

# America's Diverse Future: Initial Glimpses at the U.S. Child Population from the 2010 Census

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“The accelerating growth of new minority children heralds an increasingly diverse future child population and labor force, presenting challenges for America’s social and political systems.”

## FINDINGS

An analysis of data from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 decennial censuses reveals that:

- **New minorities—Hispanics, Asians, and other groups apart from whites, blacks, and American Indians—account for all of the growth among the nation’s child population.** From 2000 to 2010, the population of white children nationwide declined by 4.3 million, while the population of Hispanic and Asian children grew by 5.5 million.
- **In almost half of states and nearly one-third of large metro areas, child populations declined in the 2000s.** White child populations dropped in 46 states and 86 of the 100 largest metro areas, but gains of new minority children forestalled more widespread overall declines in youth.
- **In areas of the country gaining children, Hispanics accounted for most of that growth.** Fully 95 percent of Texas’s child population growth occurred among Hispanics. Los Angeles was the only major metropolitan area to witness a decline in Hispanic children from 2000 to 2010.
- **Ten states and 35 large metro areas now have minority white child populations.** Child populations in the Atlanta, Dallas, Orlando, and Phoenix metro areas flipped to “majority minority” by 2010.
- **Segregation levels for black and Hispanic children are higher than for their adult counterparts, despite a general reduction in segregation over the last 10 years.** The average black or Hispanic child lives in a neighborhood where whites make up 10 percent less of the population than in the neighborhood of the average black or Hispanic adult.

The accelerating growth of new minority children heralds an increasingly diverse future child population and labor force. While this transition presents challenges for America’s social and political systems, it also represents a clear demographic advantage for the nation and its regions versus its developed peers, one which savvy leaders will capitalize upon in the years and decades to come.

## INTRODUCTION

For some time, Americans have been aware that “new minorities”—particularly Hispanics, Asians, and people of more than one race—are becoming a more important part of our nation’s social fabric.

Initial results from the 2010 Census now make clear why the contributions of these groups are so important. With a rapidly aging white population, the United States depends increasingly on these new minorities to infuse its youth population—and eventually its labor force—with needed demographic heft and vitality.

Indeed, the new census results show that the nation, its states, and its major metropolitan areas are undergoing changes more rapidly than previously thought. Previous Census Bureau projections showed that the country would become “minority white” by 2042, and that the child population would reach that mark in 2023.<sup>1</sup> Yet given greater-than-expected growth in Hispanic and other new minority populations recorded in the 2010 Census, both dates may be pushed closer, with a minority white child population quite likely before the next decennial census.<sup>2</sup>

This report provides an overview of changes in America’s child population in the 2000s, with an emphasis on the role of new minorities. After discussing data and measures, it examines the emerging racial and ethnic profile of the nation’s under-18 population. It goes on to reveal the growth and decline of child populations in states and large metropolitan areas; the significance of new minorities in driving this growth; the evolution of new “minority white” populations across the country; and patterns of racial and ethnic segregation which, while declining, remain uniformly higher among younger blacks and Hispanics. The report concludes with a brief examination of the implications of this transformation for America’s social, economic, and political future.

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## METHODOLOGY

### Data sources

Data for this study draw from U.S. decennial censuses of 1990, 2000, and 2010.<sup>3</sup>

### Children

The terms child, children, and youth refer to persons under age 18, and adults refer to those age 18 and above.<sup>4</sup>

### Racial and ethnic classifications

The decennial census asks two separate questions regarding race and ethnicity. The first asks the respondent whether he/she is of Hispanic or Latino origin. People who identify as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. The second asks the respondent to identify his/her race; options on the 2010 decennial form include (among others) white, black/African American, American Indian, Asian (with several sub-categories), and some other race. Starting in 2000, respondents could self-identify with more than one race.<sup>5</sup> In this report, race terms such as “white” and “black” refer to non-Hispanic members of those groups. The term “new minorities” refers generally to groups other than non-Hispanic whites, blacks, and American Indians.

### Geography

The geographic units employed for most of this analysis are U.S. states and the District of Columbia, and the nation’s 100 largest metropolitan areas as defined by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget in 2008 and based on Census Bureau population estimates for that year. Segregation indices (see next page) use census tracts to represent neighborhoods. Census tracts are small subdivisions of counties with an average of about 4,000 inhabitants.

