

Taxing Simply

District of Columbia Tax Revision Commission

Taxing Fairly

Full Report

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CHAPTER A

The Changing Population of the
District of Columbia, 1990–1996
An Analysis of Results From the
Greater Washington Consumer Survey

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Summary

This chapter presents data on the District of Columbia's population loss based on data from the decennial Census and the Greater Washington Consumer Survey. It also describes people who have recently moved out of the District and their destinations within the metropolitan area.

POPULATION CHANGE IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The decades-long trend of population loss in the District accelerated in the 1990s. We estimate that the District's population as of March 1, 1996, was 541,800 — 10.7 percent below the 1990 Census.

Since the District's population peaked in 1950, households have become smaller as families with children moved out and were replaced by singles and childless couples. But the number of households was actually 11 percent larger in 1990 than in 1950, while the population was 24 percent smaller. From 1990 to 1996, the number of households fell. We estimate that there were 231,900 households in 1996 — down 17,200, or nearly 7 percent since 1990.

Every age group of household members decreased. The largest decline occurred among persons 25–44 years of age — a total of 28,000 persons. Preschool children under five and persons 55 and older also showed substantial declines.

Both the low-income and the upper-income population fell between 1990 and 1996. In current dollar terms, households with incomes of less than \$15,000 decreased by 41 percent. When measured in constant dollars, the decline in the lowest income group was not as large, only 31 percent, and upper-income households decreased by 20 percent among households with incomes of \$50,000–\$99,999 and by 31 percent among households with incomes more than \$100,000.

Also in 1996, the proportion of renters (62 percent) and blacks (60 percent) remained about the same as in 1990.

MOVERS OUT OF THE DISTRICT

This section examines the composition of households that moved from the District to its suburbs between 1990 and 1996. They were interviewed in the areawide household survey conducted monthly by Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Among those who moved from the District and stayed in the Washington metropolitan area, most remained on the same side of the Potomac River. Seventy percent chose Maryland, with 39 percent moving to Prince George's County and 27 percent moving to Montgomery County. Eleven percent went to Arlington and Fairfax counties in Virginia; 6 percent moved to the city of Alexandria. The remaining 6 percent were scattered among other suburbs on both sides of the river.

Destinations differed considerably by race. Sixty-seven percent of black out-movers who stayed in the metropolitan area chose Prince George's County. The largest share of whites, 38 percent, went to Montgomery County; an almost equal share moved to either Arlington or Fairfax counties.

Population change in the District

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Between 1990 and 1996, the District of Columbia lost 65,100 people, bringing the population below 600,000 for the first time since the 1930s. The sharp drop — 10.7 percent in only six years — has aroused serious concern.

Population loss is nothing new for the District. Population peaked in 1950 at 802,000 people and has been declining in every decade since (Summary Report, Figure 1). The largest decline was in the 1970s, when the District lost over 118,000 people, mainly through exodus to its suburbs. Their departure was barely noticed, however, and the District's economy continued to be robust.

This time the situation is different — both population and households have fallen. While the population has declined by 65,100 since 1990, households dropped by 17,200, or 6.9 percent of the total. (A household is defined as all the occupants of a housing unit. A household can consist of a family, but it can also be a single person or two or more unrelated individuals sharing living quarters.) This loss in households is a more serious matter for the District than the loss in population. Households, not individuals, are the principal consuming unit, and the dwellings they occupy are a source of property taxes for the local government.

At the beginning of the 1990s, despite the huge population decline of more than 195,000 from 1950 to 1990, District households numbered 249,000, compared to only 224,000 in 1950. This 11 percent household increase occurred at the same time that the population decreased by 24 percent. All of the household growth occurred in the 1950s and 1960s (Summary Report, Figure 5). (During the 1960s, in fact, a loss

of over 7,200 people was accompanied by a *gain* of nearly 10,500 households.) Thereafter, households declined, but at a much slower rate than the population.

While the population dropped by nearly 150,000 from 1970 to 1990, households decreased by only 13,500. However, in the six years since 1990, households have been lost at *more than four times* the average annual rate over the preceding two decades. How could the population and household trends be so different — when, as we know, households are made up of people? The reason is that throughout the 1950–1990 period the District was in transition to a *different* type of household.

From 1950 to 1990, families with children were moving out of the city, but these households were being replaced on a virtually one-for-one basis by singles and childless couples. The number of nonfamily households — consisting of single persons living alone or unrelated individuals sharing living quarters — increased from 26,000 to 125,500, and by 1990, they outnumbered families.

Over the four decades from 1950 to 1990, the average household size dropped from 3.19 people to 2.27 people, a drop of about nine-tenths of a person. The average household size was no longer large enough to include two parents plus a child. At the same time, the number of households increased from 224,000 to 249,000. This 11 percent increase occurred at the same time that the population declined by 24 percent.

While the new households were smaller in size, a larger proportion of their members were wage-earning adults who pay income taxes. Often, every member of the household was employed. Conversely, far fewer were children, who make far greater demands upon city services, especially schools. The number of children decreased from nearly 185,000 to 116,600. By 1990, only 41 percent of families in the District had children under 18 living with them.

Not surprisingly, the 1950–1990 period was one of general prosperity for the District. In most years, municipal revenues matched or even exceeded expenditures. The city's poverty population in 1990 was a relatively small share of the total at 16.9 percent — a smaller percentage than that found in 16 of the nation's 25 largest cities.

In the mid-1980s, it looked as if the District's population was about to stabilize at around 625,000, or to increase somewhat.¹ However, by 1988, the decline had resumed in earnest with the advent of crack cocaine and related violence. In 1990, the Census measured the remaining population to be at 606,900, a drop of 31,500 since 1980.

