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Racial integration between black and white people is at highest level for a century, new U.S. census reveals

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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But persistent segregation shows 'idea of post-racial America has a way to go'

Racial integration between black and white people in the U.S. is at its highest level for a century, new figures reveal.

Segregation among blacks and whites fell in roughly three-quarters of the nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas as the two racial groups spread more evenly between inner cities and suburbs.

Still, ethnic segregation in many parts of the U.S. persisted, particularly for Hispanics.

The research found that a new generation of upwardly mobile black families is moving to America's fastest-growing cities, with a decline over the past decade in black-white segregation.

WHAT THE CENSUS REVEALS ABOUT 21st CENTURY AMERICA

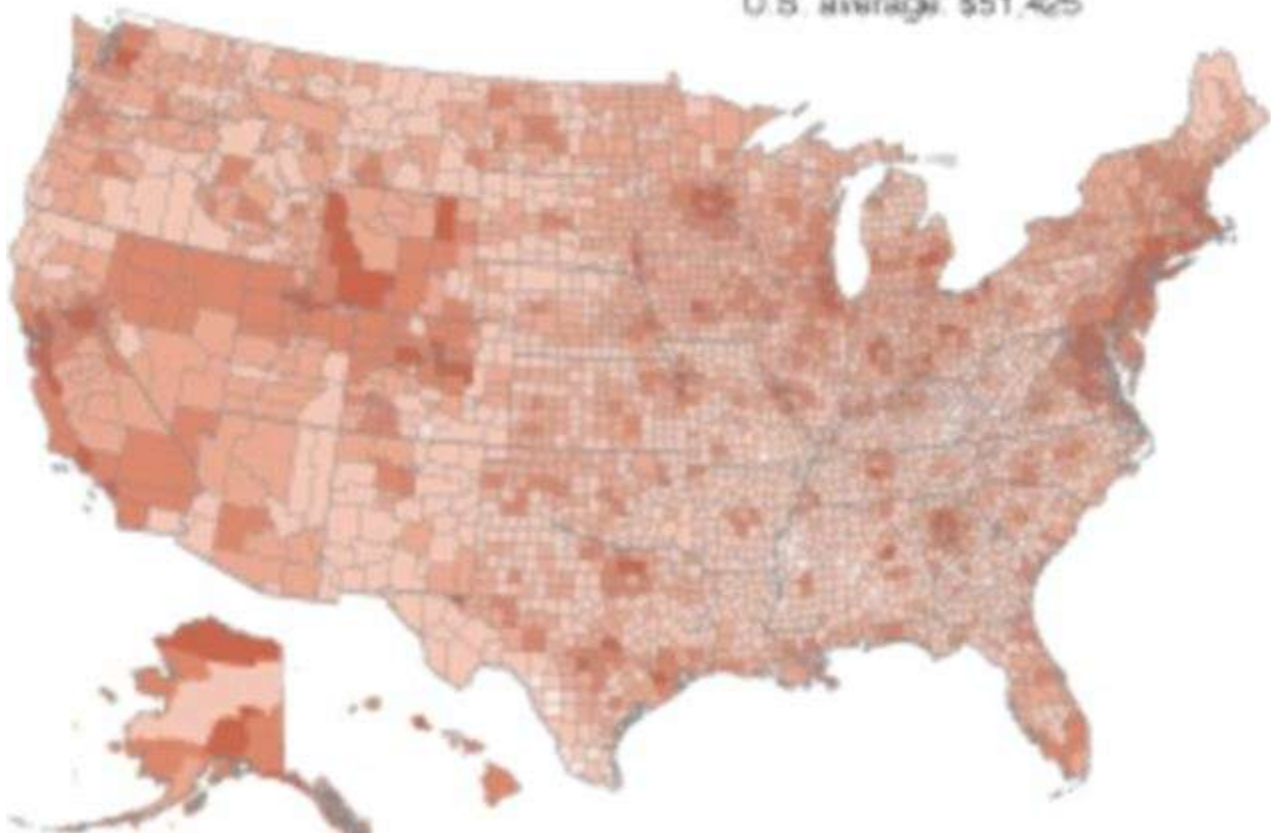
- New Orleans had a large decline in black-white segregation, with Hurricane Katrina forcing out low-income black families
 - Other than in Manhattan, residents in four of New York City's boroughs face the longest commute times in the U.S. -all in excess of 40 minutes.
 - For residents of King, Texas, the average trip to work takes just 3.4 minutes.
 - Falls Church, Virginia, has the highest median household income at \$113,313, and also the highest share of people ages 25 and older with a bachelor's degree or higher.
 - In 21 of the nation's 3,221 counties -many of them Native American reservations - more than one in three people live in poverty
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The data also showed the marked divides in income levels which varied widely by geography.

