

# GETTING CURRENT

Recent Demographic Trends in Metropolitan America



MIGRATION | IMMIGRATION | RACE & ETHNICITY  
AGING | EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT | POVERTY

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**he new administration taking shape in Washington inherits not only an economic crisis, but also a mammoth apparatus of agencies and programs, many of which were developed a generation or more ago. In view of that, a president and Congress striving to “build a smarter government” should develop new policies or retool old programs with the latest population trends in mind, especially those shaping and re-shaping metropolitan areas—our nation’s engines of economic growth and opportunity. These include:

- **Migration across states and metro areas has slowed considerably in the past two years due to the housing crisis and looming recession.** About 4.7 million people moved across state lines in 2007-2008, down from a historic high of 8.4 million people at the turn of the decade. Population growth has dropped in Sun Belt migration magnets such as Las Vegas, NV, and Riverside, CA, and the state of Florida actually experienced a net loss of domestic migrants from 2007 to 2008. Meanwhile, out-migration has slowed in older regions such as Chicago and New York. Many Midwestern and Northeastern cities experienced greater annual population gains, or reduced population losses, in the past year.
- **The sources and destinations of U.S. immigrants continue their long-run shifts.** About 80 percent of the nation’s foreign-born population in 2007 hailed from Latin America and Asia, up from just 20 percent in 1970. The Southeast, traditionally an area that immigrants avoided, has become the fastest-growing destination for the foreign-born, with metro areas such as Raleigh, NC; Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; and Orlando, FL ranking among those with the highest recent growth rates. As they arrived in these new destinations, immigrants also began to move away from traditional communities in the urban core. Today, more than half of the nation’s foreign-born residents live in major metropolitan suburbs, while one-third live in large cities.
- **Racial and ethnic minorities are driving the nation’s population growth and increasing diversity among its younger residents.** Hispanics have accounted for roughly half the nation’s population growth since 2000. Already, racial and ethnic minorities represent 44 percent of U.S. residents under the age of 15, and make up a majority of that age group in 31 of the nation’s 100 largest metro areas (and a majority of the entire population in 15). Hispanic populations are growing most rapidly in the Southeast; Asian populations are rising in a variety of Sun Belt and high-tech centers; and the black population continues its move toward large Southern metro areas like Atlanta, Houston, and Washington, D.C.
- **The next decade promises massive growth of the senior population, especially in suburbs unaccustomed to housing older people.** As the first wave of baby boomers reaches age 65 in less than two years, the senior population is poised to grow by 36 percent from 2010 to 2020. Their numbers will grow fastest in the Intermountain West, the Southeast, and Texas, particularly in metro areas such as Raleigh, NC; Austin, TX; Atlanta, GA; and Boise, ID that already have large pre-senior populations (age 55 to 64). Because the boomers were the nation’s first fully “suburban generation,” their aging in place will cause many major metropolitan suburbs—such as those outside New York and Los Angeles—to “gray” faster than their urban counterparts.

■ **Amid rising educational attainment overall, the U.S. exhibits wide regional and racial/ethnic disparities.** While 56 percent and 38 percent of Asian and white adults, respectively, held post-secondary degrees in 2007, the same was true of only 25 percent and 18 percent of blacks and Hispanics. These deep divides by race and ethnicity coincide with growing disparities across metropolitan areas owing to economic and demographic change. In knowledge-economy areas such as Boston, MA; Washington, D.C.; and San Francisco, CA, more than 40 percent of adults hold a bachelor's degree. Meanwhile, in metro areas that have attracted large influxes of immigrants, such as Houston, TX; Greenville, NC; and most of California's Central Valley, more than 20 percent of adults lack a high school diploma. And some Sun Belt metro areas, such as Las Vegas, NV, and Riverside, CA, have fast-growing populations at both ends of the attainment spectrum.

■ **Even before the onset of the current recession, poverty rose during the 2000s, and spread rapidly to suburban locations.** Both the overall number of people living in poverty and the poverty rate rose from 2000 to 2007; today, working-age Americans account for a larger share of the poor than in the last 30 years. After diverging in the 1970s and 1980s, the gap between central-city and suburban poverty rates has narrowed somewhat. More notably, the suburban poor surpassed the central-city poor in number during this decade, and now outnumber them by more than 1.5 million. The suburban poor have spread well beyond older, inner-ring suburbs, which in 2005-2007 housed less than 40 percent of all poor suburban dwellers. Yet even as poverty spreads throughout the metropolis, the concentration of poverty in highly distressed communities—after dropping in the 1990s—appears to be rising once again in the 2000s.

Even as the nation enters an extended period of economic uncertainty, the continued demographic dynamism of our metropolitan areas raises key policy and program issues for the new government in Washington. Steps to implement the recovery package wisely, pursue immigrant integration alongside immigration reform, close educational achievement and attainment gaps, combine the planning of transportation and housing, and provide needed support to low-income workers and families should take account of our constantly evolving and changing metropolitan populations. ■

**The continued demographic dynamism of our metropolitan areas raises key policy and program issues for the new government in Washington.**

# Introduction

The new administration and the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress confront an economy poised for deep recession, a banking sector weighed down with “toxic” assets, and calls for meaningful action on big issues like immigration, health care reform, and climate change.



Beyond these challenges, however, the new government also inherits a mammoth apparatus of agencies and programs inconsistently attuned to the realities of American society. Much of that apparatus was created a generation or more ago, with little appreciation of the dynamic forces constantly reshaping our population and the places in which we live.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, changing demographics with respect to race, age, and immigration helped shape the very results of the 2008 election in important ways.<sup>2</sup>

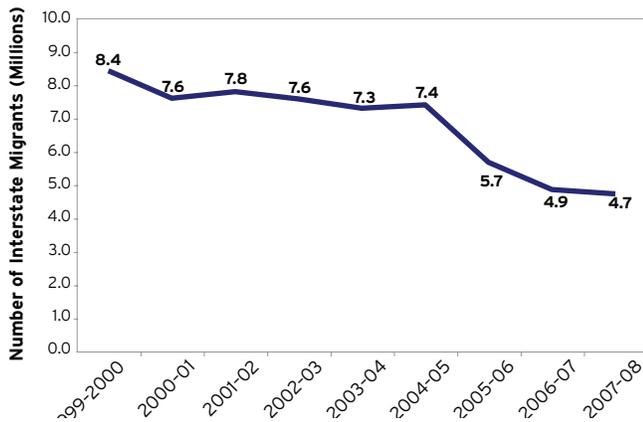
Amid their efforts to stave off economic and financial crisis, the administration and Congress should take a moment to understand how the America they now govern has changed—not just since decades-old policies were enacted, but even over the past eight years since the last administration took office. Gaining a deeper appreciation of these changes is a necessary precursor to, as President Obama puts it, “...building a smarter government that focuses on what works.”<sup>3</sup>

This brief provides a look at recent key population trends viewed primarily from the perspective of the nation’s real centers of demographic change: its 100 largest metropolitan areas—city and suburban regions with at least half a million people in 2007—which together account for more than two-thirds of U.S. population. It draws heavily on work by the Metropolitan Policy Program over the last few years charting metropolitan transformation in areas including migration; immigration; racial and ethnic change; aging; educational attainment; and poverty. It concludes with some short reflections on what these changes might imply for efforts to make federal policy more responsive to how we live today, and what we might become in the future. ■

# NATIONAL OVERVIEW—Key Trends Shape the Metropolitan Context

While America’s major metropolitan areas are the locus of its most dramatic demographic transformations, they also reflect the broader national economic and social forces that are changing populations in places both large and small.

**Figure 1-1. The Housing Crisis and Looming Recession Greatly Reduced the Number of Americans Moving Across State Lines**



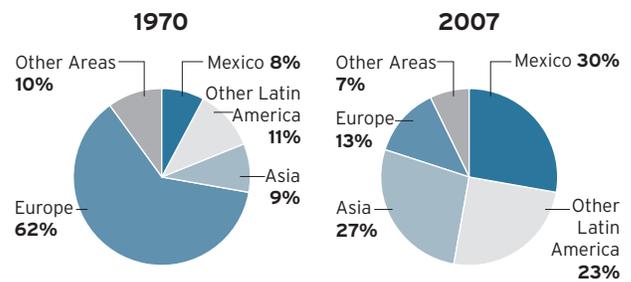
Source: Brookings analysis of Current Population Survey data

## Migration

The dawn of this decade saw an unprecedented number of Americans move across state lines within a year’s time—8.4 million. But migration slowed thereafter, correlating with the housing meltdown and broader economic recession. The number of interstate migrants dipped below 5 million in each of the last two years, and the rate of interstate migration has plummeted to its lowest recorded level (**Figure 1-1**).<sup>4</sup> Unlike earlier recessions that affected migration primarily in formerly fast-growing areas (e.g., Houston and the “oil patch” in the late 1980s), this one is not isolated to specific regions and slumping industries. The recession’s roots in the dismal housing market and subsequent credit crunch have hindered willing migrants from selling their houses and dissuaded them from buying new homes in previously hot destinations.

