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## Census: Rich Got Richer in the '90s

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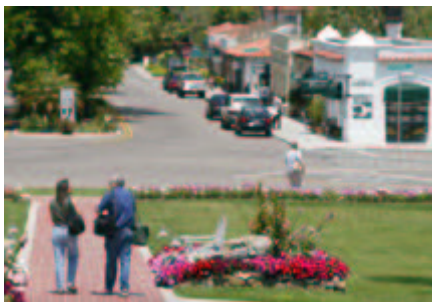
WASHINGTON (AP) — Incomes rose and poverty rates declined across parts of the South and Midwest during the prosperous 1990s, though vast stretches of rural areas remained among the poorest in the nation.

The 2000 census data released Tuesday also showed some metropolitan areas in the Northeast and California stumbling economically in a decade when paychecks grew fatter and more Americans earned college degrees.



AP/Fred Greaves [29K]

That's the scene painted of prerecession America by the more detailed state-by-state data from long-form census questionnaires. Among the biggest winners: the suburban edges of booming metropolitan areas like Denver, Atlanta, and the northern California communities in the Silicon Valley area.



AP/Fred Greaves [30K]

“I hope they raise the pay and minimum wage,” said Takay Johnson, who lives in a homeless shelter for single mothers in the Bronx borough of New York City. While the 2000 census showed the poverty rate declining slightly in the country over the 1990s, it rose from 29 percent to 31 percent in the Bronx.

“I hear a lot of people hearing they are getting ready to move out of the city and move down to the South,” said Johnson, who works the night shift at a fast-food restaurant to help support her 1-year-old son.

John Logan, a sociologist at the State University of New York at Albany, said, “The major centers of economic activity are ceding ground to the South and, incredibly, to the Midwest.”

By Tuesday, all 50 states received their first wave of detailed data from questions asked on the 2000 census long form, a survey distributed to 20 million American households. The form covered topics from income to education to commuting.

Data released last year covered questions asked of all Americans during the last head count.

Some highlights from national data released Tuesday:

—The percentage of Americans living below poverty level decreased slightly from 13.1 percent in 1989 to 12.4 percent in 1999, while the median household income went up from an inflation-adjusted \$39,008 to \$41,994 during the decade.

The poverty level differs according to the makeup of a household. For instance, in 1999 the poverty threshold for a family of four, including three children, was \$16,954. By comparison, that threshold for a three-person household with one child was \$13,410.

—The average one-way commuting time increased by three minutes to nearly 26 minutes. More people drove to work alone, and fewer people carpooled or took public transportation.

—Nearly one in four Americans age 25 and older have at least a college education, up from one in five in 1990.

The figures reaffirmed that better educated people typically make more money. Douglas County, Colo., a booming suburb of Denver, had the country's highest median household income at \$82,929. Over half of county residents 25 and older graduated from college.

“I grew up on the East Coast and was ready for a change of lifestyle,” said Justin Moore, who opened Jarre Creek Ranch Brewery in Castle Rock, a part of Douglas County, in 1997. “The more people there are, the more a business has a chance of surviving.”

Demographer Martha Farnsworth Riche, a former head of the Census Bureau, said, “As always, growth occurred in places with the most vibrant economies.”

In his own analysis of the data, Logan said Midwest metropolitan areas benefited from the 1990s expansion more than Southern California and the Northeast. For example, metropolitan areas such as Detroit made big gains, although the city itself still suffers from high poverty and unemployment, Logan said.

San Jose, Calif., was the most prosperous metropolitan area, Logan found. It was followed by Nassau and Suffolk counties in New York, home to New York City suburbs, and the Washington, D.C. area — mainly due to gains in outlying communities rather than Washington itself.

Poverty rates rose in Los Angeles County as well as in three counties outside of Los Angeles: Kern, Riverside and San Bernardino

Analysts have said part of the reason for poverty increases in urban areas may be because much job growth over the decade came in lower-paying positions. For many people, that wasn't enough to keep up with rising costs of housing and child care.

Meanwhile, more than half of the residents in rural Buffalo and Shannon counties in South Dakota lived below poverty level — the highest rates in the nation.

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On the Net: Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/>

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