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How We're Changing

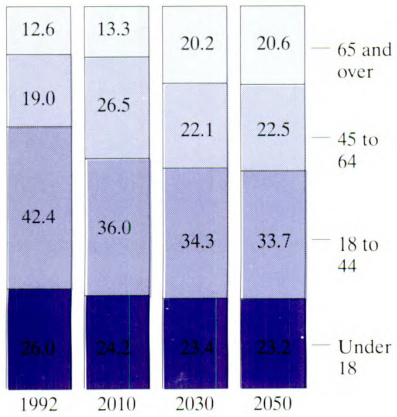
Demographic State of the Nation: 1993

This is an overview of some major demographic findings reported by the Census Bureau since January 1992. If you are interested in additional information on the topics in this report, contact one of our subject specialists listed on page 4.

United States population is projected to increase 50 percent by 2050.

Under the middle series projection, the Nation's population would increase by 50 percent from 255 million in 1992 to 383 million in 2050. The middle series assumes 2.1 births per woman, average life expectancy increasing to 82.1 years by 2050, and an annual net immigration of 880,000 by the turn of the century. The age group with the largest increase (35 percent) is expected to be persons 45 to 54, from 27.4 million in 1992 to 37.1 million in 2000. The average annual rate of growth for persons 65 years or older would decrease from 2.4 percent between 1950 and 1990 to 1.2 percent during the 1991-2010 period, and then increase to 2.8 percent between 2010 and 2030 because of the aging of the 1946-1964 Baby Boom generation (figure 1).

Figure 1.
Percent Distribution of the Population, by Age: 1992 to 2050
(Middle series projections)



Asian and Pacific Islanders are expected to be the fastest-growing race group with annual growth rates that may exceed 4 percent in the 1990's. This population would rise from 9 million in 1992 (3 percent of the total) to 41 million in 2050 (11 percent of the total). The Hispanic population is expected to rise from 24 million in 1992 (9 percent of the total) to 81 million in 2050 (21 percent of the total). (Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race.) Immigration is expected to account for a large part of the growth of these two groups.

The lowest series, with assumptions in the year 2050 of 1.8 births per woman, average life expectancy of 75.3 years, and an annual net immigration of 350,000, projects a peak population of 287 million in 2030, then a decrease to 276 million in 2050. The highest series, with assumptions in the year 2050 of 2.5 births per woman, average life expectancy of 87.6 years, and an annual net immigration of 1,370,000, projects a population of 507 million in 2050.

The number of households continues to increase.

There were an estimated 95.7 million households in 1992, up from 94.3 million in 1991, 80.8 million in 1980, and 63.4 million in 1970. The average number of persons per household in 1992 was 2.62, not significantly different from the averages since 1989, but down from 2.76 in 1980 and 3.14 in 1970.

In 1992, married-couple families constituted 55 percent (52.5 million) of all households, compared to 15 percent (14.7 million) for families maintained by a householder with no spouse present, and 30 percent (28.5 million) for nonfamily households. (Families have at least two members, including at least one relative of the householder.) People living alone represented 84 percent of nonfamily households.

In 1970, 71 percent of households were married-couple families, 11 percent were families maintained by a householder with no husband or wife present, and 19 percent were nonfamily households. People living alone represented 91 percent of nonfamily households.

The number of single parents with one or more own children under 18 rose from 3.8 million in 1970 to 10.5 million in 1992, and the vast majority (86 percent) were mothers. Among single-parents, 8.3 million lived in their own households, whereas 2.2 million lived in households maintained by relatives or nonrelatives.

About 62 percent of Black family groups with children were single-parent families in 1992. The corresponding figures for Whites and Hispanics were 24 percent and 34 percent, respectively.

More people are obtaining degrees beyond high school.

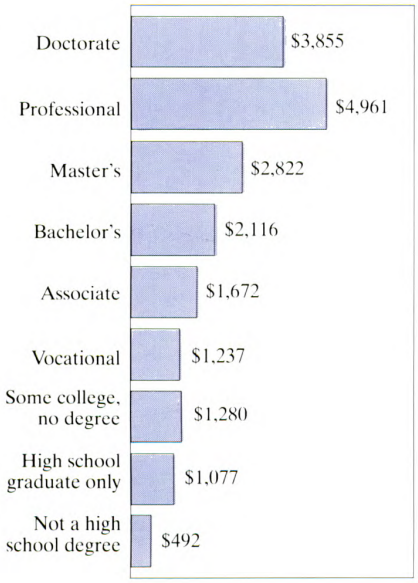
In 1990, 25.2 percent of persons 18 years or older had obtained a degree beyond high school (either academic or vocational), significantly higher than in 1987 (23.3 percent) or 1984 (20.7 percent). Across sex, race, and age groups (except for persons under 25), a higher proportion of persons had a degree beyond high school in 1990 than in 1984.