**Figure 1-2. Regions of Origin Have Diversified During the Last Several Decades**

U.S. Foreign Born by Region of Origin, 1970 and 2007

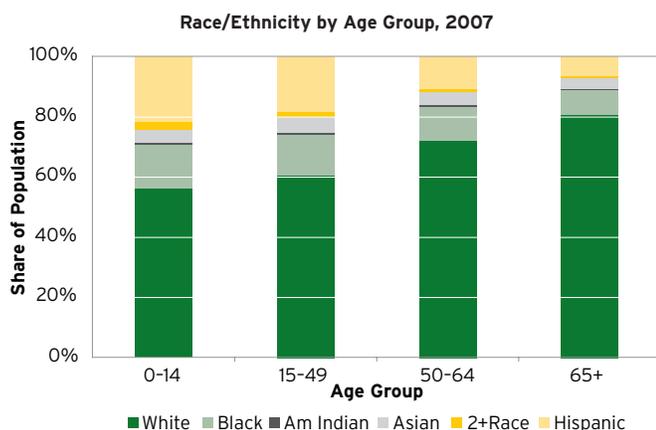


Source: Brookings analysis of 1970 Census and 2007 ACS data

## Immigration

Immigrants now comprise 12.6 percent of the total U.S. population. From 2000 to 2007, the foreign-born population in the United States grew by 22 percent, to 38 million. As the immigrant population grew, its source regions shifted considerably (**Figure 1-2**). In 1970, a majority of the nation’s immigrants were from Europe, 8 percent were from Mexico, 11 percent were from the other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, 9 percent were from Asia, and 10 percent hailed from all other regions. After several decades of new in-flows—largely from developing countries—and the aging of previous waves of immigrants, by 2007 30 percent of the nation’s foreign born were from Mexico, 23 percent were from the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, and 27 percent were from Asia, while only 13 percent were from Europe.

**Figure 1-3. The Nation's Children Are Much More Diverse than its Older Population**

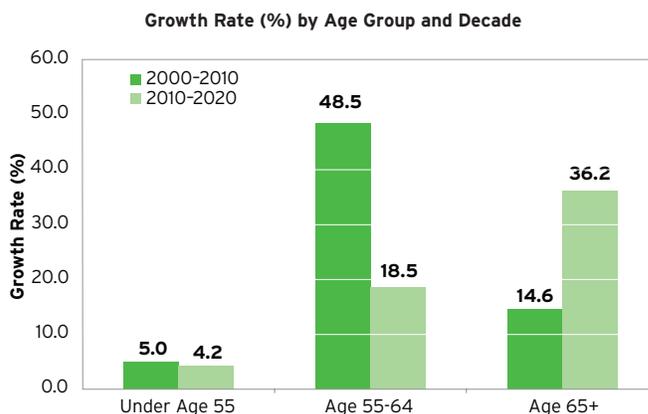


Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

### Race and Ethnicity

In part reflecting continued and diversifying immigration, America's racial and ethnic minority populations continue to expand. Hispanics accounted for 50 percent of national population growth since 2000, compared with 14 percent for Asians, 13 percent for blacks, and 17 percent for whites (who represent two-thirds of the total population). Moreover, the younger age of immigrants and higher birth rates among racial and ethnic minorities contribute to a "bubbling up" of diversity from children to seniors (Figure 1-3). While the U.S. population is projected to turn "minority white" in 2042, its preschool population will cross this threshold in 2021. Thus, while America's minority growth is already seen prominently in schools and other arenas involving teens and young adults, it will gradually spread across venues that permeate our entire society.

**Figure 1-4. As the Baby Boomers Approach Retirement, Senior Growth Will Surge**



Source: Brookings analysis of U.S. Census Bureau Population Projections data

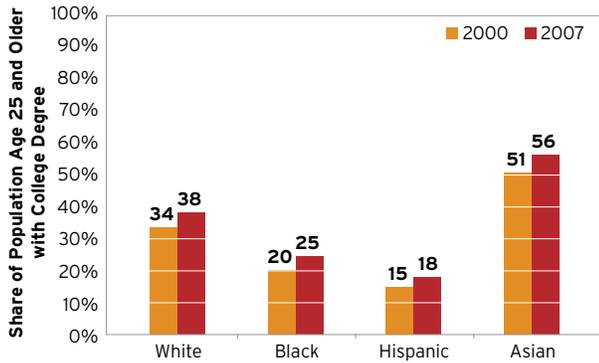
### Aging

While American society experiences ongoing racial and ethnic diversification, we also face a decade of extensive aging, brought about by the first wave of baby boomers who begin turning 65 in January 2011. These early boomers have already started to inflate the "pre-senior" ages, 55 to 64 in the current decade, and will graduate to full fledged seniorhood between 2010 and 2020 (Figure 1-4). Beyond their larger numbers, boomers will differ from earlier seniors in important ways. They possess more education, have more women in the labor force and are more likely to occupy professional and managerial positions than previous retiree generations. At the same time, boomers' higher rates of divorce mean that fewer now belong to married-couple households, and more may experience financial hardship as a result. Nonetheless, because of them, all parts of the country will age considerably more rapidly in the near future.

### About the Data

The data for this project draw from a variety of U.S. Census Bureau sources including the decennial census and 2007 American Community Survey (for nativity, poverty, and educational attainment), the Current Population Survey (for interstate moves) from 2000 to 2008 and the Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program for race/ethnicity, age, and population migration and immigration components from 2000 to 2008. Population projection data on aging derive from Census Bureau Population Projections. Our race/ethnicity classification identifies Hispanics as a separate category and whites, blacks, Asians, and other races as non-Hispanic members of those groups. Metropolitan areas, unless otherwise noted, pertain to the 100 largest metropolitan areas with 2007 populations exceeding 500,000. All metropolitan areas are identified consistently across time according to 2003 Office of Management and Budget definitions.

**Figure 1-5. All Race/Ethnic Groups Have Rising Educational Attainment, But Disparities Remain Stark**

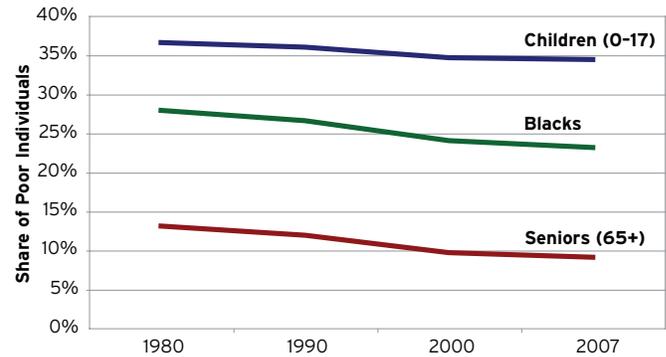


Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 and 2007 ACS data

## ■ Educational Attainment

The education of our population, and ultimately our economic and social prosperity, is shaped in part by the underlying demographic trends of aging and increasing racial/ethnic diversity. On one hand, higher educational attainment among younger populations makes us a “smarter” nation than even in the recent past, with about 85 percent of adults holding a high school diploma, and 34 percent holding a post-secondary degree (including associates degrees) (**Figure 1-5**). On the other hand, an influx of new immigrants to fill gaps in the lower-skill rungs of the labor market creates economic and social challenges, especially in those regions and metro areas where they are concentrating. The result is continued and—for Hispanics especially—widening disparities in rates of college degree attainment by race and ethnicity.

**Figure 1-6. Traditional Groups—Children, Seniors, and Blacks—Represent Decreasing Shares of America’s Poor**



Source: Brookings analysis of decennial census and 2007 ACS data

## ■ Poverty

Poverty has risen this decade—both the number of people (by 4.2 million) and the share of U.S. population (by half a percentage point) living below the federal poverty line—a worrying trend given the current recession. As poverty spreads and deepens, however, it continues to change its composition. From 1980 to 2007, groups that traditionally made up significant shares of the poor have declined in representation among those with the lowest incomes. Due in part to the aging of the baby boomers, both children and the elderly comprise smaller shares of the poor—with the result that working-age Americans account for a larger proportion of today’s poor. Meanwhile, blacks still suffer some of the highest poverty rates in the nation, but growing racial and ethnic diversity—including among the poor—mean that today African Americans account for fewer than one in four U.S. residents below poverty (**Figure 1-6**).

## Geographic Definitions

Each section of this brief examines a series of key demographic trends for metropolitan areas, and their cities and suburbs. It focuses primarily on the nation’s 100 largest metro areas, which had populations of at least 500,000 in 2007, and which collectively represent two-thirds of U.S. population. Within those metro areas, primary cities are identified as: (a) the first city in each metro area’s name; together with (b) any additional named cities with populations of at least 100,000 in 2007. This yields 137 primary cities in the 100 metro areas. Suburbs represent the parts of these 100 metro areas outside primary cities.

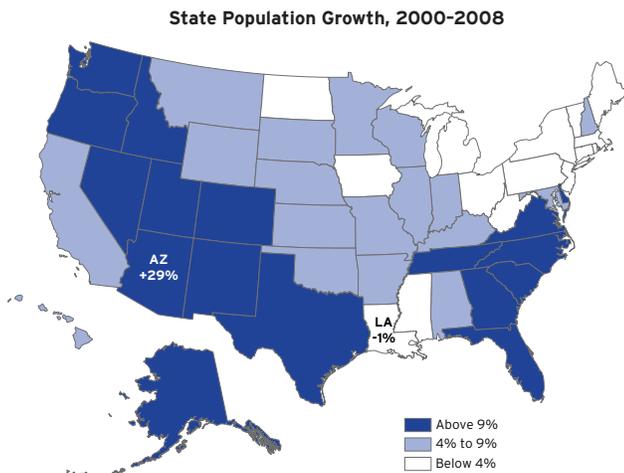
### For more information, see these Metro Program resources:

- Alan Berube, Audrey Singer, Jill Wilson, and William H. Frey, “Finding Exurbia: America’s Fast-Growing Communities at the Metropolitan Fringe” (2006).
- William H. Frey, Jill Wilson, Alan Berube, and Audrey Singer, “Tracking Metropolitan America into the 21st Century: A Field Guide to the New Metropolitan and Micropolitan Definitions” (2004).

# MIGRATION—Abrupt Slowdown Shifts Metropolitan Growth Patterns

Americans have one of the highest rates of within-country movement in the industrialized world. But the past two years have seen a migration slowdown in both fast-growing and slow-growing regions and metro areas, following the bursting of the housing bubble that inflated in the early 2000s.

