Percent Asian Population

Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties
1990

Considering that Asians constitute less than 11 percent of the population in both Los Angeles and Orange counties, the number of tracts that are over one-third or one-half Asian is striking. Individual Asian and Pacific Island groups, such as Japanese, Filipinos, Tongans, and Vietnamese have their own cultures, social networks, and chains of migration. Thus, it is not surprising that each group has its own distinctive settlement pattern.

Of the major suburban regions, the San Gabriel Valley has become the most intensely Asian. Monterey Park, with its 57 percent Asian population, has the highest percent of Asians of any city in the two counties. Nearby cities of Alhambra, San Gabriel, and Rosemead are also about one-third Asian. Perhaps the greatest transformation is in the wealthy enclave of San Marino, which was 92 percent white in 1980 but is now 32 percent Asian.

Some Asians moved still farther eastward in the 1980s. The new suburban city of Walnut is now 37 percent Asian, and another major focus of settlement is Hacienda Heights, where the imposing Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple complex is located. The Asian population increased sharply in the Woodside Village section of West Covina, where many Filipino professionals were clustered in 1980.

Chinatown’s residential area has expanded partly due to a Chinese influx from Vietnam. Two areas here are over 70 percent Asian, the highest percentage in either county. To the west the predominantly Filipino Temple/Arimondo area is over-one-third Asian, as is Koreatown. In Long Beach the major Cambodian concentration is evident, as are the strongly Filipino tracts in West Long Beach. Most long-standing Japanese settlement clusters are still evident, such as in Wilmington (East Los Angeles) and the Crescenta Valley area. Garden Grove, the largest Japanese concentration in southern California, increased its Asian percentage slightly, with two tracts now over 50 percent Asian.

The major ethnic Vietnamese concentration is in Westminster in Orange County, where the area around Little Saigon on Bolsa Avenue is now 44 percent Asian.
Asian Population Change
Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties
1980 - 1990

Immigrants and refugees from many Asian and Pacific Island countries swelled the Asian population in the 1980s, more than doubling their numbers in both Los Angeles and Orange counties.

The fairly even distribution of dots on the map shows that Asian growth was widespread, a result of the range of economic resources among Asians and the ethnic diversity contained within the Asian grouping. There was some degree of clustering of Asian growth, however, usually in areas where Asians had been concentrated before 1980. Koreatown, the western San Gabriel Valley cities, and Cerritos had major Asian increases. Asians also expanded into the area northeast of Chinatown, from Lincoln Heights to Eagle Rock, and south Glendale. Since most of the Cambodians in Long Beach arrived after the 1980 census was taken, their concentration focused on Anaheim Blvd. stands out. To the south of Long Beach, most of the dots in the Santa Ana and Westminster area (Little Saigon) on Orange County represent Vietnamese who either came as refugees or migrated in from other states during the 1980s.

The number of Asians decreased in only a few areas. Most typical were older ethnically mixed neighborhoods, some of whose Asian residents died or relocated. The historic Japanese communities in the Jefferson-Crenshaw and Boyle Heights areas continued to lose people, as they had in earlier decades, their places often taken by blacks or Latinos.

There were two areas with precipitous declines of Asian numbers: one in Koreatown and the other in Santa Ana in Orange County. Because both tracts in 1980 had contained many Vietnamese refugees, declines may have been caused by refugees relocating in their effort to find affordable housing or be closer to jobs or relatives.

Few Asians have moved into the typically expensive coastal communities which have been so strongly favored by some whites. However, Asians have increased on the elite Palos Verdes Peninsula where Rancho Palos Verdes is now 20 percent Asian.

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Percent Black Population

Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties

1990

For over a half century most blacks (or African Americans) in Los Angeles have lived in the largest black settlement at concentrations, called South Central. The rapid growth of Los Angeles' black population in the period after 1915 and, by the early 1920s, widespread restriction on black settlement in surrounding localities resulted in a crowded and segregated ghetto. Despite opposition by whites, black settlement expanded contiguous during some decades particularly to the northeast and westward. By 1980 this black ghettolike condition extended southwest from east of Downtown for 15 miles through Watts and beyond Compton. On the western and northern fringes of this concentration were some areas of higher status, such as West Adams and Baldwin Hills.

