overcrowding. After decreasing for most of the postwar period, overcrowded households began to multiply in the 1980s, and increased even more rapidly during the 1990s. The incidence of the problem is highly variable, however, being much more prevalent in western and southwestern states, like Texas, California, and Arizona. Simmons identifies seven types of counties that experience high rates of overcrowding, running the gamut from large, multiethnic urban counties to American Indian/Alaska Native land, to small suburbs and towns attracting new waves of Latino agricultural workers. The analysis highlights a vexing issue for local governments: the need to balance competing factors of health and safety, housing affordability, labor demand, and cultural preferences. Nor is the problem likely to abate in coming years, given continued international and domestic migration to the suburbs, and the resulting mismatch between affordable housing needs and available housing stock.

SUMMARY

Although the United States is now in a somewhat less favorable economic situation than it was five years ago, the contributors to this volume paint a compelling portrait of a nation, its cities, suburbs, and neighborhoods undergoing significant change. The policy issues highlighted by each chap-

ter spring not from the fleeting conditions of the places they describe on April 1, 2000, but from the long-term trends affecting all types of communities and the need to view them from a metropolitan angle. As always, leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors can benefit from understanding the demographic and economic contexts in which their decisions take shape. For leaders at the state and national levels, these chapters reinforce the facts that not all metro areas are alike, and that differing local settings should influence the contours and implementation of policy. In short, this volume provides a clear and useful assessment of the dynamics that underlie the challenges urban decisionmakers will face in the next decade and beyond.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, Margo J. 1988. *The American Census*. Yale University Press.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2002. "Australians on the Move." *Australian Demographic Statistics*, December.
- Government Accountability Office. 2004. "American Community Survey: Key Unresolved Issues." GAO-05-82.
- Long, Larry. 1991. "Residential Mobility Differences among Developed Countries." *International Regional Science Review* 14 (2): 133–147.
- Sabety, Pari, Andy Reamer, and Lindsay Clark. 2004. "Understanding Our Communities: Funding the American Community Survey." Brookings.
- Statistics Canada. 2002. "Canadians on the Move: Highlight Tables, 2001 Census." Ottawa.
- U.S. Census Bureau. 2002. "Census 2000 Basics." Washington.