## Segregation

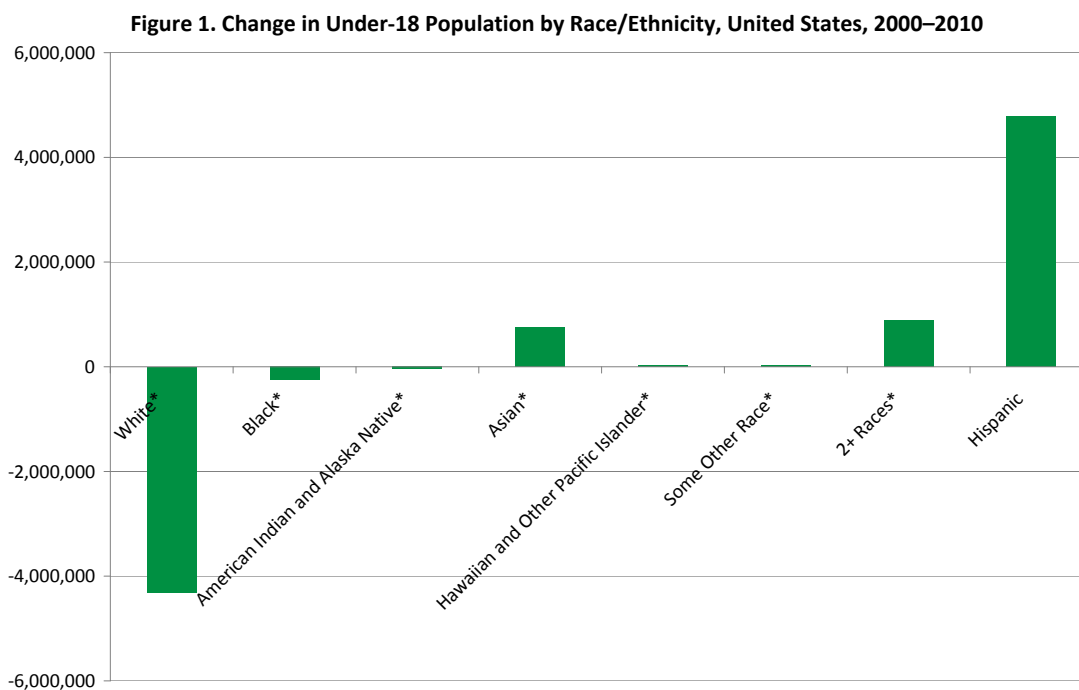
This report employs two measures of residential segregation. The first, which is termed the “segregation index” (in Figure 2 and Appendices [C](#) and [D](#)), is the index of dissimilarity. This measures the differences between two groups (e.g., blacks and whites) across neighborhoods within a metropolitan area. Values range from 0 to 100 where 0 represents complete integration, and 100 represents complete segregation. The value can be interpreted as the percentage of one group that would have to change neighborhoods to be residentially distributed exactly the same as the other group. Segregation index levels of 60 are considered high and those approaching 70 or higher are considered extreme.

The second measure used in Figure 3 indicates the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood in which the average member of a specific group (e.g., black children) lives. Sometimes called the “exposure” measure, it represents the weighted mean of the compositions of all neighborhoods, where the weights are based on the specific group’s population.<sup>6</sup>

## FINDINGS

### A. New minorities—Hispanics, Asians, and other groups apart from whites, blacks, and American Indians—account for all of the growth among the nation’s child population.

Change in the nation’s child population over the 2000s show the sharp distinction between the country’s aging white population and its growing, youthful new minority populations (Figure 1). From 2000 to 2010, the population of white children declined by 4.3 million, while at the same time child populations in each of the “newer” minority groups—



\* Non-Hispanic members of race group(s). Source: Author's analysis of 2000 and 2010 decennial census data.

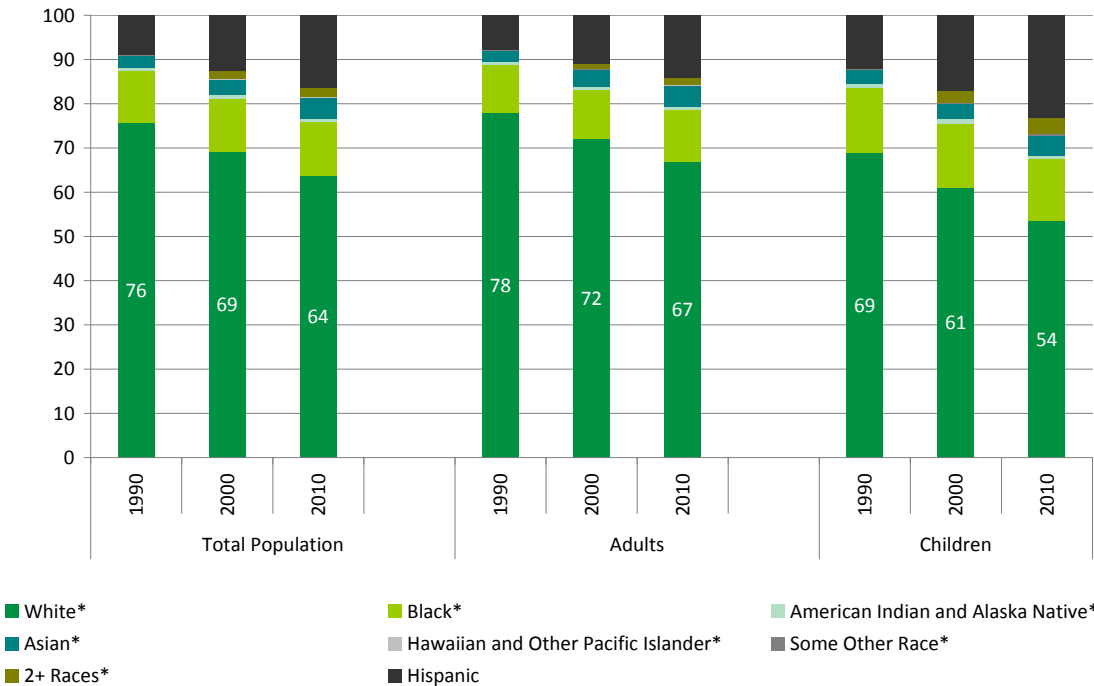
Hispanics, Asians, Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races—increased. Hispanics registered the largest absolute increase in children, at 4.8 million. Were it not for Hispanics, the nation's child population would have declined. The nation's white population is growing much more slowly than its populations of new minorities. From 2000 to 2010, it grew by only 1.2 percent, far lower than the national growth rate of 9.7 percent, and well below the 43 percent growth rates for Hispanics and Asians. Slower growth among whites owes in part to their lower fertility rate—about 1.9 births per white woman, compared with 3.0 births per Hispanic woman—as well as a relatively low contribution to population growth from immigration. From 2000 to 2009, only 15 percent growth in the immigrant population was attributable to whites, versus 78 percent for Hispanics, Asians, and other new minorities.<sup>7</sup>

