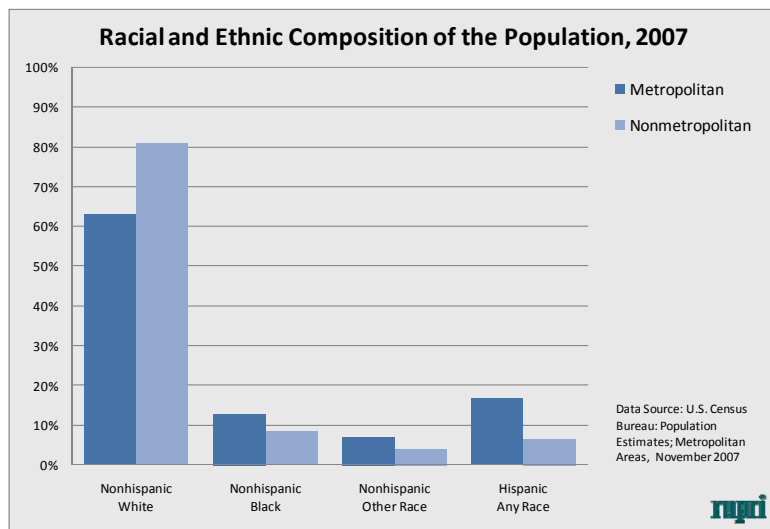


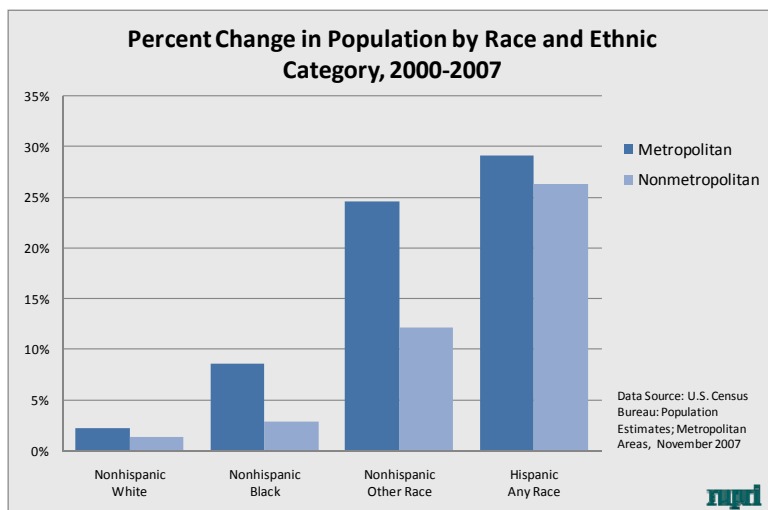
Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Population

Recently the U.S. Census Bureau released estimates of county population by age, gender, race, and ethnicity. This data brief summarizes the data on county racial and ethnic composition, and shows how the composition of many counties in the U.S. has changed during this decade.

Trends that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s have continued into this decade. While nonhispanic whites make up the majority of the population in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas, the share of minorities is increasing in both areas. In 2000, Hispanics accounted for the largest minority



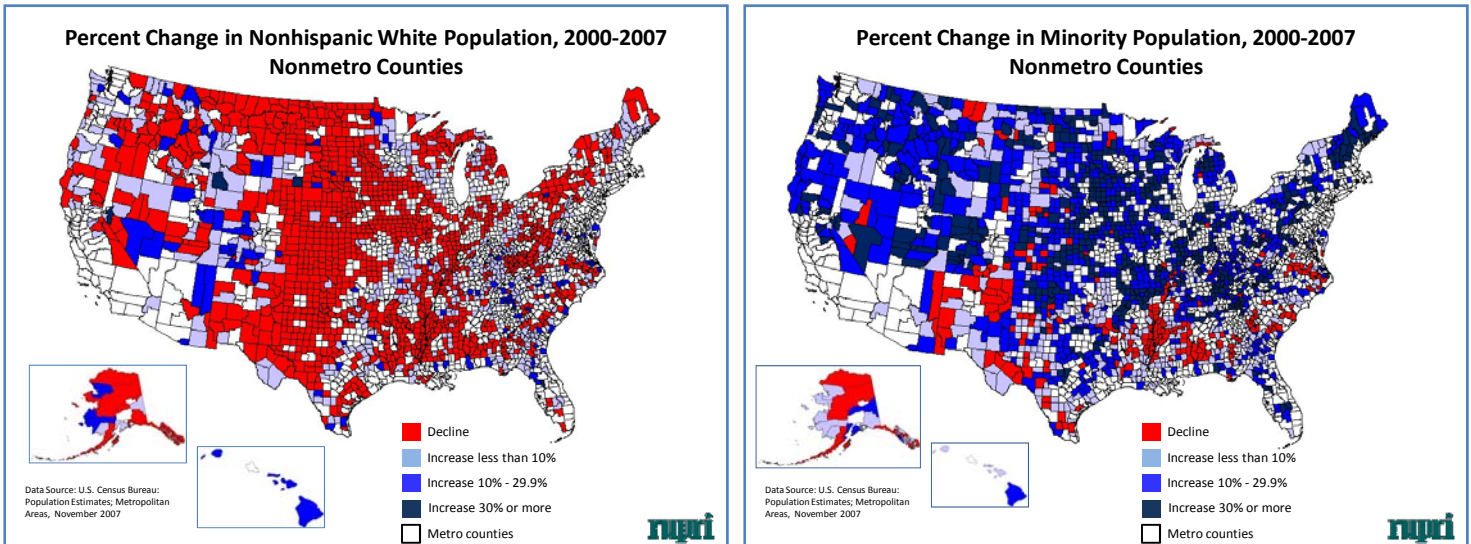
share of population, at just over 14 percent of the total population. By 2007, this figure increased to 15.1 percent of the total population. While the majority of Hispanics reside in metropolitan areas, Hispanics are accounting for an increasing share of the nonmetropolitan population – 3.7 percent in 1990, 5.4 percent in 2000, and 6.6 percent in 2007.



Between 2000 and 2007, Hispanics experienced the largest population gains. Total population increased 7.2 percent during this time, but the Hispanic population increased by 28.9 percent. Within both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties, the smallest population gains were among the nonhispanic white population, increasing just 2.2 percent in metro counties and 1.3 percent in nonmetro counties. In both areas, the largest gains were

among the Hispanic population, increasing 29.2 percent in metro areas and 26.3 percent in nonmetro areas over the decade. In many counties, a decline in the nonhispanic white population was offset with gains, often substantial, in Hispanic or other minority populations.

The following two maps show the population change in the nonhispanic white population and the total minority population (racial and ethnic minorities) in each nonmetro county from 2000 to 2007. Of the 2,049 nonmetropolitan counties, two thirds experienced declines in the nonhispanic white population during this time period, while only 12 percent of nonmetro counties experienced declines in minority populations. Likewise, while only 33 percent of nonmetro counties experienced gains in the nonhispanic white population, 88 percent of nonmetro counties experienced gains in the minority populations. Minority populations include all Hispanics plus all nonhispanic nonwhites.



In many counties, minorities account for a much larger share of population than averages show. In 2007, 223 counties had populations in which minorities made up the majority of the population, and 159 of these counties are nonmetropolitan. These counties are distributed widely across the U.S., and different geographic regions represent different population distributions. Counties in the southwestern U.S. are made up primarily of Hispanic populations, the counties in the southeast are largely represented by African American populations, and the counties in the Great Plains are made up of Native American populations.

