

Age and Race: Washington D.C. over Twenty Years

The District of Columbia is a city of paradoxes: capital of the United States, yet not a state. Extreme poverty bordering extreme wealth. A beacon of freedom and democracy, yet with the highest violent crime rates in the nation. Mobile employees, but neighborhoods of generations long landholding and generations long confinement to the poverty cycle. Built to be the capital city of the United States, but designed by a Frenchman. Paradoxes, far more than just these, tell the story of Washington, District of Columbia. From the demographics of the city to its land use design, the city is divided along harsh lines of difference. While D.C. has seen major change in age, race, and income structures over the last thirty years, the same difference plays on, in wealthy suburbs and housing projects built just outside the city's boundaries. As a demographic entity the city of Washington could not be more divided, and this project seeks to show how that division has been and how it is preserved, even as the city itself sees change.

General Characteristics of Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. was founded by George Washington, and came to be the capital city in 1800. Once the White House was built and became the official seat of the Presidency, with President John Adams, the District grew to become a national and international city. With most U.S. government agencies headquartered and many nations having consulates or embassies in the city, D.C. serves a broad range of governmental functions. It is also the location of many major lobbies and interest groups to the nation's legislators. Today industry in the city is largely comprised of these governmental and lobbying functions, as well as a small but not insignificant amount of tourism. Less than 3% of the city's industry comes from manufacture (City-Data 2012).

The site of much slave trading through 1850, and subsequent black freedom in 1862, the District has been predominately black for almost all of its 200 year lifespan, and continues to be today. Though the black population has been falling for the last 50 years, African Americans still comprise a small racial majority. While American born blacks have become an increasingly smaller portion of the populace, African born blacks have been increasing in numbers, along with other immigrant groups from Asia and South America. Today Ethiopians represent one of the small portions of the black population which is growing, though Ethiopian blacks do have different demographic behaviors than American born blacks. As mentioned, Hispanic and Asian minorities have grown in the District over the last thirty years, as have whites. Though, even together, these minorities do not have the same population size as blacks.

As a rule, D.C. is not a family oriented city. Most householders employed in the city live outside of the district's boundaries; the age pyramid has always had fewer children and elderly than the nation as a whole, though some families do remain in the city their whole lives. More often, however, families live in the areas surrounding the city, in Virginia and Maryland, where housing can be found at a lower cost and the vision of the American Dream is more intact than in urban life.

To show a general view of major demographic characteristics of the District I will show it as compared to the nation as a whole, and to Denver, CO. Denver is a city of about the same size, the same non-white population, and roughly the same metropolitan area. Some characteristics of the District of Columbia, related to high poverty rates while also having high home values, can be simply because it is a largely urban area, and some of its features are consistent with other urban areas as much as are factors of itself.

	Washington, D.C.	Denver, CO	The United States
Median Household Income 2007-2011	\$61,835	\$47,499	\$52,762
% bachelor's degree or higher, of persons age 25+, 2007-2011	50.5	41.3	28.2
% Persons below poverty level 2007-2011	18.2	18.8	14.3
Population, 2010	601,723	600,008	308,745,538
% Black 2011	50.7	10.2	13.1
% White, not Hispanic 2011	35.3	52.2	63.4
% Persons under 18 years 2011	17.0	21.5	23.7
% Persons 65+ 2011	11.4	10.5	13.3

(U.S. Census Bureau 2012)

D.C. Race Structure over Time

For as far back as data go, the District of Columbia has had a black majority. Today that majority is in more peril than ever before. With only 50.7% of D.C.'s total, the black population retained its majority in 2011, however, trends appear that the majority will likely be gone well before the next census. In just twenty years, the black population in D.C. fell almost 15% (U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2012). Though the white population has grown in the same twenty year period (from 27.4% to 34.0%) the only national racial minority which saw its numbers fall was