During the 1980s the black population of Los Angeles County grew more slowly than in previous decades, as more blacks moved out of the county than moved in. Within the county, blacks who moved out of the main ghettos usually found their places taken by large numbers of Hispanics, especially on the northern, eastern, and central portions of the ghetto. For instance, in West Adams there was a small decline in blacks but a large increase in Latinos. As a result of Latinos' in-movement, blacks in 1990 comprised only about half the population in the South-Central and Southeast parts of the ghetto, whereas black proportions were generally higher toward the west.

For example, blacks in Compton constituted 75 percent of the residents in 1960 but only 55 percent in 1990. However, in the unusual racially mixed, wealthy enclave of Lancaster Hills in Baldwin Hills the opposite occurred. There became more black as whites departed and blacks increased over 40 percent.

Suburban or outlying black enclaves -- Pacoima, Alhambra, and Pico-Union, Montebello, Pomona, Long Beach, and Orange County -- became less concentrated in the 1980s. For example, in 1970 two-thirds of all blacks in Orange County lived in the city of Santa Ana, a suburban ghetto. By 1990, Santa Ana contained only 13 percent of the more than 42,000 blacks in the county, and those concentrated less than 3 percent of the city's population. The only suburbs indicated on the map that are over 13 percent black are three military installations.
Black Population Change

Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties 1980 - 1990

Most evident from this map is the deconcentration of black (or African-American) settlement during the 1980s. Areas which declined in black population were areas which in 1980 had notably high proportions of blacks. People of Hispanic origin, usually from Mexico or Central America, expanded their own settlement area from the east into the areas left by the departing blacks. This appears to represent a filtering down of housing to a recently arrived, poor immigrant group -- a process of ethnic neighborhood succession that has been common in American cities over the last century.

The black population grew most in areas surrounding this major concentration, especially toward the west and the southeast. Indicative of this is the major expansion westward into Hawthorne where the proportion of blacks doubled during the 1980s (to 26 percent in 1990). Similarly, to the southeast of the ghetto, the city of Paramount changed from 3 percent black in 1980 to 11 percent black in 1990. In general, deconcentration brought those blacks who could afford to make the move into areas of better housing. Much less common were locally increasing black concentrations, as in the Sepulveda-Panorama City area of the San Fernando Valley, where both blacks and Latinos have crowded into neighborhoods which have grown by 70 percent since 1980.

Localized deconcentration also took place around outlying or suburban black concentrations, such as in Pacoima, Panorama, Monrovia, Pomona, and in the section of Long Beach adjacent to Signal Hill. Widely scattered dots showing increasing numbers of blacks in the San Gabriel Valley and Orange County represent suburbanization into areas without previously black settlement concentrations.

Many blacks who left areas of concentration moved out of Los Angeles County, either to surrounding counties like Orange or to other states. Thus, the number of blacks in Orange County increased 62 percent during the eighties. At the same time, part of the black population increase portrayed on this map represents new arrivals from other parts of the U. S. plus immigrants from such countries as Belize and Jamaica.
The late 19th-century focus of Mexican occupancy was near the historic city plaza just east of Downtown. Around World War I, development in that central area forced people of Mexican origin to start moving eastward into Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles, which evolved into one large barrio. Several tracts here have now become nearly 100 percent Hispanic. Inhabitants of the barrio have for decades tended to move further eastward when they could afford to do so, resulting in a predominantly Mexican "Eastside". Montebello, Pico Rivera, Duarte, and Covina have become home to more affluent and suburbanized Mexican-Americans.

The historic and current importance of industrial employment for people of Mexican origin has resulted in corridors of settlement defined by railroad arteries. The most important ones trend southeast to Santa Fe Springs and eastward to the city of Industry. Another runs northward through Pacoima and San Fernando. To the south of East Los Angeles, the arrival of Mexicans and Central Americans made the entire area on the east side of Alhambra Street south to Lynwood over two-thirds Hispanic. In just twenty years Bell and Bell Gardens have changed from 16 percent to 86 percent Hispanic.

Elsewhere there are often sharp variations between tracts or small groups of tracts in the percentage of Latinos — a striking mosaic usually reflecting social class differences. For instance, just southwest of Downtown is an immigrant reception area, especially for Central Americans. Many workers are employed on night-time cleaning crews in Downtown's high-rise office buildings, in furniture factories, and in garment industry sweatshops. This Latino area stops abruptly near the University of Southern California — a focus for white residents in an area otherwise dominated by blacks. In the older parts of Hollywood, Latino residents are in the majority as far west as Highland Avenue but not in the adjacent hills and the Los Feliz section. Thus, ethnic and cultural boundaries cross the city in intricate, evolving patterns.