CHANGES SINCE 1990

Total population and households

Between April 1, 1990 and March 1, 1996, we estimate the population of the District of Columbia to have decreased further, from 606,900 to 541,800. That is a loss of 65,100, or 10.7 percent, amounting to 11,000 persons per year. This rate is more than twice as rapid as the average loss of 4,900 over the previous 40 years.

In the same period, households decreased from more than 249,000 to under 231,900. The household loss of 17,200 during this period amounts to nearly 3,000 households annually, compared with an average of 675 per year from 1970 to 1990. (Prior to 1970, as we have noted, households were increasing in the face of population decline.)

The Greater Washington Consumer Survey's demographic database covers people living in households only. This household population omits persons living in what the Census Bureau calls "group quarters," which include military barracks, college dormitories, nursing homes, homeless shelters, and prisons. Also included are group homes such as halfway houses, if occupied by 10 or more persons. The Census Bureau estimated the population in group quarters of all types at 40,407 people in 1996. We added this amount to the household population of 501,400, as measured by the Consumer Survey, to get the District's total population of 541,800.

Our estimate of 541,800 is as of March 1, 1996, while the Census Bureau estimated the District of Columbia's total population as of July 1, 1996, to be 543,000. The Census Bureau's estimation process is a complex and sophisticated one, using data derived from public records, while our data came from a large and representative sample survey of District householders. We regard the estimates from these two independent sources to be so close as to confirm each other. Had our population figure been taken as of July 1, 1996, as was the Census Bureau's, we estimate that it would have decreased further to approximately 539,000. The difference of 4,000 people between the Census Bureau and Consumer Survey numbers is a fraction of 1 percent.

Household size

The average size of District households in 1996, as measured by the Consumer Survey, was 2.16 people (Figure A-1). The 1990 Census measured it as 2.27 people. The difference between the two is 0.11 persons, or a little over one-tenth of a person. On an annual basis, this is just under 0.02 persons, almost identical to the average annual rate of decline in household size over the previous 40 years.

Households of one person, as well as those of three or more, declined during this period. In fact, nearly 60 percent of the household loss of 17,200 consisted of one-person households, while the rest was spread among households of three people or more. The drop in one-person households was particularly sharp, falling from 102,900 in 1990 to 92,800 in 1996 and amounting to 10,100 households or 9.8 percent. From 1980 to 1990, one-person households had increased from 100,000 to 102,900, continuing a decades-long upward trend. (In 1950, a mere 32,000 District households contained only one person.)

The trend reversal of the 1990s may be attributable in part to doubling up in the face of high housing costs and income losses resulting from "downsizing." In other cases, it may have been due to an exodus of single persons, especially women,

Figure A-1

Number of People per Household						
Number of People	1990 Households		1996 Households		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	102,947	41.3%	92,800	40.0%	-10,100	-9.8%
2	66,926	26.9	70,900	30.6	3,900	5.9
3	33,466	13.4	32,700	14.1	-800	-2.4
4	22,570	9.1	20,400	8.8	-2,200	-9.6
5	11,854	4.8	8,900	3.8	-2,900	-24.9
6	5,429	2.2	3,700	1.6	-1,800	-32.3
7+	5,842	2.3	2,500	1.1	-3,300	-56.9
Total Households	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%
Total People	565,951		501,400		-64,600	-11.4%
Average Household Size	2.27		2.16		-0.11	-4.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

out of fear of crime. In any event, the 10,100-household drop accounts for nearly 60 percent of the total loss of over 17,000 households between 1990 and 1996.

Two-person households were the only size group to increase in number, rising from 66,900 to nearly 70,900, a gain of about 3,900, or 6 percent. Doubling up may be responsible for this increase. All larger household size groups decreased. The extent of these declines was strongly and positively related to size (Summary Report, Figure 7).

Children under 18

Some of the decline in the larger household size categories may well be related to the departure of households with children from the District (Figure A-2). Some also may be due to older children leaving their parents' homes after turning 18.

There was a net decrease of nearly 17,400 children between 1990 and 1996. There were 114,200 children in D.C. households in 1990, and by 1996 this number had dropped to 96,800, a 15 percent loss. Despite the decline, the percentage of the District's household population that was made up of children changed only slightly between 1990 and 1996; in 1990 it was 20.2 percent, and in 1996 had decreased only to 19.3 percent.

Figure A-2

Number of Children per Household

Number of Children*	1990		1996		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0	184,215	74.4%	178,400	76.9%	-5,800	-3.1%
1	31,882	12.6	26,900	11.6	-5,000	-15.7
2	20,537	8.1	15,600	6.7	-4,900	-23.9
3	7,844	3.1	7,100	3.1	-700	-8.9
4	3,015	1.2	2,900	1.3	-100	-3.3
5+	1,542	0.5	1,000	0.4	-500	-32.4
Total Households	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%
Total Children	114,202		96,800		-17,400	-15.2%
Average per Household	0.46		0.42		-0.04	-9.0%
As Percent of People in Households		20.2%		19.3%		-0.9%

*Ages 0-17.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Childless households also declined in number between 1990 and 1996. The numerical loss of 5,800 such households was larger than that for households with any given number of children. However, the 5,800-household decrease amounted only to 3 percent of all childless households because the number of households without children was very large. Childless households amounted to 184,200 in 1990, or 74 percent of all households. By 1996, their number had dropped to 178,400, but their share of the total had risen to 77 percent.

Among households with children, the percentage loss varied by the number of children. However, the relationship was not simple. The decline amounted to nearly 16 percent for one-child households, 24 percent for two-child households, and almost 9 percent for three-child households. It dropped to 3 percent among households with four children, but rose again to 32 percent among those with five or more children. In the size categories with over three children, however, the numbers were small, and the differences should not be given much weight.