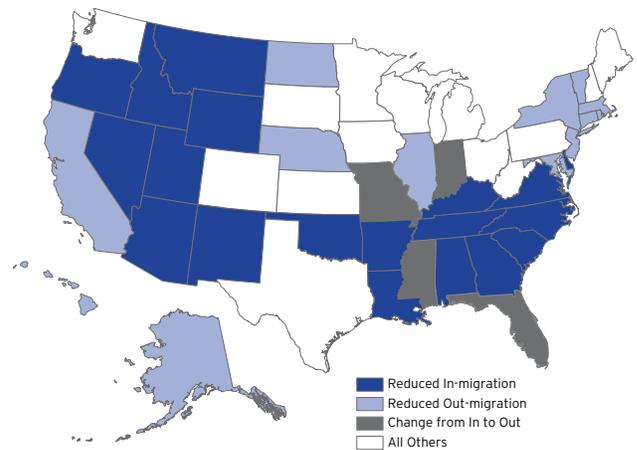
**Map 2-1. Sun Belt States Grew Faster than Northeastern and Midwestern States**



Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

**Map 2-2. Recent Migration Slowed Most in Fast-Growing States**

**Change in Migration Level, 2006-2007 to 2007-2008**

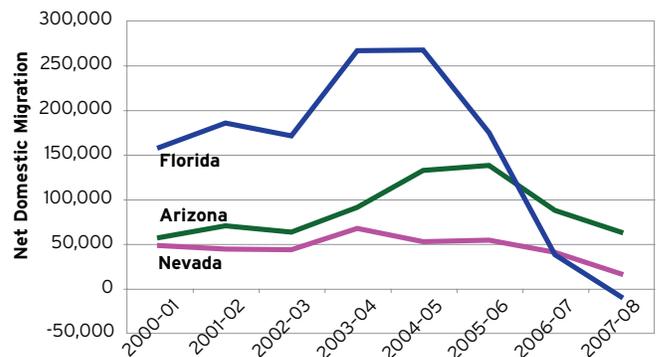


Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

Sun Belt states, especially those in the Southeast and Intermountain West, continue to grow faster than those in the Northeast and Midwest (**Map 2-1**). But the recent migration slowdown has led to noticeable reductions in their gains (**Map 2-2**). Most noteworthy is the domestic migration turnaround in Florida. While the Sunshine State gained between 150,000 and 270,000 migrants annually from 2000 to 2005, it actually experienced a net loss of domestic migrants from 2007 to 2008 (**Figure 2-1**). Only births and immigration from abroad have kept Florida's overall population from dipping. The slowdown was evident in former migration magnets like Arizona and Nevada, too. Among the 28 states that gained domestic migrants from 2006 to 2007, all but five received fewer migrants from 2007 to 2008.

On the flip side, many potential movers stayed in coastal states that, in the early and middle parts of the decade, were considered less affordable than Sun Belt destinations. For example, both California and New York lost about one-quarter million migrants to other parts of the country from 2004 to 2005. But with many more people staying put last year, out-migration from each state fell by 40 to 50 percent. Similarly, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Connecticut are losing fewer migrants, as many young couples, empty nesters, and retirees hang on until new opportunities arise.

**Figure 2-1. Net Migration Has Declined Significantly in Former Magnet States, Especially Florida**



Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

Several metropolitan areas that experienced outsized migration gains in the early 2000s witnessed a rapid growth slowdown after 2005 (**Figure 2-2**). Of the 30 fastest-growing Sun Belt metro areas this decade, 22 saw a decline in population growth by 2006-2007. As the recession slowly brings

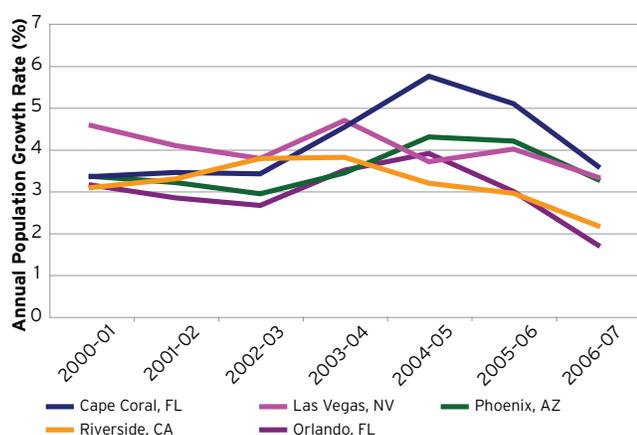
**Table 2-1. Immigration Helped to Cushion the Impact of Domestic Out-Migration in Many Large Metro Areas  
Population Change and Components in 10 Largest U.S. Metro Areas, 2000-2007**

Metropolitan area*	Population 2007	Domestic Migration	Immigration
New York, NY-NJ-PA	18,815,988	-1,684,695	1,125,297
Los Angeles, CA	12,875,587	-1,148,446	838,043
Chicago, IL-IN-WI	9,524,673	-491,498	395,664
Dallas, TX	6,145,037	229,749	301,436
Philadelphia, PA-NJ-DE-MD	5,827,962	-88,444	96,556
Houston, TX	5,628,101	157,918	274,221
Miami, FL	5,413,212	-177,067	431,611
Washington, DC-VA-MD-WV	5,306,565	-98,983	252,738
Atlanta, GA	5,278,904	369,760	187,458
Boston, MA-NH	4,482,857	-263,598	168,565

\* official metro names are shortened

Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

**Figure 2-2. Growth Began to Slow by 2006 in Several Formerly "Hot" Sunbelt Metro Areas**



Note: Official metro names are shortened

Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

housing supply and demand back into balance, growth rates in areas like Orlando, Phoenix, Las Vegas, and Riverside may decline even further in the coming years.

As with states, metro areas and central cities with previously low or no growth began to retain more residents in the wake of the migration slowdown. In the 20 slowest-growing and declining large Northeastern and Midwestern metro areas this decade, population increased faster (or declined more slowly) in 2006-2007. The greatest shift occurred in metropolitan New York, which lost 51,000 fewer migrants in that year than the previous year. Metropolitan Chicago's loss of 20,000 migrants in 2006-2007 was half the loss it experienced the year before.

The majority of large U.S. cities (those with over 100,000 residents) have gained population thus far this decade, with the fastest gainers located in the South and West. Still, the recent migration slowdown has led many older and coastal

cities to retain residents who may otherwise have headed to the suburbs or faster-growing regions. Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Boston flipped from population losses to population gains in 2006-2007. And in the Midwest, 30 of 44 large cities either gained more people, or lost fewer people, in 2006-2007 than the year before. Most Northeastern large cities also showed higher gains or reduced losses in their populations. Among the latter category were Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse.

During this period of diminished domestic migration, immigration continued to serve as a demographic "cushion" for many large metro areas. These included areas which displayed consistent (though recently smaller) migration losses such as New York and Los Angeles, and Sun Belt metro areas with increased migration losses like Miami (Table 2-1). Over the decade, immigration exceeded domestic out-migration in 40 large metropolitan areas, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore, Minneapolis, and Cincinnati.

Will migration pick up again, and if so, will the same "boom year" destinations continue to attract migrants? It is quite likely that once the economic turmoil subsides and the housing market rebounds, household mobility will rise once again to the levels of the early 2000s. But exactly where people will move is less predictable, as destinations in high demand tend to ebb and flow, decade to decade. ■

**For more information, see these Metro Program resources:**

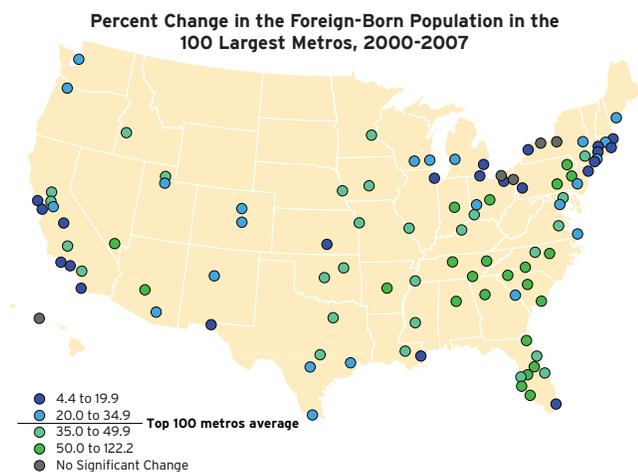
- William H. Frey, "Economy, Housing Woes Slow Migration, Census Shows" (2008).
- William H. Frey, "Older Cities Hold On to More People" (2008).
- William H. Frey, "Migration to Hot Housing Markets Cools Off" (2008).
- William H. Frey, "Metropolitan America in the New Century: Metropolitan and Central City Shifts Since 2000" (2005).



# IMMIGRATION—New Gateways and Suburbs Emerge as Destinations

The pace of immigration has slowed somewhat during this decade, after a significant wave of immigration in the 1990s. During this period, immigrants found opportunities in many more cities, suburbs and rural areas than in the recent past, when they concentrated in just a handful of states and cities. The result is a new geography of immigration which now includes many places that have little recent history of immigration.

**Map 3-1. Metros in the Southeast Are Among the Fastest-Growing Immigrant Destinations**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 and 2007 ACS data

Many of the metro areas with the fastest gains in the foreign born are clustered in the Southeast, traditionally an area that immigrants avoided (Map 3-1). To be sure, many of these new destination metros, such as Knoxville, TN and Little Rock, AR began with small foreign-born populations, and thus show high growth rates. However, some new destination areas have attracted immigrants in great numbers recently: Phoenix and Atlanta both have well over a half million immigrants, and Las Vegas and Orlando each have more than one-quarter million. Immigrant populations in well-established gateway metro areas such as New York and Los Angeles are growing more slowly, a function of their large absolute size.

The growth poles for immigrants in this decade bridge an interesting regional divide. Overall, 23 metro areas saw their immigrant populations grow by more than 50 percent since 2000. They cut a wide swath across the Southeast, including along Interstate 40 (Raleigh, Knoxville, Nashville, and Little Rock) and Interstate 20 (Columbia, Atlanta, and Birmingham), and in Florida (Cape Coral-Fort Myers, Lakeland, Orlando, Jacksonville, and Sarasota) (see Map 3-1). But several metro areas in the older industrial states of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, Allentown and Scranton), Indiana (Indianapolis), and Ohio (Columbus) also experienced at least 50 percent growth.