In 1990, a larger proportion of Whites (26.4 percent) than of Blacks (14.0 percent) or Hispanics (11.6 percent) had degrees beyond high school. Also, a larger proportion of men (26.9 percent) than women (23.8 percent) had degrees beyond high school. By age, 36.6 percent of persons 35 to 44, and 14.8 percent of persons 65 years or older had degrees beyond high school.

Among persons 18 years or older, men (7.3 percent) were more likely than women (4.5 percent) to have an advanced degree (master's, professional, or doctorate), but women (7.6 percent) were more likely than men (6.1 percent) to have an associate or vocational degree. Among persons 35 to 44, 10.1 percent had advanced degrees, whereas 3.8 percent of persons 65 years or older had advanced degrees. A larger proportion of Whites (6.2 percent) than of Blacks (2.7 percent) or Hispanics (2.5 percent) had advanced degrees (the difference was not significant between Blacks and Hispanics).

In general, higher educational attainment leads to higher earnings (figure 2). However, the mean monthly earnings of persons 18 years or older with a professional degree ($4,961) was higher than persons 18 years or older with a doctorate degree.

Figure 2.
Average Monthly Earnings, by Degree Received for Persons 18 Years or Older: Spring 1990



In 1988, about 8 million Americans provided financial support to persons not living with them.

In 1988, 8 million persons 18 years or older provided financial support (such as child support, alimony, and money for living expenses) to 12.4 million persons not living in the same household with them. Providers contributed $2,980, on average. Forty-nine percent supported only children, 45 percent supported only adults (not different from 49 percent), and 6 percent supported both.

Among providers, 4 percent were under 25, 58 percent were 25 to 44, 29 percent were 45 to 64, and 9 percent were 65 years or older. Of providers 25 to 44, 73 percent supported children; of providers 45 to 64, 71 percent supported dependent adult relatives and 34 percent supported children; and of providers 65 years and older, 93 percent supported adults only.

Three times as many men (76 percent) as women (24 percent) provided financial assistance. Almost 60 percent of the men, compared with 16 percent of the women, supported only children. Support payments by men to former or current spouses averaged 11 percent of their family income or $4,583 annually.

Among recipients, 44 percent were adults, with about one-third of them being the providers' parents. About 47 percent of adult recipients (children 21 and over receiving payments from parents) and 8 percent of children under 21 received lump-sum payments.

About 32 million people do not have health insurance.

In the fourth quarter of 1990, 13 percent of the population (32 million persons) did not have some type of health insurance, unchanged from the fourth quarter 1988 percentage. The 1990 rate was 12 percent for Whites, 18 percent for Blacks, and 28 percent for Hispanics. Almost one-half of the uninsured were under 25, an age group that accounts for 36 percent of the total population.

Ten percent of persons with a work disability and receiving retirement or disability income lacked health insurance. The rate was 24 percent for persons who did not receive these income supplements. Almost 40 percent of persons receiving unemployment compensation were uninsured at the close of 1990.

Longitudinal data during the 28-month period ending in May 1989 show that 26 percent of the population (61 million persons) was uninsured for at least 1 month. The rate was 24 percent for Whites, 40 percent for Blacks, and 46 percent for Hispanics. The likelihood of having continuous health insurance coverage increases with age among adults: 18 to 21 (49 percent), 22 to 24 (51 percent), 25 to 34 (70 percent), 35 to 44 (77 percent), 45 to 64 (82 percent), 65 years or older (99 percent).

Of persons who worked the entire 1987-1989 period, 86 percent of full-time workers and 73 percent of part-time workers were continuously covered; only 57 percent of workers with one or more job interruptions during this period were continuously covered.

Real median household income declines for the second consecutive year.[1]

Median household income declined by 3.5 percent in real terms between 1990 and 1991 from $31,203 to $30,126. Over the past 2 years, real median household income declined by 5.1 percent. This decline in income is the effect of the most recent recessionary period which began in July of 1990 and ended in March of 1991.

