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DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN SMALL CITIES, 1990 to 2000

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Census 2000 figures reveal broad demographic changes in America's cities during the 1990 to 2000 period. Although considerable analysis has been devoted to trends in the largest cities, there has been less attention to what is happening in smaller cities, which comprise 97% of cities nationwide. Data for 100 small cities (population less than 50,000) are drawn from the 1990 and 2000 Census Summary Files. The analysis reveals that growth is occurring faster in these smaller cities than in any of their larger cohorts. Other findings are that small-city growth is fastest in the West and Midwest, is occurring more rapidly in small cities within metropolitan areas, and is spurred by increases in Hispanic, Black, and Asian populations.

Keywords: small cities; demography; population growth

The word *city* generally invokes images of places such as New York, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco. Mention *smaller cities* and some people's thoughts will likely turn to such locales as Boise, Idaho; Allentown, Pennsylvania; Springfield, Illinois; or Amarillo, Texas. But none of these cities, from Boston to Boise, renders a picture of American cities as a whole. The reason: All of them have populations of 100,000 or greater, placing them in the top 3% of cities nationwide by population size.

The overwhelming majority of cities in the United States (97%) have fewer than 50,000 residents. These are places such as Lewiston, Maine; Watertown, South Dakota; Jacksonville, Arkansas; and Tualatin, Oregon.¹

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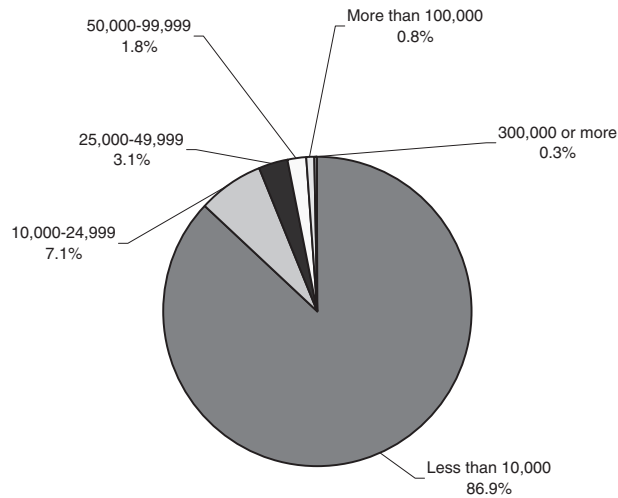


Figure 1: Municipal Governments in the United States, by Population Size²
 SOURCE: 1997 *Census of Governments* ([1999]).

Drop the population threshold to 10,000 or fewer, and the category still includes a large majority of U.S. cities (87%)—from Montpelier, Vermont, and Buffalo, Minnesota, to Whiteville, North Carolina, and Cody, Wyoming. In addition, more than two in five (43%) Americans live in cities with fewer than 50,000 in population.

Although researchers and the media often study large cities to identify trends in American society, smaller cities are more common nationwide. Understanding the demographic changes underway in these cities is necessary to understanding the changing municipal landscape of the United States today.

CITIES AND THE 2000 CENSUS

The 2000 decennial U.S. Census sparked a flurry of studies on demographic change in cities and metropolitan areas. Most of the research and analysis, however, has centered on larger cities, offering little perspective on what was happening in the smaller places that characterize the vast majority of American cities.

Among the most comprehensive of these analyses are two reports from the Brookings Institution's Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy: *Cen-*

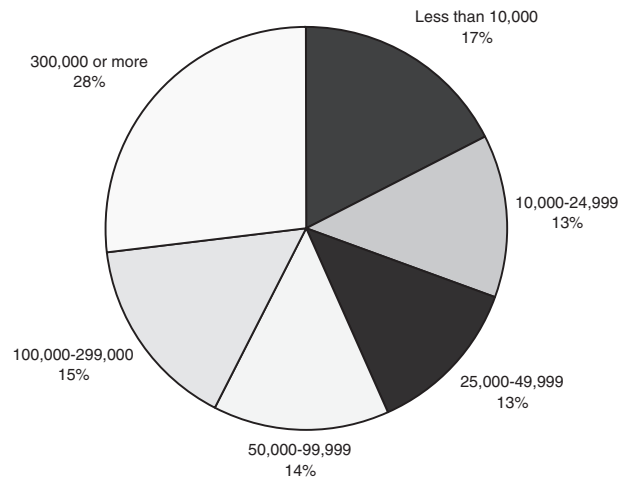


Figure 2: Population of Municipal Governments in the United States, by Population Size
SOURCE: 1997 Census of Governments ([1999]).

sus 2000: The Changing Face of Cities (Berube, 2002), and *Racial Change in the Nation's Largest Cities: Evidence from the 2000 Census* (Brookings Institution, 2001).³ Looking at demographic changes in large cities (those with 1990 populations of 175,000–7 million), these reports find the following:

- During the 1990s, large cities as a group grew by 9.1%.
- Large cities in the Southwest and West grew rapidly; those in the Northeast did not grow.
- Almost half of the largest cities no longer have majority White populations.
- Increases in Hispanic populations have driven much of the growth in larger cities.

Another Brookings report, *Demographic Change in Medium-Sized Cities: Evidence from the 2000 Census* (Vey and Forman, 2002), focuses on trends in cities with 1990 populations of 98,000–175,000.⁴ Among its findings:

- Medium-sized cities grew faster (12.9%) in population than the largest cities.
- Although growth was strong among medium-sized cities, there were significant regional disparities, with the fastest growing cities found largely in the South and West.
- The growth of medium-sized cities was driven largely by an influx of new Asian and Hispanic residents.