In some respects, America's immigrant population can still be viewed as geographically concentrated. More than half of all immigrants live in the top 10 metropolitan destinations: New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, Washington, Riverside-San Bernardino, and Phoenix (Table 3-1, left side). (By contrast, a little over one-quarter of all Americans live in the 10 largest metro areas.) Two-thirds of the foreign-born live in the top 20 destinations. Many of these metro areas are well-established areas of immigration, but several have emerged as major destination areas only in the past two decades. These include metropolitan Dallas-Ft. Worth, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and Las Vegas. Others have re-emerged, having been major destinations in the beginning of the 20th century followed by a period with very low immigration. These include Seattle, Philadelphia, San Jose, and Sacramento.

The metropolitan areas in which foreign-born populations predominate most are a slightly different list than those with the largest absolute numbers of immigrants (Table 3-1, right side). With two notable exceptions, Chicago and Phoenix, the metro areas with the largest immigrant populations in absolute size rank high among all metro areas with respect to the proportion of the total population that is foreign-born. Add to these a couple of metro areas along the Southwest border (McAllen and El Paso), as well as long-term California destinations (Stockton, Fresno and Bakersfield) and the Pacific melting pot of Honolulu, among others.

Paralleling the arrival of immigrant populations in new metropolitan destinations, immigrants have also increasingly settled away from the urban core within metro areas (Figure 3-1). In 1980, 41 percent of immigrants in the U.S. lived in the primary cities of the top 100 metros. By 2007, that share had decreased to 34 percent. Also by 2007, more than half (52 percent) of U.S. immigrants lived in the suburbs of large metropolitan areas, compared to just 44 percent in 1980. These suburban immigrants numbered 19.6 million in 2007.

Smaller metro areas (less than 500,000 total population) and non-metropolitan areas have maintained their shares of about 10 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of the nation's immigrant population. These steady proportions, however, mask the high growth rates in these areas. In fact, between 1990 and 2007, the rate of growth of the immigrant population was fastest in small metro areas (124 percent), followed by nonmetropolitan areas (119 percent). In suburbs and cities, by

**Table 3-1. The Metro Areas with the Most Immigrants Differ Somewhat from the Metro Areas with the Highest Immigrant Population Shares**

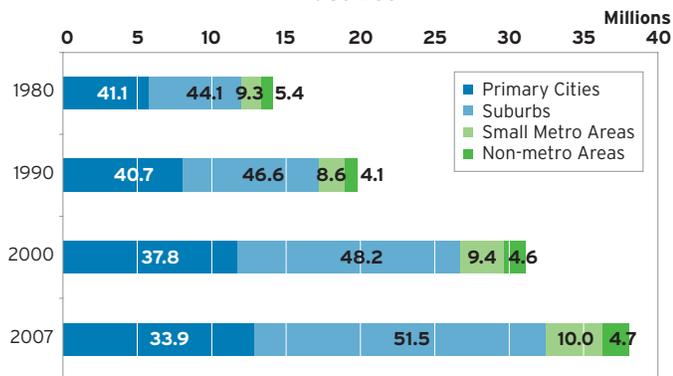
Ranked by Size of Foreign-Born Population			Ranked by Foreign-Born Share of Population			
Metro area*	Population	Foreign-born population	Metro area*	Population	Foreign-born population	Share (%)
1 New York, NY-NJ-PA	18,815,988	5,328,891	1 San Jose, CA	1,803,549	671,106	37.2
2 Los Angeles, CA	12,875,587	4,488,563	2 Miami, FL	5,413,212	2,005,178	37.0
3 Miami, FL	5,413,212	2,005,178	3 Los Angeles, CA	12,875,587	4,488,563	34.9
4 Chicago, IL-IN-WI	9,522,879	1,679,074	4 San Francisco, CA	4,203,898	1,245,007	29.6
5 San Francisco, CA	4,203,898	1,245,007	5 McAllen, TX	710,514	202,345	28.5
6 Houston, TX	5,629,127	1,204,817	6 New York, NY-NJ-PA	18,815,988	5,328,891	28.3
7 Dallas, TX	6,144,489	1,092,361	7 El Paso, TX	734,669	196,171	26.7
8 Washington, DC-VA-MD-WV	5,306,125	1,088,949	8 Stockton, CA	670,990	163,163	24.3
9 Riverside, CA	4,081,371	911,982	9 Oxnard, CA	798,364	185,207	23.2
10 Phoenix, AZ	4,179,427	736,068	10 San Diego, CA	2,974,859	674,084	22.7
11 Boston, MA-NH	4,482,857	713,529	11 Riverside, CA	4,081,371	911,982	22.3
12 San Diego, CA	2,974,859	674,084	12 Las Vegas, NV	1,836,333	408,796	22.3
13 Atlanta, GA	5,271,550	671,356	13 Fresno, CA	899,348	196,319	21.8
14 San Jose, CA	1,803,549	671,106	14 Houston, TX	5,629,127	1,204,817	21.4
15 Philadelphia, PA-NJ-DE-MD	5,827,962	508,977	15 Bakersfield, CA	790,710	162,750	20.6
16 Seattle, WA	3,309,347	508,248	16 Washington, DC-VA-MD-WV	5,306,125	1,088,949	20.5
18 Las Vegas, NV	1,836,333	408,796	18 Bridgeport, CT	895,015	176,303	19.7
17 Detroit, MI	4,467,592	388,920	17 Modesto, CA	511,263	100,851	19.7
19 Sacramento, CA	2,091,120	361,231	19 Honolulu, HI	905,601	175,256	19.4
20 Tampa, FL	2,723,949	335,183	20 Dallas, TX	6,144,489	1,092,361	17.8

\*Official metro area names are shortened

Source: Brookings analysis of 2007 American Community Survey data

**Figure 3-1. A Majority of Foreign-Born U.S. Residents Now Reside in Large Metropolitan Suburbs**

Size and Share of Foreign-Born Population by Location, 1980-2007



Numbers in bars represent proportion (of 100%) of U.S. foreign-born population living in that community type in the year denoted

Source: Brookings analysis of decennial census and 2007 ACS data

contrast, the immigrant population grew by 113 percent and 60 percent, respectively, between 1990 and 2007 (though from a much larger base). The total U.S. foreign-born population grew by 93 percent over the same time. Individually, some counties within metropolitan areas, as well as some smaller metros and

nonmetropolitan counties experienced much faster growth, prompting residents and officials to confront immigration for the first time. ■

**For more information see these Metro Program resources:**

- Audrey Singer, Jill H. Wilson, and Brooke DeRenzis, "Immigrants, Politics, and Local Response in Suburban Washington" (2009).
- Audrey Singer, Dominic Vitiello, Michael Katz, and David Park, "Recent Immigration to Philadelphia: Regional Change in a Re-Emerging Gateway" (2008).
- Audrey Singer, Susan W. Hardwick, and Caroline B. Brettell, eds., *Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrant Incorporation in Suburban America* (2008).
- Audrey Singer and Jill H. Wilson, "From 'There' to 'Here': Refugee Resettlement in Metropolitan America" (2006).
- Audrey Singer, "The Impact of Immigration on States and Localities" (Testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law, May 17, 2007).
- Audrey Singer, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways" (2004).
- Audrey Singer, "At Home in the Nation's Capital: Immigrant Trends in Metropolitan Washington" (2003).

## RACE AND ETHNICITY—Diversity Spreads Out

**A**lthough Americans like to think of our nation as a “melting pot,” the racial/ethnic diversity we often celebrate is, even today, heavily clustered across and within the nation’s regions and metropolitan areas.

Yet starting in the 1990s and even more so this decade, Hispanics have dispersed to virtually all parts of the country, Asians have spread further, and whites and blacks have taken quite different regional demographic paths. These dynamics are beginning to upend long-held assumptions of who lives where in the United States, creating new opportunities and challenges for communities of different stripes.

The Hispanic population, now the nation’s largest racial/ethnic minority group at 15.1 percent of the population, shows a strong tendency to locate in distinct areas. In 1990, 54 percent of all Hispanics lived in the 10 metro areas with the largest Hispanic populations; that share declined to 51 percent in 2000 and 49 percent in 2007 (**Table 4-1**, left side).

Hispanic growth areas, however, concentrated in newer destinations throughout the Southeast (**Table 4-1**, right side). Broader migrant flows that created jobs in construction, retail, and service sectors that employ many Hispanic workers fostered much of this growth. Yet Hispanics are also dispersing across smaller geographies. Today, in one-third (1,062) of the nation’s 3,141 counties, Hispanics comprise more than 5 percent of the population. That compares with 859 counties in 2000 and 557 counties in 1990. Whether these areas will continue to attract Hispanics as the recession dries up job opportunities is as yet uncertain.