Whites are also aging more rapidly than other groups. This contributes to their lower growth rate, as proportionately fewer white women are in their child-bearing years. The median age of whites is 41, compared to 27 for Hispanics, 35 for Asians, and a staggering 20 for the population of more than one race.<sup>8</sup> As a further reflection of these age differences by race and ethnicity, just one-fifth of U.S. whites are under age 18, compared with one-third of all Hispanics.

All signs point to whites continuing to register declines or miniscule gains for several decades to come.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, child populations among two longstanding minority groups—blacks and American Indian/Alaskan natives—gain minimally as well.

In a sense, the growth of new minority children seems to have occurred just in time to avoid overall child population declines, and their impact is evident in the changing demographic profile of U.S. children (Figure 2). Hispanics now comprise 23 percent of children, up from just 12 percent in 1990, while whites now comprise just 53 percent of youth, down from nearly 70 percent in 1990. Because white children are on the decline, these changes are happening more swiftly among the young than the old. Whites still comprise two thirds of adults while Hispanics only comprise 14 percent. The adult-child

**Figure 2. Share of Population by Race/Ethnicity and Age Group, United States, 1990–2010**



\* Non-Hispanic members of race group(s). Source: Author's analysis of 2000 and 2010 decennial census data.

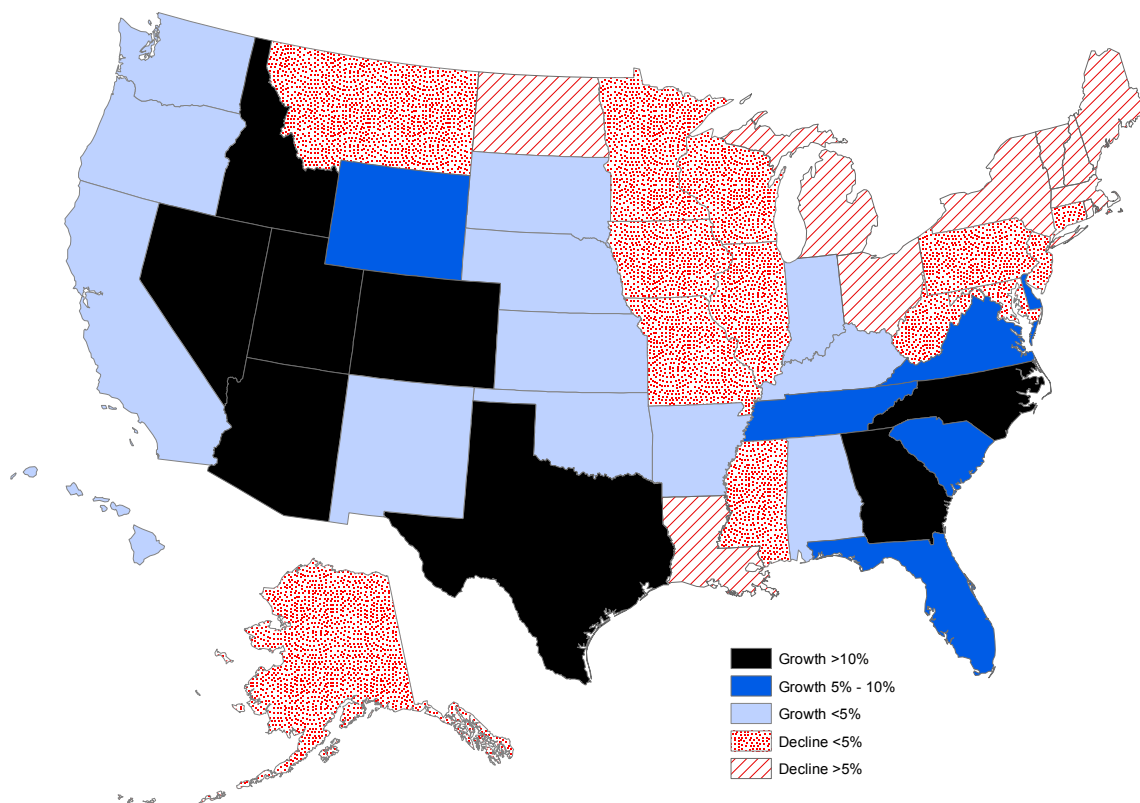
diversity gap is thus widening as the white population ages and new minority youth gains accelerate.

