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# **Whites to Be Minority in N.Y. Soon, Data Show**

By [SAM ROBERTS](#)

The influx of foreigners to New York and its suburbs and the continuing exodus of non-Hispanic whites to other parts of the country have transformed the face of metropolitan New York so profoundly that whites will constitute a minority of the region's population within a few years, demographers say.

The shift would make New York the first large metropolitan area outside the South and West in which whites do not make up a majority, according to an analysis of 2004 Census estimates by the Brookings Institution that was released yesterday.

The analysis also reveals a historic reversal: For the first time since at least the 19th century, the black population of both the city and, to a lesser extent, the region, has declined. In the five boroughs, according to the estimates, the number of blacks declined by about 30,000 since 2000, dipping below 30 percent of the overall population, as the migration of blacks to the suburbs and areas like the South outpaced immigration from the Caribbean and Africa.

In contrast, the analysis found that while the greater New York region over all lost 162,000 non-Hispanic whites and several hundred blacks from 2000 to 2004, the region gained 288,000 Hispanic people and 201,000 Asians — more Asians, in fact, than any other metropolitan area.

Increasingly, the New York region's growing multiracial makeup reflects the changing face of the inner ring of suburbs as many new immigrants bypass the city altogether or migrate from the city to neighboring counties after a generation or less.

What makes the city and the region unusual, though, is that among the nation's 88 metropolitan areas with half a million or more people, New York is one of only three — Houston and Honolulu are the others — where the proportion of blacks, Hispanics and Asians each exceeds their share of the national population.

Whites have been a minority in New York City since the 1980's. But now that shift is extending to the wider metropolitan area, driven by immigration and higher birth rates among immigrants. Already, non-Hispanic whites are a minority of the metropolitan area's population younger than 15.

"New York is still the classic melting pot, with a whole diverse array of immigrants coming in, but the suburbs are now becoming part of this bigger melting pot," said William H. Frey, the Brookings Institution demographer who conducted the analysis. "The suburbs are now tasting this new diversity."

His analysis found that whites declined to 52.2 percent of the population in 2004 from 54.2 percent in 2000 in the census-defined metropolitan area, which includes the city, Long Island, the northern suburbs, northern New Jersey and northeastern Pennsylvania, but not Connecticut.

"We went down 2.1 percent from 2000 to 2004," Dr. Frey said. "If we go another 2 percent before the end of the decade, you're there." He added: "The suburbs are now contributing to this. They've all shown a decline in the percent of whites since 1990."

The approaching statistical milestone in the New York region has not been unexpected by demographers.

"What this shows is that the pattern is spreading out," said Andrew A. Beveridge, a demographer at Queens College of the [City University of New York](#), "and the non-Hispanic white population is continuing to dwindle."

"The New York metropolitan area is becoming more like the city, and the nation's metropolitan areas are becoming more like New York," Dr. Beveridge said.

The trend was foreshadowed in an earlier analysis by New York's Department of City Planning, which found that while the region's ethnic and racial numbers had been driven for several decades by changes in the five boroughs, those changes were also being mirrored in the suburban counties closest to the city.

"The inner-ring suburbs are emulating the city," said Joseph J. Salvo, director of the department's population division.

What's happening in New York has already occurred in metropolitan areas in the West and South, including Los Angeles, Miami, Houston and San Francisco.

The proportion of whites has also dipped to just over a majority in the San Diego, Washington, Dallas and Las Vegas metropolitan regions as Asian and Hispanic people disperse beyond central cities and their suburbs and as blacks migrate to the South. In each of those areas, whites are already a minority of the population under age 15.

Atlanta led large metropolitan areas in black population growth and is poised to overtake Chicago as the region with the second-highest black population in total numbers, after New York.

In 1990, metropolitan Los Angeles and New York accounted for 30 percent of the nation's Hispanic population. By 2004, those two regions were home to only 23 percent of Hispanic people.

"For immigrant minorities, especially, friendship and family networks have drawn them to traditional ports of entry, even during times when labor market considerations would suggest they move elsewhere," Dr. Frey wrote. "Blacks, as well, have tended to follow well-worn patterns, initially out of the South and, later, to a network of cities across the North and West."