The change in real median household income between 1990 and 1991 differed across race and ethnic origin groups (figure 3). The real median income of White households declined by 3.0 percent to $31,569, and for Asian and Pacific Islander households by 9.0 percent to $36,449. The median income of Black households ($18,807) and of Hispanic origin households ($22,691) showed no significant change. Between 1989 and 1991, the real median household incomes declined significantly for all of the above-mentioned race and ethnic origin groups.

The real median earnings of male year-round, full-time workers with earnings increased between 1990 and 1991 by 2.0 percent to $29,421. This increase was accompanied by composition changes in the male work force

[1]Changes in real income refer to comparisons after adjusting for inflation.

and a decline of 1.3 million year-round, full-time workers. Real median earnings of women working year-round, full-time with earnings, on the other hand, remained unchanged at $20,553. As a result, the female-to-male earnings ratio decreased to .70. The ratio had increased from .60 in 1980 to a record high of .72 in 1990.

The above income data are based on money income from regularly received sources before any taxes and excluding capital gains and noncash benefits. A broader income definition that estimates the effect of benefits and taxes on income also shows that median household income was lower in 1991 than in 1990. Estimating the effect of benefits and taxes on income increases the ratio of Black to White median household income in 1991 from 60 percent to 67 percent, and increases the Hispanic to White ratio from 72 percent to 77 percent.

Poverty increased for the second consecutive year.

There were 35.7 million persons (14.2 percent) below the official government poverty level in 1991, up from 33.6 million (13.5 percent) in 1990 and 31.5 million (12.8 percent) in 1989. The 1991 poverty rate for Whites (11.3 percent) was higher than in 1990, whereas the 1991 rates for Blacks (32.7 percent) and Hispanics (28.7 percent) did not change significantly.

The poverty rate for children under 18 continued to be the highest of all age groups (since 1975) at 21.8 percent. The corresponding figure for persons 18 to 64 and for persons 65 years or older was 11.4 percent and 12.4 percent, respectively (figure 4).

Between 1990 and 1991, the poverty rate for families increased from 10.7 percent to 11.5 percent, representing an increase of 613,000 poor families. About two-thirds of this increase was due to the rise in the number of female householder families with no husband present below the poverty level.

The poverty rates for Whites, related children under 18, and persons in households maintained by females with no husband present increased significantly from 1990 to 1991 using the broader income definition noted in the previous section. However, significant increases did not occur for Blacks, Hispanics, elderly persons, or persons in married-couple families.

One-fourth of households are one-person households.

In 1989, there were 22.4 million single-person households, representing almost a quarter of all occupied housing units. About 53 percent of householders living alone were renters (representing 35 percent of all renters) and 47 percent owned their own homes (representing 18 percent of all homeowners).

Among the homeowners living alone, 77 percent of the women and 55 percent of the men owned their homes free and clear. The vast majority (about 90 percent) of homeowners 65 years or older living alone did not have a mortgage, whereas among homeowners under 65 living alone, 53 percent of women and 37 percent of men did not have a mortgage. Housing costs for homeowners living alone accounted for 23 percent of their income. The corresponding figure for renters was 28 percent.

For homeowners living alone, the median age of their homes was 31 years, compared to the median age of 25 years for all owner-occupied homes. Women living alone tended to own older homes (median age of 33 years) than those owned by men living alone (median age of 28 years). The median value of homes owned by persons living alone was $59,800, 21 percent lower than the $75,400 median for all owner-occupied units.

Of homeowners living alone, 78 percent lived in detached or attached one-unit structures and 11 percent lived in multiunit structures, whereas 77 percent of renters living alone resided in multiunit structures.

Figure 3.
Median Household Income, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1990 and 1991
(In 1991 dollars)