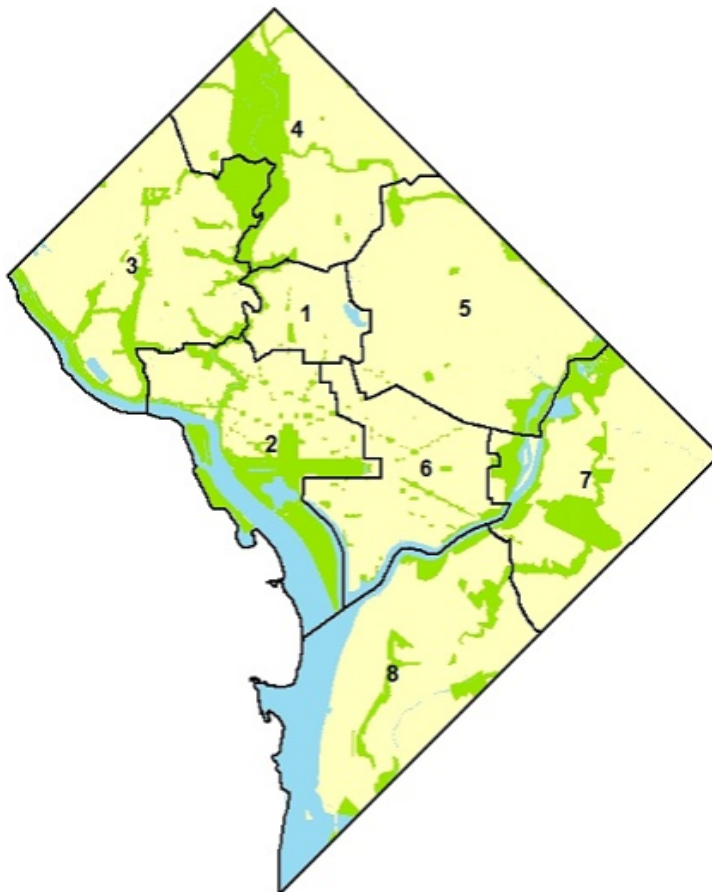
the black population. Hispanic, Asian, and foreign born populations grew from 1990 to 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2012; Neighborhood Info 2011).

	% Foreign Born Population
U.S. 1990	7.9
U.S. 2011	12.8
D.C. 1990	9.7
D.C. 2011	13.3

(U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2012)

Washington appears to have more in- and out-migration than local migration throughout the city. D.C. is divided into eight wards for administrative and legislative purposes. The wards are regional, though designed to represent roughly 80,000 people. Only three wards, 3, 7, and 8, have seen increases in the black population since 1980 and each increase was less than 2%, even though other wards have seen drops in the black community of upwards of 25% (wards 1 and 6, for example.) It is interesting that these wards saw a black increase as they are the three most extreme wards for the black community, with ward 3 only 6% black and wards 7 and 8 at least 92% black. These are also the only three wards which saw a drop in the white population. Every other ward saw an increase of at least 4% in the white population, and the city saw a total increase of 8% over that time (Neighborhood Info 2011). Individual wards seem to be moving in one of two patterns: those wards which have previously been the most balanced between white and black have seen significant increases in the white population since 1990 and significant decreases in the black population while those wards which were already heavily white or black inch closer and closer to becoming entirely black or entirely not black.

Washington D.C. Wards, 2012



Hispanics have increased in number in every ward since 1990, mimicking national standards (Neighborhood Info 2011; U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Again, it appears here that the immigration has come entirely from outside the city, and though some Hispanics may move from ward to ward, people of Hispanic origin are generally moving from outside the boundaries of the District into it.

