

The Changing Racial and Ethnic Makeup of New York City Neighborhoods

New York City has an extraordinarily diverse population. It is one of the few cities in the country in which four different racial/ethnic groups each make up at least 10 percent of the population. While the overall shares of each racial or ethnic group in the population are interesting on their own, it is important to examine in more detail the distribution of the different racial and ethnic groups across the city's neighborhoods. This section looks at trends in neighborhood diversity across the last 20 years.

According to the 2010 decennial census, 33 percent of New York City residents are white, 26 percent are Hispanic, 26 percent are black, and 13 percent are Asian.¹ Figure A reports the city's racial/ethnic makeup in each of the past three decennial censuses, and Table 1 compares the trends in the city to those of the nation's four largest cities. While the population of all of these cities is diverse, New York is the only one of the five in which each of the four major racial and ethnic groups makes up at least 10 percent of the population.

While the diversity of New York City's population is not reflected in many of the city's neighborhoods, over the past 20 years the racial and ethnic makeup of the city's neighborhoods (census tracts) has increasingly come to look more like that of the city itself.² Our analysis of the 2010 census shows that in 51 percent of the city's census tracts, at least two racial or ethnic groups each constitute 20 percent or more of the population, compared with 38 percent of census tracts in 1990. Nonetheless, nearly half of the city's neighborhoods remain dominated by a single racial or ethnic group. New York City's white residents are the most concentrated of all racial/ethnic groups. White residents represent the majority of the population in 24 percent of New York City census tracts, and 59 percent of the white population live in these tracts.

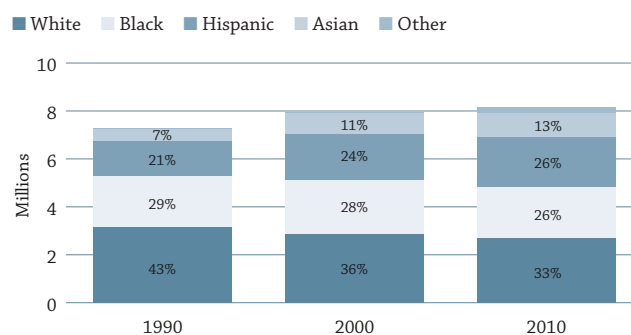
New York City Neighborhood Types

There are many potential ways to categorize the racial/ethnic makeup of a neighborhood. For this analysis, we have defined neighborhoods as *majority white*, *majority black*, *majority Hispanic*, or *majority Asian* if more than half of the residents identify as belonging to the respective category and no other single group makes up more than 20 percent of residents. The categories *white-black*, *white-Hispanic*, and *white-Asian* include

¹ We treat multiple-race or -ethnicity responses to the census race/ethnicity questions slightly differently in this analysis than in the reference pages at the end of this publication. Here, "black" includes responses of black alone, or black in combination with other races/ethnicities, "Hispanic" includes Hispanic in combination with any races/ethnicities and not classified as black, "Asian" includes Asian alone or in combination with any other races/ethnicities but not classified as black or Hispanic, "white" includes white non-Hispanic responses, and "other" includes any remaining responses.

² This analysis focuses on relatively small geographical areas—census tracts—as neighborhoods. We also adjust the boundaries of tracts that were changed from one census to the next in order to make consistent comparisons over time. There are 2,106 census tracts in New York City, with an average population of 3,900 persons per census tract.

Figure A: New York City Racial/Ethnic Groups: Levels and Shares



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (1990, 2000, and 2010).

neighborhoods where at least 20 percent of residents are white and at least 20 percent identify as the second respective category. *White-mixed* tracts have more than 20 percent white residents and multiple other groups, each with more than a 20 percent representation. We refer to these four *white-* neighborhood types as "integrated" neighborhoods in the discussion below. Finally, in *mixed-minority* neighborhoods, less than 20 percent of the population is white and at least two other groups make up more than 20 percent each of the tract population, or no group constitutes a majority of residents. While treating *mixed-minority* neighborhoods differently from integrated neighborhoods may seem arbitrary, we show later that these neighborhoods differ significantly from the integrated neighborhoods on a variety of socioeconomic indicators. Table 2 summarizes these neighborhood definitions and shows how frequently each type of neighborhood occurred in each of the past three censuses. Perhaps the most striking changes are the large decline between 1990 and 2000 in the share of neighborhoods that are majority white, from 40.3 percent to 26.6 percent, as well as the growth in *mixed-minority* neighborhoods from 16.6 percent of tracts in 1990 to 23.6 percent in 2010. The citywide increase in the Hispanic and Asian populations is reflected in increases in the share of *majority Hispanic*, *majority Asian*, and *white-Asian* neighborhoods. A more detailed analysis of how racial/ethnic composition has changed in each neighborhood type is given below.