To date, the only reporting on demographic change in small cities during the 1990 to 2000 period is from the U.S. Census Bureau. The census reporting, however, looks only at aggregate figures as part of an overall analysis, with no systematic or cross-sectional assessment of the data for small cities.

What does the census reporting tell us? It shows that cities with populations between 10,000 and 50,000 were the fastest growing cities in the country during the 1990s (Rain et al., 1999). Of the 892 cities experiencing double-digit growth during the 1990s, 691 (77.5%) had 1998 populations of between 10,000 and 50,000. Information on small cities is not broken down by region, growth rate, metropolitan location, race/ethnicity, or other factors, and it does not include cities with fewer than 10,000 in population.

The census reporting, of course, does shed light on *overall* population growth and demographic changes during the 1990s, regardless of jurisdiction. The headline finding: a 13.2% increase in U.S. population, with growth varying geographically (Perry and Mackun, 2001). What is more, we see from the census that some regions experienced large population increases (the West), whereas others experienced little growth or even decline (the Northeast). Glaeser and Shapiro (2001) take some of these data a step further, attributing the population decline in northeastern cities to that fact that Americans are moving away from rustbelt manufacturing centers. Simmons and Lang (2001) and Lang (2003), however, although acknowledging that industrial cities have experienced substantial population loss, contend that these cities may be rebounding.

Looking at race trends, Frey (2001) uses the census data to show that the 1990s was the first decade during which the Northeast, Midwest, and West experienced a net outmigration of Blacks; 58% of the nation's total Black population gain during the 1990s occurred in the South. In addition, the census reports that the Hispanic population increased by 57.9% during the 1990s (Guzman, 2001). The Hispanic share of the population grew by 2.4% in the Northeast, 2% in the Midwest, 3.7% in the South, and 5.2% in the West.

As the previous analyses demonstrate, researchers have conducted a fair amount of analysis on demographic changes in larger cities, as well as trends for the U.S. population as a whole, during the 1990s. Comparable investigations of what has happened in small cities are less prevalent.

Why is it important to examine demographic change in small cities? By *not* looking at this sector of the municipal landscape, researchers are missing an important part of the story on how American cities are growing and changing throughout time. For example, most cities with populations of less than 50,000 are either suburbs or on the suburban-rural fringe. Understanding how change is occurring in these cities, and comparing those changes across city sizes, can provide a valuable perspective on overall population trends in

America's metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas—particularly at a time when research shows that larger metropolitan areas are pushing out and expanding to include smaller communities.

Another compelling reason for taking a closer look at demographic trends in small cities is that these cities have the potential to grow and become what Lang has termed “boomburbs” such as Mesa, Arizona, and Garland, Texas (Lang and Simmons, 2001; Lang, 2003). *Boomburbs* are rapidly growing suburbs that have maintained their suburban character despite double-digit population growth rates in recent decades. As Lang argues, demographic change in small cities can potentially restructure the dynamics of entire metropolitan areas.

DEFINITIONS AND METHODS

Building on previous work, particularly the Brookings Institution's reports on large and medium-sized cities, we conducted an analysis of demographic changes in small cities for 1990 to 2000, with *small cities* defined as municipal incorporations having populations of fewer than 50,000, as specified in the 1990 decennial census.⁵ Data for this analysis are drawn from the 2000 and 1990 Census.⁶

This research is based on a sample of 100 small cities that was randomly drawn from all cities with populations of fewer than 50,000 (18,803), using the National League of Cities' database of U.S. cities. The NLC database of cities includes all of the municipalities in the United States (approximately 19,300 cities at last count).⁷

For the analysis conducted here, cities in the sample are disaggregated by population size, region, metropolitan location, and population growth rate.⁸

As in the Brookings research, inclusion in this study was based on cities' 1990 populations (as opposed to 2000). The 1990 populations of the 100 cities ranged from 1,594 (Manahawkin, New Jersey) to 49,380 (East Providence, Rhode Island). Thirty-nine cities in the sample had 1990 populations of fewer than 10,000, 36 had between 10,000 and 25,000 residents, and 25 had 25,000 to 50,000 residents. The total population of the sample cities in 1990 was 1.6 million, growing to 1.9 million by 2000.

Regional comparisons among the cities are based on the U.S. Census Bureau categories—Northeast, Midwest, South, and West.⁹ Thirty cities in the sample are located in the Midwest, 32 in the South, 25 in the West, and 13 in the Northeast. Compared to the universe of small cities, the sample slightly underrepresents small cities in the Midwest region and slightly over-