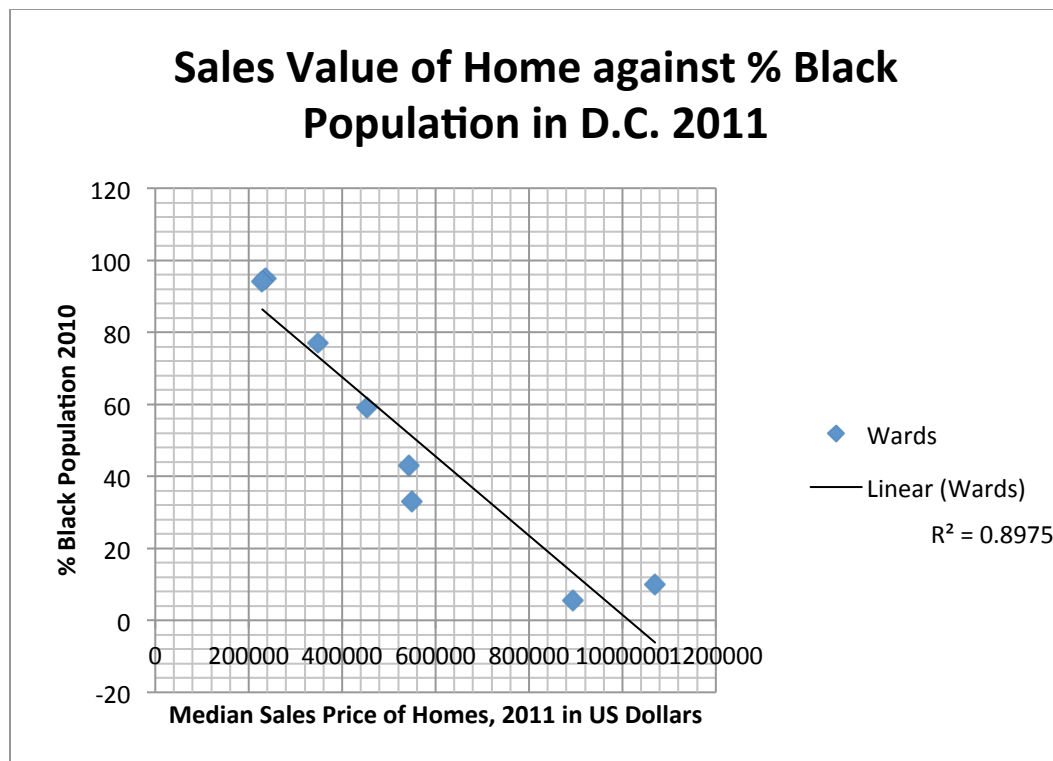
Racial Change over Time, by Ward

	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Ward 6	Ward 7	Ward 8
% population 2000-2010	3.8	21	4.7	1.0	3.8	7.2	2.5	-0.5
% Black 1990	60	19	4.9	79	86	66	96	92
% Black 2010	33	10	5.6	59	77	43	95	94
% White 1990	20	65	84	15	11	30	2.4	6.4
% White 2010	40	70	78	20	15	47	1.5	3.2
% Hisp 1990	18	9.6	7.0	4.2	1.4	3.0	0.9	1.1
% Hisp 2010	21	9.5	7.5	19	6.3	4.8	2.7	1.8
Poverty rate (%), 2005-09	16	15	7.1	9.9	19	18	27	34

(Neighborhood Info 2011)

While the racial structure of the city has changed, so has the value of land, the median income of households, and the violent and property crime rates (Neighborhood Info 2011). As the historically ill-treated and unequal African American community has moved out of the city land has been sold at higher rates and the median and average household incomes have grown. At the same time, violent and property crime rates throughout the city have fallen, and educational attainment has increased (Neighborhood Info 2011). The sociological perspective on this issue, however, may not be as simple as the city cleaning up its act and growing wealth. More likely, we have seen the increased dispossession of black owned land and ongoing processes of inequitable access to resources that is often found in largely black communities in historically black urban areas. Rather than reducing poverty and lack of education as far as the numbers go, recent changes to D.C. crime rates maybe because the poverty has moved out of the city rather than disappeared. Similar processes have occurred throughout history in other urban centers in America. Jeffrey Timberlake found similar processes on a study of Atlanta (2007), and Beeman, Glasberg, and Casey found further evidence of black inequality in the housing market in 2011. D.C. fits the profile for general inequality of land value and education.

