
Pew Research Center recently issued its latest demographic projections for the U.S. for the next 40 years. The following are excerpts from that report:

- Assumptions – current immigration trends, birth rates, and death rates will continue (Pew asserts that both the Social Security Administration projections and the Census Bureau make unreasonably conservative assumptions about immigration, thus resulting in lower projected numbers)
- Projections – by 2050 (no intermediate dates were presented; reported results were not classified by regions or states)
  - U.S. population will be 438 million (up from 296 million in 2005)
    - Third most populous country, behind China and India
    - Growth rate exceeds most other developed countries
    - Largest foreign born population than any other country
  - 82% of the increase will be from immigrants arriving between 2005 and 2050 and their U.S. born descendants
    - Immigration rates assumed to increase 1% per year, slower than recent growth trends
    - Immigration rates between 1960 and 2005 have grown at a steady rate
  - 19% of Americans will be an immigrant in 2050
    - Fertility rates have decreased from 3.5 to 2 births per woman
    - Smaller proportion of women are having children
    - Birthrates for immigrants generally are higher than for general population (rate decreases in subsequent generations of immigrants)
    - People generally immigrate without children and have children in the U.S.
  - Latino population will be 29% of the population, up from 14% in 2005
    - 48 million in 2005, 128 million in 2050
    - 60% of U.S. growth between 2005 and 2050
  - Blacks will be approximately the same percentage in 2050 as in 2005
  - Non-Hispanic whites will be 47%, compared to 67% in 2005
  - Elderly population will double in size from 2005
    - 37 million in 2005 (12%) to 81 million in 2050 (19%)
    - More rapid growth than general population
  - Children under age 17
    - 102 million in 2050 (23% of the total), up from 73 million in 2005 (25%)
    - Rate of growth is slower than for general population, but is faster than the 1960 to 2005 rate of 14% (rate appears to be only 12.3%)
      - In 1960, there were 65 million children under 17 (36% of the total)
      - In 2005, there were 73 million (25% of the total)
    - Immigrants and descendants account for the all growth in this segment
    - No statistics were provided for the 18-22 year-old cohort
Dependency ratio, i.e. ratio of people under 17 and over 65 to the number of people between 18 and 64 (assumed to be the working population) will rise from 59% in 2005 to 72% in 2050.

Working age population (18 – 64) will grow from 186 million in 2005 to 255 million in 2050, with rate of growth slower than the rate of growth for the overall population; immigrants and descendants account for all growth in this category.

Alternative projection scenarios

- Assumed lower immigration
  - Population rises to 384 million
  - Foreign-born share at 13%
  - Hispanic share at 26%
  - Dependency ratio at 75%

- Assumed higher immigration
  - Population rises to 496 million
  - Foreign-born share at 23%
  - Hispanic share at 32%
  - Dependency ratio at 69%

Projections by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) were summarized in a spreadsheet prepared by Don Bishop, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. Their projections anticipate 3.214 million high school graduates in 2018, compared to 3.19 million in 2008, an increase of .75%. The anticipated dispersion of these graduates is as follows (percentages are changes from 2008 – 2018):

- Midwest close (IA, KS, NE, SD) – down 3%
- Midwest – down 3%
- South – up 8%
- Southwest – up 16%
- West – down 1%
- East – down 9%

Comments:

Even under the most conservative of the Pew projections, several significant general population trends can be anticipated:

- Whites will no longer constitute more than 50% of the population
- Hispanic share of the population will be at least one quarter of the total
- For every 100 members of the working age population, there will 69 to 75 members of the population under age 17 and over 65 who “depend” on them
- The number of school age children will grow at a rate faster than it has the last 45 years

As the WICHE data indicate, the number of traditional age undergraduate students should increase in total over the period projected. The dispersion of these students may necessitate changes in student recruitment efforts, such as emphasis on areas that might not be heavily emphasized currently.
It also seems clear that the population over age 65 will grow at a significantly faster pace than it has in the last 45 years. Educational programs that focus on traditional undergraduates, on the needs of growing Hispanic populations, and on the needs of elderly (by both training those who would care for them and providing the elderly with expanded educational opportunities) should prove to be successful.

**Sources:**
Don Bishop, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) data spreadsheet