

News Home Page

Nation

National Security

Science

Courts

Columns

Search the States

Special Reports

■ Census 2000

Photo Galleries

Live Online

Nation Index

World

Metro

Business

Technology

Sports

Style

Education

Travel

Health

Real Estate

Home & Garden

Food

Opinion

Weather

Weekly Sections

News Digest

Classifieds

Print Edition

Archives

Site Index

Help

Immigration Fueling Big U.S. Cities

N.Y. Population Tops 8 Million, a Record

By D'Vera Cohn

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, March 16, 2001; Page A01

New York's population topped 8 million in the 2000 Census, a record for the nation's biggest city and a vivid illustration of the impact of surging immigration that is transforming the nation.

According to census figures released yesterday, the city grew only because of rising numbers of Asians and Hispanics. The black population is stable and the number of non-Hispanic whites fell over the past decade.

New York is the biggest urban beneficiary of a wave of immigration that is producing a split picture among the nation's older big cities, where deterioration and flight have been dominant themes for decades.

Cities that attract immigrants have turned around decades of population loss. Those include Chicago, whose population grew for the first time since 1950, reaching 2.9 million.

Cities that have not lured as many immigrants lost population over the decade, including Pittsburgh, St. Louis and to some extent Washington. But no other big city has lost more than New York.

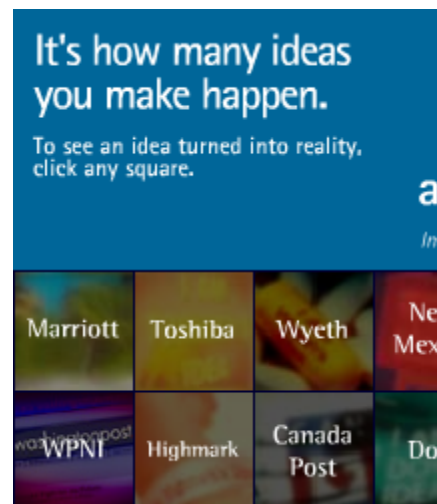
New York, always a city of newcomers, grew 9.4 percent from 1990, when the population count was just over 7.3 million.

"New York is a prototypical case of a place where if not for immigration, it would not be the vibrant city that it is," said William Frey, a demographer at the University of Michigan's William J. Wilson Institute.

"The lifeblood of the cities and hope for the cities is continued immigration," he said. "Immigrants, he said, 'will bring along vibrancy and bring along new conflicts as well as new opportunities.'

Even as New York was drawing more immigrants, it was enjoying an improved re

advertisement



Graphic

• [Big City Newcomers](#)

Special Report

• [Census 2000](#)

[E-Mail This Article](#)

[Printer-Friendly Version](#)

[Subscribe to The Post](#)

It's how many ideas you make happen.

To see an idea turned into reality, click any square.

accenture
Innovation delivered.

Marriott	Toshiba
Wyeth	New Mexico
Deutsche Börse	WPXI
Highmark	Canada Post
Dow	Best Buy

quality of life, thanks to plunging crime rates and better services.

"There's no question New York City is in a renaissance as a city," Mayor Rudolph said yesterday.

The city's population figures were higher not only because of immigration, but also the 2000 Census found people who had not been counted in the past, officials said. Still, the 1990 Census missed more than 200,000 New Yorkers, city officials pushed the Bureau to look for people at 370,000 addresses not on the official list. Grass-roots campaigners campaigned hard to get reluctant immigrants to fill out the forms.

At least half the population increase, though, is real growth, according to John Mollenkopf, director of the Center for Urban Research at the City University of New York Graduate Center. "It's a reflection of the very great strength of the city's economy in the 1990s, and a lot of interesting things are going on here," he said.

Nevertheless, many people were missed, according to advocacy groups. Several key politicians -- although not the mayor -- have joined a lawsuit by Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco and other cities seeking to force the Census Bureau to release figures that are statistically adjusted to compensate for those who were missed.

To be sure, not everyone moving to New York City is an immigrant. Joseph Teri, a bartender, recently bought a place in Manhattan's revitalized Lower East Side, where his neighbors are couples in their forties and fifties who raised their children and then moved to the city from the suburbs.

"A lot of these suburbanites don't need the big houses anymore," he said. "They need to bring back the culture again."

In a city whose ethnic neighborhoods are famous worldwide, at least a third of New Yorkers are foreign-born. The mix is continually changing: A smaller share of black city residents were born in this country and a larger share are Caribbean immigrants. The city's Latino population, dominated in the past by Puerto Ricans, is increasingly Dominican.

And whereas the Dominican Republic for years provided the most new immigrant arrivals, city planners say the former Soviet Union now does.

The effects are far-reaching. Because immigrants as a group are younger than native-born Americans and have bigger families, the city's child population is rising and its schools are overcrowded.

Election ballots, already printed in Spanish and Chinese, may need to add another language because of an influx of Koreans. There is talk of new political coalitions between Latino and Asian American advocacy groups.

By the numbers, New York is more diverse than it was in 1990. It is 65 percent minority compared with 57 percent a decade ago. Latinos outnumber non-Hispanic blacks by a narrow margin. About one in 10 New Yorkers is Asian American, a group that grew more than 100 percent. One in 20 New Yorkers is multiracial.

But beneath that surface of increasing diversity, the racial and ethnic groups live in different lives, said sociologist John Logan of the University at Albany, who analyzed figures released yesterday.

Blacks and whites in New York are no more likely to share neighborhoods than the decade ago, when New York was one of the nation's most segregated cities, according to Logan. Asian Americans and Hispanics in the city are more likely to live in segregated ethnic enclaves than they were a decade ago, he said.

Despite the appearance of diversity, Logan said, "we're living very separately. We're changing our pattern."

New York's history reflects the fortunes of many older American cities, but also its status. The city's population plunged in the 1970s, when a fiscal crisis prompted a bailout. It has fought its way back since then.

"There was a lot of discussion about the older large city no longer being an efficient one," said Joseph B. Rose, chairman of the city planning commission. "Everyone was going to migrate to edge cities. Was New York really a dinosaur? It was time to prepare to turn the lights off."

The census figures show that by pressing for a good count and focusing on making the city better, "the city can thrive in a competitive environment," he said.

Cecilia Fang, a 22-year-old NBC News associate, said the city seems more prosperous when she arrived from Taiwan as a child. And the city may be better at welcoming immigrants, she said: "I remember when I was young and I was here, there was still a lot of pressure to assimilate."

The expectations that immigrants bring to New York have not changed. "It's still New York City," she said. "People still see it as they once saw the American dream."

Database editor Sarah Cohen and staff writer Christine Haughney contributed to this report.

© 2001 The Washington Post Company

Related Links

Special Report
[Census 2000](#)

[More National News](#)

Special Offer...
Health Insurance You CAN Afford!!
[Don't Gamble With Your Family's Health! click here for more information](#)