Figure A-3**D.C. Owners and Renters**

Number	1990		1996		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Owner	96,852	38.9%	88,500	38.2%	-8,400	-8.7%
Renter	152,182	61.1	143,300	61.8	-8,900	-5.8
Total	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Figure A-4**Race of Householder**

Race	1990		1996		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	88,529	35.5%	85,500	36.9%	-3,000	-3.4%
Black	151,238	60.7	136,900	59.0	-14,300	-9.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	4,102	1.6	4,200	1.8	200	4.9
Other	5,165	2.1	5,200	2.2	*	0.0
Total	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%

*Fewer than 100.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Owners versus renters

The household loss was almost equally divided among owners and renters (Figure A-3). Thus, the large decline in number of households had little effect on the relative percentage shares of owners and renters in the District. The percentage of owners decreased from nearly 39 percent to 38 percent, while the percentage of renters increased from just over 61 percent to just under 62 percent.

Race of householders

The loss was overwhelmingly concentrated among households headed by blacks (Figure A-4). Eighty-three percent were black householders, and the remainder were white. Households headed by Asian/Pacific Islanders and other races increased slightly.

Relatively little change came about in the racial composition of householders. What change there was continued the gradual trends of the 1980s. In that decade, numbers of black householders had decreased from 63.8 percent to 60.7 percent of all householders. In the 1990–1996 period, their share decreased further to 59 percent.

The figures here do not refer to the black population as such, because the Greater Washington Consumer Survey asked the race only of the householder and not of every member of the household. Different average household sizes for the two major races make the population figures for blacks and whites somewhat different from those for householders. In 1990, blacks amounted to 65.8 percent of the population, but only 60.7 percent of householders. A roughly similar difference exists now.

In the 1980s, numbers of white householders had increased from 33.4 percent to 35.5 percent of all householders. In the 1990–1996 period, their share increased further to 36.9 percent. Other racial groups' share grew from 2.8 percent to 3.7 percent; after 1990, it moved up slightly to 4 percent.

Household incomes

Household income trends are compared here in two ways: in current dollars and in constant 1996 dollars. The current-dollar method reflects actual incomes that people received and spent. In the constant-dollar mode, the 1989 income distribution has been revised to reflect the change in the value of the dollar between 1989 and 1996, using the Consumer Price Index for the Washington area. This procedure takes into account inflation's effect in lowering the buying power of the dollar during the period between the 1990 Census and the 1996 Consumer Survey. The Census asked people their incomes in the previous year, i.e., 1989. The Consumer Survey asked them their incomes in the present year. We have taken this fact into account in our calculations.

Current dollars. Based on current dollars, the District had a large reduction in the number of households in the under-\$15,000 income bracket — from 58,500, or 23.5 percent of all households in 1990, to 34,700, or 15 percent of households in 1996 (Figure A-5 and Summary Report, Figure 8). This decrease in the lowest income stratum amounted to more than the total decline in households.

Households in the \$15,000–\$24,999 bracket also declined in number, but increased slightly in percent share. The reduction was from 43,700 households in 1990 to 41,100 in 1996, or a drop of 5.9 percent. This income bracket share of all households grew slightly from 17.6 to 17.7 percent because the total number of households decreased somewhat faster, by 6.9 percent. One other income bracket decreased in numbers but increased its percent share of the total — the \$50,000–\$99,999 bracket. It declined by 2,300 households, or 4.4 percent, but this group's share also increased from 21 percent to 21.5 percent. Three middle-income brackets saw their numbers increase *despite* the decline in total households. The \$25,000–\$34,999 group grew by 4,300 or 11.7 percent. The \$35,000–\$49,999 bracket increased by 5,200 or 13

Figure A-5

Household Income — Current Dollars
1989* and 1996

Income Range	1989 (in 1989 \$)		1996 (in 1996 \$)		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under \$15,000	58,490	23.5%	34,700	15.0%	-23,800	-40.7%
\$15,000–24,999	43,729	17.6	41,100	17.7	-2,600	-5.9
\$25,000–34,999	36,805	14.8	41,100	17.7	4,300	11.7
\$35,000–49,999	39,783	16.0	45,000	19.4	5,200	13.1
\$50,000–99,999	52,232	21.0	49,900	21.5	-2,300	-4.4
\$100,000+	17,995	7.2	20,000	8.6	2,000	11.1
Total	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%

*1989 numbers are from 1990 Census.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

percent. And the \$100,000-plus category went up by nearly 2,000, or 11.1 percent. In all three groups, the percent shares of total households increased.

Constant dollars. The constant-dollar method, in which 1989 dollar income categories have been revised to take into account decreased buying power in the years since, shows quite different results. Taking inflation into account, all income brackets from \$15,000 to \$49,999 have increased. The under-\$15,000 group has decreased, as have the two highest income brackets.

As with the current-dollar method, the under-\$15,000 bracket also declined under the constant-dollar method, but by a considerably smaller amount — 15,500 households or 31 percent (Figure A-6). Nonetheless, the drop in this one income group accounts for 90 percent of the drop in the total number of households in the city. This lowest income category's share of all households dropped from 20 percent to 15 percent.

The \$15,000–\$24,999 group increased its share instead of decreasing, as it did under the current-dollar method. It gained 7,600 households or 22 percent, and its share of all households grew from 13.5 percent to 17.7 percent. The \$25,000–\$34,999 bracket behaved almost identically. It increased by 7,400, or nearly 22 percent, and its share of the total grew from 13.5 percent to 17.7 percent. The \$35,000–\$49,999 bracket also increased. The growth was somewhat smaller, 5,200 or 13 percent, and its share of the total rose from 16 percent to 19 percent.

