

A Tale of Three Cities:

What the Census Says About the District and How We Must Respond

MAY 2011



kids
count

DC ACTION FOR CHILDREN
ISSUE BRIEF

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INTRODUCTION

The future of Washington, D.C., is writ small in the faces of our young children, who in turn reflect the context in which they grow up: their family, their community and their city. In the past decade, the nation's capital has changed dramatically, experiencing its first population growth since the 1950's. The District has become wealthier, as well as more racially and ethnically diverse. A housing boom, continued robust development in and around the city and an education reform effort that captured the nation's attention have sparked a wave of revitalization (or some say gentrification). Overall, D.C. has fared better than most cities during the recent recession, with the federal government supporting the strongest job market in the nation.

But the positive change hasn't been shared across the District, where there is a widening gulf that divides low-income residents from their wealthy neighbors. The average family income in Ward 3 in the Northwest is nearly six times higher than in Ward 8, east of the Anacostia River. Since the recession, we have also seen an increase in child poverty, driven almost exclusively by a rise in poverty among black children in the District. Overall, nearly three in ten children live below the federal poverty threshold — for black children the rate is 38 percent.

However the familiar tale of two cities misses the nuance between the extremes that has emerged over the past decade. Economic development has made some D.C. neighborhoods more diverse, constituting a "third city" with a rapidly changing demographic profile. In Wards 1, 4, 5 and 6 — neighborhoods such as Columbia Heights, Mount Pleasant, Petworth, Shaw, Bloomingdale and along the H Street corridor in Capitol Hill — young professionals and families are buying and refurbishing homes and the immigrant and Hispanic population is growing and spreading beyond its traditional core. While in some areas rising rents and home prices have pushed out older residents and families who have lived here for generations, others are staying and benefiting from changes such as new libraries, grocery stores, retail and restaurants, as well as safer streets and improving schools.



Looking closely at data from the recent 2010 Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey (ACS)¹, we see that:

- D.C.'s population growth has been powered by jumps in the population of non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics and non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islanders;
- The number of young children (under 5) is on the rise, although the entire under-18 population is shrinking;
- Child poverty declined during the mid-decade housing boom but has increased since the recession, especially among black children; and
- While the income gap is growing and poverty continues to be concentrated east of the river, some D.C. neighborhoods are more economically diverse than a decade ago.

1. Unless otherwise noted, statistics throughout this brief are derived from data tabulated by Neighborhood Info DC drawn from: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Censuses; and U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data is available from detailed tables available from the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder (http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en).

NOTE: As of April 13, 2011 the U.S. Census Bureau had only released Census 2010 data on population distribution and change since 2000 for the total population, by adults/children (18 and older and under 18), by race, and by Hispanic origin. Therefore we use American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates for 2005-2009 to draw cross-time comparisons for all other data in this brief. The one exception is the child poverty data by race/ethnicity, in which we examined single-year ACS data for 2007 and 2009. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, while it is generally possible to compare these data, "there are differences in the universe, question wording, residence rules, reference periods, and the way in which the data are tabulated which can impact comparability." Further, because the ACS figures are based on survey data, caution must be used in comparing across years or places, as the margin of error may indicate that seemingly disparate numbers fall within sampling error. We therefore follow the Bureau's guidelines and only compare those data which are directly comparable or are comparable with caution. See the U.S. Census Bureau's published tables for detailed margins of error. For full explanation of the cautions relevant to the 2009 ACS subjects and topics, visit http://www.census.gov/acs/www/guidance_for_data_users/comparing_2009/.

