



Census 2000: Segregation eases, but a divide remains

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David Peterson
Star Tribune
Friday, March 30, 2001

The Twin Cities area became more integrated in the 1990s as people of color migrated from highly concentrated enclaves in the core of Minneapolis and St. Paul out into neighborhoods beyond, according to computer analyses Thursday by the Star Tribune and an urban sociologist.

By one key measure -- the separation of blacks from whites -- the Twin Cities metro area moved from "highly segregated" to only "moderately segregated" during the decade, even as the black population soared.

That's according to a research team at the State University of New York-Albany, now known as the University at Albany.

The finding is significant, because often high and unchanging levels of segregation -- Milwaukee, St. Louis and Detroit are examples -- are associated with sinking populations and urban decline. Cities with moderate and declining rates of segregation, such as Seattle and Portland, Ore., are growing and considered healthier.

"What is very encouraging about Minneapolis-St. Paul in particular," said John Logan, director of the Lewis Mumford Center at Albany, "is that not only is it part of a national trend toward declining black/white segregation, but the positive change is stronger in your area than the average in the country."

As the Star Tribune analyzed the mounds of data released about Minnesota Wednesday, these findings also emerged:

Fourteen of the 25 most racially diverse cities in Minnesota are outside the metro area. Worthington ranks highest among them, No. 3 of the 25. Among cities with the least racial diversity are New Ulm, Hibbing and Stillwater.

The number of Minnesota cities without a single person of color sank from 14

percent to 7 percent.

The number of metro-area neighborhoods without a single minority person fell from 41 to 2.

Mapping of the metro area by neighborhoods -- what the census calls "block groups," or clusters of blocks -- revealed that blacks and Asians, still highly concentrated in inner cities as of 1990, were much more widely dispersed by 2000.

The number of neighborhoods with 90 percent or more minorities rose only slightly during the decade, from 12 to 14.

At the same time, the number of neighborhoods in the seven-county metro area with between 10 and 20 percent minorities shot from 266 to 477. Asians spread out across much of St. Paul and Minneapolis, and blacks moved farther northward in Minneapolis and into adjoining suburbs.

Logan did note that Hispanic segregation increased during the 1990s in the Twin Cities area. But Stephan Thernstrom, a Harvard history professor and author of "America in Black and White," said that a clustering of newly arriving minorities in a metro area is to be expected.

"Income constraints are obviously very important," he said. "They need to live in cheaper neighborhoods. And then there's undoubtedly chain migration, people coming because they know someone there. 'Come join us, there's work here, sleep on our couch awhile,' and after that it's an apartment across the street.

"Immigrant ghettos in the past often served an important function as a place to retreat from the larger, alien society after work; for communal self-help; to speak your own language, and to find a grocery store that carried the kind of food you like."

Logan's team considers a segregation index of 60, on a scale of 0 to 100 to be "very high." For blacks and whites in the Twin Cities, the 1990 figure was 63.52. It's now 57.83, a larger shift than most cities saw. The index is arrived at by determining how separate the races live from one another.

In contrast, the Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee metro areas are all in the 80s and had much less reduction in segregation than Minneapolis. Milwaukee barely budged. Denver and Atlanta are in the 60s and saw little reduction in segregation. Portland started at the Minneapolis level of 66 and saw a huge decline to 48. Seattle went from 58 to 50.

-- *David Peterson is at david. a.peterson@startribune.com .*

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