Figure A-6

Household Income — Constant Dollars
1989* and 1996

Income Range	1989 (in 1996 \$)		1996 (in 1996 \$)		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under \$15,000	50,213	20.2%	34,700	15.0%	-15,500	-30.9%
\$15,000–24,999	33,563	13.5	41,100	17.7	7,600	22.6
\$25,000–34,999	33,706	13.5	41,100	17.7	7,400	22.0
\$35,000–49,999	39,755	16.0	45,000	19.4	5,200	13.1
\$50,000–99,999	62,747	25.2	49,900	21.5	-12,800	-20.4
\$100,000+	29,051	11.7	20,000	8.6	-9,100	-31.3
Total	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%

*1989 numbers are from 1990 Census.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

The \$50,000–\$99,999 group was hit the hardest, declining by 12,800 or 20 percent, and the \$100,000 and higher category declined by 9,100 or 31 percent. These two brackets together had their numbers decline from 91,800 to 69,900, and their combined percent of all District households slipped from 37 percent to 30 percent.

Viewed in terms of *current dollars*, the changes of the 1990–1996 period had minimal impact on the number of District households at upper income levels. The net loss at incomes of \$50,000 or more was a mere 300 households out of nearly 92,000. Virtually all the decline took place at the lower end of the income scale.

Viewed in terms of *constant (inflation-adjusted) dollars*, however, the effect was quite different. Here, there was a loss of nearly one-fourth at the upper end of the income distribution. While the lower income end was less affected, it was still affected quite heavily.

Ages of household members

There have been losses since 1990 in every age bracket of household members from under four years to ages 75 and up (Figure A-7). Numerically, by far the greatest losses have occurred among those aged 25–34 (14,600) and 35–44 (13,400). These are the ages at which people are most likely to be parents of children in the school or preschool years. The 25–34 age group declined by 12.5 percent, and the 35–44 age group declined by 14.8 percent.

Figure A-7**Age of Household Members**

Age	1990		1996		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0-4	36,038	6.4%	31,500	6.3%	-4,500	-12.5%
5-14	60,873	10.8	57,700	11.5	-3,100	-5.1
15-24	80,947	14.3	75,200	15.0	-5,700	-7.0
25-34	116,814	20.6	102,200	20.4	-14,600	-12.5
35-44	90,431	16.0	77,100	15.4	-13,400	-14.8
45-54	61,944	10.9	60,200	12.0	-1,800	-2.9
55-64	48,644	8.6	40,100	8.0	-8,500	-17.5
65-74	41,914	7.4	34,400	6.9	-7,500	-17.9
75+	28,345	5.0	23,000	4.6	-5,300	-18.7
Total	565,950		501,400		-64,400	-11.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Even larger percentage losses, although somewhat smaller numerically, took place among older adults ages 55 and above. The declines ranged from 17.5 percent in the 55-64 group upward to 18.7 percent among those 75 and older. Deaths become an increasingly important factor in these age brackets, especially after age 65, as do moves to retirement housing and to be nearer grown children. But from 1980 to 1990, the over-65 household population had actually increased by about 7 percent.

Preschool-age children (under age 5) also declined in numbers by 12.5 percent, or about 4,500 in the 1990-1996 period. Losses were smaller in percentage terms among those aged 5-14 and 15-24, although of about the same order of magnitude numerically. This suggests that many parents may take their children out of the District *before* they become of school age.

As one result of these changes in individual age groups, the median age of all household members in the District actually dropped from 33.2 years in 1990 to 31.6 years in 1996. This downward shift does not denote an increase among the younger age groups — only a smaller decrease.

The 45-54 age group of adults has declined less than any other in the first part of the 1990s, in both numerical and percentage terms (-1,800 or -2.9 percent). Perhaps adults in this age category were less likely to leave the District than those either younger or older because many had children still in college, placing heavier burdens on their budgets and making it temporarily harder for them to move. Still, there was a net loss.

Figure A-8

Households by Ward

Ward	1990		1996		Change	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1	34,680	13.9%	31,400	13.5%	-3,300	-9.5%
2	38,852	15.6	32,800	14.1	-6,000	-15.5
3	38,353	15.4	38,600	16.6	200	0.6
4	28,826	11.6	27,600	11.9	-1,300	-4.4
5	27,923	11.2	27,100	11.7	-800	-3.0
6	28,124	11.3	26,100	11.3	-2,000	-7.2
7	28,578	11.5	23,500	10.1	-5,000	-17.6
8	23,698	9.5	24,800	10.7	1,100*	4.5
Total	249,034		231,900		-17,200	-6.9%

**The small increase in Ward 8 is probably an artifact of a 1993 shift in boundaries between Wards 7 and 8.*
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Household changes by ward

Among the District’s eight wards, only two escaped losses in households — Ward 3 (west of Rock Creek Park), and Ward 8 (lower Anacostia). In both cases, the increases were slight: Ward 3 gained only 200 households, or less than 1 percent; Ward 8 gained 1,100 households, or 4.5 percent. It appears likely that Ward 3 escaped decline because it had a relatively low incidence of crime and social problems. The gain in Ward 8, however, may be an artifact of a 1993 shift in ward boundaries between Wards 7 and 8 to equalize their populations. Together, the two wards lost 4,000 people.

As shown in Figure A-8, the losses ranged from 800 households or 3 percent in Ward 5 to 5,000 households or nearly 18 percent in Ward 7. Ward 2 was also a heavy loser, declining by 6,000 households or 15.5 percent. The rest of the wards lost more moderately.

Movers out of the District

Households that had moved recently from the District to suburban jurisdictions were primarily made up of people most likely to contribute to the suburbs’ continuing economic growth. Most were young to middle-aged, with above-average

incomes and college educations. By the same token, the continuing exodus has taken from the District more of the people it would most like to keep. It would be unwise to conclude that the District's decline will be permanent because few, if any, major U.S. cities have greater fundamental strengths.