**B. In almost half of states and nearly one-third of large metro areas, child populations declined in the 2000s.**

The decline in the white child population dramatically reduced the growth rate of the overall U.S. child population. After 13.7 percent growth in the 1990s, the under-18 population in the 2000s grew by only 2.6 percent.

In states and large metropolitan areas in which Hispanic and other minority populations were either small or not growing, however, child populations shrank. There was considerable variation in child growth rates across states, ranging from a 30 percent gain for Nevada to a 12 percent loss for Vermont.

**Map 1. Growth of Child Population by State, 2000-2010**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2010

Child populations rose in 27 states in the 2000s, with the most prominent gains of 10 percent or more occurring in the Intermountain West, Texas, and the Southeast. At the same time, 23 states and the District of Columbia showed declines in their child populations, most prominently in New England, New York, Michigan, Ohio, North Dakota, and Louisiana. All of these areas were subject to outmigration of younger groups for one or more decades, and relatively small infusions of younger minorities could not fully compensate for those losses.

Declines in white child populations were much more widespread. Like the nation as a whole, 46 states registered declines in their white child populations ([Appendix A](#)).

**Table.1 Comparison of Child and Total Population Shifts, 2000-2010: States and Large Metro Areas**

	50 States and District of Columbia		Largest 100 Metropolitan Areas	
	Total	Children	Total	Children
<b>Number Losing Population, 2000-2010</b>				
<i>Total</i>	1	24	8	32
White	15	46	42	86
Black*	7	22	13	45
American Indian and Alaska Native*	7	35	33	63
Asian*	0	2	0	3
Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander*	7	16	19	30
Some Other Race*	8	13	8	23
2+ Races^	1	0	7	4
Hispanic	0	0	0	1
<b>Number with Minority White Populations</b>				
2010	5	11	22	35
2000	4	5	14	24
<b>Number with below 60 Percent White</b>				
2010	13	23	35	53
2000	5	17	25	37

\* Non Hispanic members of race

The nation's 100 largest metropolitan areas show even greater variation in the trajectory of their child populations. Changes among the under-18 population ranged from 47 percent growth for Raleigh to a 22 percent loss for New Orleans. Two-thirds of the nation's largest metro areas gained child populations, and similar to the state picture, the fastest gains occurred in the West and South. In addition to the Raleigh metro area, the Provo, Cape Coral, Las Vegas, Austin, Charlotte, and McAllen metro areas each registered at least a one-third increase in children.

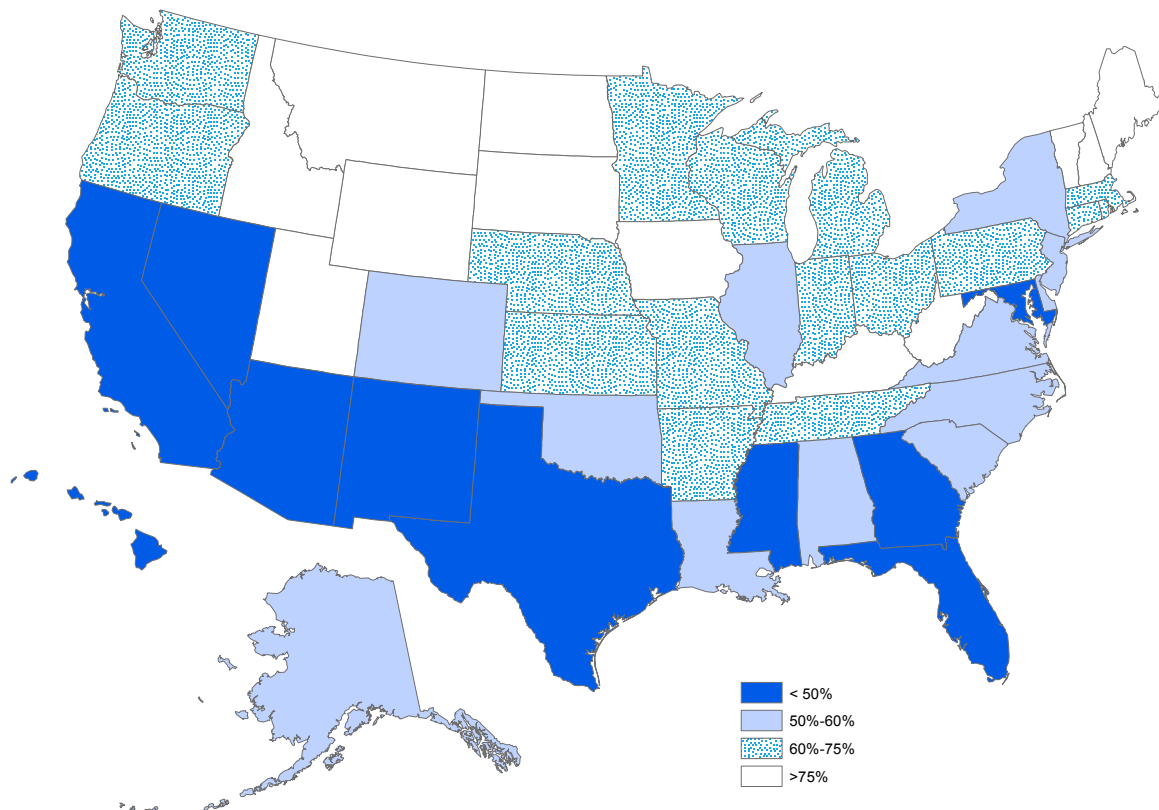
On the other hand, nearly one-third (32) of large metro areas suffered declines in child population. The steepest drops occurred in industrial metro areas like Youngstown, Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Cleveland, each of which saw its child numbers decline by more than 10 percent over the decade. At the same time, very large metro areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Philadelphia posted substantial absolute declines in children ([Appendix B](#)).