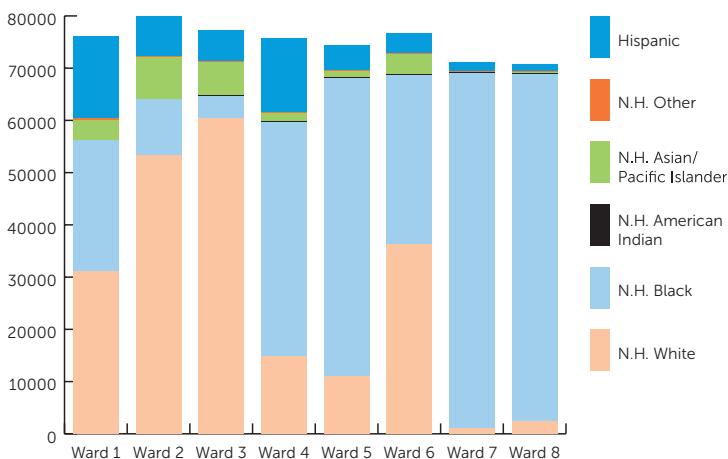
SECTION ONE

D.C.'s Total Population Has Increased and Is More Diverse

Census data show that D.C.'s total population has grown by nearly 30,000 since 2000 to 601,000, reversing 60 years of continuous decline.

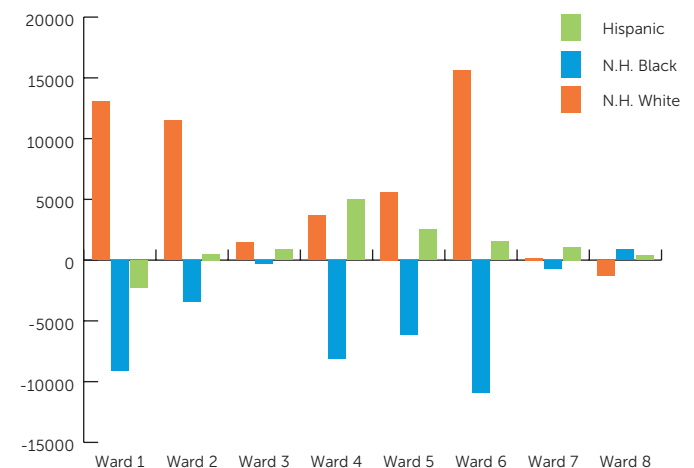
- Except for a slight dip in Ward 8, the population increased in all wards, but most significantly in Wards 2 and 6.
- D.C. has also grown more diverse over the past decade, with significant increases in non-Hispanic whites (31 percent), Hispanics (22 percent), and non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islanders (49 percent). Meanwhile, the non-Hispanic black population has decreased by 11 percent, or 38,000 people, since 2000.²
- In the last decade, the historically majority white Ward 3 has become more solidly white, with a six-percent decrease in its black population. Ward 8, which remains almost exclusively black, has lost roughly a third of its already small white population.
- Ward 7's large black majority has decreased slightly, with an uptick in white and Hispanic residents. In particular, Hispanics have almost doubled to nearly 1,000, but this is still a small percentage of the overall Ward 7 population.
- The Hispanic population has declined by 12 percent in Ward 1, its traditional core, and has expanded in Wards 4, 5 and 6. Ward 4 saw the largest influx, with a 54 percent increase, or 5,000 people. The Hispanic population has grown by 2,500 in Ward 5 and 1,500 in Ward 6.
- D.C.'s foreign-born population has held steady at about 13 percent of the total population. It has decreased by three percentage points in Wards 1 and 3 (to 25 percent in Ward 1 and 17 percent in Ward 3), while it ticked up in Ward 4 (from 18 percent to 19 percent), Ward 5 (from five percent to seven percent) and Ward 6 (from seven percent to eight percent).

Figure 1. Ward Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

Figure 2. Change in Ward Population by Largest Race/Ethnicity Categories, 2000–2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Census. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

2. The Census asks respondents to separately identify their **race** and their **ethnicity**. For Census 2000 and 2010, respondents were given a choice of six racial categories: White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and "some other race"; and two ethnicity categories: "Hispanic or Latino" and "not Hispanic or Latino." We have combined race/ethnicity to create mutually exclusive non-Hispanic and Hispanic categories. The Hispanic category includes people from all races (white, black, American Indian, Asian, etc.)