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Hispanic Population Change
Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties
1980 - 1990

People of Hispanic origin are predominantly of Mexican, Central American, and other Spanish Latin American origins (Latinos). The most significant ethnic change over the last decade was the increase of over 1.3 million Latinos in Los Angeles and Orange counties. New arrivals, predominantly from Mexico and Central America, both legal immigrants and undocumented workers and their families, contributed to rapid population growth. Equally important, however, were the predominance of young adults and their high birth rate.

The traditional Mexican settlements of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles took in more new residents, as did the Pan-Union area, just southwest of downtown. A major development since 1970 was the settlement of thousands of poor Mexican and Central American immigrants in the industrial suburbs south of Vernon and the City of Commerce. By 1990 those five small cities were over 85 percent Latino, and Bell Gardens and Cudahy had the lowest per capita incomes of all the cities in L.A. County.

Latino in-movement in the 1980s was so strong that many people moved westward into South Central Los Angeles, often as far west as Vermont Avenue, renting or buying homes of those blacks who left the ghetto. To the west of this area, many Latinos moved into Leimert and Inglewood, changing the latter city from 18 percent Hispanic in 1980 to 38 percent Hispanic in 1990. In Orange County, many Latino immigrants have settled in Santa Ana.

Latino declines were highly localized, sometimes the result of specific urban renewal projects such as new apartment construction. In some cases these same tracts showed a major increase in whites (tracts in Sawtelle and San Pedro) or Asians (a tract in Lincoln Heights). The Latino population just west across the Harbor Freeway from downtown has declined because developers bought and then demolished many old houses as part of the planned Central City West renewal project. To the east in northern Monterey Park and adjacent Rosemead, the arrival of several thousand Asians resulted in declining numbers of both whites and Hispanics.

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The map shows a clear pattern of the more central, older areas having relatively few non-Hispanic whites. The areas with the lowest percentage of whites are areas with very large minority populations -- the Mexican area of Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles and the large black concentration of South Central Los Angeles.

In direct contrast, areas of recently built suburbs or especially expensive homes, often on view lots, tend to have the highest percentages of whites. For example, in the southern San Fernando Valley, whites are particularly predominant on the slopes of the Santa Monica Mountains and nearby valley areas, from Encino east to Studio City and Toluca Lake. A similar pattern appears in the hills above Hollywood and Beverly Hills, from Coldwater Canyon through Beverly Glen. Closer to the coast, Pacific Palisades and Brentwood show up as more white than adjacent Santa Monica. To the south of LAX the higher percentages of whites are evident in high-status Manhattan Beach, perhaps in part a remnant of the 1920s when black property owners were forced out of that city.

The map is misleading in showing such a high proportion of whites in the port area of Long Beach because that entire area represents just one tract where only 27 people live. It is a zone of shipping and warehousing -- of docks, heavy cranes, and storage for thousands of containers and automobiles from overseas.

In Orange County several sections stand out as having unusually high percentages of non-Hispanic whites. Along the coast are the more expensive view areas of Huntington Beach and Laguna Beach. Newport Beach -- easily the wealthiest city in Orange County -- contrasts sharply with much more diverse Costa Mesa to its north. Moreover, Orange County contains the two tracts with the highest percentage of whites in either county. Each is over 95 percent white. The first is quite an unusual area -- the retirement center of Leisure World in Seal Beach, two miles from the coast, where 95 percent of the residents, all at least 55 years of age. The second area is part of the Laguna Hills development in the southern part of the county between the Golf Club and Interstate 5.
White Population Change

Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties 1980 - 1990

The non-Hispanic white (sometimes called “Anglo”) population of Los Angeles County declined by over 330,000 during the 1980s; the same group in Orange County increased by only 44,000 – less than 3 percent. Out-migration, particularly from Los Angeles to other Southern California counties, plus a low birth rate and high average age explain the fact that whites are the only ethnic group of those mapped which is shrinking in numbers.

Because white decline was so widespread, it may be more illuminating to examine the areas which experienced an increase in whites. In general, white populations grew where there were either (1) new middle- and upper-income housing developments or (2) recent Soviet or Iranian immigrant or refugee concentrations.

