

## What Census 2010 Reveals about Population and Housing in New Orleans and the Metro Area

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New Orleans is now a smaller city, having lost 118,526 African Americans and 24,101 whites since 2000, while gaining 3,225 Hispanics. Indeed the entire seven-parish metro area is more diverse with an influx of fully 33,500 Hispanics, and 3,000 additional Asian residents. Housing units have decreased in the most heavily flood-damaged parishes and increased in outlying parishes, while vacant housing units have increased in every parish across the metro. Children under 18 were among the least likely to return after Katrina, representing only 23 percent of the total metro population, down from 27 percent in 2000.

The once-every-ten-year head count conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau determines political representation, drives the distribution of billions of dollars in federal funds to states and localities, and helps decisionmakers and planners understand the distribution of population across cities and suburbs. The results of the decennial census are considered the gold standard of demographic data. They provide critical knowledge about the population of New Orleans and the metro area, five years after the massive displacement caused by Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent levee failures. (See the Appendix for complete statistics by parish and metro area)

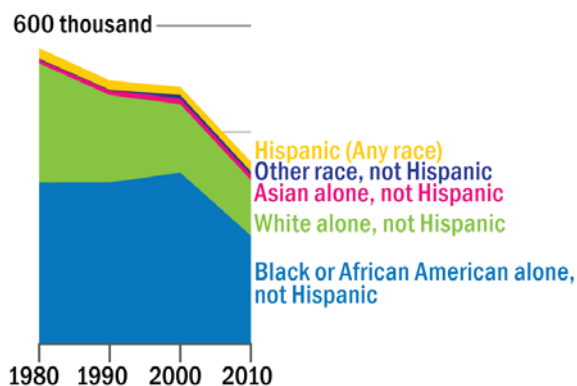
### New Orleans is now a smaller city with a growing number of Latinos.

The population of New Orleans was counted at 343,829 in April 2010 – indicating that New Orleans lost 140,845 residents since 2000. This suggests that the residential and economic destruction caused by the levee failures resulted in more than twice as much population loss as the oil bust of the 1980s when the city lost 60,577 residents.

All told, the city has lost 283,696 residents since its peak in 1960 when the Census Bureau counted 627,525 New Orleans residents.

#### Population by race/ethnicity

Orleans Parish



The Census 2010 results suggest that African Americans were the least likely to return after Katrina, followed by whites. Asians were the most likely to return, and the city has experienced an influx of Hispanics post-Katrina. There are now 118,526 fewer African Americans living in New Orleans compared to 2000, but there are also 24,101 fewer whites. Meanwhile, the number of Asians fell by only 1,019, and the number of Hispanics grew by 3,225.

Nonetheless, African Americans still represent the majority of the city's population at 60 percent, and the majority of the voting age population at 56 percent of all adults 18 years and older.

Having fallen from 67 to 60 percent of the city's population, the share of African Americans in New Orleans is now more similar to what it was back in 1990. However, as compared to 1990, the share of the white population is somewhat smaller while the shares of Asians, Hispanics and "others" (including American Indians and multi-racial individuals) are larger.

**Share of population by race/ethnicity**  
Orleans Parish



**New Orleans now has fewer housing units but more vacant homes among those that remain.**

The 2010 Census counted 189,896 housing units in the city of New Orleans, 25,195 fewer than in 2000, and 36,556 fewer than in 1980. However, it is likely that many of these housing units are uninhabitable. To be counted as a housing unit, the Census Bureau requires only that a residential building not be open to the elements. Many New Orleans houses that were destroyed by the massive flooding of 2005 are now boarded up (and, thus, *not* open to the elements) but are not habitable. Many of these boarded up and uninhabitable housing units were likely counted among the 47,738 vacant units in New Orleans in 2010.

**The New Orleans seven-parish metro area is now roughly the same size it was in 1970, but with population shifts to parishes upriver and north of the lake.**

The 2010 Census counted 1,167,764 residents in the New Orleans metropolitan area including Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, and St. Tammany parishes. This is down 148,746 from 2000 when the Census Bureau counted 1,316,510 residents across the metro.

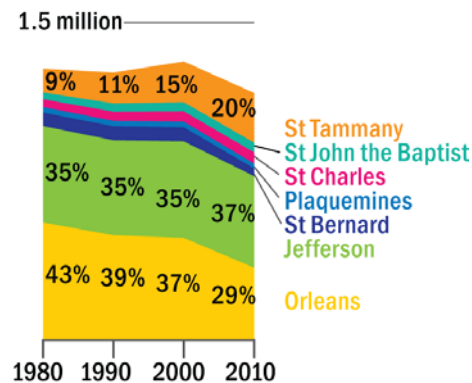
Prior to Katrina, population growth across the New Orleans metro area was sluggish at best. In the 1980s, the metro lost one percent of its population as the oil bust hammered the region's economy. And from 1990 to 2000, the metro area population grew by only four percent while the entire country grew 13 percent. Over the most recent decade, the metro population shrank 11 percent, such that the metro area now has roughly the same population it had back in 1970.