The Asian population (including Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders) is even more concentrated than Hispanics, with large numbers located in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. Today, 55 percent of all Asians are located in the 10 metropolitan areas with the largest Asian populations, compared with 58 percent in 2000 and 61 percent in 1990. As with Hispanics, there is little overlap between these metros and those in which Asians grew most rapidly from 2000 to 2007 (**Table 4-2**). The latter are more common migration magnets, including high-tech centers like Phoenix

**Table 4-1. The Southeast Dominates Among the Areas with Greatest Hispanic Population Growth**

Largest Hispanic Population, 2007		Greatest Hispanic Growth, 2000-2007**	
Metro Area*	Population (1000s)	Metro Area*	Growth Rate (%)
1 Los Angeles, CA	5,675	1 Cape Coral-Fort Myers, FL	137.3
2 New York, NY-NJ-PA	4,011	2 Port St. Lucie, FL	109.5
3 Miami, FL	2,110	3 Charlotte, NC-SC	100.7
4 Houston, TX	1,880	4 Fayetteville, AR-MO	98.8
5 Chicago, IL-IN-WI	1,858	5 Raleigh, NC	96.2
6 Riverside, CA	1,835	6 Lakeland, FL	92.4
7 Dallas, TX	1,654	7 Nashville, TN	92.1
8 Phoenix, AZ	1,271	8 Indianapolis, IN	85.9
9 San Antonio, TX	1,050	9 Atlanta, GA	80.4
10 San Diego, CA	901	10 Deltona-Daytona Beach, FL	74.9

\*Official metro area names are shortened

\*\*Among metro areas with at least 50,000 Hispanics in 2007

Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

**Table 4-2. The Asian Population Remains Relatively Concentrated in a Few Large Metro Areas**

Largest Asian* Population, 2007		Greatest Asian* Growth, 2000-2007***	
Metro Area**	Population (1000s)	Metro Area**	Growth Rate (%)
1 Los Angeles, CA	1,782	1 Las Vegas, NV	71.5
2 New York, NY-NJ-PA	1,736	2 Phoenix, AZ	65.3
3 San Francisco, CA	939	3 Riverside, CA	57.4
4 San Jose, CA	540	4 Austin, TX	56.1
5 Chicago, IL-IN-WI	494	5 Orlando, FL	55.6
6 Honolulu, HI	476	6 Atlanta, GA	53.0
7 Washington, DC-VA-MD-WV	450	7 Tampa, FL	50.9
8 Seattle, WA	361	8 Columbus, OH	45.2
9 Houston, TX	315	9 Dallas, TX	41.8
10 San Diego, CA	311	10 Baltimore, MD	41.7

\* Including Asians, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders

\*\*Official metro area names are shortened

\*\*\*Among metro areas with at least 50,000 Asians in 2007

Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

**Table 4-3. Both Blacks and Whites Are Moving to the South, Though Whites Are Also Moving Westward**

Largest Black Population Gains, 2000-2007			Largest White Population Gains, 2000-2007		
Metro Area*	Change, 2000-07		Metro Area*	Change, 2000-07	
1 Atlanta, GA	413,199		1 Phoenix, AZ	322,104	
2 Houston, TX	150,180		2 Atlanta, GA	262,890	
3 Dallas, TX	144,887		3 Dallas, TX	172,284	
4 Miami, FL	105,093		4 Austin, TX	138,701	
5 Washington, DC-VA-MD-WV	100,197		5 Charlotte, NC	134,483	
6 Charlotte, NC	84,681		6 Houston, TX	130,488	
7 Orlando, FL	69,913		7 Raleigh, NC	126,761	
8 Baltimore, MD	61,509		8 Las Vegas, NV	116,444	
9 Tampa, FL	58,114		9 Portland, OR	115,728	
10 Philadelphia, PA-NJ-DE-MD	53,976		10 Nashville, TN	111,878	

\*Official metro area names are shortened

Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

white populations, despite the emergence of Hispanics as a growing minority.

Among all racial/ethnic groups, the older white population, with its low fertility and modest immigration levels, has the lowest national growth rate—1.7 percent from 2000 to 2007 (compared to 22.6, 24.7, and 12.3 percentage points respectively for Hispanics, Asians, and blacks). This makes the migration of whites across U.S. metropolitan areas more of a “zero sum game” than for other groups. Among the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas, 34 metros, including New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco sustained a loss of white population this decade. At the same time, Intermountain West and Southern metro areas including Phoenix, Atlanta, and Dallas experienced significant white population gains (Table 4-3, right side).

Despite their low growth rate, whites comprise at least 85 percent of the population in more than half of all U.S. counties. These counties, including small rural ones, are located mostly in parts of the Midwest and Northeast that have not received many immigrants or minorities in the past two decades.

Still, the spread of minorities has created 15 metropolitan areas (among the largest 100) that are already minority white and a full 31 where white children are in the minority (Map 4-1). Metropolitan places normally thought of as predominantly white, such as Washington, D.C., Phoenix, and Las Vegas, as well as metropolitan New York, share the “majority-minority” children characteristic. Immigration and spillover migration from California have resulted in 44 percent of Phoenix’s children having a Hispanic origin; similar dynamics affect the Las Vegas area. In the Washington, D.C. area, blacks make up the largest minority group among children, followed by Hispanics and Asians.

The fact that nearly one-third of large metro areas house minority white child populations signals a new demographic future. As more than half of metropolitan Hispanics, Asians, and blacks now live in the suburbs, it is clear that the old “minority city, white suburb” stereotype no longer holds for much of metropolitan America, either. ■

**Map 4-1. In 31 Large Metros, White Children Are in the Minority**

**Metro Areas in which Less than Half of People Under Age 15 Are Non-Hispanic White, 2007**



Source: Brookings analysis of 2007 ACS data

and Austin. Far fewer U.S. counties have at least 5 percent Asian population than is the case for Hispanics: 118 in 2007, compared with 90 counties in 2000 and 51 in 1990.

Meanwhile, the black population is in the midst of its second straight decade of a large scale southward shift. Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s as smaller streams, the “return to the South” movement of blacks has been a major migration flow since 1990. The movement includes both young and old blacks (including retirees), as well as both professional and blue collar blacks. This movement has helped to drive black population gains in several New South metropolitan areas, led by Atlanta, the dominant destination for this group (Table 4-3, left side). Many Southern metropolitan areas, especially those outside of Texas and Florida, are still heavily dominated by black and

**For more information, see these Metro Program resources:**

- William H. Frey, “The Census Projects Minority Surge” (August 2008).
- William H. Frey, “Diversity Spreads Out: Metropolitan Shifts in Hispanic, Asian and Black Populations Since 2000” (2006).
- William H. Frey, “The New Great Migration: Black Americans Return to the South, 1965-2000” (2004).

## AGING—Sun Belt and Suburban Boomers Become Seniors

The baby boom generation, born roughly between 1946 and 1965, will begin to inflate the ranks of the 65-and-over crowd next decade. The social and economic needs of these “boomer seniors” will likely differ sharply from boomer proclivities of the past. As this unique generation plowed its way through the nation’s school systems, labor market, housing market and stock market, it continually broke the mold, transforming public and private institutions in its path. One thing is certain: the size of the senior population will rise everywhere, including places that are unaccustomed to housing large numbers of older people.

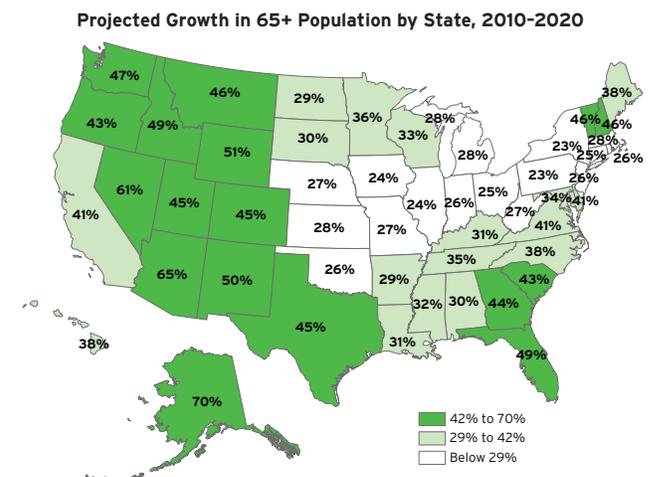
**Table 5-1. “Younger” Metro Areas Will Experience Significant Senior Growth Due to the Aging of Baby Boomers**  
Change in Population Age 55 to 64, 2000-2007

Metro Area	Growth Rate, 2000-2007 (%)
1 Raleigh-Cary, NC	31.6
2 Austin-Round Rock, TX	30.1
3 Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA	29.8
4 Boise City-Nampa, ID	28.7
5 Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	27.8
6 Orlando-Kissimmee, FL	27.2
7 Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX	23.7
8 Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	22.7
9 Colorado Springs, CO	22.6
10 McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	21.5
11 Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ	21.0
12 Charleston-North Charleston, SC	20.8
13 Albuquerque, NM	19.5
14 Tucson, AZ	19.2
15 Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV	19.1
16 Salt Lake City, UT	19.0
17 Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC	18.2
18 Denver-Aurora, CO	18.1
19 Nashville-Davidson--Murfreesboro--Franklin, TN	18.1
20 Ogden-Clearfield, UT	18.0

Source: Brookings analysis of Population Estimates Program data

Those metropolitan areas gaining the most 55-to-64 year-olds this decade provide a clue as to which areas will gain the most boomer seniors next decade (Table 5-1). This group is dominated by metro areas in the Southeast, the Intermountain West and Texas—areas not typically associated with aging populations. Among the 20 fastest growing are Raleigh, Austin, Atlanta, Boise City, Las Vegas, and Orlando, each of which saw its pre-senior population increased by more than one-quarter in the first seven years of this decade. These metro areas have experienced high overall population growth, not just growth of 50-somethings. This suggests that the bulk of the growth in

**Map 5-1. Fastest Senior Growth Will Occur in the Intermountain West, Southeast, and Texas**



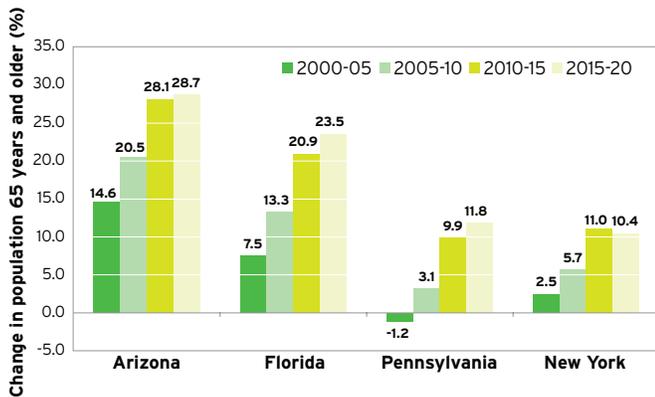
Source: Brookings Analysis of Census Bureau Population Projections

this age group is due to the “aging in place” of baby boomers, many of whom arrived there long ago.

