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| Unity Group |
| Chattanooga Racial Transition 2010-2020AP |

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| 2020 Census Brief #2 | By: Dr. Ken Chilton |

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| Census Brief #2, Aug. 27, 2021 |
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| Why is the African American population in Chattanooga and Hamilton County declining?The 2020 Census population results show that the African American population in Hamilton County dropped by 3,472 from 2010 to 2020. In Chattanooga, the African American population dropped by 5,817. The Unity Group has been asked “why is this happening?” Overall, the African American population in Tennessee increased by 3.4% between 2010 and 2020 (compared to 1.4% for whites). At this point, the honest answer is “we don’t know.” Complete 2020 Census data will not be released until 2022. Most of the data will not answer the question “why is this happening?” It will only give us additional data related to income, poverty, educational status, employment, and many other variables. *Potential Areas of Inquiry*One area of concern is a Census undercount. As the Census Bureau reports, African Americans were undercounted in the 2010 Census, and a disproportionate number of African Americans live in “hard to count” Census Tracts (<https://censuscounts.org/whats-at-stake/will-you-count-african-americans-in-the-2020-census/>). Getting a full count was likely compromised by COVID during the data collection stages of the 2020 Census. If homelessness rates have increased, this could also contribute to the broader undercount concern.The fact that African American population declines in Hamilton County were less than in the City of Chattanooga tells us that some people moved to the suburbs. As the Map below shows, most suburban census tracts experienced net gains in the African American population. While some of the percentage increases are high (+75%), the base number of African Americans living in these tracts were low in 2010 and remain low. Other potential reasons for the loss in African American population could be related to increased costs of housing. Home-price appreciation and rent inflation have likely contributed to an exodus from the city and county. Others use the catchall phrase of “gentrification” to explain African American population decline. However, we lack the data to make any definitive conclusions related to “why” this is happening.  |

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