TABLE 1: Small Cities by Population, 1990^a

<i>< 10,000</i>	<i>10,000 to 24,999</i>	<i>25,000 to 49,999</i>
Kodiak, AK	Jasper, AL	Jacksonville, AR ^a
Clanton, AL	Prattville, AL ^a	Beverly Hills, CA ^a
Prescott, AR	Arcata, CA	Brea, CA ^a
Queen Creek, AZ ^a	La Quinta, CA ^a	Culver City, CA ^a
Indian Wells, CA ^a	Rocklin, CA ^a	Grand Junction, CO
Estes Park, CO ^a	Broomfield, CO ^a	Norwich, CT ^a
Steamboat Springs, CO	Dublin, GA	North Lauderdale, FL ^a
Lewes, DE ^a	Coralville, IA ^a	Ocala, FL ^a
Dade City, FL ^a	Bradley, IL ^a	East Point, GA ^a
Fairburn, GA ^a	Park Forest, IL ^a	Greenwood, IN ^a
Rock Falls, IL	Garden City, KS	West Lafayette, IN ^a
Swansea, IL ^a	Ottawa, KS	Shawnee, KS ^a
Columbia City, IN ^a	Baker, LA ^a	Lewiston, ME
Abilene, KS	Bastrop, LA	Apple Valley, MN ^a
Norton Shores, MI ^a	Cumberland, MD ^a	Blaine, MN ^a
Buffalo, MN ^a	Greenbelt, MD ^a	Kirkwood, MO
Wayzata, MN ^a	Hyattsville, MD ^a	Millville, NJ ^a
West Plains, MO	Laurel, MD ^a	Bartlesville, OK
Port Gibson, MS	Augusta, ME	Muskogee, OK
Knightdale, NC ^a	Monroe, MI ^a	Easton, PA ^a
Whiteville, NC	Saline, MI ^a	Wilkes-Barre, PA ^a
Beulah, ND	Berkeley, MO ^a	East Providence, RI ^a
Manahawkin, NJ ^a	Starkville, MS	North Providence, RI ^a
West Wendover, NV	Henderson, NC	Rock Hill, SC ^a
Carlisle, OH ^a	Artesia, NM	Burlington, VT ^a
Trotwood, OH ^a	West Carrollton, OH ^a	
Dallas, OR ^a	Milwaukie, OR ^a	
Tillamook, OR	Tualatin, OR ^a	
Monessen, PA ^a	Chambersburg, PA	
Hartsville, SC	Watertown, SD	
Custer, SD	Farragut, TN ^a	
North Sioux, SD	Maryville, TN ^a	
Addison, TX ^a	Coppell, TX ^a	
Park City, UT	Rockwall, TX ^a	
Montpelier, VT	Marysville, WA ^a	
Brewster, WA	Port Angeles, WA	
North Bend, WA ^a		
Cody, WY		
Douglas, WY		

a. Indicates that these cities are located in "metropolitan" areas.

represents small cities in the West region. As a result, all conclusions offered in regard to regional findings should take this sample bias into account.

Cities are defined in the study as either metropolitan or nonmetropolitan depending on their location within or outside of a metropolitan statistical area (MSA), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1990. In 1990, 62 cities in the sample were located in metropolitan areas, and 38 cities were located outside of metropolitan areas.¹⁰

The study categorizes cities according to their population growth rates from 1990 to 2000 as follows: rapid-growth (> 20%), strong-growth (10-20%), moderate-growth (2-10%), no-growth (-2% to 2%), and declining cities (< -2%). Thirty-six cities in the sample are rapid-growth cities, 11 are strong-growth cities, 22 are moderate-growth cities, 15 are no-growth cities, and 16 are declining cities. This categorization is based on the Brookings methodology and is used so that growth comparisons can be made among cities of different sizes in terms of population.

SMALL CITIES IN THE 1990s

POPULATION GROWTH

Overall, the population of small cities grew substantially during the 1990s, increasing at a rate of 18.5%, compared to 12.9% for medium-sized cities and 9.1% for large cities. Small cities also were more likely than their medium-sized and large counterparts to experience rapid growth: 36% of small cities experienced population growth of more than 20%, compared to 28% of medium-sized cities and 18% of large cities.

It is important to note that increases in population in small cities may appear larger because the total population (the denominator) is smaller. Nevertheless, broadening the analysis over the growth categories reveals that small cities outpaced medium-sized and large cities in both the rapid-growth and strong-growth categories. Nearly half of small cities (47%) grew at rapid or strong rates during the 1990s, compared to 51% of medium-sized cities and 41% of large cities.

Small cities across population categories grew at a generally fast rate during the 1990s.¹¹ Cities with fewer than 10,000 in population, however, grew faster than those with populations between 10,000 and 50,000. Cities with populations of fewer than 10,000 also were most likely to experience rapid or strong growth (54%), compared to cities with populations between 10,000 and 25,000 (47%) and those with populations between 25,000 and 50,000 (36%).

In addition, the larger small cities (those with populations between 25,000 and 50,000) were far more likely to have declined in population or experi-

