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RESEARCH AREAS

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★ Election 2016 ▶

10 demographic trends that are shaping the U.S. and the world

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At its core, demography is the act of counting people. But it's also important to study the forces that are driving population change, and measure how these changes have an impact on people's lives. For example, how does immigration affect U.S. population growth? Do Americans feel that children are better off with a parent at home, in an era when most women work? How is the rise of the young-adult Millennial generation contributing to the rise of Americans with no stated religion? For this year's Population Association of America (PAA) annual meeting, here is a roundup of some of Pew Research Center's recent demography-related findings that tell us how America and the world are changing.

1 **Americans are more racially and ethnically diverse** (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>) **than in the past, and the U.S. is projected to be even more diverse in the coming decades.** By 2055, the U.S. will not have a single racial or ethnic majority. Much of this change has been (and will be) driven by immigration. Nearly 59 million immigrants have arrived in the U.S. in the past 50 years, mostly from Latin America and Asia. Today, a near-record 14% of the country's population is foreign born compared with just 5% in 1965. Over the next five decades, the majority of U.S. population growth is projected to be linked to new Asian and Hispanic immigration. American attitudes about immigration and diversity are supportive of these changes for the most part. More Americans say immigrants strengthen the country (<http://www.people-press.org/2015/11/23/9-views-of-the-nation-how-its-changing-and-confidence-in-the-future/>) than say they burden it, and most say the U.S.'s increasing ethnic diversity makes it a better place to live.

(<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/#latin-american-and-asian-immigration-since-1965-changes-u-s-racial-and-ethnic-makeup>) **Asia has replaced Latin America (including Mexico) as the biggest source of new immigrants** (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving->

2 population-growth-and-change-through-2065/)

to the U.S. In a reversal of one of the largest mass migrations in modern history, net migration flows from Mexico to the U.S. turned negative

(<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/>) between 2009 and 2014, as more Mexicans went home than arrived in the U.S. And after rising steadily since 1990, the unauthorized immigrant population has leveled off (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/19/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>) in recent years, falling to 11.3 million in 2014 from a high of 12.2 million in 2007. Meanwhile,

Asians are now the only major

racial or ethnic group whose numbers are rising mainly because of immigration (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/chapter-2-immigrations-impact-on-past-and-future-u-s-population-change/>). And while African immigrants make up a small share of the U.S. immigrant population, their numbers are also growing steadily (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/02/african-immigrant-population-in-u-s-steadily-climbs/>) – roughly doubling every decade since 1970.

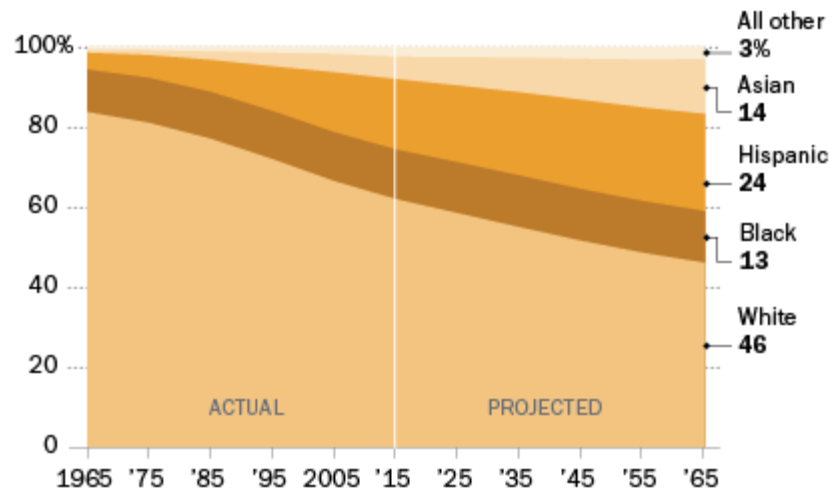
(<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/03/2016-electorate-will-be-the-most-diverse-in-u-s-history/>)

America's demographic changes are shifting the electorate – and American politics. The 2016 electorate will be the most diverse in U.S. history (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/03/2016-electorate-will-be-the-most-diverse-in-u-s-history/>) due to strong growth among Hispanic eligible voters, particularly U.S.-born youth (<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/01/19/millennials-make-up-almost-half-of-latino-eligible-voters-in-2016/>). There are also wide gaps opening up between the generations on many social and political issues. Young adult Millennials are much more likely than their elders to hold liberal views (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>) on many political and social issues, though they are also less likely to identify with either political party: 50% call themselves political independents.

