

SEARCH
DETNEWS.COM

GO

Monday, January 14, 2002

The Detroit News

► E-mail this story

► Comment on this story

► Return to Metro

► Previous story ► Next story

detnews.com

SITE INDEX

Homepage
Search
CyberSurveys
► News Talk
► Autos Talk
► Sports Talk
► Lions Talk
► Pistons Talk
► Wings Talk
► Tiger Talk
► Tech Talk
Horoscope
Hot Sites
Lottery
Weather
Staff

NEWS

Autos
► Insider
► Auto Show
► Consumer
► Joyrides
Business
Careers
Census
Columnists
Commuting
Detroit History
Editorials
Health
Metro / State
► Livingston
► Macomb
► Oakland
► Wayne
► On Detroit
Nation / World
Obituaries
► Death Notices
Politics / Govt.
Real Estate
Religion
Schools
Special Reports
Technology

SPORTS

Sports Home
► Lions/NFL
► Red Wings/NHL
► Pistons/NBA
► Shock/WNBA
► Tigers/Baseball
► MSU
► U-M
More Columns

When you **subscribe** or **renew** your subscription to

The Detroit News



The Cost of Segregation || Part I: Racial Attitudes



Donna Terek / The Detroit News

Candice Ross and other congregants gather at the Greater Miller Memorial Church in Warren, a city that has remained more than 90 percent white even though its black population more than doubled in the 1990s.

What the Numbers Show

Racial divide widest in U.S.

Fewer Metro Detroit neighborhoods are integrated than 20 years ago

By Gordon Trowbridge / The Detroit News

By any definition, the gulf between black and white is as wide or wider in Metro Detroit neighborhoods than any metropolitan region in the nation.

The evidence abounds:

* Separate analyses of 2000 census data by The Detroit News, the Brookings Institution and the State University of New York at Albany all found Metro Detroit has the highest level of neighborhood segregation between blacks and whites in the nation.

* While there are some signs of improved integration, the number of



[more Colleges](#)
[Golf Guide](#)
[High Schools](#)
[Motor Sports](#)
[Outdoors](#)
[More Sports](#)
[Scoreboards](#)

ENTERTAINMENT

[Entertainment](#)
[Casino Guide](#)
[Movie Finder](#)
[TV Listings](#)
[Crossword](#)

HOMESTYLE

[Homestyle home](#)
[Decorating](#)
[Food](#)
[Gardening](#)
[Home Improvement](#)
[Home Life](#)
[Home Tech](#)
[Wine Report](#)

PHOTOS

[Sports](#)
[Red Wings](#)
[Lions](#)
[Autos](#)
[Joyrides](#)
[News](#)
[History](#)

Copyright 2002
The Detroit News.

Use of this site
indicates your
agreement to the
[Terms of Service](#)
(updated
08/09/2001).

improved integration, the number of neighborhoods in Metro Detroit that meet even a minimal definition of integration has fallen since 1980.

* Livonia, 96 percent white, is the whitest big city in the nation, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, with a higher percentage of whites than cities like Manchester, N.H., and Provo, Utah. Warren, 91 percent white, ranks ninth. And Detroit, at 82 percent black, is the nation's second blackest city.

* Almost nine out of every 10 black residents in Metro Detroit lives in one of five cities: Detroit, Southfield, Pontiac, Inkster or Highland Park. The remaining 131,000 African Americans are sprinkled in communities with a combined population of more than 3.3 million.

"Detroit is on the outer edge in terms of the extent of segregation," said John Logan, who led the SUNY-Albany study.

The region is similar to other highly segregated areas, such as Milwaukee, Chicago, New York and Gary, Ind. The fairly small statistical differences between this region and others may not be readily visible to residents. But even most of those areas are integrating faster than Metro Detroit.

From the strength of our economy to the health of our children to our ability to cope in a new century brimming with ethnic diversity, segregation carries costs, researchers say.

Fewer integrated areas

Metro Detroit's rank as the nation's most segregated region comes from calculations by The News, and academic researchers, of something called the index of dissimilarity, the most common measure of the neighborhood segregation of racial groups. It

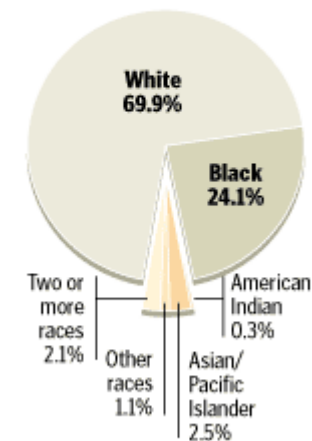


Donna Terek / The Detroit News

Althea Doolittle, Lee Anne Millinger and Aree Coons rehearse with the Chancel Choir of the First Presbyterian Church in Pontiac, one of four suburban cities that have seen their black populations steadily increase.

Face of Metro Detroit

The racial makeup of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Livingston counties:



Source: 2000 census
The Detroit News

CyberSurvey

Does segregation hurt whites?

Do you believe segregation hurts whites?
Tell us why or why not.