TABLE 2: Small Cities by Population Growth, 1990-2000

<i>Declining Cities (< -2% Growth)</i>	<i>No-Growth Cities (-2 to 2% Growth)</i>	<i>Moderate-Growth Cities (2 to 10% Growth)</i>	<i>Strong-Growth Cities (10 to 20% Growth)</i>	<i>Rapid-Growth Cities (> 20% Growth)</i>
Norwich, CT	Kodiak, AK	Jasper, AL	East Point, GA	Prattville, AL
Dublin, GA	Clanton, AL	Jacksonville, AR	Bradley, IL	Queen Creek, AZ
Park Forest, IL	Prescott, AR	Arcata, CA	West Lafayette, IN	Indian Wells, CA
Bastrop, LA	Culver City, CA	Beverly Hills, CA	Garden City, KS	La Quinta, CA
Cumberland, MD	Rock Falls, IL	Brea, CA	Ottawa, KS	Rocklin, CA
Augusta, ME	Greenbelt, MD	Dade City, FL	Blaine, MN	West Wendover, NV
Lewiston, ME	Kirkwood, MO	Ocala, FL	Starkville, MS	Trotwood, OH
Monroe, MI	Port Gibson, MS	Abilene, KS	Rock Hill, SC	Dallas, OR
Berkeley, MO	Whiteville, NC	Baker, LA	North Sioux, SD	Tualatin, OR
Beulah, ND	Artesia, NM	Hyattsville, MD	Watertown, SD	Farragut, TN
West Carrollton, OH	Bartlesville, OK	Laurel, MD	Cody, WY	Maryville, TN
Monessen, PA	Muskogee, OK	Norton Shores, MI		Addison, TX
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Easton, PA	Wayzata, MN		Coppell, TX
East Providence, RI	North Providence, RI	Henderson, NC		Rockwall, TX
Hartsville, SC	Burlington, VT	Millville, NJ		Park City, UT
Montpelier, VT		Carlisle, OH		Brewster, WA
		Milwaukie, OR		Marysville, WA
		Tillamook, OR		North Bend, WA
		Chambersburg, PA		
		Custer, SD		
		Port Angeles, WA		
		Douglas, WY		

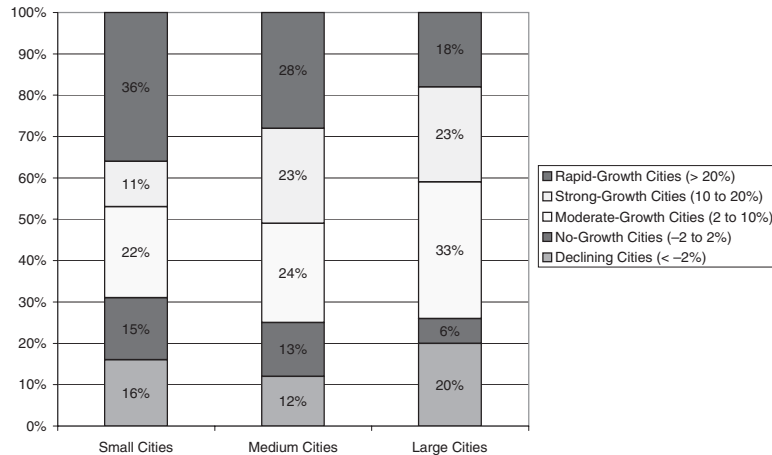


Figure 3: Population Growth Comparison, 1990 to 2000

enced no growth. Forty-four percent of these cities fell into the no-growth or declining categories, compared to fewer than 30% of the cities in each of the other two categories.

REGION

As noted earlier, studies of large and medium-sized cities have found patterns of faster growth in the West and South, confirming notions of long-term population growth and shifts in population from the frostbelt (Northeast and Midwest) to the Sunbelt (South and West). In contrast, the data on population growth in the United States' smaller cities reveal a different trend at work. The small cities experiencing the fastest growth during the 1990s were not in the South but in the Midwest and West. Midwestern cities experienced population growth of 34% between 1990 and 2000, compared to 32% in the West, 13% in the South, and a population decline of 3% among small cities in the Northeast. Given the slight overrepresentation of the West and underrepresentation of the Midwest in the sample, however, these results may not necessarily generalize to small cities overall.

Small cities in both the Midwest and West were growing at a considerably faster pace than their regions as a whole during the 1990s. The 34% growth experienced by small cities in the Midwest was more than four times the region's overall 8% growth rate, whereas the rate for Western small cities (32%) significantly outpaced the 20% growth rate experienced by the region

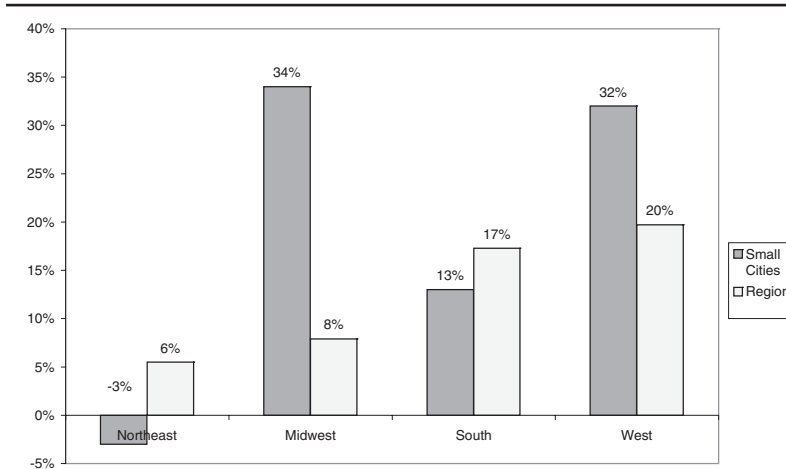


Figure 4: Growth of Small Cities Versus Regional Growth, 1990 to 2000

as a whole. In contrast, small-city growth in the South (13%) approximated the regional growth rate of 17%, and population growth in small cities in the Northeast (-3%) was less than the regional growth rate of 6%.

