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Housing Segregation, Inequality, and Poverty in Buffalo-Niagara

Abstract

The Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area is slowly losing population and growing more diverse. From 2000 to 2010, the metro population fell from 1,170,111 to 1,135,509, a loss of 34,602. During those ten years, the Hispanic population rose 36.7%, multi-racial rose 38.1%, and Asian rose 68.7%, while white population fell 6.4%, black fell 0.2%, and American Indian fell 0.2%. In 2010, the metropolitan area was 79.5% white, 11.8% black, 4.1% Hispanic, and 2.3% Asian. As of 2000, 4.4% of the population was foreign born. Of that group, 74.5% were Asian and 8.2% Hispanic. 8.4% of the population spoke a foreign language at home. 61% of Hispanics spoke a foreign language at home, as did 77.7% of Asians.

Keywords

Buffalo, Housing/Neighborhoods, Equality/Civil Rights, Race, General, Fact Sheet, PPG, PDF

Housing Segregation, Inequality, and Poverty in Buffalo-Niagara

Population Trends

- The Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan area is slowly losing population and growing more diverse. From 2000 to 2010, the metro population fell from 1,170,111 to 1,135,509, a loss of 34,602.
- During those ten years, the Hispanic population rose 36.7%, multi-racial rose 38.1%, and Asian rose 68.7%, while white population fell 6.4%, black fell 0.2%, and American Indian fell 0.2%.
- In 2010, the metropolitan area was 79.5% white, 11.8% black, 4.1% Hispanic, and 2.3% Asian.
- As of 2000, 4.4% of the population was foreign born. Of that group, 74.5% were Asian and 8.2% Hispanic. 8.4% of the population spoke a foreign language at home. 61% of Hispanics spoke a foreign language at home, as did 77.7% of Asians.

Housing Opportunities

- From 2000 to 2010, homeownership rates rose slightly for every racial/ethnic group except for blacks. The 2010 rates are 72.1% for whites, 49.5% for American Indians, 41.2% for Asians, 34% for blacks, and 32.9% for Hispanics.
- As of 2010, roughly half of area renters pay over 30% of their income for rent. 55.3% of blacks do, and 54.2% of Hispanics, compared to 41.6% of whites.
- For blacks, high interest loans made up 3.8% of home purchase loans in 2010, compared to 1.4% for whites and 0.7% for Hispanics.

Housing Segregation

- The Buffalo-Niagara metro area is 15th most segregated in the nation as of 2010. Blacks make up 38.6% of the population in the city, but only 3.5% in the rest of the county. Hispanics are 10.5% of the city's population, but only 2.2% in the rest of the county. Buffalo-Niagara was ranked 12th most segregated in 1980, 10th in 1990, and 8th in 2000.¹
- Using 2000 Census figures, of the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas, Buffalo-Niagara had the highest percentage (over 80%) of blacks living in high-poverty neighborhoods, compared to 10.6% of whites.
- The poverty rate in the Buffalo-Niagara metropolitan region in 2010 was 13.8%, but the rate in the city of Buffalo was 29.6%.²
- From 2000 to 2010, the level of housing segregation fell slightly for blacks (from 78% to 73.2%) and Hispanics (from 56.2% to 50.7%). (This figure measures the portion of a racial

group that would need to move to another census tract in order for the composition of each census tract to mirror that of the region as a whole. A value of 0% represents complete integration; a value of 100% represents complete segregation).

- In 1999, the average black person lived in a neighborhood where 28.8% of the population was living in poverty and 14.2% was unemployed. For Hispanics, it was 25.8% in poverty and 11.9% unemployed, and for whites, 8.8% in poverty and 5.8% unemployed.
- Within the city of Buffalo, as of 2000, over 85% of blacks lived east of Main Street.³
- From 2000 to 2006, there were 476 housing discrimination complaints from the Erie County suburbs filed with Housing Opportunities Made Equal, 95 with the New York State Division of Human Rights, and 86 with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Race/color/national origin was the most common cause of complaint, followed closely by familial status and disability.⁴

Education

- For blacks, the level of educational segregation in the metro area rose slightly from 2000 to 2010, from 74.5% to 74.7%. For Hispanics, it fell slightly, from 71.9% to 66.9%. (This figure measures the portion of a racial group that would need to move to another school in order for the composition of each school to mirror that of the region as a whole. A value of 0% represents complete integration; a value of 100% represents complete segregation).
- In 2010-2011, the poverty rates for the schools where the average primary student attends were as follows: white: 35%, Hispanic: 75.1%, and black: 81% (poverty here is defined as qualifying for free or reduced price school lunch).

Poverty and Unemployment

- In the 2000 Census, the metro-wide poverty rate was 11.9%. For whites, it was 7.6%, for blacks, 33.5%, and for Hispanics, 36.3%. The child poverty rates were 9.2% for whites, 44.5% for blacks, and 46.5% for Hispanics.
- In the 2000 Census, the unemployment rate for white males was 6%, for black males, 19%, and for Hispanic males, 14%. For females, the rates were 5% (whites), 14% (blacks), and 14% (Hispanics). In the 2010 Census, the unemployment rate for whites (male and female) was 6.7%, for blacks, 17.7%, and for Hispanic males, 13.1%.⁵
- In the 2010 Census, the metro-wide poverty rate was 13.9%. For whites it was 9.6%, for blacks 36.1%, and for Hispanics, 35.8%. 6.6% of the population was living at less than 50% of the poverty level. For whites, the figure was 6.4%, for blacks, 17.6%, and for Hispanics, 18.2%.⁶

NOTES

All data drawn from the Harvard School of Public Health, diversitydata.org, except where noted.

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- ¹ Yin, Li. “The Dynamics of Residential Segregation in Buffalo: an Agent-based Simulation.” *Urban Studies* 46(13) 2749-2770, December 2009.
 - ² *State and County QuickFacts, Buffalo (city), New York, Persons below poverty level, percent, 2006-2010*, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/3611000.html>.
 - ³ Yin, Li. “The Dynamics of Residential Segregation in Buffalo: an Agent-based Simulation.” *Urban Studies* 46(13) 2749-2770, December 2009.
 - ⁴ Paterson, Kelly and Robert Mark Silverman, “How local public administrators, nonprofit providers, and elected officials perceive impediments to fair housing in the suburbs: an analysis of Erie County, New York.” *Housing Policy Debate*, Vol. 21, No. 1, January 2011, 165-188.
 - ⁵ Diversitydata.org and U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, S2301, Employment Status, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.
 - ⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, S1703, Selected Characteristics of People at Specified Levels of Poverty in the Past 12 months, 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates