

# The 2010 Census: How Is America Changing?

The occasion of the 2010 census gives Americans a chance to see where their country is heading, population-wise. Although the final numbers will be emerging over the next year, we can already paint a broad picture based on recent Census Bureau population estimates and the bureau's American Community Survey. In so doing, it is clear that the nation's demographic change is being propelled by two engines: immigration from abroad and the aging of the large baby boom generation.



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THE CONTINUED IMMIGRATION of about 1 million people per year into the United States affects not only the population, but also the race/ethnic compositions of all parts of America. Over half of national growth last decade is attributable to immigrants and their children. Non-Hispanic whites accounted for only 17 percent of population gains since the last census. Immigrant minorities, Hispanics, and Asians will change America's culture and lifestyles across a broad spectrum of communities.

As the new year began, the first baby boomer turned age 65, the start of a march toward boomer seniorhood that will continue for 19 years. As seniors, boomers will continue to break the mold with respect to their lifestyles, tastes, and preferences. Demographically, they will be the most educated generation yet to enter their golden years. On the other hand, they had higher divorce rates and will have fewer children to support them.

**FIGURE 1: DOMESTIC MIGRATION GAINERS AND LOSERS, 2000-2009**

Gainers	Net Migration
1 Phoenix	530,579
2 Riverside, CA	457,430
3 Atlanta	412,832
4 Dallas	307,907
5 Las Vegas	299,027
Losers	
1 New York City	-1,920,745
2 Los Angeles	-1,337,522
3 Chicago	-547,430
4 Detroit	-361,632
5 San Francisco	-343,834

Source: William H. Frey analysis.

These demographic engines play out differently across the nation's regions and are in a state of flux. In the decade just past, there seemed to be a division between unaffordable and affordable regions, giving rise to a middle-class flight from the coasts to the interior. Yet, the end-of-decade recession, mortgage meltdown, and associated financial crises turned that movement to the county's middle on its head.

## A Roller-Coaster Decade for Migration

While the first 2010 census results showed a further population shift from Snowbelt to Sunbelt, the magnets, peaks, and valleys of the country's underlying migration patterns need to be understood. The past decade began with a movement to the nation's center by domestic migrants.

A middle-class flight lured migrants away from pricey areas like New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco to more affordable areas like Phoenix, Riverside, Atlanta, Dallas, Las Vegas, and Tampa, many relying on construction and growth as economic engines (see figure 1). The "creative class" college graduate set moved as well, to Austin, Charlotte, Raleigh, and Portland. Migration toward affordability also occurred within metropolitan areas, especially to the outer suburbs and exurbs.

Growth relief for several large coastal areas came from immigrants, who served as a cushion for losses attributable to domestic migration flight. The New York City and Los Angeles metropolitan areas garnered over a fifth of all immigrants entering since 2000. Immi-

grants also moved in large numbers to Miami, Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. More so than in the past, some foreign-born persons began dispersing to many of the domestic migrant magnets, but their numbers are far smaller than in the traditional immigrant magnets.

These shifts took a U-turn in the past three years, associated with a historic slowdown in U.S. migration, especially to the overheated growth areas of middecade. In 2008 to 2009, Las Vegas experienced its first domestic out-migration in many decades. Since 2007, the same is true for the entire state of Florida as out-migration slowed from feeder areas—the California coast, the Northeast megalopolis, and even the industrial Midwest. Movement from urban cores to the suburbs has also slowed, as has immigration from abroad.

Somewhat more immune from these shifts were Texas metro areas, including Dallas, Houston, and Austin, where both the recession and financial crises were less intense. Yet, any straight-line forecasts for domestic or international migration trends based on the 2000-to-2010 period should be made with caution.

## Patchwork, Not Melting Pot

Recent immigration from Latin America and Asia may have added to the perception of America as a melting pot, but, in fact, the country is really a patchwork. Hispanics, Asians, and African Americans are still distinctly concentrated in different parts of the country, despite some recent dispersal.

Hispanics have dispersed broadly into many new areas. In 2009, at least 5 percent of the population was

Hispanic in one out of three U.S. counties, compared with one out of six in 1990. Nonetheless, Hispanics are still heavily clustered in specific parts of the country, including the Southwest, Florida, and a few major metropolitan areas. Only ten of the nation's metro areas house fully 48 percent of the nation's Hispanic population (see figure 2).

