

America is increasingly diverse, but challenges remain

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America's communities are becoming increasingly diverse, but there are still important concerns about racial and ethnic integration in the future, according to researchers.

A new US2010 report shows whites, blacks, Hispanics and Asians are increasingly sharing American communities, said Barry Lee, professor of sociology and demography, Penn State.

Lee, who co-wrote the report with John Iceland, professor of sociology and demography, Penn State, and Chad Farrell, associate professor of sociology, University of Alaska Anchorage, said that a universal trend toward greater diversity has been underway across metro and micro areas since 1980, fueled by Hispanic and Asian growth.

During the same period, a large majority of the areas exhibit declines in the [segregation](#) of their black and white populations. The number of mixed neighborhoods—areas where no racial-ethnic group constitutes a majority of residents—has more than quadrupled in metro settings, from roughly 1,500 in 1980 to 6,300 in 2010.

"While these patterns make one optimistic about integration, there are other findings that complicate the story," said Lee.

He pointed out, for example, that micropolitan areas—nonmetro counties with an urban cluster of between 10,000 and 49,000 people—lag 30 years or more behind their metropolitan counterparts in average levels of ethnic and [racial diversity](#).

Moreover, the segregation of metropolitan Hispanics and Asians has changed little during recent decades, especially for some of the largest or fastest-growing groups such as Mexicans and Asian Indians. Segregation remains substantial in magnitude among Dominican, Guatemalan, Cuban, Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean metro dwellers as well.

Another finding uncovered by the research speaks to the fate of metropolitan neighborhoods with mixed—no-majority—racial-ethnic compositions in 1980 or 1990. In gateway areas defined by a large foreign-born population, only about one-fourth of these neighborhoods are still mixed as of 2010, most having become majority Hispanic. Far fewer such neighborhoods existed in areas dominated by natives—non-immigrants—two or three decades ago, and most now have a majority of African American residents.

"The fragility of mixed neighborhoods calls into question the potential for neighborhoods to match the diversity of the cities or metros where they are located, at least over the short term," said Lee.

The researchers used data from the last four censuses to examine the ethnic and racial diversity of metropolitan and micropolitan areas, the degree to which members of different groups live in the same neighborhoods within such areas and the persistence of mixed [neighborhoods](#) over time. These three aspects of integration are rarely analyzed together, according to the researchers.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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