

The trendy side of demographics

America has always been a land of change, but the last century in particular has seen the most dramatic shifts in its population: not only who they are, but where they live, how they work, and when they die. America's population is aging, more diverse, more educated and more suburban. The shifting demographics of the United States not only matter to census takers and product marketers, but also are a significant component of how states provide services from health care to education and from driver's licenses to criminal justice. In this month's State Trends, CSG policy staff members examine significant changes in demographics and how those changes affect certain areas of state government.

COMPILED BY CSG'S TRENDS RESEARCH AND RESONSE GROUP

Diversity: Race and ethnicity

One of the most notable demographic events in the United States in recent years is the increase in racial and ethnic diversity. Shifts in immigration patterns and high immigration rates are not only increasing the number and changing the composition of the nation's ethnic and cultural groups; they are changing basic ideas about race and ethnicity.

In recent decades, changes in U.S. immigration policy coupled with international political and economic conditions have resulted in a large influx of immigrants from different parts of the world – most notably Latin America and Asia.

Discussions and ideas about race in the U.S. have traditionally focused on a Black and White model. At the beginning of the 21st century, however, this model no longer reflects the nation's reality. The racial categories routinely used by the Census Bureau now include Black/African American, White, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race. In addition, the Census Bureau tracks two ethnicities: Hispanic/Latino and Non-Hispanic/Latino.

One noted trend marked by the 2000 Census is the increase in the number of Hispanics/Latinos. Nationwide, Hispanics make up about 12.5 percent of the total

population. About 75.1 percent is White, 12.3 percent is Black/African American, 3.6 percent is Asian, and 6.5 percent is American Indian or Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or "some other race." (These percentages total more than 100 percent because the Census Bureau does not use "Hispanic" as a racial category.)

This increase in the number of Hispanics is due largely to changes in immigration patterns and high levels of immigration. Immigrants now come to the U.S. primarily from Latin America and Asia, not Europe. In 2000, 28.4 million people (10.4 percent) in the U.S. were foreign-born. Fifty-one percent of the foreign-born population came from Latin America, 25.5 percent from Asia, 15.3 percent from Europe, 9.9 percent from the Caribbean, 6.6 percent from South America, and 8.1 percent from other regions.

There is also significant diversity within each of these racial and ethnic categories. "Hispanic" may include people with origins in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central America, South America or Spain. "Asian" may mean people who are or whose ancestors are from Japan, China, India, Pakistan, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, or others.



"Black" may include people whose ancestors have been in the U.S. for hundreds of years, as well as people born in Africa, Haiti, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, or others. "White" refers to people whose origins are in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

Though broad generalizations about racial and ethnic groups may be informative, policy-makers need to be aware of the differences such generalizations conceal.

In addition, regional and local differences mean that each city, county, state and region faces different demographic realities, and thus different challenges and opportunities. The nation's foreign-born and native Hispanic population is concentrated in the West and the South, with three-fourths living in California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Arizona and New Jersey combined.

Although U.S. immigration policy may change in coming years, especially in the wake of Sept. 11, 2001, the country's racial and ethnic diversity is expected to increase in the future. Given increased globalization and projected worker shortages in certain segments of the U.S. labor market, immigration – both legal and illegal – is expected to continue to play an important role in the U.S. economy. ★

Environment: Today and tomorrow

How can state officials determine whether events glimpsed today are blips on their policy screens or harbingers of major future drivers of environmental statutes and regulations? This problem has no clear answer, but part of the solution involves demographics.

While predicting what environmental choices will confront future generations is uncertain, demographic changes are likely to set much of the framework within which future policy options are chosen. As population concentrations evolve, the breadth and depth of associated environmental impacts will follow. As affluence varies, so will the collective ability to focus resources on environmental protective and restorative measures. While biodiversity, climate change, sustainable development and natural resource depletion dominate current environmental debates, tomorrow's environmental issues must incorporate future demographic factors.

