New Demographic Divide in the US: Immigrant and Domestic "Migrant Magnets"

By William H. Frey

The latest migration statistics for the 1990s reinforce a new regional division that we have been tracking for more than a decade. It is occurring because of the continued clustering of foreign-born immigrants into a few multi-ethnic urban areas, as native-born and longer-term mostly white and black residents disperse to new employment opportunities in other parts of the country. These separate migration processes are creating a demographic divide across space that could be just as monumental as well-known past demographic divides: rural versus urban, city versus suburb, snow belt versus sun belt. The new divide will separate those regions of the country which serve as "immigrant gateways" from the remainder of the national territory, and the former will become increasingly younger, multi-ethnic, and culturally diverse — a contrast to whiter or white-black regions of the country with older and more middle-class populations. The single melting pot image might be supplanted by "multiple melting pots" in the context of a less diverse Middle America.

> " *New region-based political constituencies will emerge that place greater emphasis on middle class tax breaks and the solvency of the Social Security system, and that cast a wary eye on too much federal government regulation.* "

The reality of concentrated immigration is evident in the distinct population geographies of southern California, southern Florida, the Southwest, Chicago, and the Greater New York region, which stand in contrast to the demographic profiles in much of the rest of the country. Our contention, that a new demographic divide is emerging as a parallel process to new immigration and domestic migration patterns, holds important implications for regional social and political cleavages, for the economies in high immigration labor markets, and for the upward mobility and assimilation of immigrants.

Concentrated Immigration, Dispersed Domestic Migration

For most of America's history, immigrants flocked to cities, attracted by jobs and the presence of like nationality groups whose enclaves provided both social and economic support. These same cities also attracted large numbers of domestic migrants from smaller communities and from rural areas, again because of the jobs which tended to concentrate in such immigrant gateways as New York, Chicago and Boston.

Today's immigrants also cluster in major gateway areas—about two-thirds of 1985-1997 immigrants located in just ten of the nation's nearly 300 metropolitan areas. Although this may seem natural and consistent with the past, it is inconsistent in that the nation's employment opportunities and population in general have become more dispersed across all regions of the country. Today, only about a quarter of the native-born US population resides in these ten gateway areas.

Despite the dispersion of jobs to other parts of the country, immigrants continue to concentrate. This concentration is influenced by the strong family reunification provisions of our immigration laws, and the change over the past several decades

toward Latin America and Asia as dominant points of origin for immigrants. Family reunification immigration tends to occur in "chains" that link family members and friends to common destinations. This is especially the case for lower-skilled immigrants, since they are more dependent on kinship ties for assistance in gaining entry to informal job networks that exist in port-of-entry areas. A recent National Academy of Sciences study points up the increasing gap in educational attainment of immigrants as compared with the native population. Although the education attainment of immigrants is bi-modal, with higher percentages of both Ph.D.'s and high school dropouts than in the native population, it is the lower end of the education distribution which dominates recent immigrant streams.

There is some sprinkling out of new immigrants to parts of the country which have previously not had much or any presence of Hispanics or Asians; however, the vast majority of new immigrants, as well as earlier arrivals from these groups, still reside in the largest port-of-entry areas. In contrast, most native-born Americans, especially whites and blacks, are far more "footloose." Their economic and social circumstances do not constrain them as heavily to particular parts of the country, and their migration patterns are dictated much more strongly by the "pushes" and "pulls" of employment opportunities and to some degree quality of life amenities than by kinship ties. While for most of this century "domestic migrants" have been urbanizing and moving to the same metropolitan destinations as immigrants, this has not been the case for most of the 1980s and the 1990s.