Part of the reason for the District's population loss is the more than 42,200 households that moved away from the District from 1990 to 1996 and took up residence in its suburbs. These out-movers are by no means all the people who left the District in that time period. They are only those who could be found in the suburbs by our surveyors. There were also a considerable number who moved completely outside the Washington metropolitan area to locations elsewhere in the nation and throughout the world. At the same time, of course, others were moving into the District.

We know nothing about the out-of-area migrants, since the Greater Washington Consumer Survey covers only households residing within the Washington area.² However, using 1990 Census data, we were able to locate about 29,500 households that had moved from the District between 1985 and 1990 to places outside the metropolitan area but that had remained in the United States. This compared to about 38,800 households that had moved to jurisdictions within the metropolitan area.³

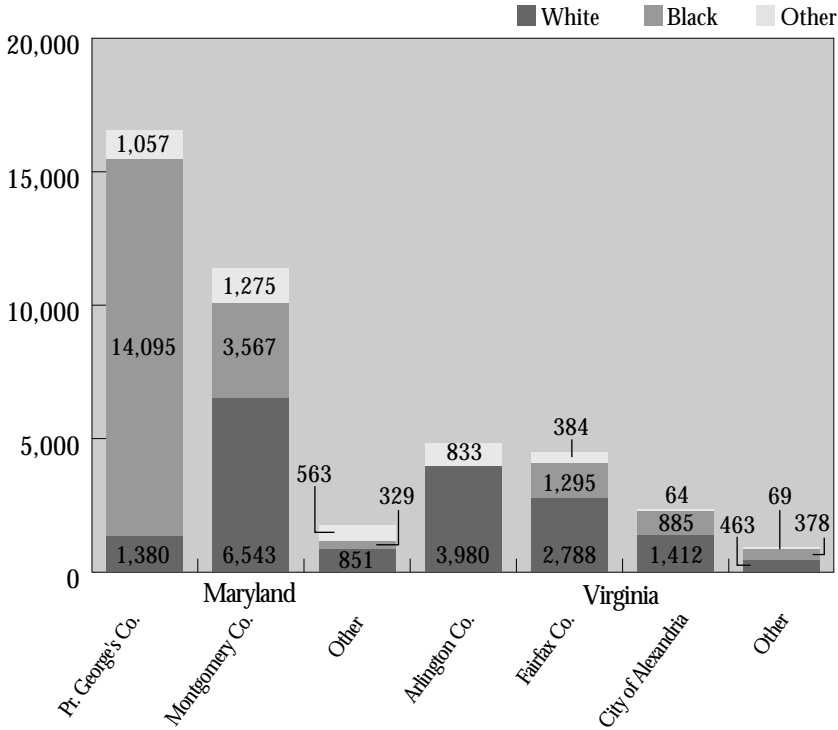
If the ratio remained the same as it did from 1985 to 1990, then about 32,100 households moved to places outside the metropolitan area from 1990 to 1996. The survey asked only about householders' most recent move; therefore, even the 42,200 former District households who moved out since 1990 that we did find in the suburbs reflect a minimum number, since they do not include any who made a subsequent move after leaving the city.

These 42,200 suburban households contained more than 102,000 persons. The District's loss of 65,000 persons is only about two-thirds of this number. How could many more people have moved out of the District than the District lost? The answer is that while they were moving out, others were moving in.

The District of Columbia has had streams of people moving both in and out simultaneously. Between 1990 and 1996, a minimum of 34,200 households containing nearly 70,000 persons entered the District. This number is incomplete since it excludes those incoming households that subsequently moved within the city. About 20,300 of these households, or 60 percent of the total, moved to the District from places completely outside the metropolitan area. In this respect they continued a traditional pattern of migration to the nation's capital from other parts of the nation and the world. The remaining 40 percent, however, came from the nearby suburbs — about 13 percent from Prince George's County, 10 percent from Montgomery County, 5 percent from Arlington County, 4 percent each from Fairfax County and the city of

Figure A-9

**Destinations of Out-Movers
by Race, 1990-1996**



Source: Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Alexandria, and the rest from various other suburbs. Therefore, the movement of households between the District and its suburbs has been by no means one-way — not even during the 1990s. But clearly the movement out has been exceeding the movement in — and exceeding it to a growing degree, bringing an accelerating District population loss.

DESTINATIONS OF DISTRICT OUT-MOVERS

Most households that moved to the suburbs since 1990 remained on the same side of the Potomac River. In all, 70 percent (29,600 households) chose homes in Maryland instead of in Virginia. The largest number of out-movers went to

Prince George's County — 16,500 households. The second largest number went to Montgomery County, which received 11,400 households. The other three Maryland suburbs, Calvert, Charles, and Frederick counties, took in 1,700 households in all. On the Virginia side, Arlington and Fairfax counties were the largest recipients, with 4,800 and 4,500 households, respectively. Alexandria was third with 2,400, while all other Virginia suburbs took in a total of only 900 households.

There was a distinct difference among racial groups in the destinations they selected (Figure A-9). Black out-movers overwhelmingly chose Maryland by an 88 percent majority. White out-movers split down the middle, with 50 percent choosing each side of the Potomac. Seventy-seven percent of Asian out-movers went to Maryland. In terms of jurisdictions, 69 percent of black out-movers went to Prince George's County. Montgomery County was a distant runner-up, with 17 percent. No other jurisdiction attracted more than 6 percent.

Among white out-movers, destinations were more diverse. The largest share, 38 percent, moved to Montgomery County, while 23 percent went to Arlington County, and 16 percent to Fairfax County, for a total of 76 percent who chose those three jurisdictions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RECENT OUT-MOVERS

Race and ethnicity

Just over half of the out-moving households (52 percent) were headed by blacks. Another 43 percent were white, and the remaining 5 percent were of other races. Six percent were Hispanic; however, Hispanics can be of any race. In the 1985–1990 period, 51 percent of all out-movers were white.