Table 1: Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Major U.S. Cities

		New York City	Chicago	Los Angeles	Houston	Philadelphia
White	1990	43.2%	37.9%	37.3%	40.6%	52.1%
	2000	35.0%	31.3%	29.7%	30.8%	42.5%
	2010	33.3%	31.7%	28.7%	25.6%	36.9%
Black	1990	28.7%	39.1%	14.0%	28.1%	39.9%
	2000	26.6%	36.8%	11.2%	25.3%	43.2%
	2010	25.5%	32.9%	9.6%	23.7%	43.4%
Hispanic	1990	20.9%	19.1%	39.0%	27.0%	5.1%
	2000	22.8%	24.4%	43.4%	35.1%	7.3%
	2010	23.6%	26.9%	45.4%	41.0%	10.2%
Asian & Pacific Islander	1990	6.7%	3.5%	9.2%	3.9%	2.7%
	2000	9.8%	4.3%	10.0%	5.3%	4.5%
	2010	12.6%	5.4%	11.2%	6.0%	6.3%
Other	1990	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%
	2000	5.9%	3.2%	5.7%	3.4%	2.6%
	2010	4.9%	3.0%	5.1%	3.6%	3.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (1990, 2000, and 2010)

Table 2: Neighborhood Type Definitions and Percentage Breakdown

Neighborhood Type	Description	% OF TRACTS			# of Census Tracts 2010
		1990	2000	2010	
Majority White	>50% white; all other groups <20% each	40.3%	26.6%	23.7%	501
Majority Black	>50% black; all other groups <20% each	18.4%	19.4%	18.3%	387
Majority Hispanic	>50% Hispanic; all other groups <20% each	2.6%	4.0%	5.1%	108
Majority Asian	>50% Asian; all other groups <20% each	0.3%	0.7%	1.8%	39
White-Black	>20% white; >20% black; all other groups <20% each	4.6%	3.7%	2.8%	59
White-Hispanic	>20% white; >20% Hispanic; all other groups <20% each	2.6%	8.8%	10.5%	221
White-Asian	>20% white; >20% Asian; all other groups <20% each	9.9%	9.4%	9.7%	205
White-Mixed	>20% white; at least two other groups >20%	4.7%	6.2%	4.5%	96
Mixed-Minority	<20% white; no other groups >50%	16.6%	21.4%	23.6%	498

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (1990, 2000, and 2010). Note: Tract boundaries are defined to be consistent across censuses.

Table 3 provides a more detailed look at the distribution of the different racial and ethnic groups among the neighborhood types. For example, the average *majority white* neighborhood is 76.7 percent white, and 58.5 percent of all white residents live in such a neighborhood, whereas 32.8 percent of New York City’s white residents live in a combination of integrated neighborhood types. *Majority black* neighborhoods are more concentrated still, with an average black population of 82 percent. However, just under half of New York’s black residents live in these neighborhoods, while over a third live in *mixed-minority* neighborhoods. In contrast, a far lower share of Hispanics and Asians live in majority neighborhoods. About 45 percent of Hispanics live in *mixed-minority* neighbor-

hoods, and 25.7 percent of Asians live in *white-Asian* neighborhoods. Figure B shows the distribution of the racial and ethnic groups throughout the five boroughs.