Most domestic migrants are not "fleeing" immigrants; but the locus of opportunity has shifted away from the

Table 1: High Immigration and High Domestic Migration Metros, 1990-97

Rank	Metropolitan Area*	Immigration	Net Domestic Migration
High Immigration Metros			
1.	New York CMSA	1,045,347	-1,551,591
2.	Los Angeles CMSA	990,981	-1,425,464
3.	San Francisco CMSA	342,206	-303,576
4.	Chicago CMSA	251,582	-403,896
5.	Miami CMSA	212,515	-37,802
6.	Washington DC CMSA	189,513	-149,227
7.	Houston CMSA	169,073	55,425
8.	Dallas-Fort Worth CMSA	133,946	154,298
9.	San Diego MSA	125,507	-158,263
10.	Boston NECMA	101,294	-182,493
High Domestic Migration Metros			
1.	Atlanta MSA	53,284	371,061
2.	Las Vegas MSA	22,027	307,585
3.	Phoenix MSA	48,214	294,024
4.	Portland MSA	37,437	177,851
5.	Denver CMSA	35,604	157,069
6.	Dallas-Fort Worth CMSA	133,946	154,298
7.	Seattle CMSA	52,872	136,262
8.	Austin MSA	21,104	125,295
9.	Orlando MSA	33,399	124,369
10.	Raleigh-Durham MSA	10,715	122,087
11.	Tampa-St. Petersburg MSA	28,891	116,780
12.	Charlotte MSA	9,649	112,281
13.	West Palm Beach MSA	35,176	101,436

*Note: Metropolitan Areas refer to CMSAs, MSAs, and (in New England) NECMAs, defined by the Office of Management and Budget. Official names are abbreviated.

Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census Bureau Estimates.

more expensive, densely populated coastal metropolises like New York and Los Angeles to less dense, faster growing, more entrepreneurial regions of the country. These include large metropolitan areas in the southeast and the western states surrounding California. They also include smaller-sized places and non-metropolitan territory within these fast-growing regions. Because the current "magnets" for domestic migrants are, largely, different than the immigrant gateway metropolises, it is possible to classify large growing metropolises by their dominant migration sources.

When one ranks the greatest gaining "immigrant magnets" and the greatest gaining "domestic migration magnets" (see Table 1), there is only one metropolitan area that appears on both lists: the Greater Dallas metropolitan area. This exception aside, most "high immigration metros" experienced negative domestic out-migration during the first seven years of the 1990s, with the premier immigration magnets—New York and Los Angeles—each losing about one and a half million domestic migrants. By the same token, most "high domestic migration metros" received most of their migration gains from within-US migration.

It is important to note that "high immigration metros" for the 1990-97 period were the same as those during the 1980s and, in most cases, earlier decades. Immigrants continued to pour into the same gateway areas irrespective of economic upturns and downturns. In contrast, domestic migration for these "immigrant magnets" did change over time in response to the economy and changing employment opportunities. For example, although both Dallas and Houston showed domestic migration gains for the 1990s, plummeting oil prices drove a sharp domestic out-migration from these areas during the late 1980s.

The ranking of "domestic migration magnets" fluctuated to a greater degree than their "immigrant magnet" counterparts. For example, Rocky Mountain metros such as Las Vegas, Phoenix, Portland and Denver vastly improved their rankings in the 1990s. This resurgence of the west involved, in some cases, recovery from extractive industry declines of the late 1980s, and the rise of growth industries associated with computers, telecommunications and entertainment/recreation.

The Rural Renaissance and Older Suburbs

About two-thirds (2011) of the nation's counties gained domestic migrants over the 1990s, and in all but 110, domestic migration contributed more to growth than immigration did. The fastest-growing counties via domestic migration were located in the southeast and Rocky Mountain west, and in smaller and nonmetropolitan areas. The latter counties tended to attract itinerant professionals and the soon-to-be burgeoning elderly population, but many of them also attracted "would-be suburbanites." The latter

Table 2: Counties with Highest Domestic Migration Rates: 1990-97 (among counties with a population greater than 5,000 in 1990)

