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Home  
News

Main Categories

Washington  
States  
World

Editorial/Opinion

News Briefs

Top News

Nation

World

Washington

Offbeat

More News

Health

Science

Census

Politics

Supreme Court

Columnists

Lotteries

City Guides

Talk Today

Money

Sports

Life

Tech

Weather

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Racial, ethnic lines remain sharp in metro areas

By Haya El Nasser, USA TODAY

Despite increased diversity across the country, America's neighborhoods remain highly segregated along racial and ethnic lines, according to a study released Tuesday. Residential segregation, particularly between blacks and whites, persists in metropolitan areas where minorities make up a large share of the population, says John Logan, a sociology professor at the University at Albany in New York.

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Logan analyzed Census 2000 data for the country's 331 metropolitan areas. He found that Asians and Hispanics are increasingly segregated from whites as they become a larger share of the population in more places.

"If we focus on the places with very few minorities, we could convince ourselves there's a real change in the pattern of race relations," Logan says. "Unfortunately, that's not where minorities live."

In metro areas where most blacks, Hispanics and Asians live, all three minority groups are just as segregated from whites as they were in 1990.

Blacks remain the most segregated, a pattern that has persisted since segregation was first measured in the 1920s. Black-white segregation is highest in metros in the Northeast and Midwest, areas that absorbed most of the black migration from the rural South before World War II.

Black-white segregation dropped slightly overall, but mostly in areas where blacks make up a small share of the population, Logan says.

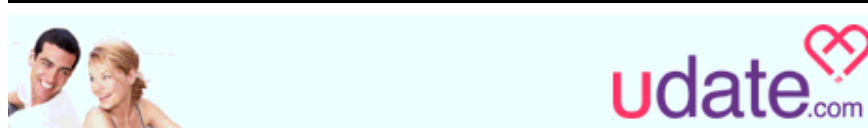
"Even the suburbs they move to are becoming more segregated," Logan says. "It's a very disappointing pattern."

Segregation can result from economic and cultural differences in addition to discrimination. But in response to the new research, civil rights and fair housing advocates called for stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.

"Very few people want to live in all-minority neighborhoods," says Gary Orfield of the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University.

Logan's analysis shows that the average white person lives in an area that is almost 83% white and 7% black. The average black lives in a neighborhood that's more than half black and 33% white.

Segregation between Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites is highest in New York, Newark and Los Angeles. Segregation between Asians and whites is highest in New York; Stockton, Calif.; and Houston.



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