A similar pattern emerges from projected state level growth in the 65-and-over population between 2010 and 2020, the decade when boomers become full fledged seniors (Map 5-1). Again, the fastest senior growth will occur in the Intermountain West, the Southeast, and Texas—states where the senior population is projected to grow by up to 70 percent in just one decade. Once again, these states will have attracted most of their aging boomers well before they reach their senior years, rather than as migrants during the next decade. For example, Georgia’s senior population will increase by 40 percent between 2010 and 2020 due to the “aging in place” of boomers alone, and only an additional 4 percent due to the in-migration of people age 65 and over.

Many metropolitan areas and states without a history of rapid senior growth will thus newly encounter the issues that go along with that trend. Of course, even states with relatively low senior growth levels next decade could be overwhelmed.

**Figure 5-1. Even “Low-Growth” States Will Experience Significant Increases in Over-65 Population Due to Aging in Place**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census Bureau Population Projections

New York and Pennsylvania, for instance, will exhibit the lowest rates of senior growth among all states, but at 23 percent growth from 2010 to 2020, they will far surpass their senior growth rates from the previous decade (**Figure 5-1**).

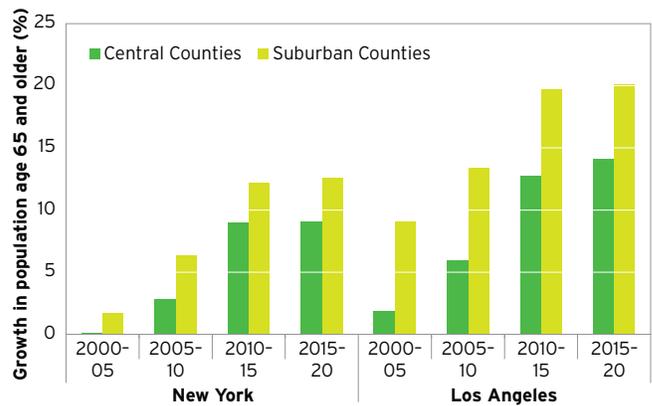
In many respects, the boomers were the first fully “suburban generation,” having spent most of their lives there. The aging in place of suburban baby boomers will thus make the suburbs in most parts of the country a lot grayer than they have ever been before. In the New York and Los Angeles metro areas, both central and suburban counties are projected to have brisk senior growth from 2010 to 2020 (**Figure 5-2**). But in each case, suburban senior growth rates will exceed those in the urban core.

The rise of large numbers of seniors in suburban communities that are used to catering to the needs of younger populations and families with children will bring new challenges to their residents and local governments. Fortunately, the fast growing “younger” elderly population (ages 65 to 74) need fewer medical and other costly social services than seniors in their late 70s and 80s. Regardless, the next decade will herald the dawn of a new era of suburban graying in all parts of the country. In fast-growing parts of the country, there may be short-term gains as well-off younger seniors create demand for new types of housing and cultural amenities, and may remain involved in the labor force. By contrast, burgeoning senior populations in slower-growing parts of the country may be comprised disproportionately of “older” elderly, who may require greater social support, along with more affordable private and institutional housing and accessible health care providers. ■

**For more information, see these Metro Program resources:**

- William H. Frey, “Mapping the Growth of Older America: Seniors and Boomers in the Early 21st Century” (2007).
- William H. Frey, *America’s Regional Demographics in the ‘00s Decade: The Role of Seniors, Boomers and New Minorities* (2006, with Research Institute for Housing America).

**Figure 5-2. Suburban Populations in New York and Los Angeles Will Age Faster Than Their Urban Counterparts**



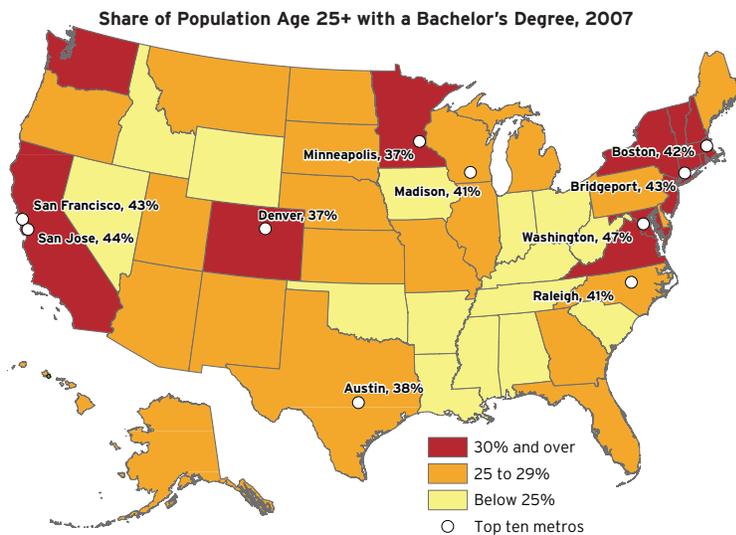
Source: Brookings analysis of Census Bureau Population Projections

**The next decade will herald the dawn of a new era of suburban graying in all parts of the country.**

# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT—Brain Gains, Drains Widen Regional Disparities

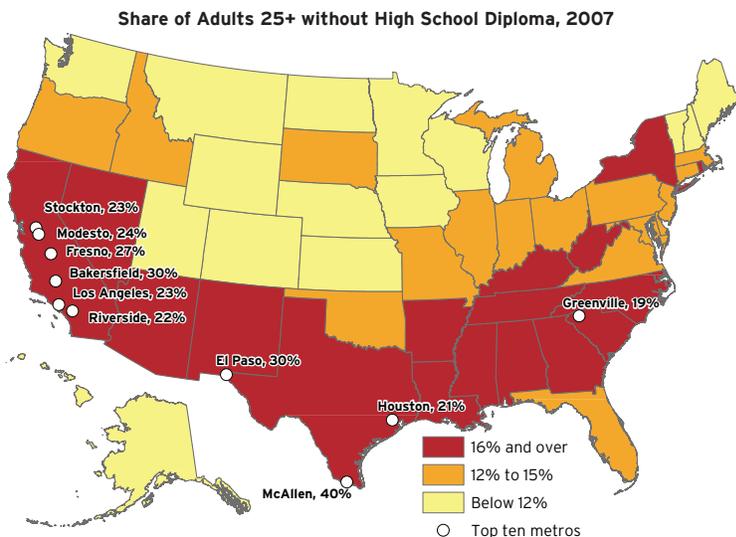
**O**n the whole, our nation is experiencing a continued rise in the educational level of its populace. In 1990, about 20 percent of the adult population (aged 25 and above) held a college degree. That share rose to 24 percent in 2000 and to 28 percent in 2007. Those with at least a high school diploma rose from 75 percent in 1990 to 85 percent in 2007.

**Map 6-1. Metro Areas with the Highest Rates of College Education Lie Mostly in Coastal States**



Source: Brookings analysis of 2007 ACS data

**Map 6-2. Large Shares of Adults in the "Old South," Appalachia, and Inland California Lack a High School Diploma**



Source: Brookings analysis of 2007 ACS data

Beneath the national picture lie sharp geographic variations that have led to “brain gains” for prosperous areas steeped in knowledge economy industries, and others that are particularly attractive to young college grads. Of course, other areas have seen outflows of talent, both young and old, leading to more tepid growth in the skill levels of their labor forces. Alongside these movements, the number of immigrants and Hispanics who have not obtained a high school diploma has risen, especially in a few areas of concentration around the country.

Areas of the nation with the highest shares of college graduates are represented by a swath of coastal states, from Virginia to New Hampshire on the East, and California and Washington on the West, plus Colorado and Minnesota in between (**Map 6-1**). At least three in 10 adults are college grads in these states, led by Massachusetts at 38 percent. Among large metro areas, seven—led by Washington, D.C.—show at least four in 10 residents with college degrees. The most highly educated metro area populations are located in knowledge economy areas, including university “islands” such as Austin, TX, Madison, WI, and the North Carolina Research Triangle. Among the nation’s 100 largest metro areas, 37 see college graduates make up at least 30 percent of the population.

On the other side of the coin are regions with high shares of adults lacking high school diplomas (termed “high school dropouts” for this discussion). **Map 6-2** shows that these states tend to be located in the “Old South,” Appalachia, and regions that have received large influxes of immigrants including California, the Southwest, and New York state. Nine

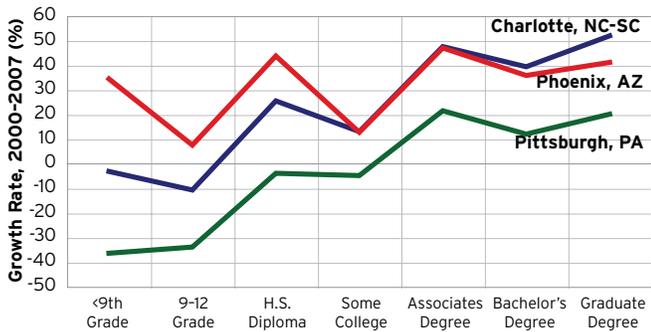
**Table 6-1. Some Metro Areas Are Gaining Both High- and Low-Educated Adults**

Highest Growth in Bachelor's Degree Holders			Highest Growth in High School Dropouts		
Metro Area*	Growth Rate, 2000-2007 (%)		Metro Area*	Growth Rate, 2000-2007 (%)	
1 Las Vegas, NV	65.2		1 Austin, TX	21.8	
2 Cape Coral, FL	51.1		2 Phoenix, AZ	19.0	
3 Riverside, CA	50.3		3 Bakersfield, CA	15.0	
4 Boise City, ID	46.4		4 Las Vegas, NV	11.5	
5 Raleigh, NC	43.7		5 Colorado Springs, CO	10.7	
6 Charlotte, NC-SC	42.9		6 Dallas, TX	10.7	
7 McAllen, TX	42.6		7 Riverside, CA	8.2	
8 Orlando, FL	41.3		8 Raleigh, NC	6.7	
9 Lakeland, FL	41.1		9 Houston, TX	6.7	
10 Stockton, CA	40.4		10 Albuquerque, NM	5.0	

\*Official metro area names are shortened

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 and 2007 American Community Survey data

**Figure 6-1. Educational Attainment Levels Are Growing Unevenly Across Metropolitan Areas**



Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Population Age 25 and Over

Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2000 and 2007 American Community Survey data

of the 10 metro areas with the highest shares of high school dropouts locate in California and Texas, with a significant cluster lining California's Central Valley. Although just 16 percent of US adults lack a high school diploma, rates exceed 20 percent in these nine metro areas and in six states (Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, Kentucky, California, and Alabama).