The following graph shows the stark trend between home values and the size of the black population in the city. A linear regression between the percent black population in each of the individual wards and the median sales price of the homes in each respective ward (in 2010 USD) has an r^2 value of 0.8975 and a correlation of 0.9474. Such an extremely high rate of correlation does not show a causal linkage but does make it clear that the racial makeup of a community and the property values of that community are not unrelated through some number of variables.



(Neighborhood Info 2011)

D.C. and Migration to the 'burbs

While the black community has moved out of central D.C. the black communities of neighboring regions have also moved. White, Hispanic, and black communities throughout Northern Virginia and Southern Maryland have seen trends of migration in the last two decades as well. These trends follow patterns very similar to the racial migration found in Washington. I.E. places of higher property values continue to be increasingly populated by whites and as the values increase the black communities formerly in those areas move further away from the city and urban centers.

The City of Alexandria and the County of Arlington, both in Virginia, which have seen growth in education, population, home values, and household income over the last twenty years

have seen a corresponding decrease and stagnation of black community, while Prince George's County of Maryland, a county with a black majority as early as 1990, has seen a significant increase in black population over the last twenty years (U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2012). These counties follow the patterns outlined previously for the wards of D.C.: regions which are moving towards increased black population or almost complete lack of black population.

Alexandria, Arlington, and Prince George's are all municipalities which share a direct border with D.C. Counties further from the changing city structure are behaving differently than the bifurcated trend seen in, and immediately near to, the District. The counties which are further from the urban and growing centers of Alexandria, Arlington, and the District itself are, by and large, seeing increases in the black population as black are forced out of the urban centers due to rising property values. The relatively southern Virginia county of Stafford and relatively western Maryland counties of Montgomery and Frederick, once distant exurbs of D.C., are seeing growing numbers of the percent black population as the home values in the interior suburbs grow beyond the perceived lending power of the black communities at large.

Migration out of the expansive, valuable inner-city of the black community is significant for several reasons. First, it seriously inhibits the ability of community organizers outside of the city, in the places to which the poverty is pushed, to plan and accommodate increasing numbers of people. Housing is pressured, as is need based aid to families. Not only that, but it removes people from the lands on which they have long lived. Communities are splintered and the means of safekeeping for that community are lost. Further, moving the neediest population out of one group's hands gives a false positive of progress. Though some of the population may be more educated now than ever before, it is difficult to know if teens who were born in D.C. twenty years ago have actually improved their educational attainment, or if the people who live there

now have always had different access to education, thus creating a sense of improving graduation rates. To fully understand the educational attainment of at-risk teens who were born in D.C. twenty years ago we need to verify the educational attainment of teens in Prince George's county in Maryland and Fairfax and Stafford Counties in Virginia. The problems associated with poverty and inequitable access to human, educational, and financial resources can be difficult to pin down and those difficulties are only exacerbated by the movement of poor, urban populations across regional boundaries.

Racial Change over Time, DC and Metro Region

	DC	Alexandria	Arlington	Fairfax	Stafford	Montgomery	Prince George's	Frederick
% Black 1990	65.8	21.9	10.5	7.7	7.0	12.2	50.7	5.3
% Black 2011	51	21.8	9.1	9.9	17.7	18.2	65.4	9.2
% Non-Hispanic White 1990	27.4	64.3	69.5	77.4	89.4	72.4	41.6	92.4
% Non-Hispanic White 2011	35	53.5	64	54.1	67.4	48.7	15.2	77.3
% Hispanic 1990	5.4	9.7	13.5	6.3	2.0	7.4	4.1	1.1
% Hispanic 2011	9.1	16.1	15.2	15.8	9.5	17.5	15.2	7.6

(U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2012)

D.C. Age Structure over Time

The family structure of Washington has also changed over the last twenty years. Today, the District has become much more young family oriented. Though the number of people over the age of 65 has shrunk, (from 13.5% in 1990 to 11.4% in 2011) the number of children has grown. With only 9.7% of the population under the age of 18 in 1990, now 17% of the population is under 18. This number also reflects an increase in the size of the public education system in Washington, D.C. over the same twenty year period (U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2012). The dependency ratio in D.C. (calculated for persons 0-18 and those over 65 years of age against the rest of the population) is 40.0, while the rest of the U.S. (in the same terms) has a dependency ratio of 58.7. D.C. may have seen a growth in the number of children, but it is still a highly professional community more than a family space (U.S. Census Bureau 2012).