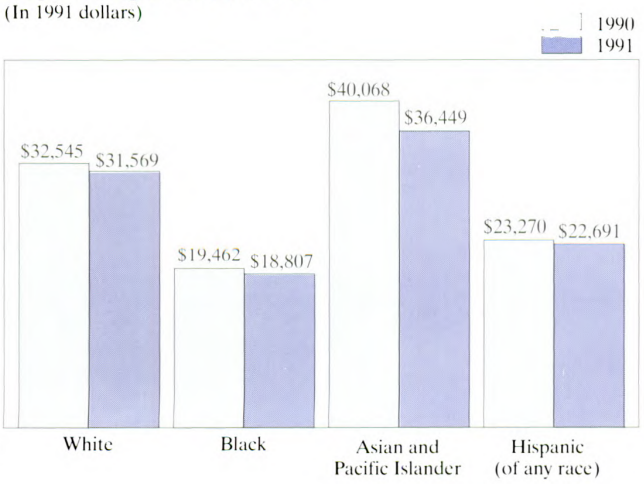
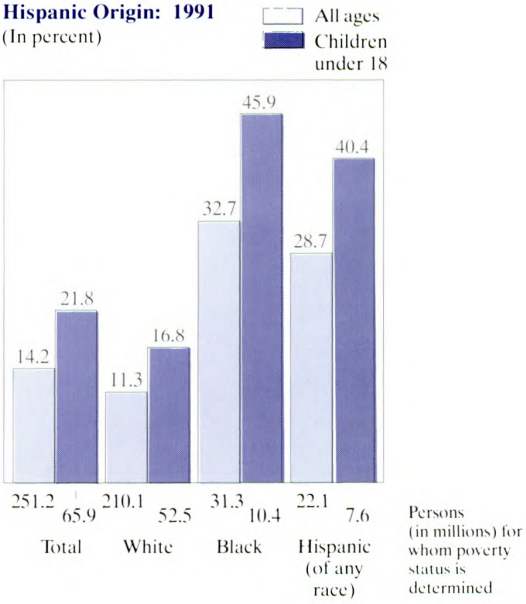


Figure 4.
Poverty Rate, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1991
(In percent)



Homeownership rate has declined for young adults.

In 1991, 64 percent of households were owner occupied. The homeownership rate ranged from a low of 15 percent for householders under 25, to a high of 81 percent for householders 65 to 69. The homeownership rate was 79 percent for persons 70 to 74 and 73 percent for persons 75 years or older.

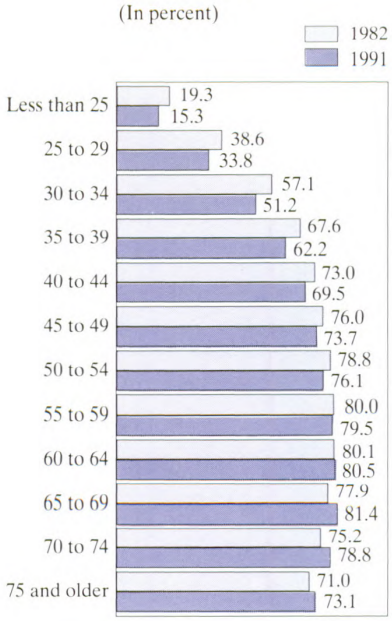
Homeownership rates were higher in 1982 than in 1991 for householders under 55. For householders 65 years or older, homeownership rates were higher in 1991 than in 1982 (figure 5).

The homeownership rate for married-couple families in 1991 was 79 percent. The corresponding rates for families maintained by a male with no wife present and female with no husband present were 54 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Among one-person households, the homeownership rate was 43 percent for males and 54 percent for females.

Among States, homeownership rates in 1991 ranged from 53 percent in New York to 74 percent in Pennsylvania. The homeownership rate in the District of Columbia was 35 percent.

There were 107.3 million housing units in the Nation in 1991: 61 million were owner occupied, 34.2 million were renter occupied, and 12 million were vacant.

Figure 5.
Homeownership Rates, by Age of Householder: 1982 and 1991
(In percent)



For further information, call (301):

National population projections
Jennifer Day 763-1902

Households and families
Steve Rawlings 763-7987

Education
Rebecca Sutterlin 763-1154

Support networks
Bob Bennefield 763-8578

Health insurance
Kathy Short 763-8578

Income
Carmen DeNavas 763-8576

Poverty
Martina Shea 763-8578

Housing of persons living alone
Jeanne Woodward 763-8120

Homeownership and vacancies
Bob Callis 763-8165

General information on this report
Janice Valdisera 763-7962

Source and Accuracy of Estimates

Data presented here are from the population projections program, the Current Population Survey, the Survey of Income and Program Participation, and the American Housing Survey. The survey data are all subject to sampling variability as well as to survey design errors, respondent classification and reporting errors, and data processing mistakes. The Census Bureau has taken steps to minimize errors, and statistical statements have been tested and meet statistical standards. Further information can be found in detailed reports.

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