This decade's population losses were concentrated in those parishes hardest hit by Katrina and the multiple levee failures – specifically Orleans, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, and Jefferson parishes. Orleans lost 29% of its population, St. Bernard lost 47%, Plaquemines lost 14% and Jefferson lost 5%. Meanwhile, the more northern and western parishes of St. Tammany, St. Charles, and St. John experienced population gains of 22%, 10% and 1% respectively.

In 2000, Jefferson and Orleans were the most populous parishes in the metro accounting for 35 and 37 percent respectively of the total metro area population. Today, despite its loss in population, Jefferson accounts for the largest share of the metro's population at 37 percent, followed by Orleans at 29 percent, and St. Tammany at 20 percent. St. Charles, St. John, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines each account for five percent or less of the total metro population.

### Population by parish for the New Orleans Metro

plus share of population located in St. Tammany, Jefferson, and Orleans



### Children may have been the least likely demographic group to return following Katrina.

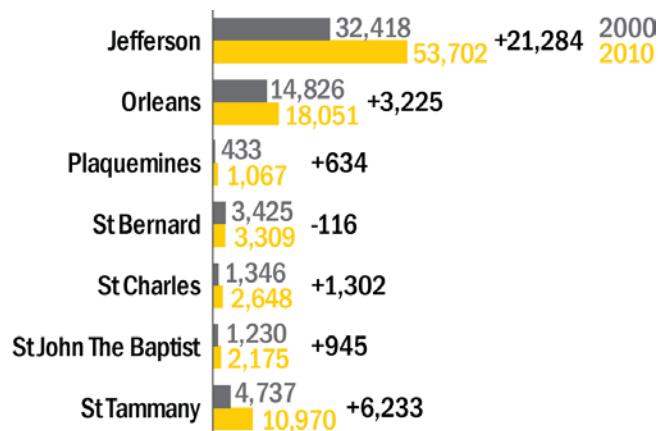
Children represent a disproportionately smaller share of the metro area population. By 2010 the share of the metro's population that was under 18 years old was only 23 percent – down from 27 percent in 2000. And this trend is consistent across all metro area parishes except St. Bernard.

However, it is important to recognize that children were a declining share of the metro area's population before Katrina – falling from 31 percent in 1980 to 27 percent by 2000, and to 23 percent by 2010. Thus, the loss of children post-Katrina may be, to some extent, the acceleration of a trend that was already observable before the massive displacement.

## Most parishes in the metro area have experienced an influx of Hispanic residents.

Since 2000, the number of Hispanics has grown in six of the seven metro area parishes. Hispanics now represent eight percent of the total metro area population, or 91,922 residents. This is a notable departure from the past, when Hispanics represented a consistent four percent of the metro area population from 1980 to 2000. Jefferson Parish experienced the largest influx of Hispanics. The 2010 Census counted 53,702 Hispanics in Jefferson Parish - up from 32,418 in 2000.

**Hispanic population**  
by parish



## Every parish in the New Orleans metro area is now more diverse.

The growth in Hispanics helped to partially offset the loss of other racial/ethnic groups in Jefferson, Orleans, and Plaquemines.

Jefferson Parish, which was 80 percent white in 1980, has become an increasingly diverse community despite a relative stable total population over the previous three decades. The share of white residents has declined to 56 percent while Asians, Hispanics and African Americans now make up four percent, 12 percent, and 26 percent respectively of the Jefferson population.

St. Bernard Parish, which was 87 percent white in 1980, experienced a dramatic displacement of its white population this past decade such that the population is now 69 percent white, 17 percent African American, nine percent Hispanic, and three percent "other." (Other races include American Indians and multi-racial individuals.)

Plaquemines experienced significant losses of both white and African American residents. Today that parish is 68 percent white, 20 percent African American, five percent Hispanic, four percent "other," and three percent Asian.

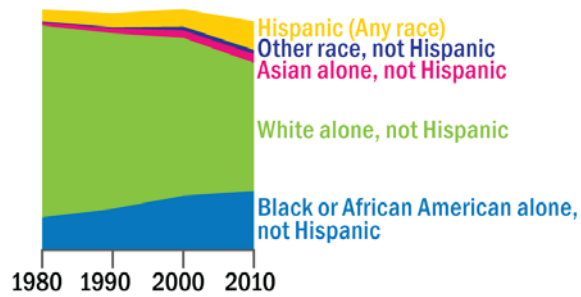
St. Charles' growth is due to an influx of nearly 1,900 African Americans, 1,300 Hispanics, and 1,000 whites. St. Charles is now 66 percent white, 26 percent African American, and five percent Hispanic.

St. Tammany Parish's notable growth has been due to an influx of 25,256 white residents, and 7,642 African American residents, as well as 6,233 Hispanic residents. St. Tammany is now 81 percent white, 11 percent African American, and five percent Hispanic.

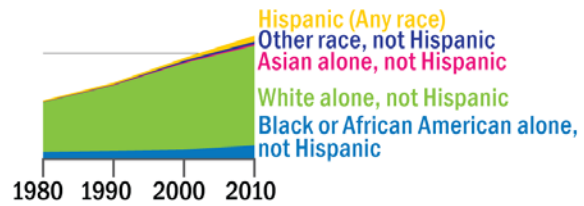
St. John the Baptist's growth is due primarily to an influx of African American residents over the last decade. That parish is now 40 percent white, 53 percent African American, and five percent Hispanic.