Patterns of faster growth in small cities in the Midwest and West also were evident across cities in different population growth categories. For example, approximately 6 in 10 small cities in the West (62%) and Midwest (58%) experienced rapid or strong population growth in the 1990s, compared to 4 in 10 small cities in the South (40%) and less than 1 in 10 small cities in the Northeast (8%). In perhaps the most dramatic picture of regional differences in small-city growth, 1 in 2 small cities in the Northeast (54%) declined in population during the 1990s, compared to 17% in the South, 13% in the Midwest, and none of the sample cities in the West.

METROPOLITAN LOCATION

Small cities in metropolitan areas (what might be better characterized as suburban small cities) were more likely to experience rapid population growth than their nonmetropolitan counterparts during the 1990s. Eighty-six percent of the small cities experiencing more than 20% population growth from 1990 to 2000 were located in metropolitan areas. At the same time, however, a significant majority of the small cities that declined in population during the 1990s were metropolitan cities, largely because the declining small cities in the Northeast are mostly located in metropolitan areas.

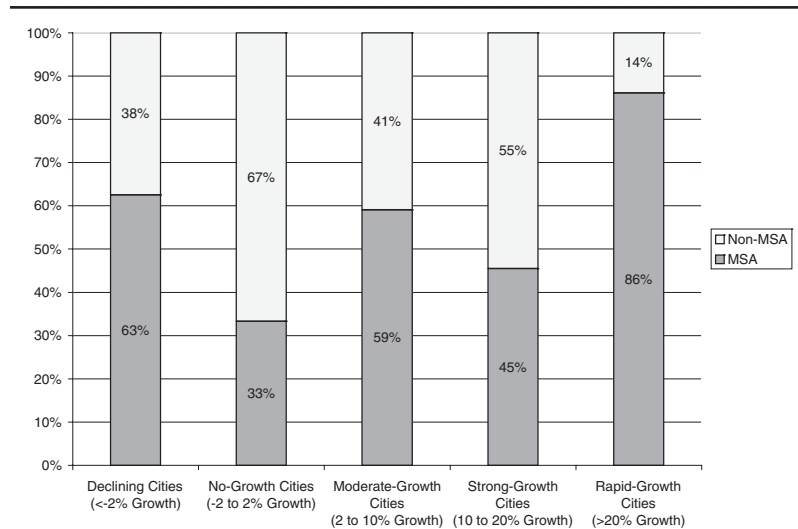


Figure 5: Population Growth by Metropolitan Location

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The 1990s was a decade of growing racial and ethnic diversity among cities of all population sizes, although popular images of small-town United States as homogeneously White (except in the South) are supported in this analysis. As of 2000, three in four small-city residents (76%) were White, compared to 13% who were Black, 7% who were Hispanic, and 2% who were Asian.¹² The data show that small cities are considerably less ethnically and racially diverse than their large and medium-sized city counterparts, where 44% and 56% of the 2000 population, respectively, were White.

All cities, however, saw the share of the total population that is Black, Hispanic, and Asian increase between 1990 and 2000. Large cities, overall, became non-White majorities, with the White share of the large-city population falling from 52% to 44%. Similarly, the White share of the population in medium-sized cities declined from 67% to 56%. In small cities, the comparable decline was from 83% in 1990 to 75% in 2000. Increases in the Black and Hispanic shares of total small-city population accounted for much of this drop, with the Black population growing from 10% to 13% of the total small-city population, and the Hispanic population growing from 4% to 7% of the total.

For a clearer picture of trends in the racial and ethnic composition of small-city populations, we analyzed total population growth among different

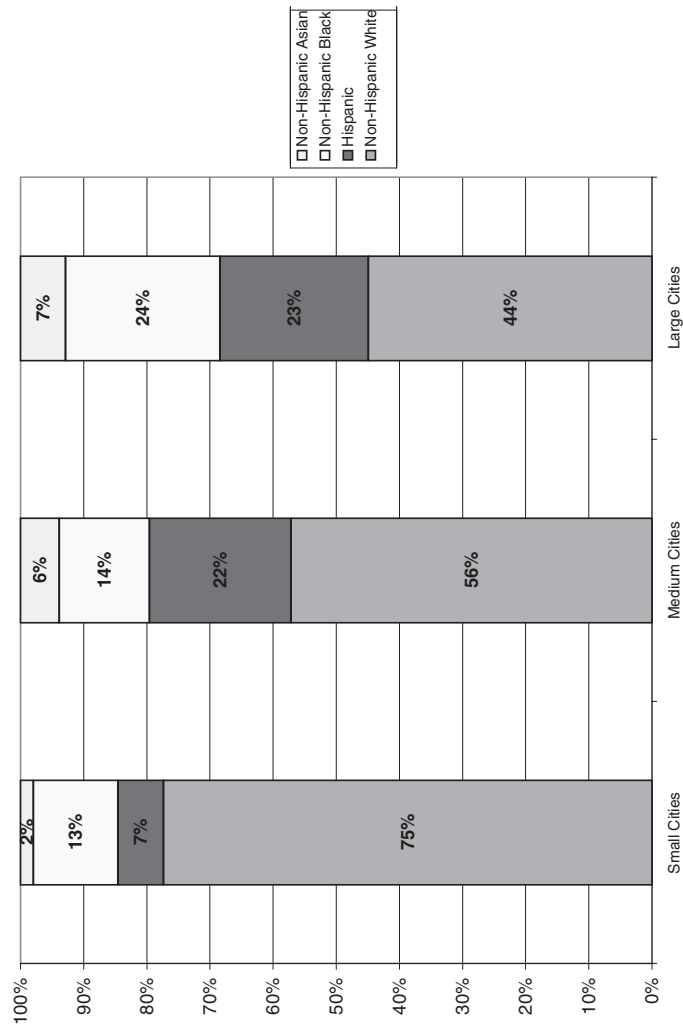


Figure 6: Racial and Ethnic Composition of Small, Medium, and Large Cities, 2000

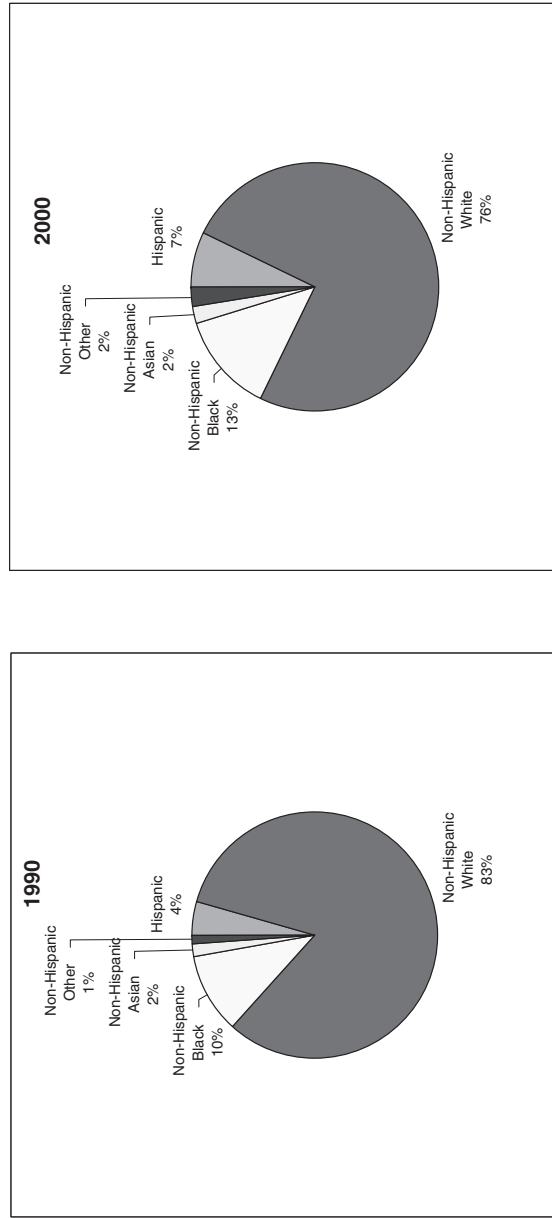


Figure 7: Racial and Ethnic Composition of Small Cities, 1990 and 2000

groups rather than focus solely on their respective shares of the population. This analysis revealed large population gains among all three of the largest racial and ethnic groups, and especially among Hispanics. In all regions of the country, the Hispanic population in small cities at least doubled between 1990 and 2000, growing by 229% in the South, 191% in the West, 128% in the Northeast, and 102% in the Midwest.

But the Hispanic population is not the only group experiencing dramatic rates of growth in the United States' small cities. During the 1990s, the Asian population in small cities doubled in the West (107%) and South (106%), and grew by more than 60% in the Northeast (65%) and Midwest (61%). The Black population in small cities also increased among all regions, particularly in the Midwest (114%) and West (84%).

PREDICTORS OF SMALL-CITY GROWTH IN THE 1990S

What were the driving factors behind rates of small-city growth population growth in the 1990s? The preceding analysis suggests that a number of factors may predict the rate of small-city population growth, including being located in a metropolitan area (suburban small cities will grow faster) or a particular region of the country, significant increases in non-White populations (most likely as a result of immigration), and the size of the city at the beginning of the period (growth rates for larger small cities are less likely to be as high).

The Brookings analysis (Vey and Forman, 2002) of larger cities also examined hypotheses around annexation (annexing more land leads to population growth), population density (low-density areas have greater room for population growth), education levels (areas with more highly educated populations are more likely to attract jobs and further population growth), and the size of the aging population (areas with more aging people are more likely to grow more slowly).

Using the findings from our descriptive analysis and the research on larger cities, we estimate the following model with OLS to further analyze the factors contributing to small-city growth:

$$\begin{aligned} Growth_{i,t} = & \beta_1 + \beta_2 Suburban_{i,t-1} + \beta_3 Region_{i,t} + \beta_4 ForeignBorn_{i,t-1} \\ & - \beta_5 Pop1990_{i,t-1} + \beta_6 Annex_{i,t} - \beta_7 Density_{i,t} + \beta_8 Degree_{i,t-1} \\ & - \beta_9 Over65_{i,t-1} + \mu_{i,t} \end{aligned}$$