Socioeconomic Characteristics of New York City Neighborhood Types

The neighborhood types differ along dimensions other than racial and ethnic composition. Table 4 shows a number of socioeconomic indicators for the mean neighborhood within each group in 2010. *Majority white* neighborhoods have, on average, the highest average income, share of college educated residents, and homeownership rates. Household income of *majority white* tracts is, on average, more than double that of any other

Table 3: Racial/Ethnic Composition and Exposure

	White		Black		Hispanic		Asian	
	% of white population in nbhd type	Average % white in nbhd type	% of black population in nbhd type	Average % black in nbhd type	% of Hispanic population in nbhd type	Average % Hispanic in nbhd type	% of Asian population in nbhd type	Average % Asian in nbhd type
Majority White	58.5%	76.7%	3.4%	3.4%	9.2%	9.3%	17.1%	8.5%
Majority Black	1.9%	4.3%	46.7%	82.0%	4.8%	8.4%	2.5%	2.2%
Majority Hispanic	1.7%	8.7%	2.7%	11.0%	17.3%	70.5%	3.9%	7.7%
Majority Asian	0.7%	10.0%	0.3%	3.8%	1.0%	12.0%	12.7%	72.1%
White-Black	2.8%	37.6%	4.1%	42.6%	1.0%	10.8%	1.1%	5.8%
White-Asian	13.9%	48.7%	1.2%	3.3%	4.3%	11.7%	25.7%	34.1%
White-Hispanic	11.5%	46.0%	2.3%	7.1%	11.4%	35.2%	6.1%	9.2%
White-Mixed	4.6%	32.0%	2.7%	14.5%	5.5%	29.8%	7.9%	20.7%
Mixed-Minority	4.5%	5.7%	36.4%	35.3%	45.4%	44.4%	23.1%	11.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (2010)

Table 4: Average Tract Characteristics by Neighborhood Type

	Poverty Rate	Educational Attainment: Bachelor's Degree and Higher	Homeowner-ship Rate	Foreign-Born Population	Households with Children Under 18 Years Old	Average Household Income
White Majority	10.4%	55.5%	38.5%	24.3%	22.1%	\$124,470
Black Majority	17.0%	21.4%	33.8%	37.4%	38.7%	\$57,847
Hispanic Majority	24.4%	16.1%	18.8%	52.0%	43.3%	\$48,485
Asian Majority	20.5%	24.9%	25.2%	66.2%	29.0%	\$51,656
White-Black	18.0%	38.7%	27.6%	29.0%	27.3%	\$66,898
White-Asian	12.4%	36.4%	42.2%	45.7%	27.7%	\$75,606
White-Hispanic	15.4%	32.4%	28.9%	35.1%	27.7%	\$66,910
White-Minority	20.6%	31.0%	26.7%	27.6%	33.5%	\$60,004
Mixed-Minority	28.8%	16.2%	17.8%	37.7%	41.7%	\$44,221

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census (2010)

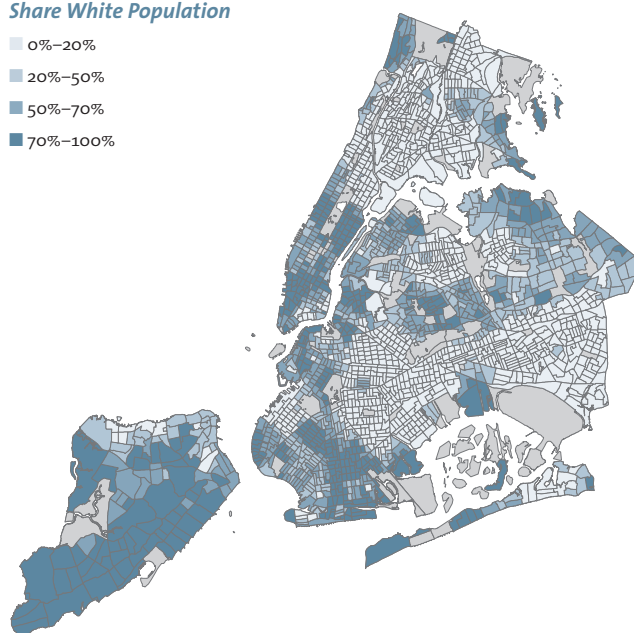
neighborhood type except *white-Asian*. At the other extreme, mixed-minority neighborhoods have, on average, the highest poverty rates and the lowest incomes, homeownership rates, and shares of college educated residents. Among the integrated neighborhood types, *white-Hispanic* and *white-Asian* neighborhoods average higher household income, ownership and college degree rates, and lower poverty than their *majority Hispanic* or *majority Asian* counterparts. The average poverty rate

