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Neighborhood integration grinds to halt, according to Census data

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Integration of America's neighborhoods slowed or grounded to a halt over the past decade, according to an analysis of Census data released Tuesday, and Chicago's neighborhoods mirrored the nation.

Here, 81 percent of blacks would have to move in order to be distributed as evenly across the city as whites, down slightly from 83 percent in 2000, according to a Sun-Times analysis of data from the Census Bureau's 5-year American Community Survey.

For Hispanics, that figure is 49 percent for 2009 compared to 47 percent in 2000.

The American Community Survey samples about 1 in 65 households and offers the first look since 2000 at smaller neighborhood-level areas. However, it is not as accurate as the actual census count data, which will be released next year.

Nationwide, a similar index calculated by professors from Brown University and Florida State University showed an average of 65 percent for black-white segregation and 52 percent for Hispanics.

That makes Chicago worse in terms of black-white segregation than the national average but for Hispanics, we are slightly better than the national average.

Overall, the numbers show integration is slowing, according to an analysis coauthored by Brown University sociology professor John Logan.

"This is a surprising result," he said. "At worst, it was expected that there would be continued slow progress."

The national data shows that Asians also tend to live in segregated neighborhoods.

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

The data also shows that cities may not be losing population as quickly as they were in the middle of the decade — possibly because of the recession, according to University of New Hampshire demographer Kenneth Johnson.

“All those extra people not leaving is going to help Chicago and I suspect Cook County when it comes to keeping seats in the state legislature,” Johnson said, referring to the legislative district reapportionment mandated every 10 years.

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