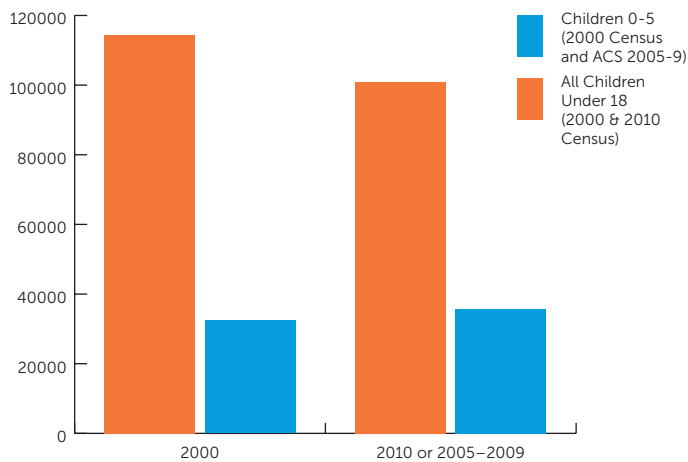
SECTION TWO

The Number of Young Children Is On the Rise, While the Total Under-18 Population is Shrinking

There are nearly 14,000 fewer children and youth under 18 living in D.C. than in 2000, but the number of children under five has increased by an estimated 11 percent. There are now 101,000 children, meaning one in six residents is under 18.

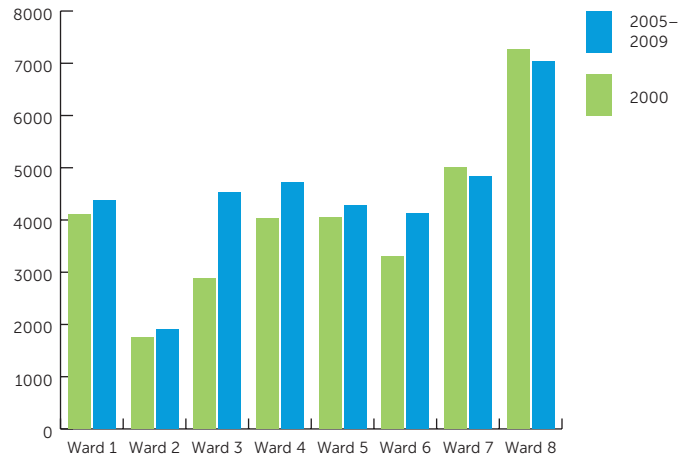
- Over half of all children are under 10 years old and children under age five are the largest group, at 31 percent.
- The population of young children (under age five) increased in all wards except Wards 7 and 8, both of which saw a five-percent decrease.
- Wards 7 and 8 hold the greatest share of the District’s total child population (39 percent, combined), and this holds true across all age ranges under 18.
- Since 2000, Ward 1’s total child population has dropped the most dramatically, but only Ward 3 saw an increase in its total child population with a 60 percent spike in young children under age five and an over 30 percent increase in older children (five to 17 years).

Figure 3. Total D.C. Children Under 18 and Children 0 to 5, 2000 vs 2010 or 2005-2009



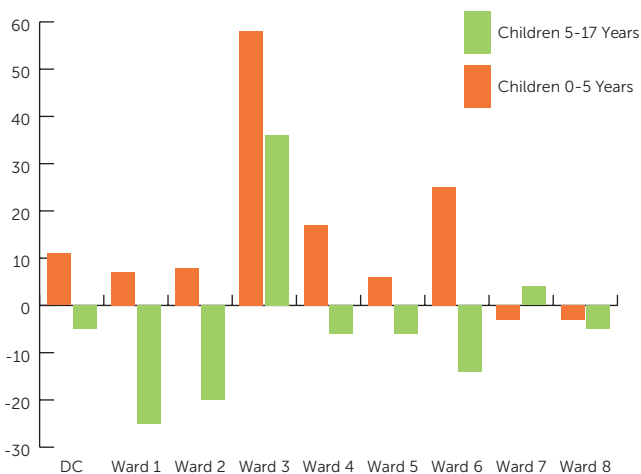
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Decennial Censuses, and American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