The metropolitan areas that did show fast Hispanic growth tended to have smaller Hispanic shares of their total populations. They include Greenville, South Carolina; Nashville and Knoxville, Tennessee; and Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina; and are largely located in the Southeast and Midwest. Because the draw for Hispanics to these new destinations tends to be the availability of low-skilled jobs, their Hispanic populations are not representative of Hispanics nationally. They are more likely to be recent immigrants who have lower education levels and lower English proficiency.

The Asian population constitutes a smaller share of the U.S. population than do Hispanics (5 percent versus 16 percent) and tends to be even more concentrated. The three metro areas with the largest Asian populations—Los Angeles, New York City, and San Francisco—house 37 percent of U.S. Asians.

Like Hispanics, Asians are showing more dispersal to places that have been growing generally over the decade, such as Las Vegas, Phoenix, Riverside, and Orlando.

Perhaps the least noticed concentration is associated with the continued relocation of African Americans to the South. The South's share of the national black population continues to rise, from 54 percent in 1990 to 57 percent in 2009 (see figure 3). The region accounted for about three-fourths of the nation's total black population gains since 2000.

Among metropolitan areas, Atlanta leads all others in gaining blacks, followed by Dallas, Houston, Washington, D.C., Miami, and Charlotte. In the last two years, Atlanta has surpassed Chicago

as the metropolitan area with the second-largest African American population (after New York), signaling the full-circle reversal of last century's Great Migration of blacks.

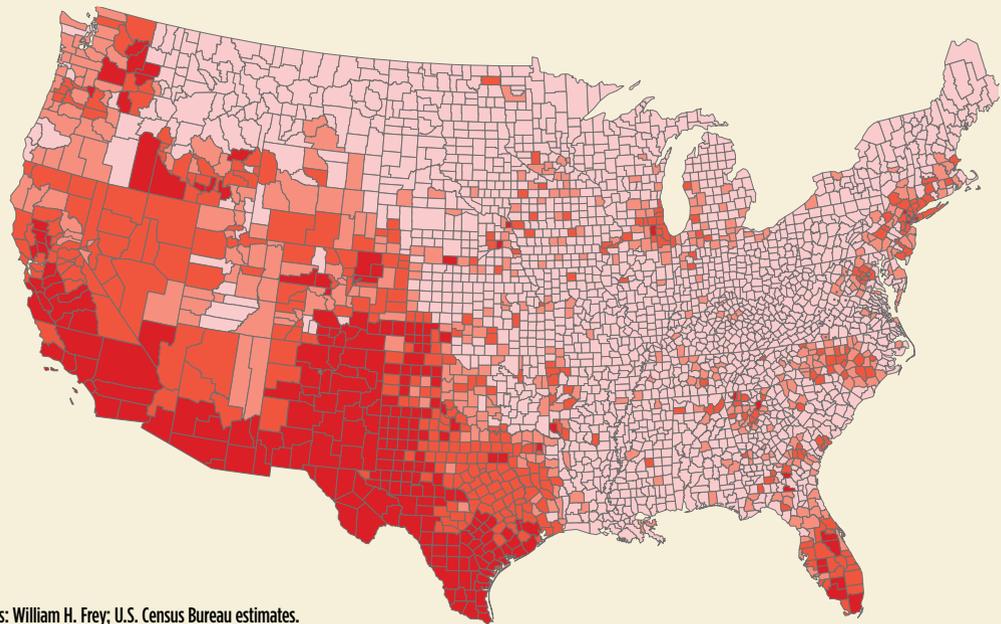
Because the white population has

grown only modestly since 2000 (2.1 percent), its internal population shifts are roughly a zero-sum game. The greatest white gains occurred in parts of the country that attracted the most domestic migrants—the

interior West, the Southeast, and Texas. Yet, over one-third of the nation's 100 largest metro areas, mostly on the West Coast and in the Northeast and Midwest, experienced white population losses since

**FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE HISPANIC BY COUNTY**

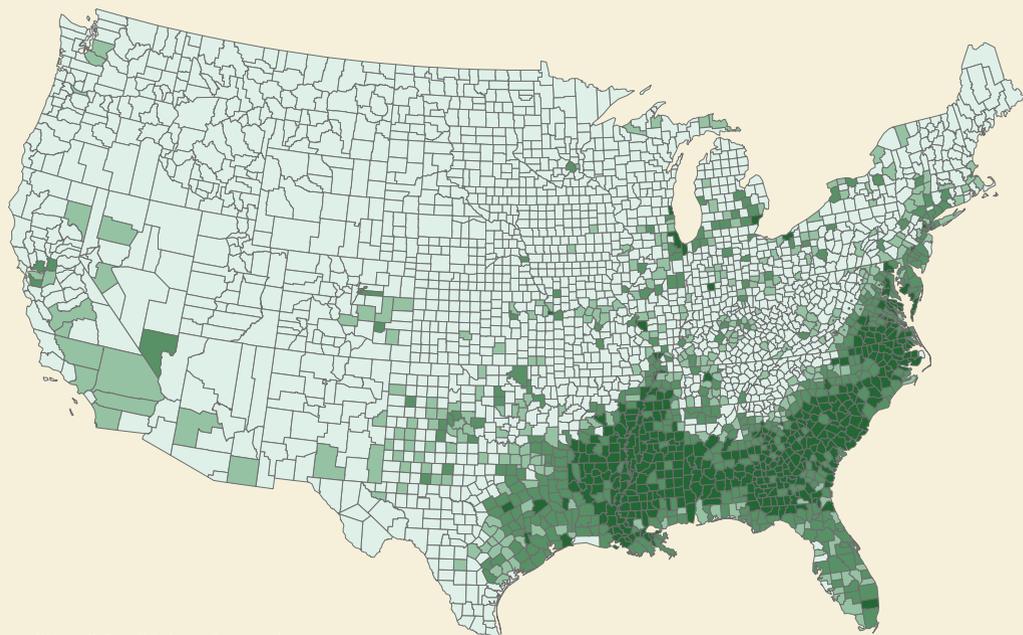
Under 5%   5% to 9.9%   10% to 24.9%   25% and above



Sources: William H. Frey; U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

**FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE AFRICAN AMERICAN BY COUNTY**

Under 5%   5% to 9.9%   10% to 24.9%   25% and above



Sources: William H. Frey; U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

2000 due to middle-class flight or poor economies. Still the “whitest” part of the country is the nation’s interior—the Great Plains and Midwestern states—and New England. This is not because whites are moving there in large numbers, but because minorities are not.

The next decade will see a continuation of this race/ethnic patchwork with some variations. The dual clustering and dispersal of Hispanics and Asians will proceed, though the where and when of this dispersal will depend on the vagaries of the economy. Blacks will almost certainly continue their march to the South, but the specific southern destinations may change. And while

whites will continue to follow the jobs wherever they are created, they will also make up the bulk of the “left behind” slow-growing parts of the nation’s interior.

**Regions Aging and Getting Younger**

America’s 55- to 64-year-old population grew by one half in the decade before 2010, reflecting the aging of the baby boom’s leading edge (see figure 4). The continued aging of this large generation, born between 1946 and 1964, will lead to sharp gains in the senior population in the next two decades. In some places, like Florida, some of this projected senior growth will come from retirees. But

pretty much everywhere, senior growth will occur due to the “aging in place” of baby boomers.

In the decade just past, the 55- to 64-year-old population grew fastest in Sunbelt destinations like Raleigh and Austin, as well as in places with natural and cultural amenities like Boise, Idaho, and Madison, Wisconsin. These areas should show boomer-driven senior gains in the next decade.

The highest projected growth of the 65-plus population will not be in areas thought of as “older” such as the Rustbelt or rural America, but places that attracted lots of working-aged migrants in the past, such as a swath of states in the Mountain West, Texas, and the Southeast. Over the 2010-to-2020 decade, Nevada’s senior population is projected to grow by 61 percent. Boomers aging in place will also propel senior growth in the suburbs because that is where America’s first suburban generation settled to form families and will mostly remain as it grows older.

While all of America is aging, only part of America will be getting younger. Since 2000, 25 states experienced absolute declines in their child (under-18) populations. These declines were most apparent

in much of the Northeast and industrial Midwest with largely older age structures. They tend to have lower fertility, and less immigration and out-migration of families.