Even with the exorbitant poverty and violent crime rates, Washington has invested heavily into its education system (Neighborhood Info 2011). At the behest of the District's new mayor, D.C. has embarked upon an aggressive and well funded public education reform plan. Both in terms of student outcomes and technology, program, and infrastructure improvement, the reform plan has thus far been very effective (The District of Columbia 2012). At this time, three years in, the city has vastly increased high school graduation rates and enrollment rates, though the enrollment numbers likely reflect the change in age structure as much as the change in educational structure, as mentioned above. The D.C. public education system currently serves over 72,000 students. With a focus on community equity, the plan has been founded on instruction and leadership plans to work with students closely to increase their abilities to learn, regardless of their situation outside of the classroom.

Graduation Rates in D.C. over Time

	% High School Graduation Rate
DC 1988	58.2
DC 2009	72.0

(Matthews 1991; Robinson 2010)

D.C. and the 2012 Election

Historically and infinitely Democratic, the 2012 election did not bring any surprises for the District of Columbia. Washington reelected President Obama with 91% of their vote. In fact, only 7% of the city voted for Mitt Romney in this election (D.C. Board of Elections 2012). The District voted with the widest division in the U.S. on the presidential race (Silver 2012). In the race for the non-voting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives the Democratic candidate, Eleanor Holmes Norton, received well over 88% of the vote. And though the Libertarian candidate, Bruce Majors, did receive just over 5% of the vote, there was not a Republican Party candidate in the race. The same is true of the second shadow seat to the U.S. House, no Republican had a viable enough option to run for the seat. The five D.C. Council seats which were up for grabs this year all went to Democrats, who faced more pressure from the D.C. Statehood Green Party than from any Republicans. Democrat Muriel Bowser won her Ward Four seat with only 933 votes against her, more than 33,000 for (D.C. Board of Elections). Ward Four is in Northwest D.C.

The bottom line of all the preceding numbers is that Washington is a haven for Democrats. Though not a state, and extremely limited in its ability to legislate for itself, it is

progressively minded and open on all fronts. D.C.'s age, race, and educational structures predispose it to be so. Predominately black, 50.7% of the population, and with a growing Hispanic population, now at almost 10%, the racial makeup tends itself to the left (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Blacks and Hispanics voted with the President at rates of 93% and 71%, respectively (Washington Post 2012). Further, the entire city is considered urban, making it entirely more likely to vote with the Democratic Party, as urban areas voted with the President at over 60% in this election (Washington Post 2012).

Age and Race in D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the seat of the United States government. Arguably, it is the seat of the largest economy in the world and the seat of hegemonic military strength in this increasingly interdependent world. D.C. is a beautiful city, with gleaming monuments, memorials, and museums, with the streets of Georgetown as a vision of the American upper-class, and with Capitol Hill and U Street melting pots of the many different ethnicities and ways of life of American culture. Nevertheless, D.C. is also a city plagued by poverty and violence, by inequitable access to capital and educational resources, and by an ongoing and never ending cycle of poverty. Today that poverty has been forced out of the city more aggressively than ever, and the once entirely middle class suburbs of Maryland and Virginia are being forced to absorb that poverty, imperfectly. Changes in the age and race structures of the District of Columbia have happened continuously over the last several decades, and the outcomes of those changes haven't happened yet. The period of change in which the city finds itself is ongoing and tumultuous and the end point is not completely foreseeable or necessarily positive for the entire D.C. metro region.

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