Figure 4. D.C. Children 0 to 5 Years by Ward, 2000 vs 2005-2009



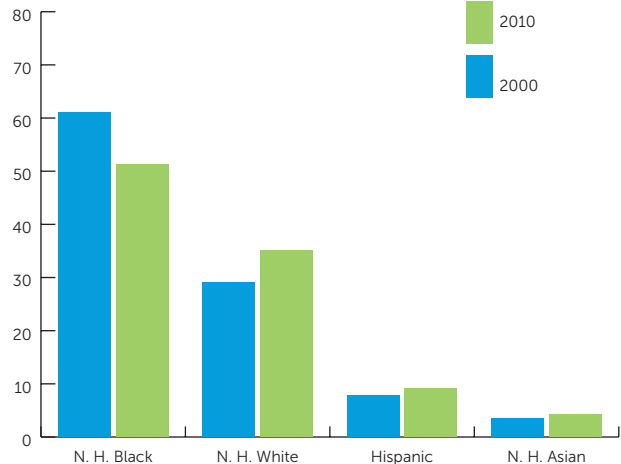
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

Figure 5. Percent Change Children by Age Category, 2000 vs 2005-2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Decennial Census and American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

Figure 6. Percent of Child Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2000 vs 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

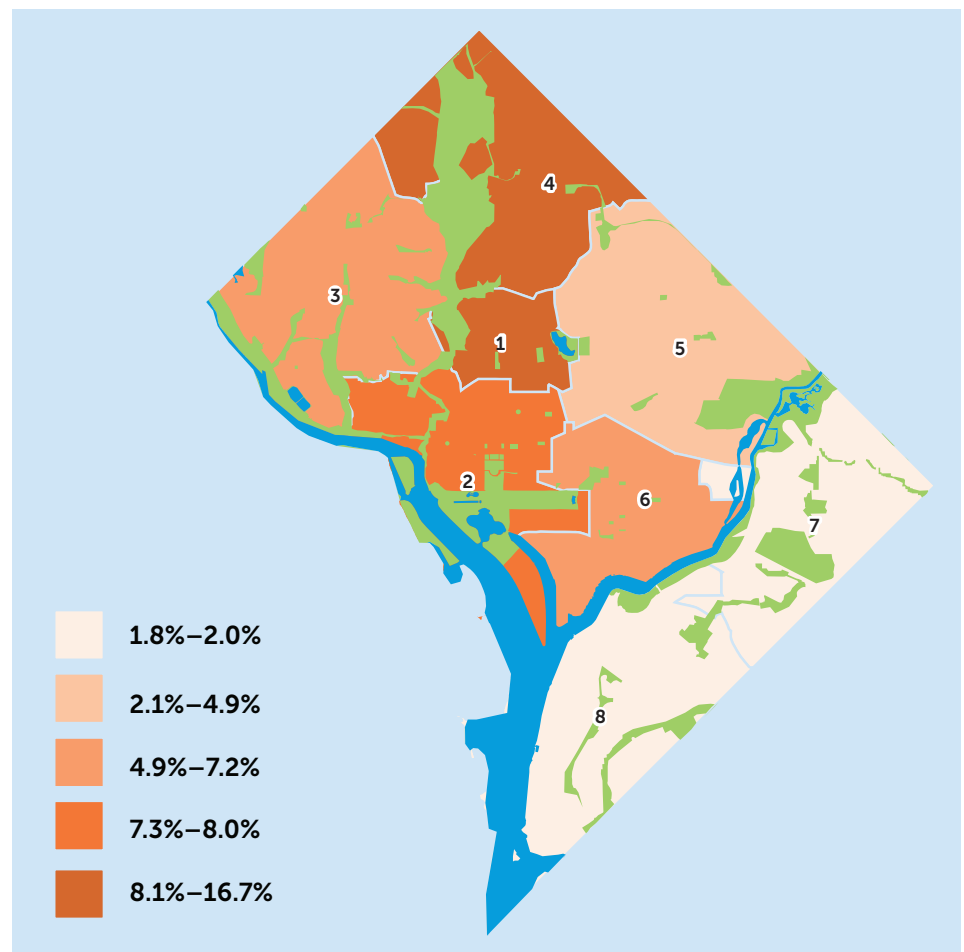
The racial and ethnic composition of D.C.'s child population largely mirrors that of the total population citywide and within each ward, and has seen changes similar to the total population since 2000. (See figure 6 on prior page.)