in *white-black* neighborhoods is similar to that in *majority black* neighborhoods, while college degree rates and household income are higher in *white-black* neighborhoods, and homeownership rates are higher in *majority black* neighborhoods. We also see that *mixed-minority* neighborhoods are among the worst off according to the indicators presented. Such neighborhoods have the highest poverty rates, the lowest homeownership rates, and the lowest average incomes.

Figure B: Racial and Ethnic Concentration

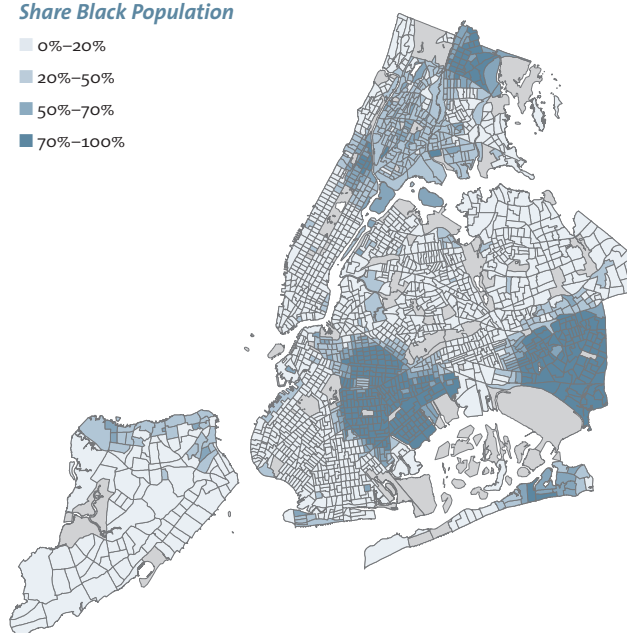
Share White Population

- 0%–20%
- 20%–50%
- 50%–70%
- 70%–100%



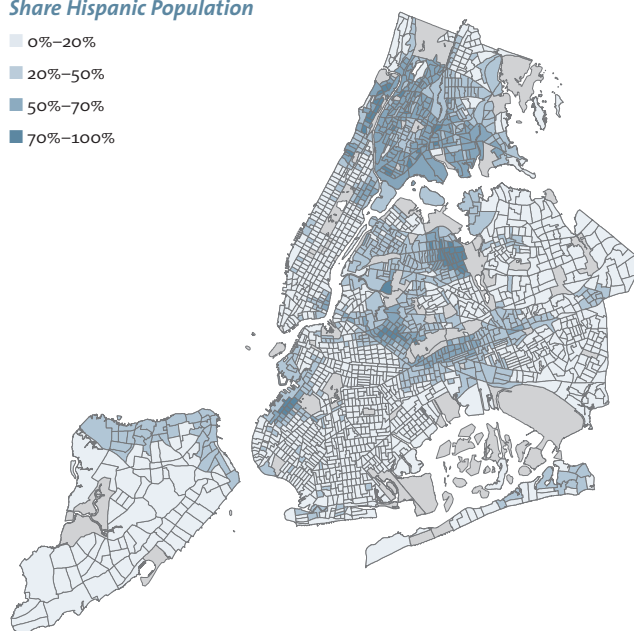
Share Black Population

- 0%–20%
- 20%–50%
- 50%–70%
- 70%–100%



Share Hispanic Population

- 0%–20%
- 20%–50%
- 50%–70%
- 70%–100%



Share Asian Population

- 0%–20%
- 20%–50%
- 50%–70%
- 70%–100%

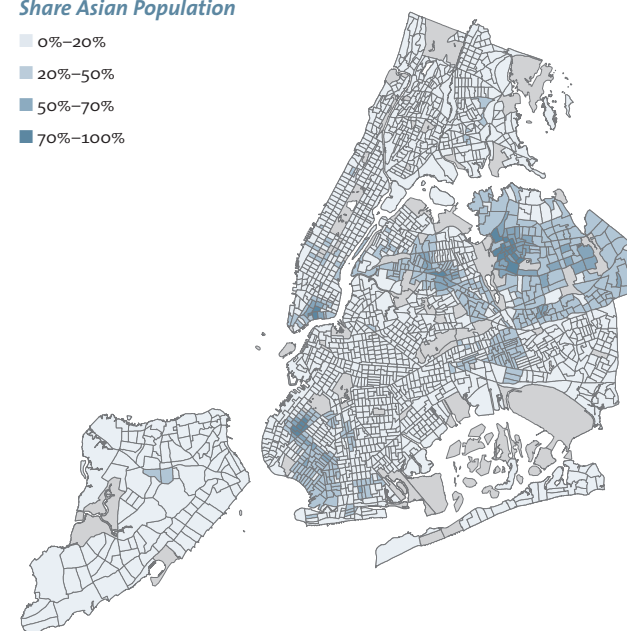


Table 5: Change in Racial/Ethnic Share by Neighborhood Type (2000-2010)

	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Other</i>
Majority White	-2.5	-0.6	0.7	0.9	1.4
Majority Black	-0.9	-3.7	1.7	0.4	2.4
Majority Hispanic	-2.7	-2.2	3.6	0.0	1.3
Majority Asian	-7.8	-2.9	-3.8	13.3	1.3
White-Black	7.0	-10.7	-0.1	1.4	2.3
White-Asian	-11.3	-0.6	2.2	8.1	1.7
White-Hispanic	-4.1	0.4	1.2	1.1	1.5
White-Mixed	-5.8	-1.2	2.1	2.8	2.2
Mixed-Minority	-2.0	-3.9	1.8	1.6	2.5
All Neighborhoods	-3.1	-2.3	1.5	2.0	1.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Decennial Census (2000 and 2010)*

Changes in Composition of New York City Neighborhood Types

Between 2000 and 2010 the city as a whole became more Hispanic and Asian, but a look at average changes in individual neighborhoods reveals a more nuanced picture. Table 5 shows the average percentage point change in the share of each racial/ethnic group present in each type of neighborhood, as defined in 2000. The first trend highlighted in these tables is that single-race majority neighborhoods became more diverse for *majority white* and *majority black* neighborhoods but not in *majority Hispanic* or *majority Asian* neighborhoods. For *majority white* and *majority black* neighborhoods, the