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HEADLINE: Hispanic growth reveals isolation Trend might take decades to reverse

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BODY:

The **millions of Hispanic** immigrants to the USA in the 1990s are spreading throughout the country, but they are living in increasingly segregated neighborhoods in cities where they are the largest minority.

Census Bureau population numbers show that Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites might mingle in schools, at work and in stores, but they're less likely to go home to the same neighborhoods.

"We see them around, but they're really on a side street somewhere," says John Logan, a sociologist at the University at Albany who analyzed Census 2000 data out this month. "It's not 'our' street." The trend is especially significant now that Hispanics are spreading out from traditional immigrant gateway cities. Sociologists say such residential segregation can last for generations. "The segregation of Jews and Italians did decline after about 50 or 80 years," Logan says. "It may take until 2050 before we see a serious reversal."

Population data available on 41 states so far shows that the average non-Hispanic white lives in a neighborhood that is 6.3% Hispanic, Logan says. But the average Hispanic lives in a neighborhood that is 44% Hispanic. Such disproportion runs deep in metropolitan areas, where Hispanics became the largest minority group in the 1990s, often surpassing blacks. Logan says that so far, that's happened in 16 metros. In 11 of these metros, Hispanics are more segregated from whites now than they were in 1990.

Logan used a "segregation index" that measures the percentage of Hispanics who would have to move to less-Hispanic neighborhoods to be fully integrated with non-Hispanic whites.

In the Dallas metro area, for example, where Hispanics now make up 23% of the population, the index went from 50.6 to 56.5. That means that 56.5% of Hispanics would have to move to less-Hispanic neighborhoods to be fully integrated with whites.

"When a new group comes in, there is always segregation at the neighborhood level," says William Frey, a demographer with the non-profit Milken Institute. "But typically, Hispanic segregation reduces over time much more so than we've seen with blacks."

On average, 68% of blacks would have to move to other neighborhoods to be fully integrated with whites.

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