As with states, the vast majority (86) of large metro areas showed declines in their white child populations. Yet two-thirds of these areas managed to gain enough minority children over the 2000s to avoid overall child losses.

### **C. In areas of the country gaining children, Hispanics accounted for most of that growth.**

Amid pervasive losses of white children in states and large metro areas, Hispanics contributed most to the child population gains that did occur. Hispanic youth populations grew in all 50 states and D.C., and all but one large metropolitan area (notably, Los Angeles). Asian children declined in only two states and three metropolitan areas, and

**Map 2. Percentage White Child Population by State, 2010**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2010

child populations of two or more races expanded in all states and 96 of the 100 largest metropolitan areas.

The states that gained the most children in the last decade reveal the outsized influence of Hispanics on child growth (Appendices [A](#) and [B](#)). Texas led all other states by gaining nearly 1 million children in the 2000s—representing about half of the nation's overall gain in children. Fully 931,000 of its 979,000 increase in children (95 percent) came from Hispanics. Among the next biggest gainers—Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, Arizona, and Nevada—Hispanics were the single biggest contributors.<sup>10</sup> Utah was the only state in which whites contributed most to child population gains, though their numbers increased only barely more than those for Hispanic children.

Hispanic influence on child growth was evident in large metro areas, too. The greatest child gainers were Dallas, Houston, Atlanta, Phoenix, and Riverside. In each of these metro areas, Hispanic children exhibited by far the greatest increases, though the black child population also rose substantially in Atlanta. Hispanic children accounted for 250,000 of Dallas's gain of 323,000 children (77 percent), and 255,000 of Houston's gain of 294,000 children (87 percent).

Some large metro areas bucked the prevailing trends. In Raleigh, Provo, Boise, and Ogden, whites contributed most to child growth. In Los Angeles, which lost more children than any other metro area, white, Hispanic, black, and Asian children all registered declines from 2000 to 2010.

Overall, though, the 2010 Census shows that Hispanics were largely responsible for most

state and regional child population gains that occurred over the decade. Among the 27 states with rising child populations, Hispanics accounted for half or more of those gains in all but one (Utah). They also accounted for the bulk of gains in 57 of the 68 large metros with expanding child populations.

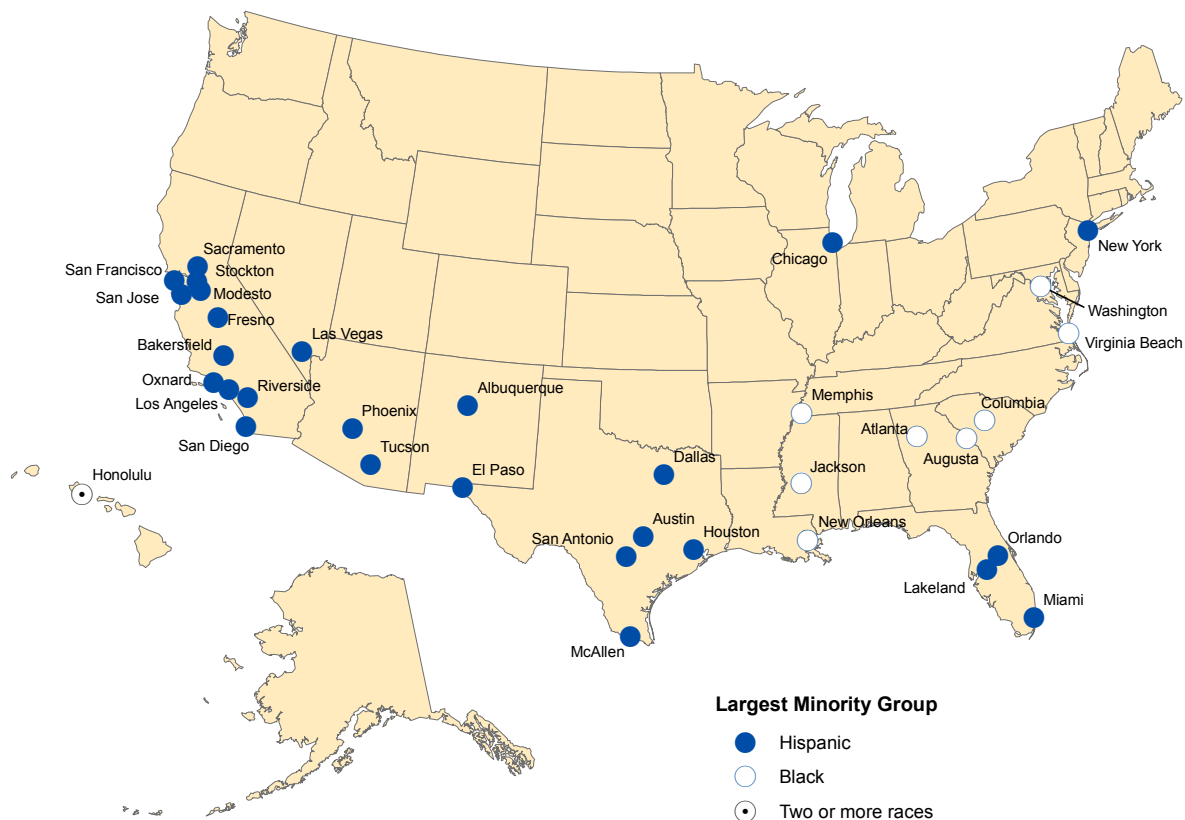
#### D. Ten states and 35 large metro areas now have minority white child populations.