- Just over 50 percent of children under 18 are non-Hispanic black, followed by 35 percent non-Hispanic white, nine percent Hispanic, and four percent non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander.
- The share of children who are black has decreased most significantly, from 61 percent in 2000, while the share of those who are white rose from 29 percent. The shares of those who are Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander also inched upward.

The language that children ages 5 to 17 speak at home largely reflects that of the total population.

- Nearly 90 percent of children between ages 5 and 17 speak English at home.
- Spanish is the second most prevalent home language in the District, at eight percent.
- Spanish-speaking children are most heavily concentrated in Wards 4 and 1. Just over 2,000 children in Ward 4 (16 percent) speak Spanish at home, and approximately 1,600 children in Ward 1 (18 percent) are Spanish-speakers.
- Wards 7 and 8 have the fewest Spanish speaking children, with just over 400 in Ward 7 (two percent) and nearly 300 in Ward 8 (two percent).

Figure 7. Share of People 5+ Years Who Speak Spanish at Home Within Each Ward



Source: American Community Survey (2005-2009). Prepared by NeighborhoodInfo DC (04/5/11).

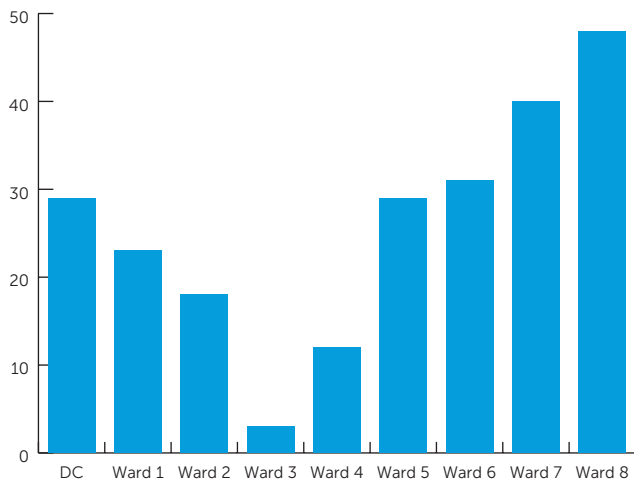
SECTION THREE

Child Poverty Declined During the Mid-Decade but Increased During the Recession

The District’s child poverty rate decreased three percent overall since 2000, from 32 percent to 29 percent, but this masks a recent spike since the beginning of the recession in 2007. There also continue to be alarming disparities by race and ethnicity.

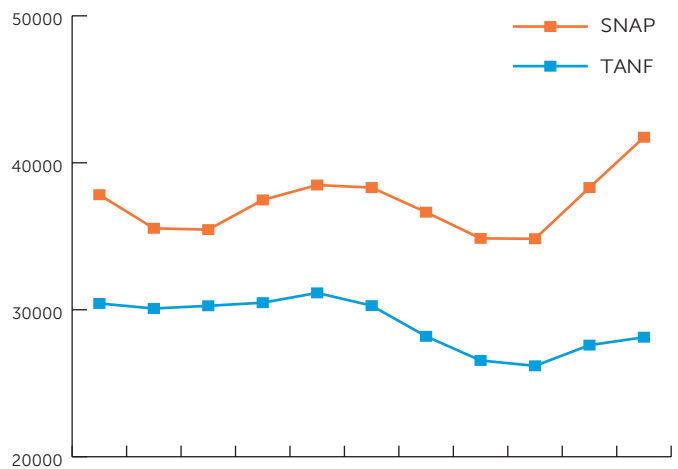
- Over the last 10 years, the percent of children in poverty decreased in Wards 1, 2, 4 and 6, while *increasing* slightly in Wards 5, 7 and 8.
- Child poverty remains most heavily concentrated in Wards 7 and 8. *Close to half (48 percent) of all Ward 8 children and 40 percent of all Ward 7 children live below the federal poverty threshold.* Forty-three percent of all D.C. children living in poverty reside in these two wards.
- After declines between 2005 and 2007, the number of children receiving support through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) increased in most wards, a trend that continued through 2010.³
- SNAP receipt by children increased by almost 70 percent in Ward 4, and by just over 20 percent in Wards 5 and 7 each. In contrast, SNAP receipt by children fell in Ward 6 by 25 percent. Ward 8 saw a four-percent increase since 2000, but has the highest number of children receiving SNAP over all other wards (13,800 children).

