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## Among the races, income gaps closing unevenly

By Bill Dedman, Globe Correspondent, 8/27/2002

**T**he warm economic winds of the 1990s filled the sails of people of all races in Massachusetts, but not equally, according to new data from the 2000 Census. Asians and Native Americans closed some of the income gap separating them from whites, while blacks and Latinos still trailed far behind.

The good news for all groups was that incomes rose faster than inflation. After taking inflation into account, household incomes in the state rose by 2 percent for blacks, 6 percent for non-Hispanic whites, 7 percent for Hispanics, 14 percent for Asians, and 25 percent for Native Americans, according to census figures analyzed by The Boston Globe.

These changes left blacks earning 64 cents on the dollar compared with non-Hispanic whites, down from 66 cents at the beginning of the decade; Hispanics 51 cents, unchanged; Asians 97 cents, up from 90 cents, and Native Americans 69 cents, up from 59 cents. The median household incomes reported for 1999 were \$53,051 for non-Hispanic whites, \$33,727 for blacks, \$27,300 for Hispanics, \$51,273 for Asians, and \$36,810 for Native Americans.

Gaps in the quality of life may be increasing more rapidly than the income gap, according to an analysis of the new data by researchers at the State University of New York at Albany. The researchers looked at the neighborhoods where the average person of each race and ethnicity lived, and found that the typical black and Hispanic residents live in areas with generally lower education, more poverty, and lower rates of homeownership than the neighborhoods where whites typically live. These differences, in turn, may translate into higher crime rates and other measures of quality of life.

"How people do in life doesn't depend entirely on their own income, but what quality of life are they able to achieve with that income," said John R. Logan, professor of sociology and director of the university's Lewis Mumford Center, which studies segregation patterns. "What kind of schools their children will go to, how secure the neighborhood is, how fast their homes appreciate in value. Minorities, regardless of their own incomes, tend to live in neighborhoods that offer less in these respects."

These gaps between whites and the other racial groups increased in the past decade in the Boston metropolitan area, Logan said, both in the suburbs and in the cities Boston, Cambridge, Lynn, Waltham, Gloucester, and surrounding areas. Boston's pattern is similar to those in most metro areas, Logan said.

While Hispanics in the Boston area are living in quite similar neighborhoods to blacks, Hispanics are doing better than their low average income would suggest. As a group, Hispanics are about \$6,000 behind blacks in median household income, yet they are equal in access to neighborhoods with high rates of home ownership and education. Analysts say that shows that Hispanics are less segregated from whites, more likely than blacks to live in white neighborhoods. "That does suggest that Hispanics, despite their lower incomes, are able to get into better neighborhoods," Logan said.

Asians, a fast-growing group in the state, have drawn nearly even with whites in income. And the typical Asian lives in a better-educated neighborhood than the typical white. But Asians still trail whites on most social indicators, living in areas with more poverty and less homeownership than whites.

"The Asian case is interesting, because in many metro areas, after we control for the income levels, Asians were living in better neighborhoods than whites, but whites are catching up," Logan said. "In Boston, Asians were a little bit behind and now are further

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behind whites."

Why is the quality-of-life gap increasing? The researchers suspect that middle-income blacks and Hispanics would prefer to live in neighborhoods with people of similar education and income levels, but housing discrimination keeps them out.

"We always knew there was segregation, a dual housing market," he said. "What we're discovering is that minorities live not only in different neighborhoods, but even when you control for income, they live in worse neighborhoods."

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