State agency, legislative and judicial officials are forced to make decisions every day that affect present and future generations. A growing list of demographic data, however, is being released from the 2000 Census that may have some effect on future environmental policy decisions. What follows is a brief review of some recent demographic information – only a portion of which is environmental in nature – that may affect the types of environmental choices facing future generations.

According to the 2000 Census:

- Population growth was higher in the West and the South and lower in the North and the East from 1990 to 2000. Every state's population grew, a majority of Americans (54 percent) lived in the 10 most populous states, and the percentage of Americans living in metropolitan areas is now up to more than 80 percent.
- Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Hispanic residents increased by 57 percent to 35.3 million, and half of all Hispanics lived in just two states: California and Texas.
- The U.S. has more residents 80-and-over and has a population that is older than much of the rest of the world.


What links these three results? It is possible that as the U.S. population becomes increasingly concentrated in metropolitan areas, state and local governments will be forced to focus even more on land use and development issues to respond to increasing population demands for housing, infrastructure, natural resources and services. The myriad of environmental issues contributing to directing metropolitan growth will likely grow to dominate state and local land-use planning even more than today.

States with higher populations may become increasingly focused on sustaining levels of economic performance and environmental practices. Conversely, states with shrinking population bases will find it more difficult to continue environmental compliance staffing and activities given lower general tax revenues available.

As Hispanic and other ethnic groups gain political influence as a result of their growing population, the substance of

environmental policy-making will change. This could include more consideration of agricultural environmental effects – where a large percentage of Hispanics currently find employment – and may affect issues from water rights with Mexico to air quality concerns in larger southern and western states.

As more people live past the age of 65, an increasing percentage of every tax dollar generated may have to be spent toward the maintenance of a retired population, thereby edging out resources that could be otherwise devoted to environmental protection.

State officials are and should be presently engaged in identifying and integrating disparate demographic developments into environmental policies. Ours is a mobile society where demographic changes will, no doubt, continue to be increasingly rapid. Being alert to these developments – connecting the dots – has to be a fundamental practice of state government, if not for today, certainly for tomorrow. 



Agriculture: Integrating development plans

The demographics of rural America are the demographics of farmers, retirees, commuters and food consumers. The industry responsible for the production of food from “gate to plate” is America’s largest industry. As of 1999, each farmer feeds 96 other Americans and 20 foreigners, on 21 percent of the U.S. landmass. Americans are consuming more fruit, vegetables and grain products, eating leaner meat, and consuming record amounts of sweeteners and fats. Each person in America now eats more total food, more snacks, bigger portions and more calories than they did 20 years ago.

In general, as income rises, consumers eat more meat with a wider variety of ethnic foods, and demand more value-added, convenience foods. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Statistics Services, Americans eat more meals away from home, with 2000 figures showing that approximately 45 per-

centage of the retail food dollar goes to food eaten away from home. The price of that food continues to drop as a percentage of disposable income, with food expenditures at just over 10 percent in 2000. Farmers received approximately 23 percent of each retail dollar spent, but the linkage between farm and retail prices continues to weaken, evidenced by the fact that the grain used to make breakfast cereal costs less than the carton that holds it. Increasing globalization of the food supply and reduced home preparation

knowledge indicate a need to strengthen food safety and security initiatives. At an average age of 54, farmers are getting older while the number of minority owners and employees continues to increase. The farms themselves have been changing dramatically, both in number and size. Farms have been undergoing consolidation, with the average size increasing from 420 acres in 1980 to 475 acres in the 1997 Census. Total number of farms has decreased almost 20 percent in the same time period, to just over 2 million today. Twenty-five percent of the nation’s largest farms produce 75 percent of the products.

