
PROJECTIONS OF THE U.S. POPULATION, 2010-2040, BY IMMIGRANT GENERATION AND FOREIGN-BORN DURATION IN THE U.S.

Executive Summary

The important role of immigration as a driver of population growth makes it a critical factor in projections of the U.S. population. This study builds on the results of the censuses of 2010 and 2000, vital statistics data and other information, and a decade of methodological development to generate new projections to the year 2040. These projections show the effects of past and future immigration on the population size as well as the numbers of foreign-born residents and their children, the “immigrant generations” that are of continuing public and policy concern.

The new projections result in a total population of 391.1 million in 2040, which is 13.0 million (3.2%) below the projection issued in 2008 and still currently recommended by the U.S. Census Bureau. Fertility and mortality rates in the new projections are similar to the Census Bureau’s; however, the expectations about immigration differ.

Slower rates of annual immigration post-2000, indeed much reduced in the Great Recession years, have led to lower expectations for future immigration (legal and illegal combined). Even after recovery from the recession, which we presume will occur, the expert opinion we have surveyed does not anticipate that net immigration will return to levels higher than experienced at its peak around 2000 (1.26 million per year) in the near future. Net immigration was estimated at 0.92 million in 2009, and is projected to rise to 1.18 million in 2015 and to 1.25 million in 2025. These average annual flows are far below those projected in 2008 by the Census Bureau for 2025 (1.57 million), apparently because those expectations were shaped by the upswing in immigration during the 1990s and did not take into account the extended post-2000 downturn.

Total foreign-born population continues to grow from these immigrant flows, standing at 13.2% of the total U.S. population in our estimate for 2010. The 2010 census was the first in over a century not to record place of birth and the first in many decades not to record length of US residence, leaving uncertainties about these basic characteristics of the population. The Census Bureau recently updated its survey-based estimate of the foreign born share from 12.5% (for 2009) to 12.9% (for 2010) of the total population, but additional foreign born may remain uncounted, hence our higher estimate of the current foreign born based on a detailed demographic accounting.

The rising share of foreign born and their children is shown in Figure 4, which covers the period from 1970 to 2040. The foreign born share is projected to rise to 16.7% in 2040 and the second generation share to 13.7%. In the decades before 2000 the latter did not grow as fast because the aged children of an earlier era’s immigration were declining from mortality, and also because today’s immigrants have roughly half as many children as those in the early 20th century, so the new second generation is expanding less pro-

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portionally than in the last century. After 2000, however, the new second generation population began to grow rapidly. The total foreign stock (parents and children with recent immigrant roots) is currently 22.5% of the total U.S. population and is projected in 2040 to rise to 30.5%, a level not seen since 1930.

Among the foreign born, there is a rapidly increasing length of U.S. residence, which lays the basis for stronger social, economic, and civic ties and better integration in the American fabric. Between 2000 and 2010, the large wave of 1980s immigrants reached 20 years of residence, and in coming decades more immigrants will reach this threshold of settlement. The share of all foreign born who are long settled declined to a low point in 2000 (30.4%) but has since started rising; it is estimated at 38.5% in 2010 and projected to reach a majority (52.6%) by 2030.

This report provides details about immigrant generations and duration in the Asian and Hispanic population, and shows the generational shares of the population in census years starting in 1970 with projections to 2040. The complete methodology is also described.

The Research Program on Generational Population Projections

This specialized program of research, initiated in 2000, is conducted through the Population Dynamics Research Group in the School of Policy, Planning, and Development at the University of Southern California. Principal products have been the projection series on California Demographic Futures. A number of reports and special studies have also been carried out in preparation for the 2011 series of projections.

Additional publications and supporting documents available on the website:

<http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/futures/>

Survey of Expert Opinion on Future Level of Immigration to the U.S. in 2015 and 2025: Summary of Results

by John Pitkin and Dowell Myers

May 2011

Projections of the Population of California by Nativity and Year of Entry to the U.S., in Addition to Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin. Paper presented at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America, Washington, DC.

by John Pitkin and Dowell Myers

April 2011

The 2010 Census Benchmark for California's Growing and Changing Population

by John Pitkin and Dowell Myers

February 2011

A Predictive Estimate of the 2010 Census Count for California

by John Pitkin and Dowell Myers

December 2010



2005 edition of the projections for California

California Demographic Futures: Projections to 2030, by Immigrant Generations, Nativity, and Time of Arrival in U.S.

by Dowell Myers, John Pitkin and Julie Park