But more recently, he concluded, "many lower-skilled Hispanic migrants are moving to fast-growing areas of the country, in response to retail, service and construction job growth, while higher-skilled minority migrants are following the same professional opportunities that have attracted whites."

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## **Minorities avoid wilderness activities, advocates look for fix**

By MICHAEL HILL  
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Bunyan Bryant has camped by the shores of Lake Huron for decades and usually sees the same thing: green trees, blue skies and white people.

"I seldom see other African-Americans or even other minorities camping," said Bryant, director of the Environmental Justice Initiative at the University of Michigan.

"Sometimes they might be with another church group or something like that, but truly speaking it doesn't happen."

It's the same story from New York's Adirondacks to Arizona's canyons: there's a lack of ethnic and racial diversity in the outdoor areas where people hike, camp, mountain bike, paddle and picnic. In a time when minority populations are growing, wilderness advocates and administrators are reaching out to blacks, Hispanics and Asians to change that.

"We're only serving part of the public now and we aspire to represent many, many people who are not using all the public lands," said Neil Woodworth of the Adirondack Mountain Club.

The Outdoor Industry Foundation this summer reported that 79 percent of people taking part in outdoor activities like hiking and kayaking last year were Caucasian, 6 percent were black and 4 percent were Hispanic.

Blacks and Hispanics combined make up 27 percent of the U.S. population.

The U.S. Forest Service found similar trends in Arizona, where whites accounted for 88 percent or more of the visitors to the six national forests in that state, even though Hispanics make up about a quarter of the state's population.

Economic and geographic conditions have something to do with it \_ think of a city dweller who lacks a car, or even the money to buy a tent. But money has become less a factor as more blacks and Hispanics enter the middle class, said Alan Spears, associate director of cultural diversity programs at the National Parks Conservation Association.

Advocates and academics say cultural factors can play a large part. Marta Maldonado of Iowa State University's sociology department said the concept of "wilderness" is a western European idea, not one necessarily shared by minority groups. As U.S. Forest Chief Dale Bosworth noted in a speech early this year, "the face of conservation has traditionally been rural and white. "

For blacks descended from sharecroppers, camping might have associations of living on a farm and of poverty, Bryant said. Hispanics whose families are new to this country might have the same sort of negative associations with roughing it, Spears said.

While reasons for avoiding the woods can be different for different groups, there might be a common feeling among minorities that it is unwelcome territory.

"It's all couched under a larger fear that maybe with some of these public lands, you're going to run into white supremacists in camouflage clothing running seven-man assault drills or something like that," Spears said.

Whatever the reasons, advocates for public land use are concerned. Aside from wanting to make sure the widest range of people take advantage of natural areas, the Adirondack Mountain Club's Woodworth noted that minorities represent a growing constituency who will be weighing in on land use policies.

Woodworth's group has a number of programs aimed at introducing minority children to the outdoors. The Breakfree program run by its mid-Hudson Valley chapter takes high school students in Poughkeepsie out to climb mountains, camp overnight or paddle up the Hudson.

"We have to make the effort to say `You're welcome here,'" said Breakfree's Tom Lint.

Similarly, the National Wildlife Federation's Earth Tomorrow program targets inner-city kids in Houston, Atlanta, Detroit, Seattle and elsewhere. The kids fish, hike or listen to talks on endangered species.

Federal officials also have been trying to make parks more hospitable to a wider array of people.

Improvements to the Applewhite Picnic Area in California's San Bernardino National Forest include bilingual signs, hosts that speak Spanish and larger picnic tables to accommodate bigger groups. Now, about 80 percent of people using Applewhite are Hispanics, an increase from years past, said Deborah Chavez of the service's Pacific Southwest Research Station.

Chavez notes that it can be difficult to promote park areas to Hispanics since they tend to respond more to word of mouth than advertisements and brochures.

That's why so many advocates focus on outreach: once people start showing up in wilderness areas, the problem often takes care of itself.

"Once you get people to the Grand Canyon," Spears said, "you don't have to do a lot of talking."

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On the Net:

Environmental Justice Initiative: <http://ejl.snre.umich.edu/index.html>

The Outdoor Industry Association: <http://www.outdoorindustry.org/>

U.S. Forest Service: <http://www.fs.fed.us/>

Adirondack Mountain Club: <http://www.adk.org/>

National Wildlife Federation: <http://www.nwf.org/>