

National Population Projections

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Projections illustrate possible courses of population growth.

The Census Bureau's latest population projections illustrate the future size and composition of the United States, by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin, under three assumptions about fertility, life expectancy, and net immigration:

Fertility in the middle series was assumed to remain almost constant, near the current fertility level of about 2.1 births per woman. For the low and high assumptions, levels of 1.9 and 2.6 births per woman were used, respectively.

Life expectancy is projected in the middle series to increase from 76.0 years in 1993 to 82.6 years in 2050. In 2050, life expectancy in the low assumption would be 75.3 years and in the high assumption would be 87.5 years.

Net immigration for the middle series remains constant at 880,000 per year. A wide range between the high (1,370,000) and low (350,000) net immigration figures reflects uncertainty concerning the future flow of immigrants.

The U.S. population is growing larger.

Based on the middle-series projections, the Nation's population is projected to increase to 392 million by 2050 — more than a 50 percent increase from the 1990 population size. During the 1990's, the population is projected to grow by 27 million, a 10.8 percent increase. This assumes that fertility, mortality, and net immigration would continue to reflect recent trends. Only during the 1950's were more people added to the Nation's population than are projected to be added during the 1990's. Using the lowest assumptions, the population would grow slowly, peak at 293 million

by 2030, then gradually decline. Conversely, the highest series projects the population to increase quite steadily over the next several decades, more than doubling its 1990 size by the middle of the next century.

The U.S. population growth rate is slowing.

Despite these large increases in the number of persons in the population, the rate of population growth, referred to as the average annual percent change,¹ is projected to decrease during the next six decades by about 50 percent, from 1.10 between 1990 and 1995 to 0.54 between 2040 and 2050. The decrease in the rate of growth is predominantly due to the aging of the population and, consequently, a dramatic increase in the number of deaths. From 2030 to 2050, the United States

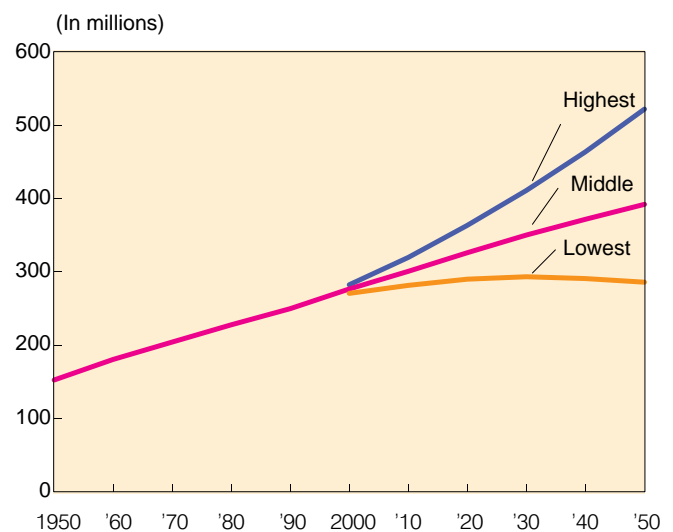
would grow more slowly than ever before in its history.

The U.S. population will be older than it is now.

In all of the projection series, the future age structure of the population will be older than it is now. In the middle series, the median age of the population will steadily increase from 34.0 in 1994 to 35.5 in 2000, peak at 39.1 in 2035, then decrease slightly to 39.0 by 2050. This increasing median age is driven by the aging of the population born during the Baby Boom after World War II (1946 to 1964). About 30 percent of the population in 1994 were born during the Baby Boom. As this population ages, the median age will rise. People born during the Baby Boom will be between 36 and 54 years old at the turn of the century. In 2011, the first members of the Baby Boom will reach age 65, and the Baby Boom will have decreased to 25 percent of the total population (in the middle series). The last of the Baby-Boom population will reach age 65 in the year 2029. By

¹The average annual rate of change, or increase, is defined as the natural logarithm of the ratio of the population at the end of a period to the population at the beginning of the period, divided by the duration of the period in years.

Estimates and Projections of Resident Population: 1950 to 2050



that time, the Baby-Boom population is projected to be only about 16 percent of the total population.

The U.S. population is becoming more diverse by race and Hispanic origin.

The race and Hispanic-origin² distribution of the U.S. population is projected to become more diverse. As the Black; Asian and Pacific Islander; American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut; and Hispanic-origin populations increase their proportions of the total population, the non-Hispanic White population proportion would decrease. By the turn of the century, the non-Hispanic White population is projected to decrease to less than 72 percent with about 13 percent Black; 11 percent Hispanic origin; 4 percent Asian and Pacific Islander; and less than 1 percent American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut. By 2050, the proportional shares shift quite

²Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race. These projections do not include the population of Puerto Rico.

dramatically. Less than 53 percent would be non-Hispanic White; 16 percent would be Black; 23 percent would be Hispanic origin; 10 percent would be Asian and Pacific Islander; and about 1 percent would be American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut.

Non-Hispanic Whites, the slowest growing group, are likely to contribute less and less to the total population growth in this country. Although non-Hispanic Whites make up almost 75 percent of the total population, they would contribute only 35 percent of the total population growth between 1990 and 2000. This percentage of growth would decrease to 23 percent between 2000 and 2010, and 14 percent from 2010 to 2030. The non-Hispanic White population would contribute nothing to population growth after 2030 because it would be declining in size.

According to the middle-series projection, the Black population would increase almost 5 million by 2000, almost

10 million by 2010, and over 20 million by 2030. The Black population would double its present size to 62 million by 2050.

The fastest growing race groups will continue to be the Asian and Pacific Islander population with annual growth rates that may exceed 4 percent during the 1990's. By the turn of the century, the Asian and Pacific Islander population would expand to over 12 million, double its current size by 2010, triple by 2020, and increase to more than 5 times its current size, to 41 million by 2050.

Growth of the Hispanic-origin population will probably be a major element of the total population growth.

According to the middle series, the Hispanic-origin population would be the largest growing group. By 2000, the Hispanic-origin population may increase to 31 million, double its 1990 size by 2015, and quadruple its 1990 size by the middle of the next century. In fact, the Hispanic-origin population would contribute

32 percent of the Nation's population growth from 1990 to 2000, 39 percent from 2000 to 2010, 45 percent from 2010 to 2030, and 60 percent from 2030 to 2050.

Future fertility and immigration may play major roles in the Nation's growth.

The two major components driving the population growth are fertility (births) and net immigration. In the middle series, the number of births is projected to decrease slightly as the century ends and then increase progressively throughout the projection period. After 2011, the number of births each year would exceed the highest annual number of births ever achieved in the United States.

Almost one-third of the current population growth is caused by net immigration. By 2000, the Nation's population is projected to be 8 million larger than it would have been if there were no net immigration after July 1, 1992. By 2050, this difference would increase to 82 million. In fact, about 86 percent of the population growth during the year 2050 may be due to the effects of post-1992 net immigration.

For Further Information

See: Current Population Reports, Series P25-1104, *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1993 to 2050.*

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Percent of the Population, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1990, 2000, 2025, and 2050

(Middle-series projections)