► [Check Survey Results](#)

CyberSurvey

Does segregation hurt blacks

Do you believe segregation hurts blacks?
Please explain your view.

► [Check Survey Results](#)

[Comment on this story](#)
[Send this story to a friend](#)

segregation of racial groups. It measures how closely

[▶Get Home Delivery](#)

neighborhoods in a region reflect the overall region's population breakdowns as a whole.

But there are other ways to examine how blacks and whites live, and by some of those measures, the picture is becoming more extreme. For instance, there are fewer racially balanced neighborhoods now than in 1980.

To find out how many people live in integrated neighborhoods, The News looked at census data for more than 1,200 neighborhoods from 1980 to 2000. A neighborhood was considered integrated if it was more than 12 percent black -- about half the metro area's black percentage -- but not more than half black. The idea: find parts of the metro area with racial breakdowns even roughly close to the six-county region as a whole. In 1980, there were 94 such neighborhoods in Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, St. Clair and Lapeer counties. Last year, there were only 74.

And few neighborhoods remain integrated over time. Only 34 neighborhoods met the definition in both 1990 and 2000.

Reynolds Farley, a researcher at the University of Michigan, said the pattern demonstrates what researchers have long observed: Few Metro Detroit neighborhoods gain a substantial number of blacks without sparking whites to leave. Neighborhoods may be racially mixed for a few years, but they rapidly become majority-black.

Southfield shows shift

The process is now most vivid in Southfield, where a number of neighborhoods shifted rapidly in the 1990s. The fastest change came in a roughly T-shaped area along Telegraph and 10 Mile roads. In 1990, neighborhoods in that area averaged 75 percent white and 22 percent black; by 2000, they were 38 percent white and 53 percent black.

"Generally, whites are reluctant to move into areas where there's a substantial black population, or that are viewed by whites as likely to become predominantly black," said Farley, who has done extensive polling and other research on the causes behind those patterns.

That means few whites have moved into predominantly black neighborhoods, especially in Detroit, while whites continue to leave neighborhoods that are becoming more black.

"The neighborhood has changed dramatically," said Gloria Little, one of the few whites remaining in a Southfield neighborhood that has turned from mostly white to mostly black over the last two decades. She said she's seen many neighbors move out after their children have grown, often to be replaced by young African-American couples.

University of Pennsylvania historian Thomas Sugrue, who has studied the flight of whites from Detroit following World War II, said the nation's suburbs are just following the path set by central cities in earlier decades.

"You're breaching the boundaries, but you still find segregation patterns based on race," Sugrue said. "Often you hear arguments that segregation is based on class terms, but you find the same patterns in well-to-do suburbs like Southfield."