Millennials, young adults born after 1980, are the new generation to watch. They have likely surpassed (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/01/16/this-year-millennials-will-overtake-baby-boomers/>) Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) as the largest U.S. generation and differ significantly from their elders in many ways. They are the most racially diverse generation (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood>

The changing face of America, 1965–2065

% of the total population



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only single-race non-Hispanics; Asians include Pacific Islanders. Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center 2015 report, "Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to US, Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065"

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3 (#racial-diversity) in American history: 43% of Millennial adults are non-white, the highest share of any generation. And while they are on track to be the most educated generation to date, this achievement has come at a cost: Many Millennials are struggling with student debt

(<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/05/14/young-adults-student-debt-and-economic-well-being/>) . In addition to the weak labor market of recent years, student debt is perhaps one reason why many are still living at home

(<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/07/29/more-millennials-living-with-family-despite-improved-job-market/>) . Despite these troubles, Millennials are the most upbeat about their financial future

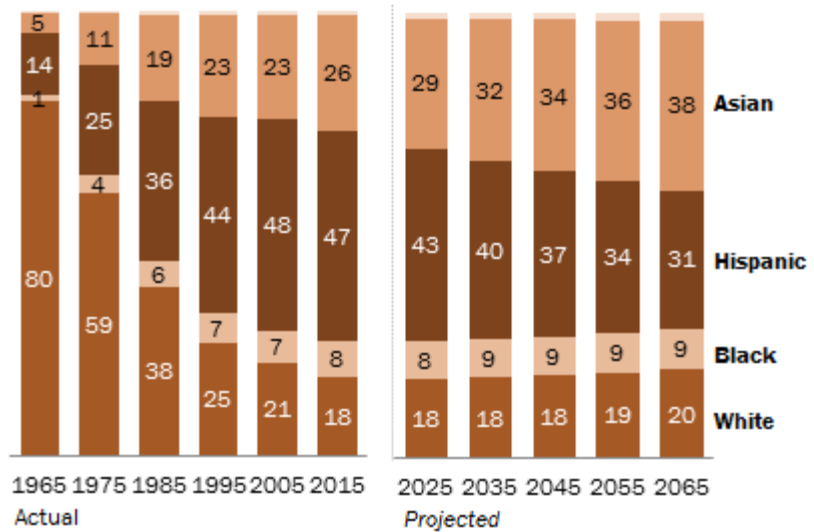
(<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/#economic-optimism-social-security-worries>) : More than eight-in-ten say they either currently have enough money to lead the lives they want or expect to in the future.

(<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/>) **Women’s role in the labor force and leadership positions has grown dramatically.** The labor force participation rate for American women has risen steadily since the 1960s. In fact, mothers were the sole or primary breadwinner (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/05/29/breadwinner-moms/>) in a record 40% of all households with children in 2011. The gender pay gap has narrowed (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/on-pay-gap-millennial-women-near-parity-for-now/>) over this period of time, especially for young women just entering the labor force, but it still persists. As more women have entered the workforce, the share of women in top leadership jobs has risen (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/01/14/women-and-leadership/>) , but they still make up a small share of the nation’s political and business leaders relative to men. Why the continued disparity? While Americans say women are every bit as capable of being good leaders as men, four-in-ten believe they are held to higher standards than men and that the U.S. is just not ready to put more women in top leadership positions.

(<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/#the-growing-complexity-and-diversity-of-families>) **The American family is changing.** After decades of declining marriage rates, the share of American adults who have never been married is at an historic high (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09>

Asians Projected to Become the Largest Immigrant Group, Surpassing Hispanics

% of immigrant population



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only single-race non-Hispanics. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Hispanics are of any race. Other races shown but not labeled.

