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Even in rural spots, US diversity on the rise

Posted By [A'ndrea Elyse Messer-Penn State](#) On September 7, 2012 @ 4:33 pm In [Society & Culture](#) | [No Comments](#)

PENN STATE (US) — Since 1980, over nine-tenths of all cities, suburbs, and small towns have become more diverse, and the trend includes rural communities.

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity has long been apparent at the national level and in our nation's largest metropolitan gateways.

"What really stands out is the near-universal nature of the trend toward greater racial and ethnic diversity at the local level," says Barry Lee, professor of sociology and demography at Penn State, and co-author of the US 2010 policy [brief](#) ^[1].

Straight from the Source

[Read the original study](#) ^[2]

Another significant finding is the decline in white-dominant places, where whites make up 90 percent or more of the population. Three decades ago these places represented two-thirds of the total.

Today, they are down to only one-third of the total. In their stead are a growing number of communities where minorities are a significant share of the population and often where no group is a majority.

Despite the general upward trend in diversity, dramatic contrasts are still apparent between communities. At the high end of the diversity scale, places such as Oakland and Jersey City now have roughly equal proportions of white, black, Hispanic, and Asian residents. At the low end, the most homogeneous communities tend to remain all white or all Hispanic.

A unique feature of this study is that it included "micropolitan" areas where the largest community has a population under 50,000, as well as rural areas.

"We feel that studying these areas is important because they form the core of small-town America," says Lee. "One of the surprises is that even small towns now have to adapt to newcomers who are from different backgrounds than their longtime residents."

Other Penn State researchers on the study were John Iceland, professor of sociology and demography, and Gregory Sharp, recent PhD graduate in sociology and demography.

The Russell Sage Foundation and Brown University fund the [US 2010 research project](#) ^[2].

Source: [Penn State](#) ^[3]

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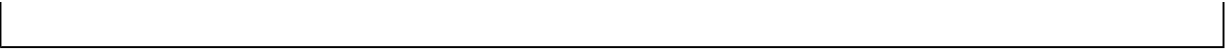
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[1] brief: <http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/Data/Report/report08292012.pdf>

[2] Read the original study: <http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/>

[3] Penn State: <http://live.psu.edu/story/61120>



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