At the same time, the other 25 states, led by Nevada, Arizona, Utah, and Georgia, registered gains in their child populations. There is a strong overlap between this set of states and those where minorities, especially Hispanics, constitute more than half of the child populations. In 2009, seven states, including California, Texas, Arizona, and Nevada, had mostly minority children. Another strong overlap is the 11 states where more than one-fifth of all children speak a language other than English at home.

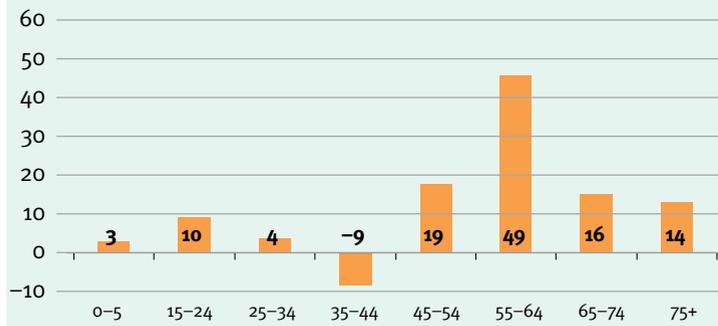
**Cultural Generation Gaps**

One of the distinguishing features of the U.S. population is the juxtaposition of its racially and ethnically diverse young population and its largely white older population. This disparity between young and old will be with us for a while (see figure 5). A swath of areas, especially in the Southwest, displays a large and growing “cultural generation gap,” more pronounced than at the national level. For example, metropolitan Phoenix, long a haven for midwestern migrant retirees, shows sharp disparities between its 85 percent white senior population and its 44 percent white child population.

Fostering social cohesion within such regions may take on added challenges due to their unique racial/ethnic overlay.

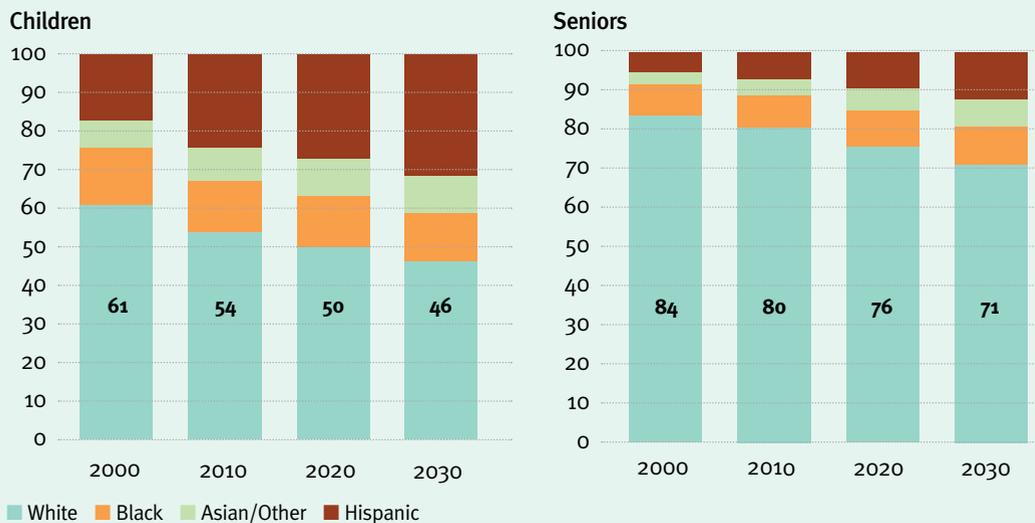
In sum, the 2010 census results will reify a country that is both aging and getting younger, remaining largely white, but also becoming more racially diverse in different ways in different regions. The attitudes, consumer preferences, and politics of aging white baby boomers cannot be ignored. But the nation’s future rests with its more youthful, racially diverse population and regions that will exert increasing influence on America’s economy and society in the decade ahead. **UL**

**FIGURE 4: U.S. PERCENTAGE GROWTH BY AGE, 2000–2010**



Source: William H. Frey analysis.

**FIGURE 5: PROJECTED RACE/ETHNIC PERCENTAGE SHARES OF U.S. POPULATION, 2000–2030**



Source: William H. Frey analysis.