Figure 8. Percentage of Children Living Below the Federal Poverty Threshold, by Ward, 2005–2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

Figure 9. DC Children Under 18 Receiving TANF, SNAP 2000–2010



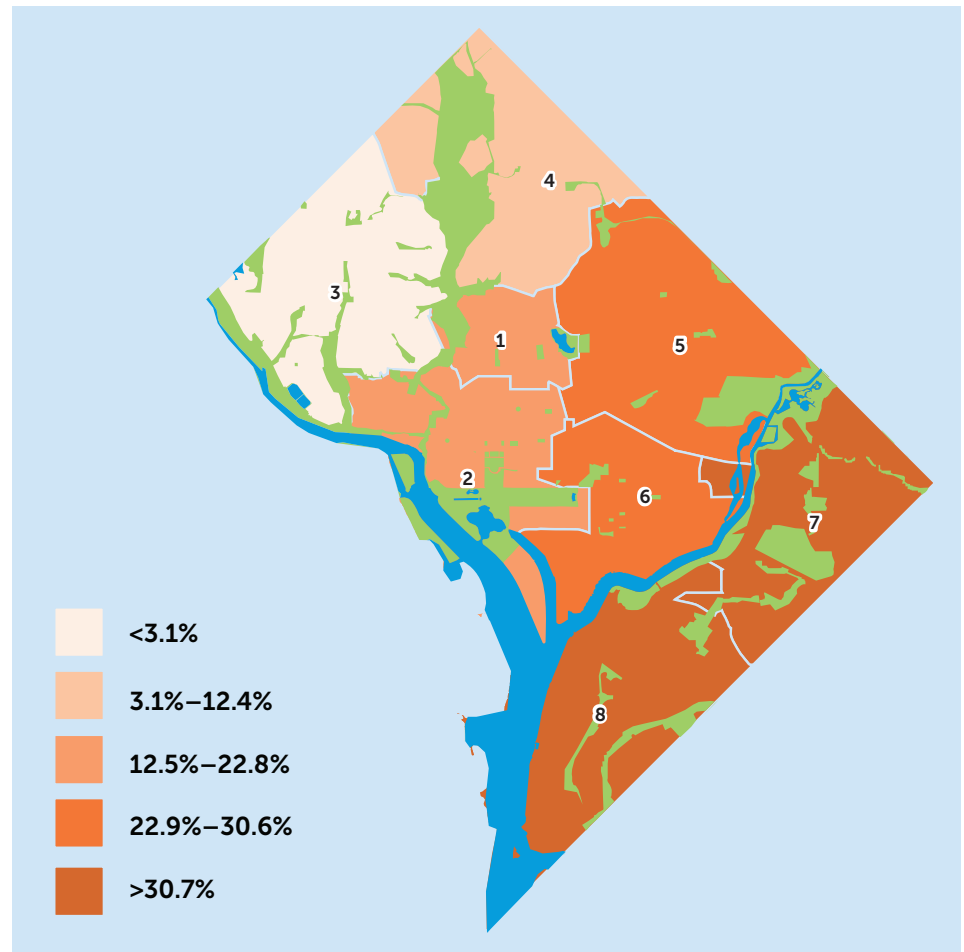
Source: Income Maintenance Administration, D.C. Department of Human Services. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

3. Income Maintenance Administration, D.C. Department of Human Services. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

In the years since the recession began, more black children have fallen into poverty than children in any other racial/ethnic group.⁴

- Between 2007 and 2009, the poverty rate among black children jumped from 31 percent to 38 percent. The rise was greater than the two-point increase for black children nationwide (to 36 percent).
- In the same period, the Hispanic child poverty rate increased two percentage points, to 13 percent. The white child poverty rate increased one point, to three percent.