Rank	County and State		Inside Metro Area	1990-97 Rate*
1.	Douglas County	CO	Denver-Boulder-Greeley, CO CMSA	87.7
2.	Elbert County	CO	*nonmetropolitan*	71.2
3.	Park County	CO	*nonmetropolitan*	67.3
4.	Forsyth County	GA	Atlanta, GA MSA	59.8
5.	Flagler County	FL	Daytona Beach, FL MSA	53.9
6.	Henry County	GA	Atlanta, GA MSA	53.0
7.	Paulding County	GA	Atlanta, GA MSA	52.7
8.	Archuleta County	CO	*nonmetropolitan*	52.6
9.	Polk County	TX	*nonmetropolitan*	52.2
10.	Teller County	CO	*nonmetropolitan*	50.8
11.	Summit County	UT	*nonmetropolitan*	49.9
12.	Washington County	UT	*nonmetropolitan*	49.6
13.	Nye County	NV	Las Vegas, NV-AZ MSA	47.3
14.	Bandera County	TX	*nonmetropolitan*	40.1
15.	Coweta County	GA	Atlanta, GA MSA	39.4
16.	Williamson County	TX	Austin-San Marcos, TX MSA	38.8
17.	Loudoun County	VA	Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	38.6
18.	Dawson County	GA	*nonmetropolitan*	38.1
19.	Lyon County	NV	*nonmetropolitan*	38.1
20.	Stone County	MO	*nonmetropolitan*	37.2
21.	Bryan County	GA	Savannah, GA MSA	36.8
22.	Fluvanna County	VA	Charlottesville, VA MSA	36.6
23.	Collin County	TX	Dallas-Fort Worth, TX CMSA	36.4
24.	Torrance County	NM	*nonmetropolitan*	36.0
25.	Ravalli County	MT	*nonmetropolitan*	36.0
26.	Clark County	NV	Las Vegas, NV-AZ MSA	35.6
27.	Christian County	MO	Springfield, MO MSA	35.6
28.	Blanco County	TX	*nonmetropolitan*	35.4
29.	Kootenai County	ID	*nonmetropolitan*	35.0
30.	Gilchrist County	FL	*nonmetropolitan*	34.6

*Net Domestic Migration Rate = (Population gained from 1990-97 Net Domestic Migration) X 100 / 1990 Population.

Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census Bureau County Estimates.

showed especially strong tendencies to leave both inner and outer suburbs of densely populated "high immigration metropolises."

The 30 counties with the highest domestic migration rates in the 1990s are emblematic of new destinations: smaller places and nonmetropolitan counties in fast-growing states like Colorado, Utah, Texas, and Nevada. On the list are also suburban counties of metropolitan areas that lie in "domestic migrant magnet" regions (see Table 2).

These areas and their domestic migration sources for growth differ sharply from the dynamics of city and suburban counties within large immigrant gateway regions. For example, of the 29 counties within the New York metropolitan region, twenty-one of them experienced net domestic out-migration over the 1990-97 period. The eight counties where domestic migration gains overshadowed immigrant gains were located, largely, on the periphery—southern and eastern New Jersey, and Pike County, Pennsylvania. Similarly, seven of the ten counties comprising the San Francisco metropolitan region and four of the five counties of the Greater Los Angeles metropolitan region registered domestic out-migration along with immigration gains. What these patterns underscore is the fact that immigrant growth in high immigration metros characterized the entire metropolitan area rather than the central part only. It suggests that the old "city-suburb" distinction will be supplanted by a new, more regionally-based distinction to the extent that an area's demographics influence culture, lifestyles, and political preferences.

Race and Space

The topic of "race and space" usually conjures up images of segregated neighborhoods or sharp racial distinctions between minority-dominated cities and largely white suburbs. Yet the new migration dynamics portend a broader regional division along racial and ethnic lines. Clearly, the concentrated nature of recent immigrant waves

is linked to a similar concentration of the new ethnic minorities—Hispanics and Asians. This can be seen by comparing the biggest gaining metros for these two groups with those growing fastest for blacks and whites over the first six years of the 1990s (see Table 3).

The Greater Los Angeles metro is home to one-fifth of the nation's Hispanic population, and it garnered 18% of the total Hispanic gains over the 1990s. This growth came largely from Mexican and Latin American immigrants, but it also resulted from the continued high fertility of long-term Hispanic "stayers." Just ten metropolitan areas accounted for over half of US Hispanic gains during this period. These included Miami, with its strong attraction for Cubans; New York City, gaining Dominicans, Puerto Ricans and other Caribbean-origin Hispanics; and Chicago, a continued magnet for Mexicans. The rest of the ten lie close to the Mexican border and continued to build on large, existing Latin American populations.