Growth is the percentage population growth in City *i* between 1990 and 2000. *Suburban* refers to whether or not City *i* was located in a metropolitan

area in 1990 and is expected to have a positive effect on growth. *ForeignBorn* is the percentage of the population in City *i* that was foreign born in 1990; given the findings on demographic change in larger cities, this factor is expected to have a positive effect on small-city growth.¹³ *Annex* refers to whether City *i* increased its land area by more than 5% during the decade; cities annexing more than 5% are expected to have greater growth.¹⁴ *Density* is the population per 1,000 people per square mile of land in City *i* in 2000, as used in Vey and Forman (2002). Density is expected to have a negative relationship with small-city growth. *Degree* is the percentage of people older than 25 in City *i* with at least a bachelor's degree in 1990, and it is expected to positively influence growth. *Over65* refers to the percentage of the population of City *i* that was older than 65 in 1990; given findings on demographic change in larger cities, this factor is expected to have a negative effect on small-city growth. Our descriptive analysis also pointed to the potential influence of region and base population, so we subsequently include them in the model. *Region* refers to dummy variables constructed to control for each of the four census regions discussed above. *Pop1990* is the population of City *i* in 1990, and it is expected to have a negative effect because a similar change in population could result in different rates of growth for small cities with different base populations. For example, if a city had a population of 5,000 in 1990 and added 1,000 people during the decade, its growth rate would be 20%. If, however, a city had a population of 20,000 in 1990 and added 1,000 people during the decade, its rate of growth would only be 5%.

The multivariate regression analysis (Table 3) points to several significant predictors of small-city population growth in the 1990s.¹⁵ As expected, small cities located in metropolitan areas (suburban cities) were significantly more likely to have grown at faster rates in the 1990s than cities located outside of metropolitan areas (rural cities). Looking at the standardized beta coefficients, metropolitan location has the largest impact on small-city growth rates of all of the variables in question. Small cities that annexed significant portions of land were also, as expected, more likely to grow at faster rates during the decade. Higher density small cities, presumably with less available space to accommodate additional population, were less likely to see faster growth rates. Lastly, small cities in the West region were more likely to experience fast growth, although the overrepresentation of small cities in the West casts some doubt as to whether this finding may hold for all small cities.¹⁶ Overall, the model explains 25.1% of the variation in growth rates in our sample of 100 small cities.

Our results are similar to those of the study of demographic change for large cities for the factors *Annex* and *Density*. Our findings differ from those

TABLE 3: Regression Results: Small-City Population Growth (Dependent Variable)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Standardized Coefficient (Beta)</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>T Statistic</i>	<i>Probability</i>
C	7.97		10.02	0.80	0.43
ANNEX	15.59	.193	7.55	2.06	0.04
DEGREE	27.51	.084	26.62	1.03	0.30
DENSITY	-4.64	-.190	2.52	-1.84	0.06
FOREIGNBORN	-12.43	-.019	71.14	-0.17	0.86
OVER65	1.49	.035	1.64	0.91	0.37
SUBURBAN	29.72	.368	7.65	3.89	0.00
POP1990	-0.00	-.138	0.00	-1.45	0.15
SOUTH	-1.28	-.015	7.76	-0.16	0.87
MIDWEST	-5.52	-.062	9.75	-0.57	0.57
WEST	21.06	.229	10.32	2.04	0.04
R^2		0.326	Mean dependent variable		23.544
Adjusted R^2		0.251	SD dependent variable		40.480
SE of regression		35.035	Akaike information criterion		10.054
Sum squared resid	109241.8		Schwarz criterion		10.341
Log likelihood	-491.701		F statistic		4.317
Durbin-Watson statistic	2.185		Probability (F statistic)		0.000064

of Vey and Forman (2002), however, for the factors *ForeignBorn*, *Degree* (higher education levels), and *Over65* (the population older than 65). As our descriptive analysis suggested, the foreign-born population in smaller cities may not yet be sufficiently large to predict overall small-city growth. In regard to the higher education levels, our results suggest that larger cities may be more likely to see population growth benefits than smaller cities. Finally, despite considerable attention to the movement of empty nesters to central cities, our findings, although not significant, suggest that larger numbers of retirees may still have had preference for smaller communities in the 1990s.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The analyses conducted here provide a needed snapshot of the demographic changes experienced by small cities in the 1990s and of how the

changes compare to the experiences of larger and medium-sized cities. Among the key findings:

- Overall, small cities grew at faster rates than larger cities during the 1990s.
- Regional disparities in growth patterns are evident, with small cities in the West and Midwest growing at fast rates, and considerably faster than their regions as a whole. This finding runs counter to findings about larger city population decline in the frostbelt (Northeast and Midwest) and growth in the Sunbelt (West and South).
- Whites are still the most prevalent racial or ethnic group in small cities, although influxes of Hispanic, Black, and Asian residents are gradually changing the face of many small cities in the United States.
- Small cities in metropolitan areas (suburban cities) are growing at faster rates than small cities outside of metropolitan areas, and location in a metropolitan area is a significant predictor of small-city population growth.
- Other significant predictors of small-city population growth are annexing land and being of relatively low density.

Taken together, these results paint a picture of small-city population growth that might best be characterized as one of continuing “urban sprawl”—the expansion of metropolitan areas and populations further into previously nonmetropolitan, or rural, areas, and the increasing urbanization of the landscape. Small-city growth is most likely to be occurring in suburban cities where there is an availability, and perhaps abundance, of land and where large numbers of people are less likely to have already concentrated.

These and other demographic changes affecting the United States’ small cities present challenges and opportunities for municipal leaders and policy makers. Among the key questions: how to cope with rapidly increasing population growth resulting from the expansion of metropolitan areas and continued increase in the growth of the overall U.S. population.