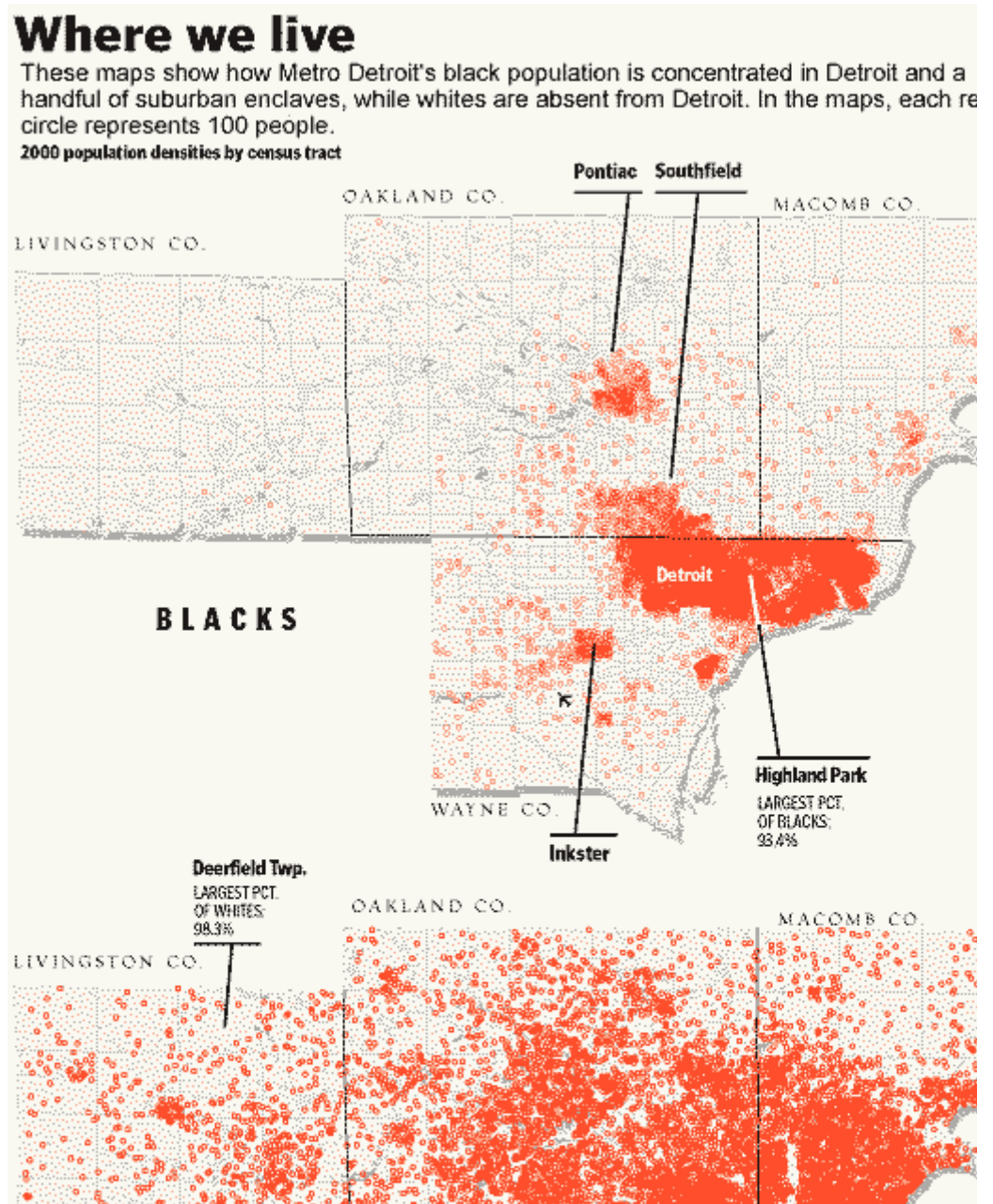
Dense concentration

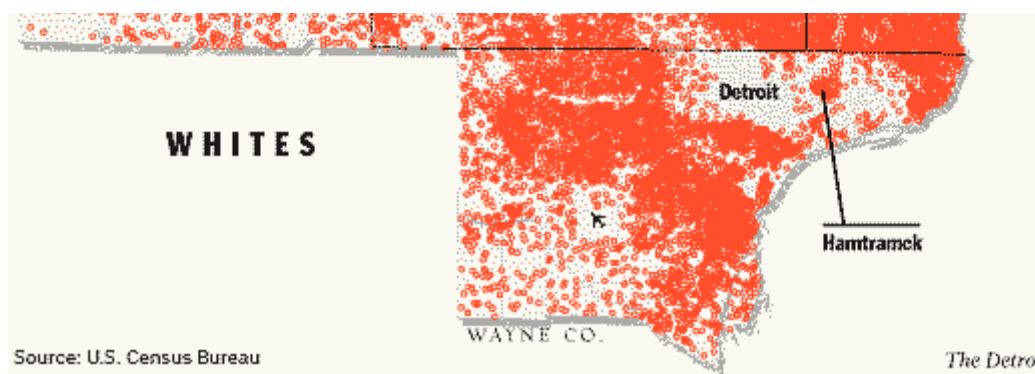
One constant indicator of the region's black-white divide stands out even among other highly segregated regions: the concentration of the area's black population within the city of Detroit and a handful of much smaller pockets.

Of the 185 cities and townships in the six-county Detroit region, 115 are more than 95 percent white.

Meanwhile, three out of four area blacks live in Detroit -- a concentration much higher than any other large metro area, even in places with largely black central cities. By contrast, 22 percent of the Atlanta region's blacks live in the city of Atlanta; in the Baltimore area, it's 60 percent; it's 27 percent in Washington, D.C.

While the number of blacks in Detroit's suburbs has grown steadily, to more than 240,000 in 2000, suburban blacks are also highly concentrated: 44 percent of them are in just four cities, Southfield, Pontiac, Inkster and Oak Park.





Pioneers bring change

The small change that has occurred in Detroit's segregation patterns appears to have come from a small but growing number of blacks willing and able to live in previously all-white areas.

Parts of Metro Detroit that once were closed to blacks are now open, at least to a few. In 1980, there were 138 neighborhoods in the six-county metro area with no blacks.

By 2000, there was just one. Though Warren has remained more than 90 percent white, its black population more than doubled in the 1990s.

"Black suburbanization is a trend we're seeing across the country," said Jacob Vigdor of Duke University, who co-wrote the Brookings Institution's report on segregation data from the 2000 census. "To a large extent, the decreases in segregation we've seen since the 1990s are related very closely to blacks moving into neighborhoods that had been almost entirely white."

In Metro Detroit, the number of blacks living in nearly all-white areas doubled from 1980 to 2000, to more than 20,000. Farley said that could represent a significant switch in attitudes among blacks, who, in his and other surveys, have in the past shown little desire to be black pioneers in all-white areas.

"There are an increasing number of blacks who are willing to pioneer and don't find great hostility when they move in," Farley said. "If we were talking about northwest Detroit in the 1950s, there would have been great hostility. So that's a beneficial change."

Harvard historian Stephan Thernstrom, co-author of *America in Black and White*, a controversial 1997 book on race relations, said such numbers are good news that liberal social scientists often ignore.

"There are very few whites in states with significant black populations who do not have blacks living somewhere nearby," Thernstrom said. "That's very good news, and it runs counter to a lot of alarmist talk that takes place."

[► Comment on this story](#)

[► Previous story](#) [► Back to index](#) [► Next story](#)