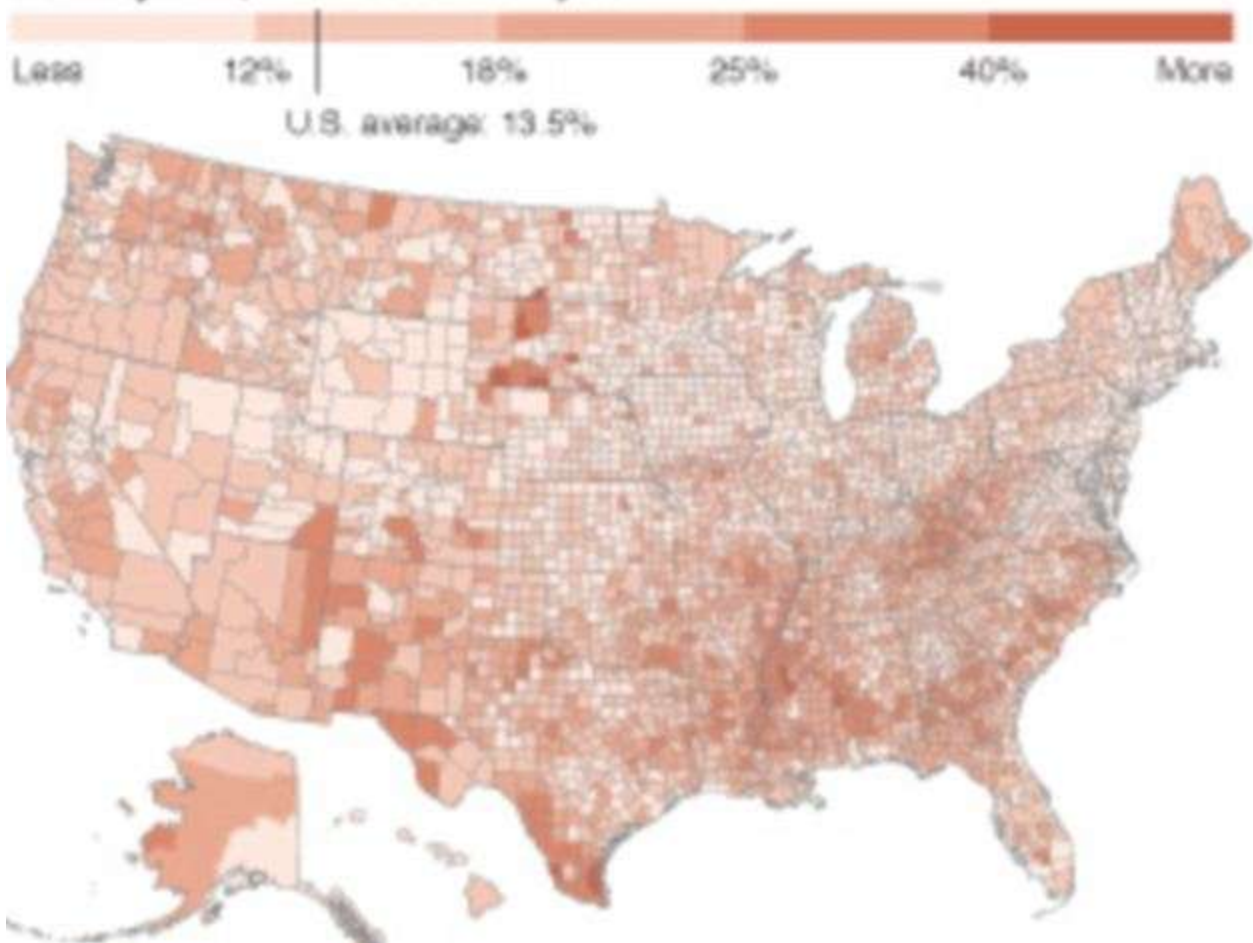
Census reports lower income and higher poverty rates among Southern states