The swift racial and ethnic transformations among youth in almost all parts of the country are yielding a rising number of “majority minority” state and metropolitan child populations. While only four states (HI, NM, CA, TX) and D.C. have minority white populations, 10 states (also including AZ, FL, GA, MD, MS, and NV) and D.C. now have minority white child populations (Map 2). Furthermore, in 23 states minorities represent more than 40 percent of the child population.

States with the fastest growing child populations (Map 1) also have relatively large child minority populations (Map 2). Many of these states also exhibited the greatest declines over the 2000s in the share of their children who are white ([Appendix A](#)). In Nevada, for example, whites declined from 54 percent of children in 2000 to just 40 percent in 2010. Over the same period, Florida’s child population changed from 56 percent white to 46 percent white.<sup>11</sup>

More than one-third (35) of large metro areas have minority white child populations (Map 3). This compares with 22 where the total population is minority white. California and Texas house the largest number of these metro areas; indeed, every large metro area in those two states has a majority minority child population in which Hispanics predominate.

**Map 3. Large Metro Areas with Minority White Child Populations, 2010**



Source: Brookings analysis of Census 2010



Florida, Georgia, and Arizona each also contain multiple metro areas in that category. The number of these metro areas increased from 24 in 2000, with Atlanta, Dallas, Orlando, and Phoenix ranking among the 11 new members. Among the 35, only the mega-regions of Chicago and New York lie outside the South and West.

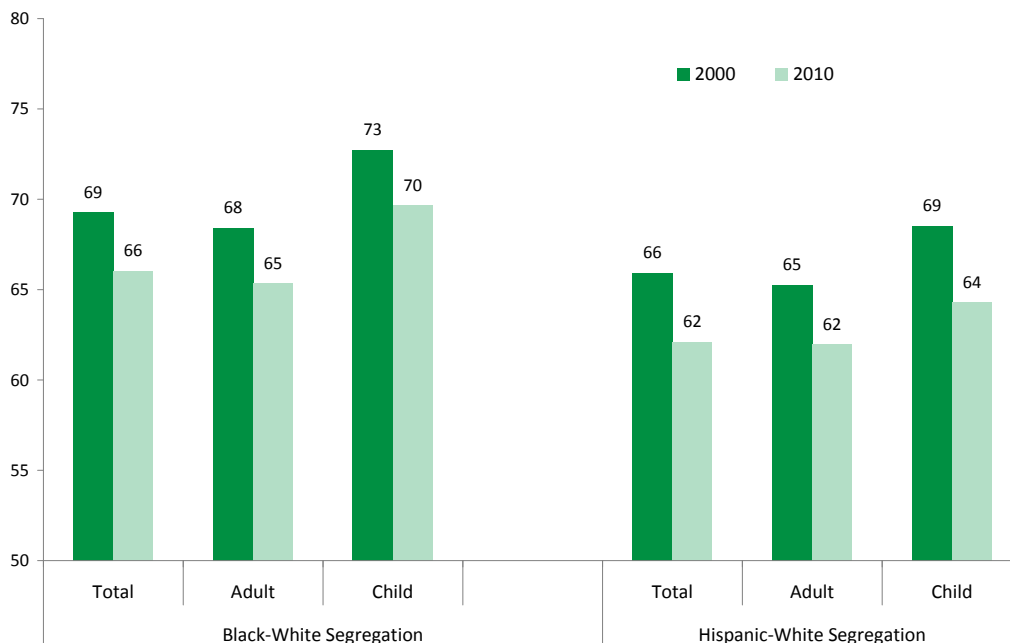
As with states, metropolitan declines in the white share of child population tended to accompany overall child population growth ([Appendix B](#)). Orlando's white share of child population dropped from 56 percent in 2000 to 42 percent in 2010. These declines occurred in less diverse areas of the country outside the South and West, too. In Allentown, PA, which has gained new Hispanic population from greater New York, whites accounted for 66 percent of children in 2010, down from 80 percent in 2000.

