

Young and Restless 2011

Talented young adults are increasingly choosing to settle in the close-in neighborhoods of the nation's metropolitan areas. Since 2000, the number of college-educated 25 to 34 year-olds has increased twice as fast in the close-in neighborhoods of the nation's large cities as in the remainder of these metropolitan areas.

In the aggregate, in the nation's largest metro areas, the number of young adults with a four-year degree living in close-in neighborhoods increased 26 percent since 2000. Outside these close-in neighborhoods, the number of young adults with a four-year degree increased only half as fast, about 13 percent.

These close-in neighborhoods, which on average account for less than five percent of the nation's metropolitan population, accounted for about 20 percent of the growth in college educated young adults over the past decade.

The trend to close-in living is apparent in almost every metropolitan area. The college educated young adult population increased faster in these close-in neighborhoods than in the remainder of the metropolitan area in 36 of the 51 large metropolitan areas examined.

Overall, the number of college educated young adults increased about 13 percent since 2000. In 19 metropolitan areas, the increase in the number of college educated young adults increased at least three times faster than in the nation as a whole (i.e. by 39 percent or more).

Urban cores attracted increased numbers of young adults even in metropolitan areas that were losing population and hemorrhaging talented young workers. Cleveland and Detroit, both of which experienced an exodus of 25 to 34 year-olds over the past decade, saw an increase in the number of young adults with a college degree in their close-in neighborhoods. (In both of these cases, the numerical increases were from small bases, but show that the urban core is attractive even in these economically troubled regions).

Overall these close-in neighborhoods have higher levels of educational attainment among their young adult population than the overall metropolitan areas of which they are a part. The college attainment rate of young adults living in close-in neighborhoods in the largest metropolitan areas increased to 52 percent from 43 percent in 2000. Outside the three-mile urban core, educational attainment rates increased slightly from about 31 percent to about 34 percent.

This pattern varies across metropolitan areas. Most large metropolitan areas now have higher levels of education attainment among young adults living in the urban core than among young adults living in the rest of the metropolitan area. Some 34 of the 51 metropolitan areas have higher levels of young adult educational attainment in the core than in the rest of the metro, up from 30 in 2000.

In five metropolitan areas—Boston, Chicago, New York, San Francisco and Washington—at least two-thirds of the young adults living in close-in urban neighborhoods have at least a four-year college degree.

The relative preference for urban living among young adults, and especially well-educated young adults, increased sharply over the past decade. In 2000, young adults with a four-year degree were about 61 percent more likely to live in close in urban neighborhoods than their counterparts with less education. Now, these well educated young adults are about 94 percent more likely to live in these close-in urban neighborhoods. This relative preference for close-in neighborhoods increased in 45 of the 51 large metropolitan areas examined.

Data for this report are taken from the recently released 2005-2009 American Community Survey and reflect changes in population distribution patterns since Census 2000. The 51 metropolitan areas all have a population of one million or more. The data were collected in annual surveys undertaken each year from 2005 to 2009 and represent the average annual values over that five-year period.

Close-in neighborhoods were defined using GIS software and Census Tract data to estimate the number of persons living within three miles of the center of the central business district of each metropolitan area. The federal government now uses a different set of boundaries to define metropolitan areas than were used in Census 2000. This report adjusts Census 2000 data to reflect the newer “Core Based Statistical Areas” used in reporting the 2005-2009 American Community Survey.

The number of young adults with a four-year degree increased by 1.4 million since 2000. The nation’s 51 largest metropolitan areas—those with a population of one million or more—accounted for three-fourths of the net increase in college educated young adults over the past decade.

Overall, the number of college educated young adults increased about 13 percent since 2000. In 19 metropolitan areas, the growth rate in the number of college educated young adults was at least three times in close-in neighborhoods faster than in the nation as a whole (i.e. by 39 percent or more).

Since 2000, the close-in neighborhoods of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas have added a net of about 200,000 college educated young adults. This is net of the number of persons that aged out of this group or moved out of these neighborhoods.

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Percentage Growth in 25 to 34 Year Old Population with a Four-Year Degree, 2000 to 2005-09, by Metropolitan Area, Close in Neighborhoods and Balance of MSA

Metropolitan Area	Close-In	Rest of MSA
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA (MSA)	61%	7%
Austin-Round Rock, TX (MSA)	24%	40%
Baltimore-Towson, MD (MSA)	66%	13%
Birmingham-Hoover, AL (MSA)	-12%	15%
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH (MSA)	40%	-2%
Buffalo-Niagara Falls, NY (MSA)	27%	7%
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC (MSA)	34%	20%
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI (MSA)	33%	5%
Cincinnati-Middletown, OH-KY-IN (MSA)	28%	10%
Cleveland-Elyria-Mentor, OH (MSA)	49%	-10%
Columbus, OH (MSA)	45%	23%
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX (MSA)	56%	12%
Denver-Aurora-Broomfield, CO (MSA)	25%	-1%
Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI (MSA)	59%	-8%
Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford, CT (MSA)	8%	0%
Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown, TX (MSA)	62%	18%
Indianapolis-Carmel, IN (MSA)	83%	14%
Jacksonville, FL (MSA)	41%	35%
Kansas City, MO-KS (MSA)	50%	15%
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV (MSA)	19%	59%
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA (MSA)	55%	22%
Louisville-Jefferson County, KY-IN (MSA)	10%	19%
Memphis, TN-MS-AR (MSA)	26%	8%
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Pompano Beach, FL (MSA)	68%	18%
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI (MSA)	38%	8%
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI (MSA)	23%	10%
Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN (MSA)	41%	21%
New Orleans-Metairie-Kenner, LA (MSA)	-24%	-7%
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA (MSA)	13%	14%
Oklahoma City, OK (MSA)	5%	29%
Orlando-Kissimmee, FL (MSA)	28%	34%
Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD (MSA)	57%	10%
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ (MSA)	14%	32%
Pittsburgh, PA (MSA)	40%	9%
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA (MSA)	22%	25%
Providence-New Bedford-Fall River, RI-MA (MSA)	38%	5%
Raleigh-Cary, NC (MSA)	28%	25%
Richmond, VA (MSA)	16%	12%
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA (MSA)	65%	66%
Rochester, NY (MSA)	8%	-6%
Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville, CA (MSA)	28%	31%
St. Louis, MO-IL (MSA)	87%	16%
Salt Lake City, UT (MSA)	21%	44%
San Antonio, TX (MSA)	7%	23%
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA (MSA)	54%	23%
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA (MSA)	5%	1%
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA (MSA)	10%	-6%
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA (MSA)	24%	17%
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL (MSA)	21%	32%
Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, VA-NC (MSA)	15%	12%
Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV (MSA)	31%	9%
Total, 51 Largest Metro Areas	26%	13%

Source: Impresa calculations from Census 2000 and 2005-09 American Community Survey