

## Census Brief: Aging in California and Los Angeles County

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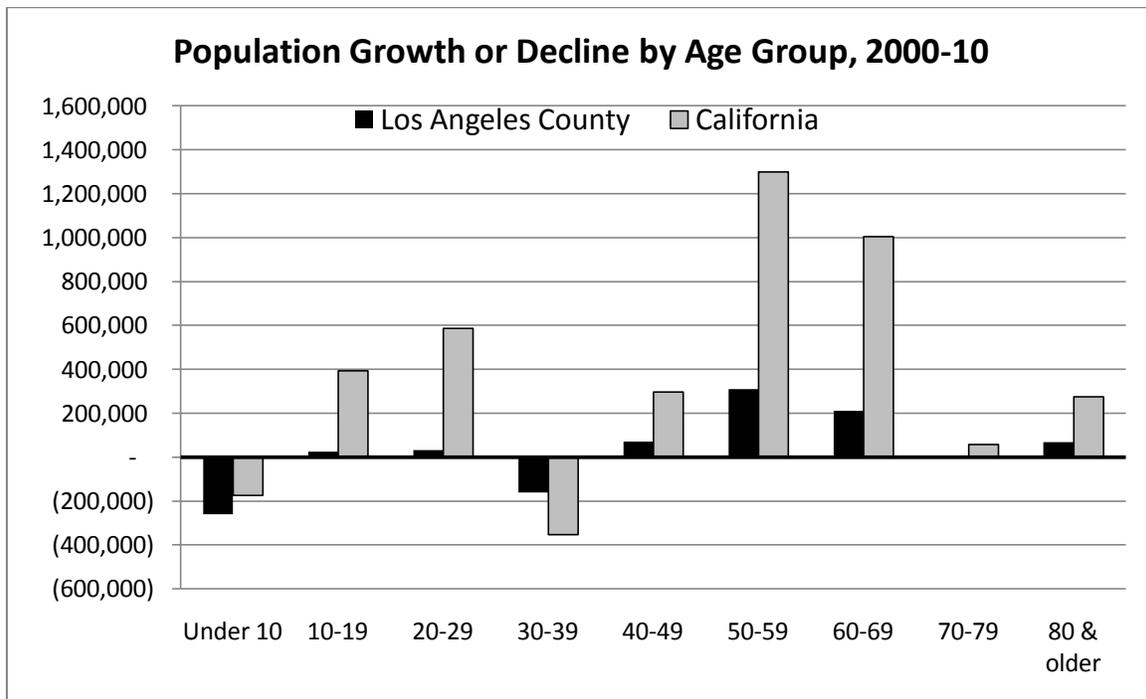
People in both Los Angeles and California are blowing out more candles on their birthday cakes, because of aging baby boomers and their parents who are now octogenarians.

More than half the state's population is now over 35 (a median age of 35.2), nearly two years older than in 2000 when the median was 33.3. Los Angeles County is both younger than the state and aging more rapidly, as reflected in its median age, which rose from 32 to 34.8.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, the losses of children under 10 are more severe in Los Angeles than the state.

The divergent trends in Los Angeles are best shown in Exhibit 1, a chart comparing population change by age groups in Los Angeles County to California as a whole. The county accounted for 8.8% of the state's nearly 3.4 million population growth from 2000 to 2010.

Exhibit 1



But not all age groups shared equally in this growth. The biggest difference is among children under age 10. Los Angeles lost 260,195, which greatly exceeded the state's total loss of 175,689. In effect, Los Angeles accounted for *all* the population loss in the state for this age group.

The loss of children in Los Angeles reflects the difficult living conditions for families facing high housing costs followed by high unemployment during the Great Recession. It also is related to the surprising finding by Brookings that Los Angeles was the only major metropolitan area to experience a decline in Hispanic children over the last decade.<sup>2</sup>

The chart also shows that Los Angeles suffered an unusually large share of the losses in adults aged 30-39 over the last decade, 161,151, which amounts to 45.6% of the statewide loss. This loss occurs in the age range of the parents of the “lost” children.

Above age 40, Los Angeles participated much more heavily in the statewide population growth. Its rapid aging is reflected in the very large shares of growth, for example, at ages 50 to 59 (23.8% of the statewide growth), the age of the Baby Boomers, and at ages 80 and older (24.9% of the statewide growth), which is the age of the Boomers’ parents.

In comparison to 33 of the other 36 states for which data are now available from the 2010 census, Californians, on average, are younger. Selected states with higher median ages include: Maine (42.7); West Virginia (41.3); New Hampshire (41.1); Florida (40.7); Pennsylvania (40.1); Connecticut (40.0); Massachusetts (39.1); Hawaii (38.6); and New York (38). On the other hand, California’s median age is older than Idaho’s 34.6; Alaska’s 33.8; and Utah’s 29.2.

But the median divides two halves of the population, younger and older, and significant changes are being recorded at both ends.