Figure 10. Share of Children Living Below Poverty Level Within Each Ward



Source: American Community Survey (2005-2009). Prepared by NeighborhoodInfo DC (04/5/11).

4. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 and 2009. Data Tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC.

Note: Black or African American, Asian/Other, and Mixed Race can include children of Hispanic ethnicity, so there is likely double counting, and these groups are not mutually exclusive.

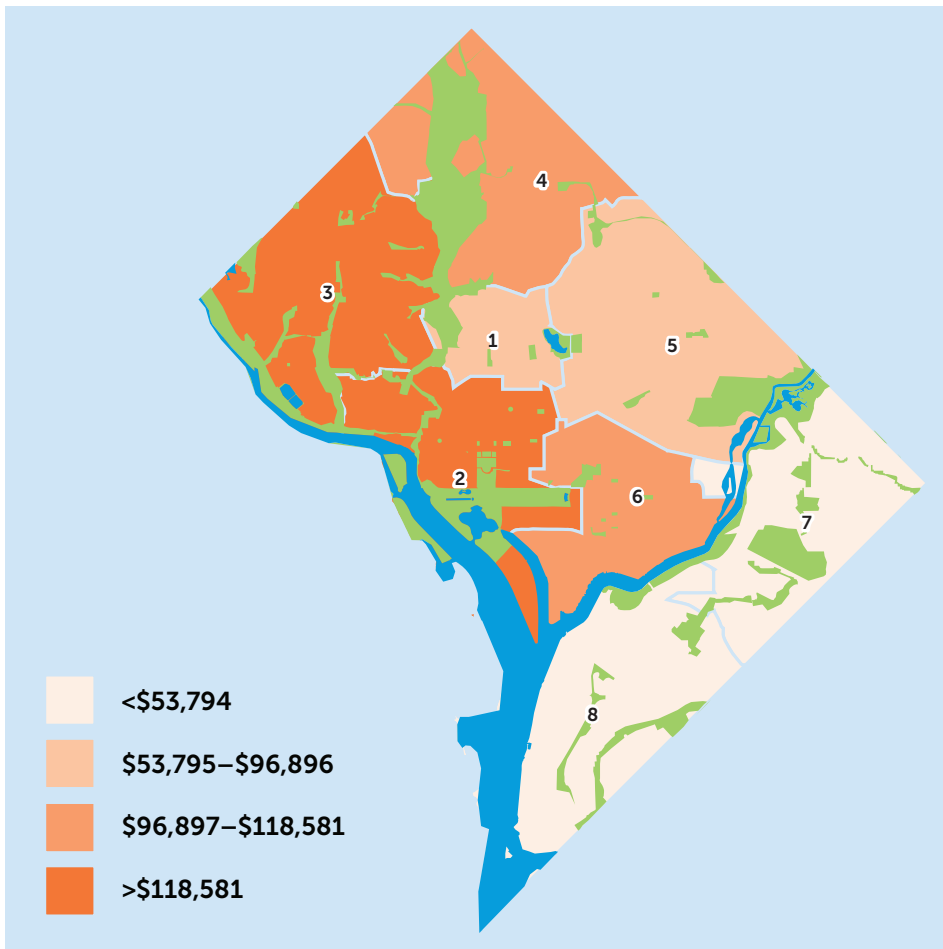
SECTION FOUR

Income Gaps Are Growing, but Some Neighborhoods Are More Economically Diverse

D.C.'s average family income rose 12 percent over the last decade to over \$115,000. But behind this statistic is the alarming growth in income disparities.

