



# Census data show 'surprising' segregation

12/14/2010

By [Haya El Nasser](#), USA TODAY

Despite increased racial and ethnic diversity, American neighborhoods continue to be segregated and some of the progress made toward integration since 1980 has come to a halt this decade, according to an analysis of Census Bureau data released Tuesday.

"This is a surprising result," said Brown University sociology professor John Logan, who analyzed 2005-09 Census numbers. "At worst, it was expected that there would be continued slow progress."

The five-year data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey provide the first opportunity to gauge post-2000 demographic trends all the way down to small neighborhoods.

Logan and his co-author, Florida State University sociologist Brian Stults, also head the US 2010 research project, which examines changes in American society. They found:

- The average non-Hispanic white person continues to live in a neighborhood that looks very different from neighborhoods where the average black, Hispanic and Asian live. Average whites in metropolitan America live in a neighborhood that's 74% white — although it's not as segregated as in 1980, when the average was 88% white.

Even if segregation had continued to slide this decade at the same rate as in the previous 20 years, "It would take into the middle of the century for black segregation rates to come down to the Hispanic level," says Roderick Harrison, a demographer at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies and at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and a former chief of racial statistics at the Census Bureau. "(The decline) was very incremental."

- Blacks continue to be the most segregated minority followed by Hispanics and Asians. The average black American lives in a majority black neighborhood.

Logan says that a handful of very large metropolitan areas in the Northeast and Midwest formed a "ghetto belt" of extremely high and fairly constant levels of segregation.

Much of the decline in segregation in recent decades was due to the rise of the black middle-class and its move to suburbia. Harrison expects that the recession, which has cut jobs and reduced mobility, may push segregation rates up again. "I wouldn't be surprised if the recession had a polarizing effect," Harrison says.

For members of minority groups, the cost of residential segregation is that the neighborhoods where they live typically have fewer resources than neighborhoods where non-Hispanic whites live, Logan says.

- While segregation levels between blacks and whites and between Hispanics and whites are almost the same today as in 2000, the segregation of Asians from whites is now almost as high as whites' segregation from Hispanics.

- Segregation levels among Hispanics are nearing those of blacks. On average, 48% of Hispanics' neighbors are Hispanic and that share is growing, Logan says.

"Immigrants naturally tend to cluster in ethnic communities," Logan says. "The growth of the country's Hispanic and Asian populations therefore naturally results in more concentrated ethnic enclaves."

The index Logan uses measures how evenly two groups are spread across neighborhoods.

"The highest value of 100 indicates that the two groups live in completely different neighborhoods," Logan says.

By this measure:

- Black-white segregation averaged 65.2 in 2000 and 62.7 now.

- Hispanic-white segregation was 51.6 in 2000 vs. 50 today.

- Asian-white segregation has grown from 42.1 to 45.9.

Segregation for African Americans was largely the result of racist policies that created concentrations of poor neighborhoods, Logan says. "You're not going to get substantial declines in segregation until you start breaking up these nearly all-black neighborhoods in central cities," Harrison says.

The segregation index in six metropolitan areas with the largest black populations still hovers near 80, the same level as 30 years ago. It's at its highest in New York, Milwaukee, Newark, Detroit and Chicago, home to about one in five blacks.

"Black-white segregation in most of the country is a residue from blatant exclusion (of blacks) from white neighborhoods" from 1920 to 1970, Logan says. "Although residential patterns are always partly due to people's preferences of where to live,

limited choice continues to be a larger factor for African Americans. Immigrant neighborhoods are more often Asians' and Hispanics' preferred location."

---

## **LEAST DIVERSE**

### **Metro areas with large black populations where segregation is most pronounced between whites and blacks, 2005-09:**

1. New York
2. Milwaukee-Waukesha, Wis.
3. Newark, N.J.
4. Detroit
5. Chicago

### **Metro areas with large Asian populations where segregation is most pronounced between whites and Asians, 2005-09**

1. Detroit
2. New York
3. Los Angeles-Long Beach
4. Vallejo-Fairfield-Napa, Calif.
5. Sacramento

### **Metro areas with large Hispanic populations where segregation is most pronounced between whites and Hispanics, 2005-09**

1. New York
2. Los Angeles-Long Beach
3. Newark, N.J.
4. Salinas, Calif.
5. Philadelphia

*Source: Brown University/US 2010 project*