### **Stagnant Growth Under Age 18**

Even though the state’s population grew by nearly 3.4 million between 2000 and 2010, only 45,211 of that increase was under age 18, amounting to only 1.3% of total growth. In contrast, fully 77.9% of the state’s overall population growth was over the age of 50. No wonder the median moved up.

California was fortunate to have any growth under age 18, in part because of a 1.8% growth in children under 5. Some other large states experienced actual declines in the hundreds of thousands: New York (-365,178); Michigan (-251,699); and Ohio (-157,588).

Los Angeles County, however, did experience a dramatic decline. The county lost the most minors in the entire state of California during the 10-year span, losing 265,768 residents under 18, a decline of 10.0% from its level in 2000.

This decline in Los Angeles was not evenly spread among children of different ages. The deepest losses (-21.0%) were suffered at ages 5 to 9. And among the youngest children, those under age 5, there was also a decrease of 12.5%. The fall of population among these children has led to enrollment declines in elementary schools, sometimes even requiring closures. But there are still nearly 646,000 children under 5 and about 634,000 children between 5 and 9 who need pre-schools, other early childhood services and elementary schools.

Other counties in California have also suffered losses of school age children. Orange County, the third largest county in California, experienced the second largest loss of residents under 18, a

drop of 31,760 children under 18 (a decline of 4.1%). The decline was especially deep at ages 5 to 9 (-14.3%). Two other Southern California counties – Ventura and Santa Barbara – saw slight decreases in the number of residents under 18 between 2000 and 2010.

In contrast, gains for this group were observed slightly in San Diego and Imperial counties. San Diego and San Bernardino counties also gained residents under 18 but the biggest winner was Riverside, with a gain of 151,417 minors (32.3%), exceeding the state's gain.

Ten other large counties in the state outside Southern California with a population of at least 500,000 residents that lost residents under 18 were Alameda (-13,951 or -3.9%); San Francisco (-5,278 or -4.7%); and San Mateo (-2,328 or -1.4%). Again, the losses were deeper at ages 5 to 9: Alameda (-10,102 or -9.7%), San Francisco (-3,102 or -9.8%) and San Mateo (-2,201 or -4.7%).

Overall, California lost 220,041 children at ages of 5 to 9 from 2000 to 2010, or a loss of 8.1%.

### **Resurgent Growth in the 20s**

Young adults, between the ages of 20 and 29, shot up in the state in 2010 compared to 2000. The total number of 20- to 24-year olds jumped by 16.2% and 25- to 29-year-olds increased by 7.9%.

The upward trend for Los Angeles County followed the state for 20- to 24- year-olds with a 7.3% increase from 2000. But adults 25 to 29 actually declined by 2.5% in the county.

Elsewhere in Southern California, Orange County also had increases for 20- to 24-year-olds and a decreasing number of 25- to 29-year-olds. But Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Imperial, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties all experienced gains for residents in their 20s, like the state.

California's 10 other large counties with at least 500,000 residents all had gains among young adults 20-24, excepting San Mateo. Residents ages 25 to 29 increased in six of the 10 counties but Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara experienced losses.

Teenagers, ages 15 to 19, also had a large growth across the state (15.2%).

### **Gains at Ages over 45**

California largely saw an upswing in the number of residents 45 and older. The biggest gains were for these age groups: 50s (+37.5%), 60s (+47.1%), and 85 and older (+41.2%).

Los Angeles County largely echoed the same trends as the state. Other Southern California counties plus the 10 counties outside the region with at least 500,000 residents mirrored similar patterns as well.

With the oldest Baby Boomers (born 1946) now crossing age 65, the ranks of seniors in the state are poised to grow. This ratio has remained almost constant for four decades but began a slight rise after 2000.

In California, the senior ratio of residents aged 65 and older to those aged 25 to 64 increased from 20.4 to 21.5 from 2000 to 2010. The senior ratio also increased for Los Angeles County from 2000 to 2010, an increase of 1.5 points to 20.2. Population projections show this ratio will rise dramatically in the next 20 years, by 70% to 90% in the state and Los Angeles, according to our previous research.<sup>3</sup>

Looking ahead, Los Angeles will continue to ride the aging wave of Baby Boomers and it could suffer more losses of children unless steps are taken to stem the outflow of families with children.

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## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> All data in this report are taken from the following sources, unless otherwise noted: Data from 2010 are taken from the Census Bureau's Demographic Profile Report (DP-1); Data from 2000 are taken from the Census 2000 SF1.

<sup>2</sup> Frey, William H. "America's Diverse Future: Initial Glimpses at the U.S. Child Population from the 2010 Census," Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C. 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Myers, Dowell, Janna Goldberg, Sarah Mawhorter, and Seong Hee Min, "Immigration and the New Maturity of Los Angeles," pp. 12-27 in Ali Modarres, ed., *Los Angeles 2010: State of the City*, Pat Brown Institute, California State University, Los Angeles, 2010, Figure 9.

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### **For more information:**

Copies of all project reports are downloadable from the website of the Population Dynamics Research Group, School of Policy, Planning and Development.

<http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/popdynamics/home.html>

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