**Population by race/ethnicity**  
by parish for the New Orleans Metro

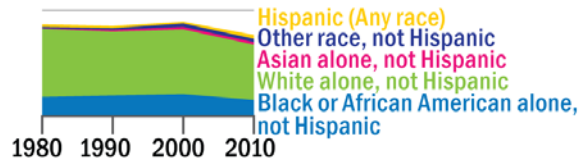
**Jefferson**  
600 thousand



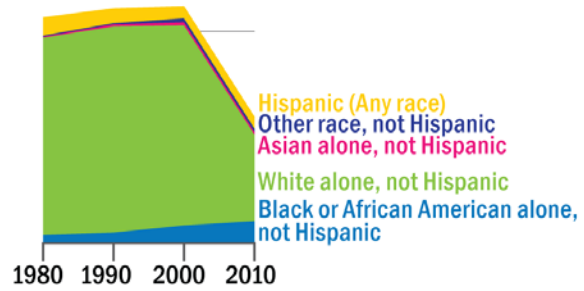
**St. Tammany**  
600 thousand



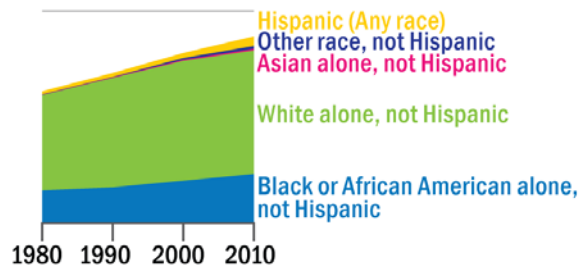
**Plaquemines**  
90 thousand



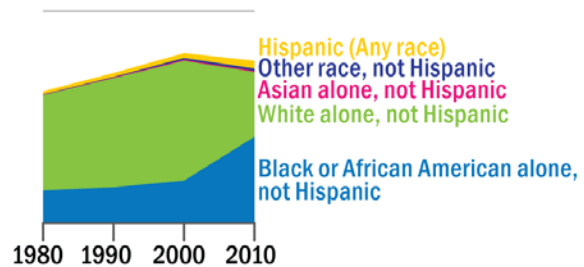
**St. Bernard**  
90 thousand



**St. Charles**  
90 thousand



**St. John the Baptist**  
90 thousand



## While the most heavily damaged parishes lost housing units, less damaged parishes gained housing units. At the same time vacancies increased across all parishes in the metro.

The 2010 Census counted 16,794 housing units in St. Bernard Parish, 9,996 fewer than in 2000. In Plaquemines, the number of housing units decreased, but by only 885. This is a reversal of the trends from 1990 to 2000 when the number of housing units grew in both of these parishes. At the same time vacancies increased in these parishes, likely an indicator of abandoned flood-damaged housing.

Meanwhile the number of housing units has grown since 2000 in St. Tammany by 20,014, in St. Charles by 2,466, and in St. John by 1,978. Simultaneously, the number of vacant housing units also grew in these parishes, suggesting possible overbuilding in these exurban parts of the metro. Vacant housing units increased in St. Tammany by 1,746, in St. Charles by 331, and in St. John by 296 from 2000 to 2010.

## Known limitations of the decennial census

Studies of the accuracy of the Census 2010 count will not be undertaken until more Census 2010 data has been released. However, studies of earlier decennial censuses provide guidance as to likely limitations of the Census 2010. A state-specific study of the Census 2000 undercount conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers concluded that Louisiana's population in 2000 was undercounted by 60,698 or 1.34 percent.<sup>1</sup> Studies of both the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses concluded that American Indians, Asians, African Americans, Hispanics, and children were most likely to be undercounted.<sup>2</sup> A study of the 2000 decennial census concluded that some people were double counted, including college students living away from home, and families counted at both their main and vacation homes. These people were more likely to be white and higher-income.<sup>3</sup>

Race and Hispanic origin questions have changed each decennial census, and are not perfectly comparable. In particular, individuals could select only one race for the 1980 and 1990 censuses whereas individuals could select multiple races in 2000 and 2010. The 2000 and 2010 counts of whites, African Americans, and Asians in the analysis above include only individuals who selected one race.

Suggested Citation: *GNO Community Data Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census*

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<sup>1</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers, "Effect of Census 2000 Undercount on Federal Funding to States and Selected Counties, 2002-2012," August 7, 2001, accessed online at [http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cmb/cmbp/reports/080601.pricewaterhouse/state\\_la.asp.htm](http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/cmb/cmbp/reports/080601.pricewaterhouse/state_la.asp.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Edmonston, Barry. "The Undercount in the 2000 Census," The Annie E. Casey Foundation and The Population Reference Bureau, May 2002, accessed online at <http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/undercount%20in%202000%20census.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ericksen, Eugene. "An Evaluation of the 2000 Census and Census Bureau Efforts to Measure the Gross and Net Rates of Undercount," 2001. *North Dakota Law Review*, 77 (753).