As in previous decades, new homes were most commonly built on the fringes of the already built up areas. In Orange County the southward development of earlier decades continued. Suburbanization, led by both condominiums and single-family homes, transformed hills and valleys and the more expensive near-coast zones into the new cities of Laguna Niguel, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest (formerly El Toro), Mission Viejo, and Dana Point. Suburbanization was also widespread in the eastern San Gabriel Valley area, particularly in La Verne, in parts of Pomona, and in Diamond Bar.

The second reason for white population increase in certain places is the arrival of white immigrants and refugees, primarily from Iran and the Soviet Union. Most of the white growth in parts of Hollywood is due to the influx of Soviet Jews and Soviet Armenians, just as Jewish settlement in Westwood has increased that area’s white population. Similarly, Iranians, including many Jews, and Jews from the Soviet Union have settled in the southern portion of the San Fernando Valley. The southern part of the city of Glendale appears on the map as an especially important center of increasing white population. That area represents a step up for Armenians who arrived first in Hollywood and is perhaps the major focus of the growing Armenian population, particularly of those from Iran.
**Ethnic Diversity**

**Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties**

1990

This map shows the relative ethnic heterogeneity of tract populations as measured by the numbers reported in five groups: non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, Asians and Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and American Indians (including Eskimos and Aleuts). An excellent statistical measure of diversity, the entropy index, was calculated for each tract.* Entropy index values increase as the groups become more equal in number within a tract. High diversity in a tract does not imply that the different populations are socially or residentially mixed within the tract.

Los Angeles County as a whole is one of the most diverse counties in the entire United States. Greater ethnic diversity is often found in the meeting and mixing zones between different ethnic concentrations, as in Koreatown, which is only about 30 percent Asian. There, Latinos outnumber Asians in nearly all tracts, but both groups increased substantially during the 1980s as many white residents left. Another zone of unusually high diversity lies on the west side of the largest black concentration, from Hawthorne and Gardena southeast through Carson to Long Beach.

The map highlights some sharp local contrasts, usually closely related to differences in social class and housing costs. For instance, a central corridor of high diversity extends westward from Koreatown and Pico-Union to Venice, but to the north is very low diversity in the strongly white areas of Westwood and Beverly Hills.

Neve's suburban areas of the eastern San Gabriel Valley and the Pomona-Walnut area are typically highly diverse in contrast to most other areas of new homes on the urban fringes because whites, Latinos, and Asians have so frequently chosen to move eastward. The lowest ethnic diversity is found in the most homogeneous ethnic areas, which can be either white, black, or Hispanic. Asians are generally dispersed with the exception of Chinatown.

*For a description of the entropy index and its properties see Michael J. White, "Segregation and Diversity Measures in Population Distribution, Population Index v. 52, No. 2 (1986)."

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Ethnic Diversity Change

Metropolitan Los Angeles and Orange Counties
1980 - 1990

On the average both counties gained in diversity during the last decade, but this map identifies specific areas in which ethnic change during the 1980s has been most dramatic. Entropy indexes were calculated for all tracts for both 1980 and 1990. The 1980 values were subtracted from the 1990 values. Thus, tracts with much greater ethnic diversity in 1990 have larger positive scores, whereas tracts with decreasing diversity have higher negative scores.

In general, areas with large increases in diversity scores began to change ethnically in just the late 1970s or early 1980s and have lost the greatest proportion of whites and gained the most minorities. Although this map identifies such areas of recent change, there are no simple explanations as to why such changes occurred during different decades in different areas.

The city of Downey, long a bastion of white settlement, lost thousands of whites during the 1980s while tripling its black population (to 3 percent in 1990) and evolving from 15 percent Hispanic to 32 percent. To the south, Bellflower and north Long Beach became much more diverse as they experienced the same sort of change. Higher status Arcadia and wealthy San Marino had not been at all diverse in 1980, but so many Asians replaced departing whites that their diversity increased sharply. And eastward the next focus of greatly increased diversity during the eighties is Covina and West Covina where blacks, Asians, and Hispanics all moved in.

Areas with the major decreases in diversity are typically nearing the end of period of major ethnic recomposition and are solidifying ethnically with a single minority predominating, usually Latinos. This has occurred in parts of Pomona, for instance. The largest area of rapidly decreasing diversity was between Vernon and South Gate, where only a few elderly whites remained in an increasingly homogeneous Latino area. In Orange County, Santa Ana became less diverse because both whites and blacks left while Latino growth numerically overwhelmed the Asian increase. However, many tracts in Anaheim and Garden Grove became more diverse as whites moved out and both Asians and Latinos moved in.

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