More than 80 percent of all U.S. counties had median household income below the \$51,425 national average from 2005 to 2009. And nearly 60 percent of all counties experienced poverty rates higher than the national average.

Median household income, 2005-2009 county estimates



Poverty rate, 2005-2009 county estimates



The data is among the Census Bureau's most detailed yet for neighbourhoods and comes ahead of results from the official 2010 census which is released next spring.

The American Community Survey is sent to about one in 10 households each year. It includes questions on ancestry, national origin and many other traits that are no longer asked about in the census done every 10 years.

'It's taken a civil rights movement and several generations to yield noticeable segregation declines for blacks,' said William H. Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institution who reviewed the census data.

'But the still-high levels of black segregation in some areas, coupled with uneven clustering patterns for Hispanics, suggest that the idea of a post-racial America has a way to go.'

The study of America's 310 million people also showed Hispanics are becoming more marginalised and turning away from mainly white neighbourhoods to congregate in their own districts.

The race trends hint at the coming political and legal wrangling over the 2010 census figures, to be published in the spring.

The data will be used to reallocate congressional districts, drawing new political boundaries. New Hispanic-dominated districts could emerge, particularly for elected positions at the state and local levels.

States are required under the U.S. Voting Rights Act to respect the interests of minority voting blocs, which tend to support Democratic candidates.

The data also showed the marked divides in income levels which varied widely by geography.

Poverty ranged from 4 per cent to more than 40 per cent with many of the poor living on American Indian reservations in the High Plains in the western states.

Douglas Besharov, a professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy, told Bloomberg: 'The dispersion of income is larger than it's ever been. There used to be a much wider spread of incomes within geographic areas than there is now.

'There's much more of a clumping together.'

John Logan, a sociologist at Brown University in Rhode Island, said the ethnic trends would have a major impact on politics in the future.

'Majority black districts will become harder to sustain, while more majority Hispanic districts will emerge, especially for state and local positions,' he said.

According to the data released this week, the average white person now lives in a neighborhood that is 79 per cent white, compared with 81 per cent in 2000.

The average black person lives in a 46 per cent black neighbourhood, down from 49 per cent.

However, for Hispanics, the figure rose from 45 per to 44 per cent.

While less Hispanic-white segregation was noted in large metropolitan citres such as Seattle, Las Vegas and Jacksonville, Florida, the data showed the emergence of Hispanic ghettos in smaller neighbourhoods in Los Angeles, Boston and Chicago.

The increased segregation of Hispanic could be put down to a large influx of immigrants from Central and South America, who band together in Spanish-speaking communities upon arrival in the U.S.

They stay among families of similar ethnic backgrounds to benefit from the support of its social structure.

For places with fewer than 20,000 people, the ACS figures from 2005-2009 were averaged to help compensate for otherwise large margins of error.

The increased segregation of Hispanic could be put down to a large influx of Hispanic immigrants, who band together in Spanish-speaking communities upon arrival in the U.S. and remain among families of similar ethnic backgrounds to create a supportive social structure.

The data regarding the segregation of blacks, whites and Hispanics could be put down to increasingly prosperous middle-class blacks moving to developing metropolitan areas with a high quality of life and job opportunities, said William H. Frey, a demographer at Brookings Institution who reviewed the census data.

'In contrast, the faster national growth of Hispanics has led to increased neighborhood segregation,' he added said.

But while the census suggest a rise in racial integration between black and white people, Mr Logan stressed the U.S. remains fundamentally divided on racial and economic lines.

'Whites are still on average a large majority in the places where they live, and blacks and Hispanics are the majority or near-majority in their neighbourhoods,' he said.

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