Length of residence in the Washington area

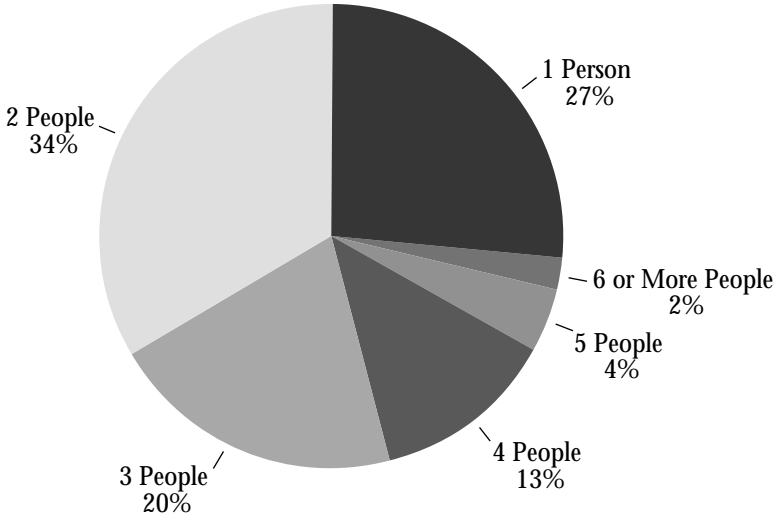
Most of the out-movers were not recent newcomers to the metropolitan area. Half had lived in the area 15 years or more (35 percent lived in the District for 25 years or more, 9 percent for 20–24 years, and 6 percent for 15–19 years). Another 12 percent had been area residents for 10–14 years. Only 14 percent had come to the area within the past five years. These figures compare to 62 percent of all suburban households that had been in the Washington area 15 years or more, 11 percent that had lived here 10–14 years, and 14 percent that had moved to the area within the past five years.

Household size

The households who moved out to the suburbs were generally small, with 81 percent containing no more than three people at the time the household head was interviewed (Figure A-10). Twenty-seven percent consisted of a single person living

Figure A-10

**Out-Movers
by Household Size, 1990-1996**



Source: Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

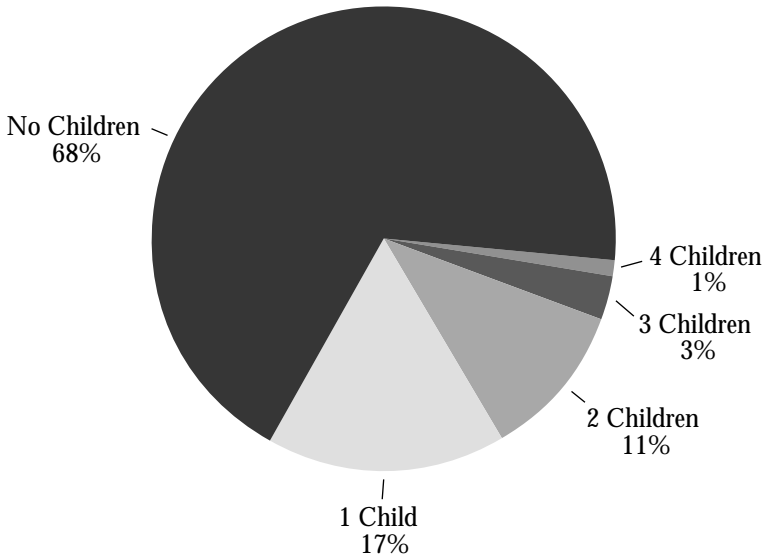
alone, and 34 percent contained two people. Only 2 percent of the households had as many as six members. The average household size was 2.41 people. This was considerably larger than the average for residents of the District, which now stands at 2.16. It was also somewhat larger than the average among all out-movers between 1985 and 1990, which was 2.3 people.

Children

Only 32 percent of the recent out-movers had children living with them at the time they were interviewed (Figure A-11). This low percentage may seem surprising, but it is almost identical to the 31 percent of out-moving households who had children in the 1985-1990 period. And it compares with only 26 percent of households residing in the District in 1990 that contained children — a figure that had dropped to 23 percent by 1996 as a result of the suburban exodus.

Figure A-II

**Number of Children in Households
Moving From D.C. to the Suburbs
1990-1996**



Source: Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

More of the black out-movers than the white had children living with them, but for neither race were households with children anywhere near the majority. For whites the proportion was 25 percent, and for blacks it was 38 percent.⁴

Marital status

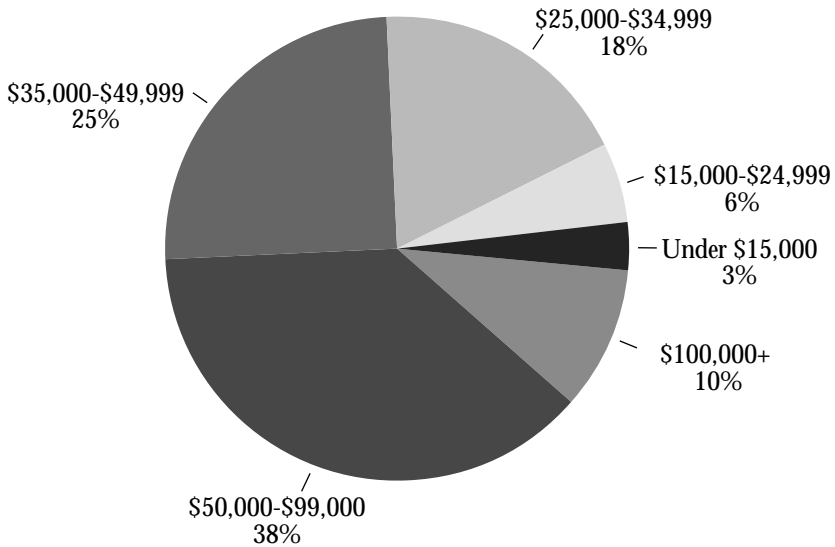
As many of the respondents had never been married as were currently married — 43 percent single versus 42 percent married. The rest were separated, divorced, or widowed.