share of residents of the majority race declined, on average, by 2.5 and 3.7 percentage points respectively between 2000 and 2010. Those declining shares partly reflect a decline of 3.1 percentage points in the share of the city's overall population that is white, and a decline of 2.3 percentage points in the share of the city's population that is black. In contrast to the decreasing concentrations of the other groups, neighborhoods which began as *majority Asian* gained, on average, 13.3 percentage points in the percentage of their population that is Asian. This increasing concentration of the growing Asian population is also evident in neighborhoods which began as *white-Asian*, where on average 11.3 percentage points in the share of the population that was white was replaced by Asian, Hispanic, and other racial/ethnic groups.

In *white-black* neighborhoods, the black shares declined and were replaced mostly by white residents. In *white-Hispanic* neighborhoods, the white share decline was accompanied by an increase in the share of black, Asian, and other residents, while the Hispanic share remained largely unchanged. In *white-mixed* neighborhoods, white and black shares declined while Hispanic, Asian, and other increased. Lastly, *mixed-minority* neighborhoods became less black and white and more Hispanic, Asian, and other.

Conclusion

This analysis of changes in the racial/ethnic makeup of New York City's neighborhoods shows that while the city's white and black residents remain quite concentrated, they are becoming less so over time. The city's Asian population has, meanwhile, become more concentrated. The share of neighborhoods that we classify as *majority white* declined, showing some progress toward desegregation, and the share of *mixed-minority* neighborhoods increased, reflecting larger trends. Among the nine neighborhood types, the *mixed-minority* neighborhoods have the worst average socioeconomic status in terms of poverty rates, income, the share of the population with a college degree, and homeownership rates, followed by the *majority Hispanic*, *majority Asian* and *majority black* neighborhoods, respectively.