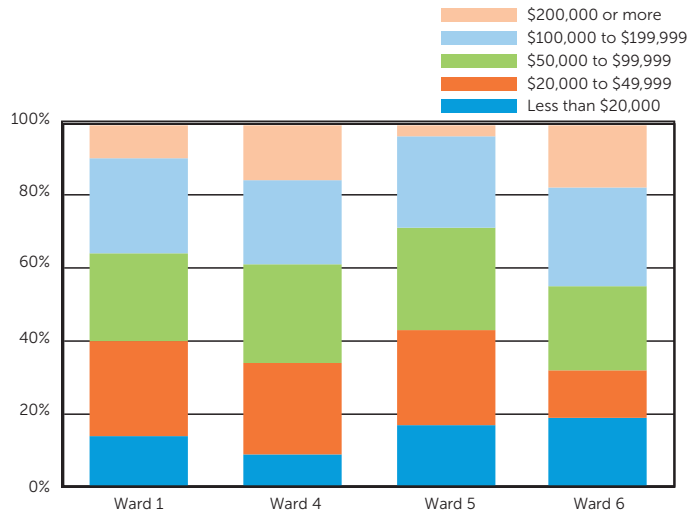
- Average family income for families in Wards 7 and 8 is actually declining, while it is rising in all other wards.
- The average family income in Ward 3 is nearly six times (83 percent) higher than that in Ward 8—a gap that has grown by two percentage points since 2000.
- Wards 1, 4, 5 and 6 are more economically diverse than the wards considered affluent (2 and 3) and low-income (Wards 7 and 8).

Figure 11. Average Family Income Within Each Ward, 2005–2009 (\$2009)



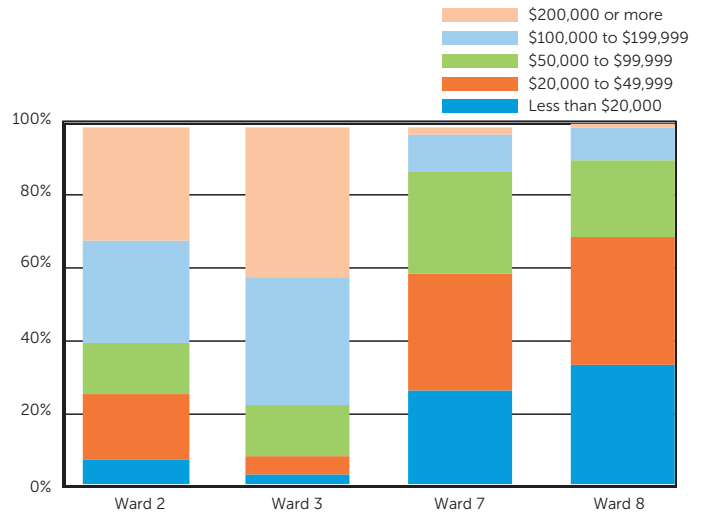
Source: American Community Survey (2005–2009). Prepared by NeighborhoodInfo DC (04/5/11).

Figure 12. Distribution of Families by Income Range, Most Economically Diverse Wards (2005–2009)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC. Note: All dollar amounts are in 2009 USD.

Figure 13. Distribution of Families by Income Range, Least Economically Diverse Wards (2005–2009)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005-2009. Data tabulated by NeighborhoodInfo DC. Note: All dollar amounts are in 2009 USD.

SECTION FIVE

Implications

The Census can tell us where we have been over the past decade, but more importantly, it can suggest where we are headed and what opportunities and challenges we may face along the way. Ultimately, we will have to decide how the District, as One City, will work together to create a brighter and more prosperous future for all of its citizens.

The demographic realities outlined in this brief have important implications for the funding and administration of public services in the District, particularly for our youngest children, whose potential as productive citizens is founded on how well we prepare them today. With the right opportunities to grow and thrive, today's children will drive D.C.'s long-term prosperity.

Advocates and policy makers must start charting the course by asking the right questions. For example:

- In an era of perpetual budget shortfalls, how can we make funds available to prioritize programs and interventions that can break the cycle of poverty for children and families?
- With all of the research that indicates the negative effects of concentrated poverty on child and family well-being, what can be done to bridge the geographic divide between high- and low-income families in the District?
- With the rising population of children under 5, how can we ensure that the District provides the early care and education services necessary to prepare all children for success in school and life?
- How can the District meet the social service needs of an increasingly diverse population in a way that is culturally competent and accessible to all?



**DC Action
for Children**

Shaping Policy for DC's Youngest Citizens

DC Action for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that all children in the District of Columbia have the opportunity to reach their full potential.