Age of heads of household

Among the mover household heads, more than two-thirds (69 percent) were between the ages of 25 and 44 — the prime age range for moving. Eleven percent were below age 25, and fewer than 8 percent were 55 or older.⁵

Figure A-12

**Out-Movers
by Income Group, 1990-1996**



Source: Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Income

Not surprisingly, given the high cost of suburban housing, incomes among most of the out-movers were quite substantial (Figure A-12). Forty-eight percent had household incomes of \$50,000 and more, while fewer than 10 percent were under \$25,000.

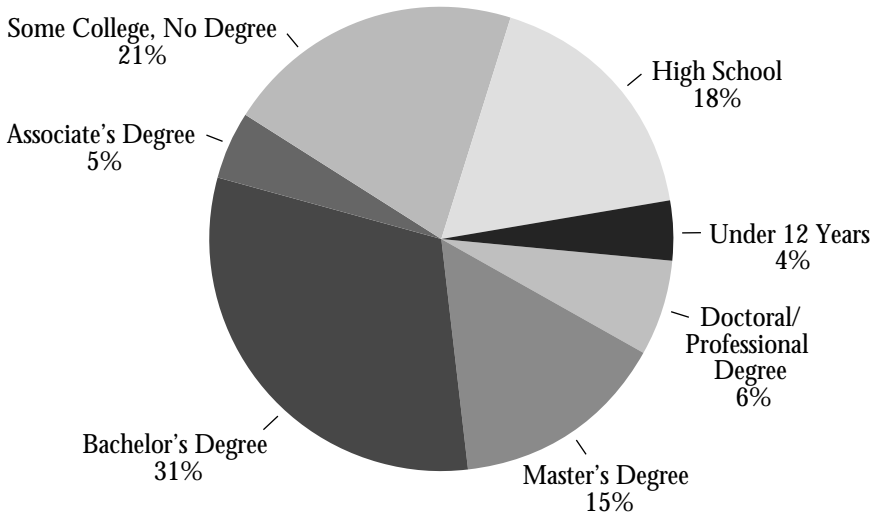
Those who moved to Prince George’s County from the District were not disproportionately poor. Only 3.8 percent of Prince George’s County residents who had moved there from the District since 1990 had incomes below \$15,000. This compares with 3.2 percent of their counterparts in other suburbs — a slightly higher proportion in Prince George’s County than elsewhere in the suburbs, but still very tiny.

Education

Educational levels were generally high, with 58 percent having received a college degree of some kind, and 22 percent holding graduate degrees (Figure A-13). A handful had not completed high school.

Figure A-13

**Educational Levels of Household Heads
Moving From D.C. to Suburbs
1990-1996**



Source: Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc.

Owner-renter status

A 56 percent majority of the out-movers were currently renting, compared with 62 percent of residents renting in the District.

REASONS FOR MOVING OUT OF THE DISTRICT

Movers say that they left the District for a variety of reasons. The three most frequently mentioned were to get more room (16 percent), to buy a home (15 percent), and crime (15 percent).⁶ Three additional common reasons were to be near families and friends (14 percent), to get a less expensive dwelling (10 percent), and to be nearer to one's job (10 percent). The least frequently mentioned common reason was convenience of location (8 percent).

Among black residents, crime was the top-ranking reason for moving to the suburbs, although cited by only one-sixth of them. Crime was mentioned by 18 percent of black respondents, but by only 12 percent of white respondents.

Opportunity to buy a home was cited by 16 percent of blacks and by 14 percent of whites.

The need for a larger residence was also cited by more blacks than whites — 17 percent versus 15 percent. Whites, on the other hand, were more likely to mention nearness to the job (12 percent versus 7 percent for blacks) as well as lower cost (14 percent versus 8 percent). The two groups were nearly equal in mentioning family and friends as well as convenience of location.

REPLACEMENTS

While households were moving out, more than 34,000 were moving in. These newcomers were predominantly young; 64 percent of household heads were under age 35. The households were mainly small, with 76 percent containing no more than two people, and 41 percent having only one. Nearly two-thirds had completed college.

Household incomes were mostly moderate to high. More than half were \$35,000 or more, and one-third were \$50,000 or more, with nearly 10 percent exceeding \$100,000. While substantial, these income levels were somewhat lower than among recent District out-movers.

Afterword

Methodology

The data in this report were collected from two principal sources: 1) The U. S. Census for the District of Columbia and (2) The Greater Washington Consumer Survey.

THE U.S. CENSUS

1990 Census data were used to provide a historical baseline against which to measure recent changes in the District of Columbia. On occasion, Census data on trends over a longer base period were used, extending back as far as 1900.

Wherever possible, we have drawn the 1990 figures from published reports and from computer printouts of the Census long-form responses found in the Census Bureau's Summary Tape File 3 (STF-3) series of preformatted tabulations. Long-form questionnaires were administered to a randomly selected 15 percent sample of all Census respondents.

The STF-3 tabulations are produced by many planning offices and other public agencies. We used the exceptionally well organized and comprehensive printouts graciously provided by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and the D.C. Planning Office.