The profitability crisis encountered by the small- and middle-sized farms is reflected in the journey-to-work data from the 2000 Census. Commuting distances are getting longer, and more people are driving alone. Commuting increases are coming from rural areas,



where people are driving longer distances across less-congested roads. Most are rural residents who are commuting to jobs in suburban metro areas. Even with urban jobs for rural residents, the Census also showed that rural communities continue to decline in population. Farm-dependent and rural counties that are not adjacent to metro areas appear to have a difficult challenge in finding ways to diversify their economies to create employment opportunities that attract new workers. The changes occurring in

rural America require elected officials to develop integrated rural-development plans that include economic, education and health issues. Rural areas seeing increases in population are generally located in areas of the country that are encountering sprawl. However, urban growth and development are not a threat to national food and fiber production. Farms in metropolitan areas are an increasingly important segment of U.S. agriculture, making up 33 percent of all farms, 16 percent of all cropland and producing 30 percent of the output. It is important to understand that due to increasing contact with suburban neighbors and rising land values, these farmers often have to change their operations to produce higher-value products and undertake an urban-marketing orientation. It is the expansion of large-lot subdivisions in rural areas that threaten prime farmland and consume much more land per house than does urban growth. Sprawl is a public issue in every region – over 3 million acres are converted annually – highlighting the growing importance of farmland preservation in planning and zoning decisions.★



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Infrastructure: Farther and farther apart

Demographic trends in the U.S. point to a consistent decentralization of residential life. Therefore, cities will continue to lose ground to suburbs and rapidly developing communities on the periphery of metro areas. As these areas capture the majority of economic and population growth, the shifting population trends fueling this movement of people and capital are also contributing significantly to an increase in traffic congestion across the country.

Currently, urban areas account for over 72 percent of the U.S. population. These areas contain 23 percent of the total miles of roadway in the U.S., yet these roads account for over 61 percent of all miles driven in the U.S. On the whole, total travel for all motor vehicles increased to 2.7 trillion miles in 2000, an increase of 150 percent for the 30-year period since 1970. Over the next 20 years, the U.S.

population is projected to increase by 50 million, from 280 million to 330 million, and the number of registered and commercial vehicles is projected to increase similarly by 52 million. When considered alongside a recent report by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), which found that the average U.S. driver sits in standstill traffic for more than 15 minutes each day and the nationwide “rush-hour” period has grown by more than 55 percent since 1982 to seven hours each day, these numbers and future projections point to a worsening trend.

As urban sprawl increases, jobs, housing and services grow farther apart. Development patterns that require an automobile trip for every errand force us to drive more every year to accomplish the same things. In fact, according to a past report by the U.S. Department of Transportation on travel behavior, more

than 70 percent of driving growth throughout the 1980s and early 1990s was caused by sprawl-related factors such as increases in trip lengths, commute times and trips taken, as well as switching to driving from other forms of travel.

As many states are forced to address issues of sprawl resulting from shifting population and suburban growth, an issue that repeatedly rises to the surface is how to deal with the increasing level of traffic congestion being seen on today’s roadways. At odds, however, is the best way to reduce congestion without sacrificing future mobility.

While traffic congestion problems prompt many to point toward the simple solution of increasing urban roadways, many question whether a larger highway system would be the best solution. Supporters of increased investment in public transit maintain that transit is better for the environment and more energy efficient than automobile use. However, transit has one fatal shortcoming; relatively few people use it. In the U.S., transit accounts for a very small fraction of passenger miles traveled while automobile use accounts for 99 percent of all passenger miles traveled.

One thing is certain: major planning and investment in transportation infrastructure improvements will be necessary. As many people exercise their freedom to work, live, and travel where they choose, they also enjoy the freedom that driving brings. Therefore, until a similarly attractive and viable alternative comes along, don’t expect traffic congestion to go away anytime soon.

The biggest concern for states will be the loss of productivity that occurs with congestion. The recent TTI report also found that in 2000, congestion cost the U.S. economy over \$58.5 billion dollars in lost productivity and \$9 billion in wasted fuel. As congestion problems continue to increase, states will have to become more involved in transportation issues that have historically been addressed at the federal level. Future success in addressing transportation congestion issues will require cooperation across governmental boundaries. 