Growing small-city populations pose real challenges to local leaders in areas from infrastructure and service delivery to the fiscal capacity of municipal governments to respond to the needs of increasing numbers of residents. Fiscal capacity also is a challenge confronting those cities that are declining or not growing, which often experience infrastructure problems and increasing poverty at the same time that they see an outmigration of residents and businesses.

Further attention to questions about small-city demographic change is needed to tell us more about how U.S. cities are changing, in what ways, and why. As 97% of U.S. cities, these cities are vitally important to understanding the future municipal and metropolitan landscape.

NOTES

1. *City* is defined here as a municipal incorporation.
2. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
3. All references to large and medium-sized city results refer to the cited Brookings reports.
4. *Medium-sized cities* in this report refers to the terminology used by the Brookings Institution studies, focusing on the second 100 largest cities ranked by population size. A better description of these cities might be *smaller large cities* or *second-tier large cities*, because most of these cities fall within the top third of cities nationwide in terms of their population.
5. This research does not include cities between 50,000 and 100,000 in population because there are vast differences between the smallest communities in the United States and those with 100,000 in population. The authors recognize that a study examining cities in this population range would be beneficial to the body of research on demographic change and should be conducted separately. To provide an analysis of small cities, however, we felt that it was appropriate to use a definition of small cities set by cities themselves. The National League of Cities' Small Cities Council defines *small cities* as those with fewer than 50,000 in population.
6. This study uses standard methods to separate the populations of our sample into both racial and ethnic categories. The U.S. Census Bureau considers race and Hispanic origin to be distinct concepts. All individuals who identified themselves as Spanish/Hispanic/Latino are, for the purposes of this survey, considered "Hispanic" regardless of their race. Other race categories—White, Black, Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and other races—include only those individuals who did not identify themselves as Hispanic. In 2000, the census gave respondents the opportunity to classify themselves as being of more than one race for the first time. Matching 1990 racial and ethnic counts to 2000 counts subsequently became more difficult. As in the Brookings studies, the race categories here represent individuals who classified themselves as that race only; individuals who classified themselves as being of more than one race are grouped in a "multiracial" category. As a result, some unknown share of a given city's residents in 1990 could have reclassified themselves as multiracial in 2000; this may introduce a degree of error into the calculation of changes in the population of that city's other race/ethnicity groups. Census analysis of this potential for error suggests that the size of the error is likely insignificant.
7. Reviewers of this manuscript questioned the size of the sample—asking why we had not chosen to use the universe of small cities, or noting that it would at least have been more desirable to have sampled 300 cities instead of 100 to ensure a more representative sample. We agree with this assessment. The data in this report, however, needed to be collected individually, by city and by variable, which took considerable time and effort. As a result, using the universe of more than 18,000 small cities was not feasible or practical, and the resource constraints we faced prohibited expanding the sample beyond 100 cities.
As noted above, the National League of Cities database includes all municipalities in the United States. At any given time, given lags in tracking changes in municipal incorporation, name changes, consolidations, and dissolutions, NLC's database may not precisely match that of the U.S. Census, but the database typically accounts for 99% of all cities in the United States.
8. We did not classify growth rates in comparison to overall U.S. population growth (13.2%) because (1) the unit of analysis is cities (and population growth within cities), not the country overall; and (2) we wanted to provide some consistency with similar studies of other city sizes, allowing comparisons to be made.
9. U.S. Census Regions include the Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont), the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio,

South Dakota, and Wisconsin), the South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia), and the West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming).

10. The Brookings studies use a different categorization for metropolitan location—central cities and “satellite cities.” The *central city* category comprises the largest cities within metropolitan areas, and *satellite cities* include all other cities. Because the Brookings studies analyze the top 200 cities in population, their analyses do not include any nonmetropolitan cities. We do not use this categorization for small cities because it would be less useful in explaining or revealing trends as clearly as the metropolitan/nonmetropolitan breakdown. Because many small cities are located outside of OMB-defined MSAs, a more important distinction is whether these cities are located within metropolitan areas.

11. The faster growth rate of cities with fewer than 10,000 in population explains the difference between the census’s reported growth for cities between 10,000 and 50,000 and, again, is an issue with the smaller denominator.

12. All references to White, Black, and Asian figures in the text and figures refer to non-Hispanic White, non-Hispanic Black, and non-Hispanic Asian; see note 6 for further explanation.

13. *ForeignBorn* is used here to attempt to pick up the effects of immigration on small-city population growth. An alternative measure, the percentage of the population in City *i* that was non-White in 1990, was also substituted for *ForeignBorn* and was found to also be insignificant.

14. *Annex* is measured as a discrete, categorical variable, with 1 = cities that annexed more than 5% of their land during the 1990s, and 0 = cities that annexed less than 5%. The variable is measured in this way, as opposed to a continuous variable measuring total area of annexed land, to minimize the broad variation in cities in terms of the percentage of annexed land and the impact of outliers on the equation.

15. The results of the multivariate OLS analysis were tested for heteroskedasticity using the White’s test, and White’s-corrected standard errors and resulting *t* stats are reported in Table 3. Both condition indices and variance inflation factors indicate that the level of multicollinearity is very low. The model was also tested for serial correlation, given that the Durbin-Watson statistic (2.185) was in the zone of indecision. Further testing with the modified Durbin-Watson test revealed no evidence of negative serial correlation.

16. We tested all combinations of three region dummy variables to understand the effect that region has on growth. When included, *West* was always significant.

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