Where these tabulations did not tell us all we needed to know, we turned to a still more comprehensive source: the Bureau's 5 percent Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). This is a sample of magnetic facsimiles of individual Census long-form questionnaires. These computer-readable questionnaires permit the user to produce "custom" tabulations of responses to almost any desired questions asked in the Census. Two or more questions can be cross-tabulated, and specific subpopulations can be singled out for in-depth analysis.

Because the STF-3 and PUMS data are two different samples from the same source, the results do not always agree exactly. The differences are minor, and to avoid confusing the reader and to make for easy comparison we have adjusted the PUMS totals to conform to those from STF-3 where appropriate.

GREATER WASHINGTON CONSUMER SURVEY

The recent data were collected by the Greater Washington Consumer Survey. The Consumer Survey was a regular monthly survey of households in the District of Columbia and the greater metropolitan area. It was conducted by Greater Washington Consumer Research, Inc., which was founded by the Greater Washington Research Center and sold to PSC Systems, Inc. This survey, conducted monthly by telephone, interviewed a randomly selected, representative sample of more than 1,000 households throughout the Washington metropolitan area.⁷

The Survey was initiated in June 1994, and collected a broad range of data closely patterned on the major Census questions. Summaries of the data can provide a fairly complete update of the major items collected by the U.S. Census.

Different households were interviewed each month, resulting in a database containing more than 30,000 interviews from residents throughout the metropolitan area and 8,537 interviews from residents in the District of Columbia.⁸

The survey owes its heritage to two earlier efforts. The first was the Greater Washington Research Center's 1974 mid-decade "Trends Alert" survey, supported by the Ford Foundation. The second was the Research Center's "Census 86" survey conducted in 1986. This similar effort was financed in major part by the Rockefeller Foundation, with additional support from the District government. Both surveys identified important shifts in population trends that were later confirmed by the next regular Census. Both also helped to develop the techniques that made this latest effort possible.

Improving survey results

Because Census updating requires especially rigorous methods, great care was taken with quality control in the Greater Washington Consumer Survey. Steps were taken that are omitted in most commercial surveys for reasons of cost. Rigorous quality

controls cover every aspect of the survey process, with special attention to any that could introduce systematic bias into the results.

Up to 10 callbacks were made to each sample household in an effort to contact hard-to-reach households. These callbacks were made over a number of days at different times of the day or evening. The extra attempts were undertaken because of the high labor force participation rate in the Washington area. After the requisite number of attempts, another number is selected.

Random digit dialing was employed to give every household with a telephone an equal chance of being surveyed. Random digit dialing eliminates an important source of bias, the inability to reach unlisted numbers. In the Washington area, 27 percent of phones are unlisted.

In the District of Columbia, households without phones are a significant and rapidly growing group, with recent data from the Census Bureau indicating that about 10 percent of all households residing in the District do not have phones. To compensate for their omission and thus to correct to the extent possible for the resulting bias, we used a procedure developed and tested in our 1986 survey. We incorporated into the database a “pseudo sample” chosen to be as representative as possible of phoneless households. To do this, we first drew a profile of phoneless households from the computer tapes of the Census Bureau’s annual Current Population Survey (CPS) demographic supplement. Every year the Census Bureau conducts a sample survey of approximately 60,000 households throughout the United States. The questions asked were closely modeled on those in the decennial federal Census, and the result is a fairly complete update of the Census results. Households both with and without phones were sampled. Whether or not each household has a phone was indicated in the results.

While a subsample of this survey is available for the District of Columbia, the annual sample is too small for reliable use in Census updating (typically 500–600 households). Nonetheless, by combining the District’s results from several years of the CPS, we were able to construct a profile of phoneless households.

We then drew a “pseudo sample” from the survey database that was closely representative of those households, with the exception that its members did have phones. These records were added back into the database. Thus, about 10 percent of the households in that database appear twice, once on their own behalf and a second time as surrogates for the missing phoneless households.

In addition to households without phones, the Consumer Survey missed District residents who live in “group quarters.” These include people in college dormitories and military barracks, of whom there are thousands in the District. They also include patients in psychiatric hospitals and nursing homes, inmates of correctional institutions, residents of halfway houses, and residents of other group homes occupied by 10 or more unrelated individuals.

To represent this missing population as accurately as possible, we incorporated the Census Bureau's 1996 estimate of the group quarters population of the District into our estimate for the total population. This estimate of 40,407 people changed little from the 1990 Census count. While the group quarters population is contained in our estimate of the total population, most of the figures in this report — either from the 1990 Census or from the Consumer Survey — are for the household population only, and hence do not include it.

Endnotes

¹ As indicated by the Greater Washington Research Center's 1986 Census-updating survey and the U.S. Census Bureau's annual population estimates.

² The Consumer Survey covers only the Washington metropolitan statistical area (MSA) as it was defined for the 1990 Census. In addition to the District of Columbia, it includes the Maryland counties of Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George's and, in Virginia, the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, and Stafford, plus the independent cities of Alexandria, Fairfax City, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park.

³ Grier, George, *Comings and Goings in the Washington Area: Impact of Migration on the D.C. Population*. Washington, D.C.: Greater Washington Research Center, April 1994.

⁴ For whites, 14 percent had one child, 10 percent had two children, 2 percent had three or more children. For blacks, 20 percent had one child, 13 percent had two children, 4 percent had three children, and 2 percent had four or more.

⁵ Ages 45–54 account for 13 percent of all movers; ages 35–44 account for 30 percent; and ages 25–34 account for 39 percent.

⁶ Interviewees were not prompted for an answer or given a list of reasons. Crime may have been in the background for many additional respondents, but they may have recalled the more immediate factor that led directly to the move — for example, an opportunity to buy a suburban home at an attractive price.

⁷ The Washington metropolitan area is defined as it was for the 1990 Census.

⁸ The District, as the area's central city, was over-sampled for most of this period to improve the precision of the monthly results.