A similar concentration of growth has occurred for Asians. Together, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco accounted for 38% of US Asian population gains over the 1990s. Just 20 metropolitan areas accounted for more than 70% of Asian growth in the 1990s; these areas house over three-quarters of the nation's Asian population.

In contrast to these two groups, blacks remain highly concentrated in the urban north and the south, which is beginning to attract a strong black "return movement." Blacks and whites are, for the most part, fueling domestic migration gains to the "New South" metro areas in the southeast and in Texas. The greatest gaining metros for whites, shown in Table 3, contrast markedly with those for the new immigrant groups. Whites are the primary contributors to the domestic migration trends discussed above.

If one projects current immigration and domestic migration patterns through the year 2025, it becomes clear that 12 states will have populations that are less than 60% white. In most of these, at

least two major minority groups (among Hispanics, Asians, blacks, American Indians) are overrepresented. At the same time, 25 states have white populations that make up at least three-quarters of their total, and in 12 of these, the white population will exceed 85%. Between these extremes lie states, mostly in the south, which have large white and black populations.

The projections provide only a cursory glimpse of different diversity profiles across states without filling in the details of specific age structures, class patterns and political orientations. The portrait they paint of the nation's emerging regional demographic divisions contrasts sharply with that which has characterized most of the present century.

While this new demographic division may serve as a *regional* divide, this does not imply that there will be increased divisions between different racial and ethnic groups. In fact, the concentration of large numbers of new racial and ethnic minorities along with whites and blacks within the high immigration regions should lead to a greater incorporation of these groups into new "multiple melting pots" that will emerge distinctly in different parts of the country. In contrast, much of the rest of America may have a demographic profile that is older, whiter and more middle class than in the more vibrant, younger and multi-ethnic regions. New region-based political constituencies will emerge that place greater emphasis on middle class tax breaks and the solvency of the Social Security system, and that cast a wary eye on too much federal government regulation. Already these regions are becoming more conservative and more likely to vote Republican. Their residents will become far less energized over issues such as preserving affirmative action laws, extending the federal safety net to new foreign-born generations or maintaining bilingual education in the schools. Taking cognizance of this new geography, marketers will need to pay just as much attention to metropolitan and regional demographics as they do to local zip codes when targeting advertisements to consumers.

Table 3: Metro Areas With Greatest Population Gains, 1990-96
for Hispanics, Asians, Blacks, and Whites*

Rank	Metropolitan Area	1990-96 Change
Hispanics		
1.	Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, CA CMSA	1,028,141
2.	New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA CMSA	447,867
3.	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA CMSA	250,747
4.	Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, TX CMSA	222,144
5.	Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI CMSA	221,308
Asians		
1.	Los Angeles-Riverside-Orange County, CA CMSA	305,860
2.	New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA CMSA	294,485
3.	San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA CMSA	240,969
4.	Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	87,208
5.	Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI CMSA	70,966
Blacks		
1.	Atlanta, GA MSA	159,830
2.	New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-CT-PA CMSA	154,446
3.	Washington-Baltimore, DC-MD-VA-WV CMSA	129,909
4.	Houston-Galveston-Brazoria, TX CMSA	97,163
5.	Miami-Fort Lauderdale, FL CMSA	86,812
Whites		
1.	Atlanta, GA MSA	320,841
2.	Phoenix-Mesa, AZ MSA	301,505
3.	Dallas-Fort Worth, TX CMSA	245,672
4.	Las Vegas, NV-AZ MSA	202,944
5.	Portland-Salem, OR-WA CMSA	198,702

*Non-Hispanic Whites

Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census Bureau Race Estimates.

This also suggests that the "Americanization" of new immigrants in the twenty-first century may take different forms in different parts of the country as contrasted with the "single melting pot" model which characterized the assimilation process in the century just ending.

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