Even more notable than this static picture is a mini-trend, present in some metro areas, toward increasing numbers of adults without a high school diploma, even as the number decreased nationally. A small number (15 among the 100 largest metros) showed net gains in adults without high school diplomas from 2000 to 2007, most characterized by recent increases in immigrant and/or Hispanic populations. Led by Austin, where dropouts grew by 21 percent over the 7-year period, they include a handful of housing-boom metro areas that attracted large numbers of low-skilled workers to work in construction and related industries: Phoenix, Las Vegas, Riverside, Dallas, and Houston (Table 6-1). Among the 50 states, only two—Arizona and Nevada—showed increases in adults without high school diplomas from 2000 to 2007.

As they grew and expanded over the first part of the decade, many of these same areas gained population at higher levels of education, too. Las Vegas and Riverside ranked first and third in college graduate growth at the same time they drew large numbers of high school dropouts (Table 6-1). This contrasts slightly with other rapidly growing metro areas like Charlotte, which experienced gains in college graduates but declines in adults without high school educations (Figure 6-1). The former areas now confront the challenge of maintaining employment and social cohesion as a housing-led recession disproportionately impacts the newer, less-educated members of their local labor forces.

Finally, areas in the long-declining manufacturing regions surrounding the Great Lakes, such as Pittsburgh, continue to experience difficulty in attracting many and retaining many college graduates (Figure 6-1). Their rates of educational attainment continue to rise due to aging of their populations, but many are seeking to re-invent themselves and their economies more deliberately by retaining their “homegrown” college graduates, and attracting both high- and low-skilled immigrants. ■

**For more information, see Metro Program resources:**

- William H. Frey, “Brain Gains/Brain Drains.” American Demographics, June, pp. 19-23 (2004).
- Paul D Gottlieb, “Labor Supply Pressures and the ‘Brain Drain:’ Signs from Census 2000” (2004).



## POVERTY—Variable Change Amid Diversifying Locations

The current decade has had uneven impacts on poverty around the United States. The overall rate in metropolitan areas rose slightly from 2000 (11.6 percent) to 2007 (11.9 percent). In a group of metropolitan areas, however, the increase was much more severe (**Map 7-1**). Several areas dependent on the manufacturing sector, which has continued to shed jobs over much of the decade, saw steep rises in their poverty rates. This included Ohio metro areas such as Cleveland, Akron, and Toledo; the Michigan regions of Detroit and Grand Rapids; and Sun Belt manufacturing centers such as Greensboro, Greenville, Memphis, and El Paso.

By contrast, rates fell modestly in the large metro areas of New York, Washington, D.C., and San Diego; and dropped sharply in Los Angeles and throughout central California. Given the projected eventual depth of the current recession, few metro areas are likely to avoid poverty increases in the next few years, though the magnitude is once again sure to vary.

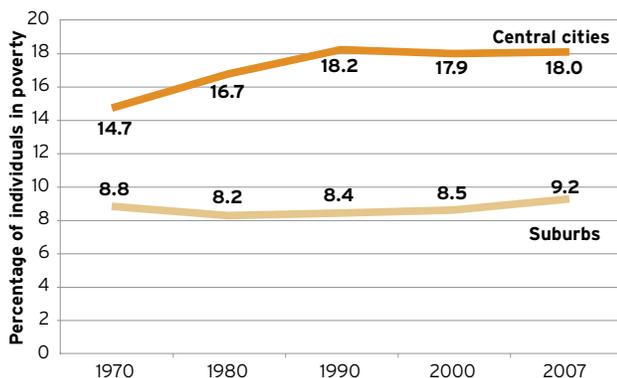
Behind the recent regional variation lies a long-emerging trend that has challenged historical patterns in the metropolitan location of poverty. After widening considerably in the 1970s and 1980s, the gap between primary-city and suburban poverty rates stabilized in the 1990s, and has narrowed during the current decade (**Figure 7-1**). Primary-city residents are still almost twice as likely to be poor as their suburban counterparts. But as a product of this narrowing gap, and continued rapid population growth in the suburbs, the balance of the metropolitan poor population swung sharply toward the suburbs in the last seven years. Specifically, while cities had about 100,000 more poor residents in 2000 than their suburbs, by 2007, the suburban poor outnumbered the city poor by more than 1.5 million.

While the city poor population has declined in some areas, several areas, especially in the older industrial Midwest. The Akron, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and Rochester metro areas are now marked by majority-suburban poverty.

The profile of the suburban poor, as it turns out, is not altogether different from that of the poor in cities (**Table 7-1**). Overall, suburban residents are only half as likely as primary-city residents to have below-poverty incomes. But very similar shares of the poor in each type of location (43 and 44 percent) live in “deep” poverty, with incomes below 50 percent of the poverty line. The city poor are somewhat, though not dramatically, more likely to be foreign-born (22 versus 19 percent). Similar shares work, either full-time or part-time (43 percent in cities, 45 percent in suburbs). Perhaps the most significant (though by no means enormous) difference between the groups is in household type; over 20 percent of poor suburban households are married couples; this holds for less than 16 percent of poor primary-city households.

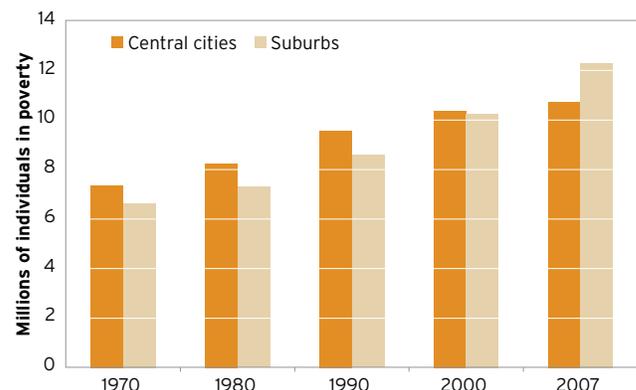
The continuing spread of metropolitan poverty to sub-

**Figure 7-1a. The Gap Between Central-City and Suburban Poverty Rates Has Narrowed in the 2000s**



Source: Brookings analysis of decennial census and ACS data

**Figure 7-1b. The Number of Suburban Poor Surpassed the Number of City Poor in the 2000s**



Source: Brookings analysis of decennial census and ACS data

**Table 7-1. Poor residents of central cities and suburbs have similar social/economic characteristics**

Characteristics of poor, 2007	Central Cities	Suburbs
Share of individuals in poverty	18.0	9.2*
Share of households in poverty	16.2	8.7*
Share of poor:		
With incomes:		
Below 50% poverty	44.7	43.0
75% to 99% poverty	29.8	31.8*
Foreign-born	22.2	19.2*
Who work:		
Full-time, year-round	9.0	8.8
Part-time or part-year	34.1	36.0*
Share of poor households who are:		
Married couples	15.6	20.3*
Female-headed families	31.0	28.2*
Male-headed families	5.0	4.9
Female-headed non-families	28.7	29.2
Male-headed non-families	19.7	17.4*

\* statistically significant difference at 95% confidence interval

Source: Brookings analysis of ACS 2007 data

urbia has taken low-income families beyond the first-ring, older suburbs that have only recently begun to attract policy attention (**Figure 7-1**). Indeed, nearly as large a share of the suburban poor live in somewhat less dense, 1960s/1970s-era “mature suburbs” (36 percent) as in higher-density “older suburbs” (39 percent). This reflects in part the higher prevalence of more recently developed suburbs in the South and West, where poverty is not as confined to central cities.

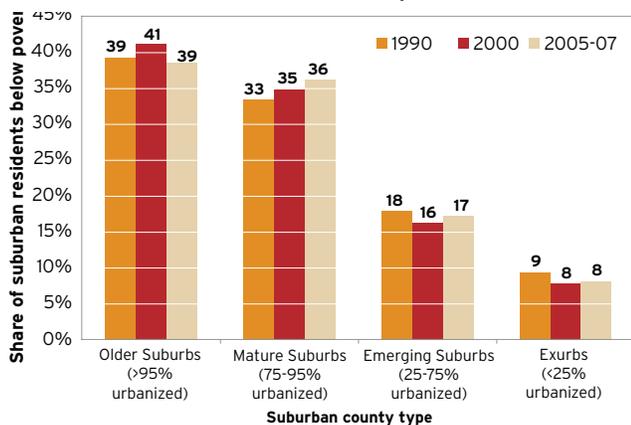
Nonetheless, a few regions stand out for their shifting balance of poor households from older to newer suburbs. In the Cleveland metro area, the older suburbs of Cuyahoga County

**The continuing spread of metropolitan poverty to suburbia has taken low-income families beyond the first-ring, older suburbs that have only recently begun to attract policy attention.**

(which contains Cleveland) had about 84,000 poor residents in the 2005-2007 period, while the region’s somewhat newer counties (Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina) had 68,000 poor residents. About 60,000 poor lived in the older suburbs of Hennepin and Ramsey counties in Minnesota (which contain the Twin Cities), while 81,000 resided in the region’s mature and emerging suburbs and exurbs in 2005-2007.

