



# Segregation to its Lowest in a Century - Immigration a Factor, Study Finds

Published January 31, 2012

An exodus of African Americans from struggling industrial cities such as Detroit and the growth of Sunbelt states pushed racial segregation in US metropolitan areas to its lowest level in a century, according to a new study.

The report, released by the conservative Manhattan Institute, said US cities are more integrated now than at any time since 1910, based on analysis of census data from neighborhoods.

Fifty years ago, nearly half the black population lived in a ghetto, the study said, while that proportion now has shrunk to 20 percent. All-white neighborhoods in US cities are effectively extinct, according to the report.

Immigration and gentrification helped convert ghettos into racially-mixed communities and contributed to diversifying suburbia, according to economists Edward Glaeser of Harvard University and Jacob Vigdor of Duke University, who co-wrote the study.

"Segregation is as low as we have ever seen it," Vigdor said. "It's an unprecedented scenario."

Some scholars said the report, titled "The End of the Segregated Century: Racial Separation in America's Neighborhoods, 1890-2010," paints too rosy a picture and argued the country is far from being fully integrated.

"That segregation is declining in most places is a real plus," according to John Logan, a Brown University sociologist who has published research on the topic. "But it is declining at a rate that will leave the country with a very high level of segregation for a long time."

Using the most common measure of segregation, the "dissimilarity index," the authors found that segregation is lower now than it was in 1970 in all but one of the 658 housing markets tracked by the Census Bureau. Between 2000 and 2010, segregation declined in 522 out of 658 housing markets, the report said.

The index of dissimilarity measures how evenly two groups are distributed in a neighborhood. The score indicates what share of the members of one group would need to move neighborhoods to enable the two groups to be equally distributed.

In 2010, Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston were the country's least segregated large cities.

Still, segregation has not been eliminated. The typical urban African-American still lives in an area where more than half the black population would need to move to achieve overall integration.

"There are still segregated places, like the South Side of Chicago, the East Side of Cleveland and Detroit," Vigdor said. "But those places have fewer people."

Immigration has been a factor in desegregation. The Hispanic population has climbed and spread across the US since the 1990s, with Latin American immigrants settling in both predominantly black and white neighborhoods, the report says. The typical African-American now lives in a neighborhood that is 14 percent Latino.

But the decline in desegregation in residential areas has not meant an end to racial inequality. Minorities at every income level tend to reside in poorer neighborhoods than whites with comparable incomes, according to Logan.

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