Still another dimension of the recent change is the “generation gap” in race-ethnicity that exists between children and adults. Such gaps are apparent in almost all states in large metropolitan areas, but are especially sharp in places with recent minority growth (Table 2). Among states, Arizona has the largest gap, with a 63 percent white adult population and a 42 percent white child population.<sup>12</sup> Among metropolitan areas, gaps are especially large in Tucson, Cape Coral, Bradenton, and Phoenix. These gaps could signal emerging cultural and political divisions across generations.

#### **E. Segregation levels for black and Hispanic children are higher than for their adult counterparts, despite a general reduction in segregation over the last 10 years.**

Where children live within metropolitan areas is especially important for their access to schools and other community resources. Segregation measures provide one indication of trends in these opportunities available to minority children. The long history of black-white segregation, and later for Hispanics and other groups, and its implications for inequality in American metropolitan areas has been documented in a number of scholarly studies.<sup>13</sup> Focusing first on the total population, both black-white segregation and Hispanic-white segregation declined nationally between 2000 and 2010 (Figure 3). Both remain in the

**Figure 3. Black-White and Hispanic-White Segregation Index by Age Group, United States, 2000–2010**



Source: Author's analysis of 2000 and 2010 decennial census data.

**Table 2. Largest “Racial Generation Gaps,” States and Large Metro Areas, 2010**

	White Share of Population		
	Child	Adult	Difference
<i>States</i>			
Arizona	41.6	63.4	-21.8
District of Columbia	17.4	38.3	-20.9
Nevada	39.5	58.9	-19.4
New Mexico	26.2	45.3	-19.1
California	27.4	44.4	-17.0
Oklahoma	55.9	72.8	-16.9
Delaware	53.0	69.0	-16.0
Rhode Island	63.8	79.8	-16.0
Colorado	58.0	73.9	-15.9
Oregon	66.1	82.1	-15.9
<i>Metro Areas*</i>			
Tucson, AZ	36.1	61.0	-24.9
Cape Coral, FL	51.0	75.8	-24.8
Bradenton, FL	61.8	83.5	-21.7
Phoenix, AZ	43.4	64.2	-20.8
Lakeland, FL	49.1	69.3	-20.2
Modesto, CA	32.8	52.3	-19.6
Las Vegas, NV	33.5	52.8	-19.3
Milwaukee, WI	54.4	73.7	-19.3
Albuquerque, NM	27.7	46.9	-19.2
San Diego, CA	33.9	52.9	-19.0

*\*Metro area names are abbreviated; see Appendix B for full names.*

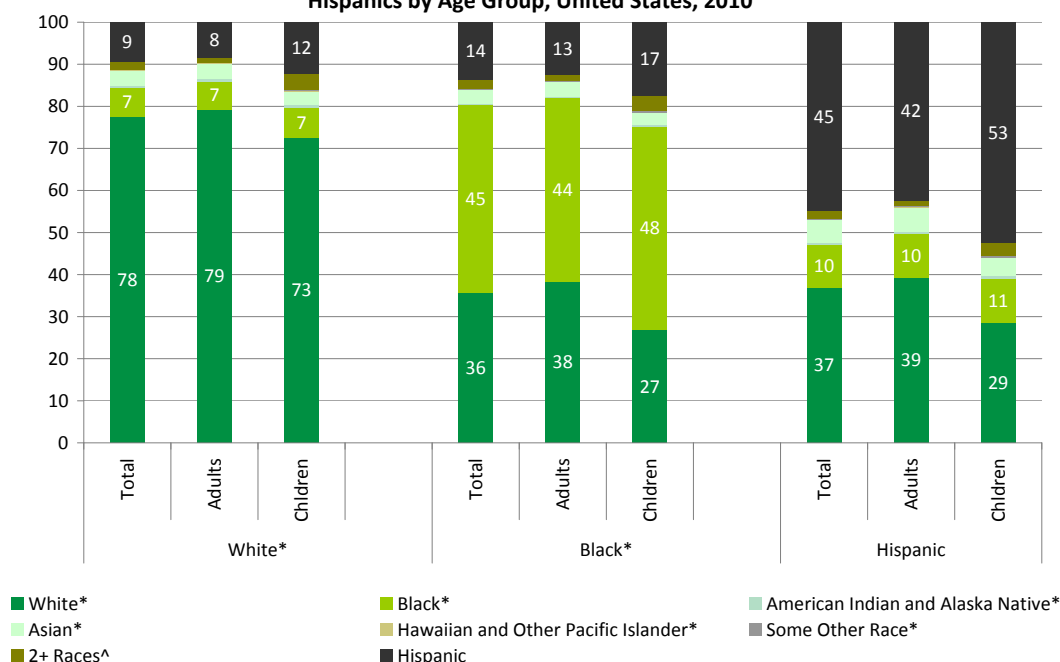
*Source: Author's analysis of 2010 Census data.*

high-60 range, which nonetheless is a substantial improvement for blacks compared to earlier decades. These declines occurred in most, but not all, parts of the country. Among the largest 100 metropolitan areas, 92 experienced declines in black-white segregation and 65 showed declines in Hispanic-white segregation.