Even as poverty suburbanizes and spreads throughout the metropolis, its concentration in distressed communities remains a key economic and social concern. One of the signal developments of the 1990s was a dramatic decline in

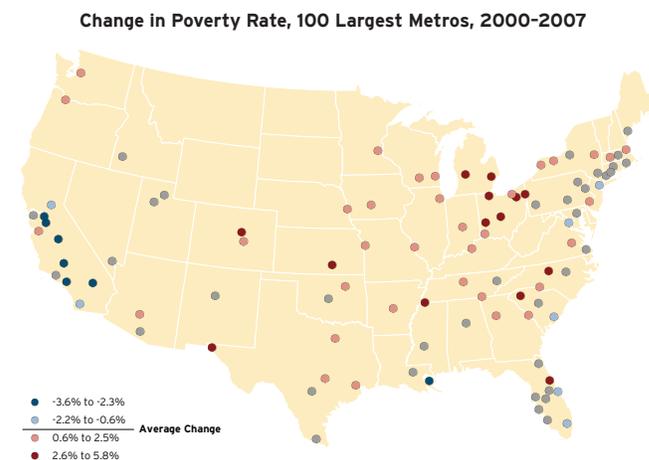
**Figure 7-2. The Share of Suburban Poor in “Mature” Suburbs is Rising**



Note: due to data constraints, 8 percent of exurban population is not reflected in 2005-2007

Source: Brookings analysis of decennial census and ACS data

**Map 7-1. Poverty Rates Rose Fastest in Parts of the Midwest and Southeast and Fell in Most California Metro Areas**



Brookings analysis of Census 2000 and ACS 2007 data



## The current decade has seen concentrations of working poverty grow in most regions, especially the South.

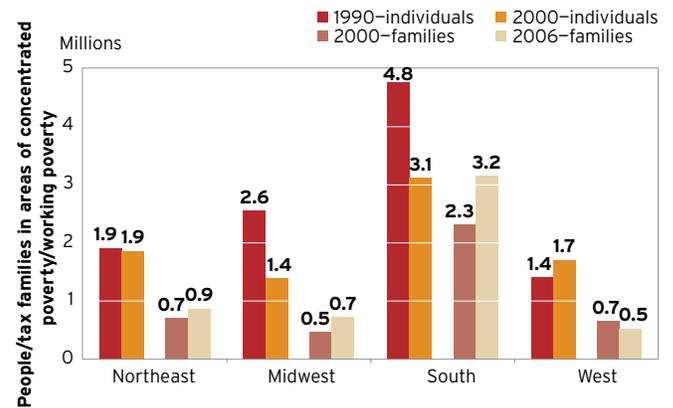
the incidence of concentrated poverty—the clustering of poor people into very poor communities. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of people living in neighborhoods (census tracts) where the poverty rate exceeded 40 percent (roughly three times the national average) dropped by nearly a quarter. The change was somewhat uneven, however, with concentrated poverty declining even more rapidly in the Midwest and South, stagnating in the Northeast, and actually climbing in the West.

Unfortunately, 2000 marked the end of several years of strong economic growth. The current decade has seen concentrations of working poverty—as measured by receipt of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (at the ZIP code level)—grow in most regions, especially the South. Here again, the West has proven the exception, with working poverty declining and spreading out in many of the central California metro areas that experienced overall poverty declines from 2000 to 2007 (**Map 7-1**). ■

### For more information, see these Metro Program resources:

- Alan Berube, “The Geography of U.S. Poverty and Its Implications” (Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means, February 13, 2007).
- Alan Berube and Elizabeth Kneebone, “Two Steps Back: City and Suburban Poverty Trends, 1999-2005” (2006).
- Federal Reserve System and Brookings Institution, *The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America: Case Studies from Communities Across the U.S.* (2008).
- Paul Jargowsky, “Stunning Progress, Hidden Problems: The Dramatic Decline of Concentrated Poverty in the 1990s” (2003).
- Elizabeth Kneebone, “Reversal of Fortune: A New Look at Concentrated Poverty in the 2000s” (2008).
- Robert Puentes and David Warren, “One-Fifth of America: A Comprehensive Guide to America’s First Suburbs” (2006).

**Figure 7-3. Concentrated Poverty Dropped in Most Regions in the 1990s, But Has Risen in Most During the 2000s**



Source: Brookings analysis of decennial census and IRS data

## CONCLUSION—Washington and the New Metro Demography

America is entering what could be an extended period of economic uncertainty, where the dynamism that has long marked our economy and society is temporarily muted as families and businesses slowly rebuild assets and confidence.

The implications of this shift are already evident in a steep drop-off in migration to formerly booming metropolitan markets in the interior West and Southeast. The overhang of overbuilding in these housing markets will likely take some time to come back into balance with demand. Meanwhile, infrastructure and neighborhood stabilization investments in the federal economic recovery package must be deployed wisely in these metro areas, with an eye toward ensuring much more sustainable long-run community growth. That aid can also connect surplus construction labor in these markets to productive, stimulative economic activities.

The weakening economy may also slow the tremendous wave of immigration that has in recent years transformed an increasing array of places across the United States. But millions of relatively new arrivals already in the country will continue to shape the social and economic trajectory of the local communities they call home. About one-third of immigrants are in the United States illegally, and local pressures—especially in the context of an economic downturn—may create a further patchwork of confusing, and ultimately counterproductive, local enforcement measures. A federal impact aid program for communities experiencing significant new immigrant settlement could help compensate state and local governments for their extra costs. Additionally, a federal New Americans Initiative could enhance the integration of new immigrants by supporting state and local partnerships around activities like English language instruction and citizenship education.

Recession will not interrupt the long-run racial and ethnic diversification of U.S. population, nor will it alter the position of our major cities and metropolitan areas at the forefront of that trend. Perhaps the most significant implication for policy regards the intersection of this growing diversification with our nation's educational profile. Wide disparities in attainment by race and ethnicity threaten our future economic growth, as well as the broader promise of upward mobility in American society. The growing number of metro areas that exhibit a white/minority split between their adult and child populations represent a proving ground for resolving those challenges.

**Regardless of the policy area, Washington should examine anew the nation's complex and ever-evolving metropolitan demography.**

Stimulating the widespread adoption of innovative, proven educational models and practices in these metro areas that serve minority youth well should be a key priority for the new administration and Congress. And bolstering the federal commitment to high-performing community colleges can provide a pathway to greater educational success and higher earnings for many first-generation college students, and ultimately greater economic growth for the nation.

Although many might wish that the aging of our population would slow along with the economy, we can predict with much greater accuracy when the boomers will reach seniorhood than when our GDP will rise again. It is likely that the current climate may cause some of the leading-edge boomers to delay retirement for a couple of years, until their 401(k) plans recover a bit. Regardless, a wide range of U.S. metro areas will face a tsunami of senior growth in the next decade. The detached, car-dependent suburban communities that we built for the boomers and their families three and four decades ago are not particularly well-equipped to accommodate these individuals in their golden years. Programs and policies at the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development



opment should foster greater coordination between housing and transportation planning at the regional level that anticipates future population demands. For instance, investments in transit that serves mixed-use communities with affordable, accessible housing would promote greater mobility and quality of life for aging populations.

Poverty is all but certain to grow worse in the United States over the next couple of years. Even more unfortunately, there are several regions of the country in which poverty rates are considerably higher entering this recession (in 2007) than they were entering the last recession (in 2000). The economic recovery package just signed into law will soften the blow somewhat, with new tax credits and increased aid to benefit low-income and unemployed workers and their families. But services for these families such as child care, job search assistance, basic education and training, affordable health care and housing, and emergency shelter remain geographically out of reach for the growing share of the poor who live in suburban America.

Federal programs for vulnerable families and communities, many of which came into existence during the Great Society era of the late 1960s, must be brought forward to align with the new metropolitan geography of poverty. Meanwhile, the federal government should renew its efforts to reduce concentrated poverty, by backing local efforts that blend housing, educational, and human services investments to transform neighborhoods of distress into neighborhoods of choice and opportunity. Regardless of the policy area, Washington should examine anew the nation's complex and ever-evolving metropolitan demography. By understanding the far-reaching implications of dynamic change within our major metropolitan areas, new leadership in Washington might better emulate the "smarter" government we deserve. ■

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**For more information, see these Metro Program resources:**

- Robert Puentes, "A Bridge to Somewhere: Rethinking American Transportation for the 21st Century" (2008).
- Bruce Katz and Robert Puentes, "Memo to the President: Invest in Long-Term Prosperity" (2009).
- Audrey Singer, "Communities with New Immigrants Deserve Federal Aid." *The News and Observer* (Raleigh), May 2, 2008.
- Alan Mallach, "Stabilizing Communities: A Federal Response to the Secondary Impacts of the Foreclosure Crisis" (2009).
- Sara Mead and Andy Rotherham, "Changing the Game: The Federal Role in Supporting 21st Century Educational Innovation" (2008).
- Sara Goldrick-Rab and Alan Berube, "Stimulus for America's Community Colleges" (2009).
- Elizabeth Kneebone, "Expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit to Benefit Families and Places" (2009).
- Alan Berube, "Confronting Concentrated Poverty in Tough Economic Times" (Remarks at Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, December 3, 2008).

## ENDNOTES

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6. *OECD Employment Outlook: Boosting Jobs and Incomes* (Paris, 2006).
7. As other Brookings experts have argued, the federal government should modernize the poverty measure so that it takes account of the poverty-reducing effects of programs like the Earned Income and Child Tax Credits, which were expanded under the recovery package, as well as important regional differences in costs of living. Rebecca M. Blank and Mark H. Greenberg, "Improving the Measurement of Poverty" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2008).

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