Amid the largely positive trend, minority children remain more residentially segregated than minority adults. The differences are somewhat larger for blacks than for Hispanics and pervasive across metro areas. Black-white segregation levels are higher among children in 93, and Hispanic-white segregation levels in 94, of the 100 largest metro areas. This indicates that black and Hispanic households with children are more segregated from whites than their single and childless counterparts. White parents with children may be more likely to locate in select neighborhoods and communities, perhaps those with better schools, or superior public amenities related to childrearing.

Another way to examine segregation is to compare the racial and ethnic characteristics of neighborhoods occupied by average members of different groups. While the average black lives in a neighborhood where blacks are a plurality, and the average Hispanic lives in a neighborhood where Hispanics are a plurality, these tendencies are more pronounced for children (Figure 4). This means that among children, minorities are less exposed to whites than adults. For example, black children live in neighborhoods which, on average, are 27 percent white, but black adults live in neighborhoods that are on average 38 percent white. A very similar pattern holds for Hispanics. The loss of white children, on

**Figure 4. Racial and Ethnic Composition of Average Neighborhood for Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics by Age Group, United States, 2010**



\* Non-Hispanic members of race group(s). Source: Author's analysis of 2000 and 2010 decennial census data.

the other hand, seems to have contributed to white children living in neighborhoods that are slightly more integrated than those for white adults, mostly by virtue of having larger Hispanic and multi-racial populations.

## CONCLUSION

The first complete picture from the 2010 Census makes plain that large swaths of our country are becoming more diverse from the bottom up. New minorities are fueling growth in these places, and in some cases providing population boosts stemming further declines.

This trend undoubtedly brings some challenges, particularly as the younger part of the population becomes more racially and ethnically diverse than the older baby boomer-dominated white population. “Racial generation gaps” can emerge as a result of competing interests regarding community resources or views on issues like immigration.<sup>14</sup> Politically, an age-race divide could create even sharper divisions between candidates and parties that espouse more or less government support for measures benefiting the young, like education or affordable housing, and those benefiting the old, like Social Security or Medicare.<sup>15</sup>

From a social and human capital perspective, larger new minority youth populations, many of whom are first- and second-generation immigrants, also pose new challenges for public education and human services to be addressed in the decades ahead, especially in light of minorities’ traditionally lower levels of educational attainment.<sup>16</sup>

Yet the growth, and growing diversity, of America’s children sets this nation apart from many of its peers in the developed world. Capitalizing on this demographic advantage will be perhaps the key priority for leaders across the nation seeking to achieve economic growth and prosperity for their populations in the years and decades to come.

## ENDNOTES

1. William H. Frey, "The Census Projects Minority Surge" (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2008).
2. Jeffrey S. Passel, D'Vera Cohn, and Mark Hugo Lopez, "Census 2010: 50 Million Latinos: Hispanics Account for More than Half of Nation's Growth in Past Decade" (Washington: Pew Hispanic Center, 2011).
3. The 2010 data are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's Redistricting data from PL-94-171 files. These are the first geographically detailed data to be released from the 2010 Census results.
4. The PL 94-171 data provide counts for the total population, and those age 18 and above; the child population is obtained by subtracting the adult population from the total population.
5. Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez, "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).
6. Further information on these segregation measures can be found in William H. Frey and Dowell Myers, "Neighborhood Segregation in Single-Race and Multirace America: A Census 2000 Study of Cities and Metropolitan Areas" (Washington: Fannie Mae Foundation, 2001).
7. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program, "Cumulative Estimates of the Components of Resident Population Change by Race and Hispanic Origin for the United States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2009" (2010).
8. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program, National Characteristics—Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin (2010).
9. Frey, "The Census Projects Minority Surge."
10. Black child populations also rose in each of these states over the decade, and the white child population increased in North Carolina.
11. In most states with majority minority child populations, Hispanics represent the dominant minority group among children; in Maryland, Georgia, and Mississippi, blacks are the dominant child minority group.
12. The gap is also large in the District of Columbia, which has a 38 percent white adult population and a 17 percent white child population.
13. Karl E. Teauber and Alma F. Teauber, *Negroes in Cities: Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Change* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965); Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Harvard University Press, 1993); Reynolds Farley and William H. Frey, "Changes in the segregation of whites from blacks during the 1980s: Small steps toward a more integrated society." *American Sociological Review* 59: 23–45 (1994); Frey and Myers, "Neighborhood Segregation in Single-Race and Multirace America;" John R. Logan, Brian Suits, and Reynolds Farley, "Segregation of Minorities: Two Decades of Change" *Demography* 41: 1-22, (2004); John Iceland, *Where We Live Now: Immigration and Race in America: Where We Live Now* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2009)
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This analysis, along with all appendices, can be found at  
[http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/0406\\_census\\_diversity\\_frey.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2011/0406_census_diversity_frey.aspx)

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