Source: Pew Research Center estimates for 1965-2015 based on adjusted census data; Pew Research Center projections for 2025-2065

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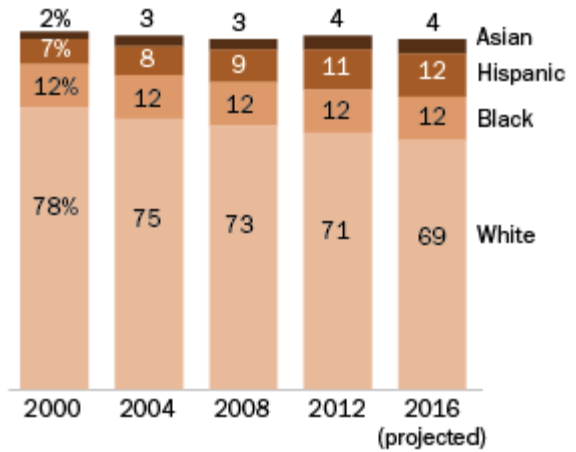
4 5 /24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/). Two-parent households are on the decline (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/17/1-the-american-family-today/>) in the U.S., while divorce, remarriage and cohabitation are on the rise. About one-in-six American kids now live in a blended family. And the roles of mothers and fathers are converging (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/03/14/modern-parenthood-roles-of-moms-and-dads-converge-as-they-balance-work-and-family/>), due in part to the rise of breadwinner moms. Dads are doing more housework and child care, while moms are doing more paid work outside the home. Americans are conflicted about some aspects of this change: While nearly half of two-parent households have a mom *and* dad who both work full time (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/how-american-parents-balance-work-and-family-life-when-both-work/>), 51% of Americans say children are better off with a mother at home.

The share of Americans who live in middle class households is shrinking.

The share of U.S. adults living in middle-income households fell to 50% (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/12/09/the-american-middle-class-is-losing-ground/>) in 2015, after more than four decades in which those households served as the nation’s economic majority. And the financial gaps between middle- and upper-income Americans have widened, with upper-income households holding 49% of U.S. aggregate household income (up from 29% in 1970) and seven times as much wealth as middle-income households (up from three times as much in 1983). Most Americans say the government doesn’t do enough (<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/02/04/most-americans-say-government-doesnt-do-enough-to-help-middle-class/>) to help the middle class, and neither political party is widely viewed as a champion for middle-class interests.

2016 voters most diverse ever

% among eligible voters



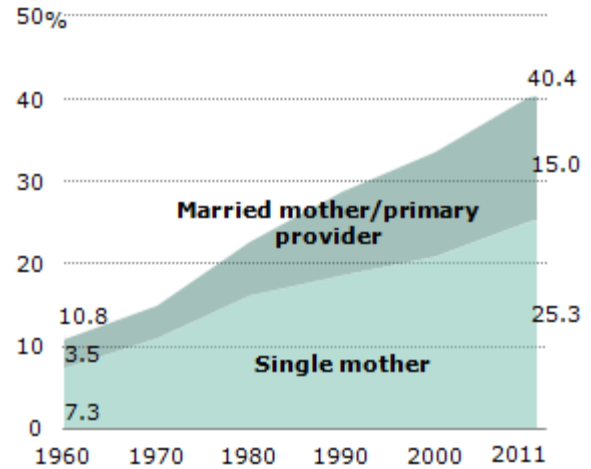
Note: Eligible voters are U.S. citizens ages 18 and older. White, black and Asian includes only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. American Indians, Native Hawaiian/Pacific islanders and multi-race Americans not shown.

Source: For 2000-2012, Pew Research Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey, November Supplements. For 2016, Pew Research Center estimates based on American Community Survey (2008-2014), November Current Population Survey (2008-2015), and the Puerto Rican Community Survey (2008-2014).

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Mother as the Sole or Primary Provider: 1960-2011

% based on households with children under age 18



Note: Single mothers include mothers who are never married, divorced, widowed, separated, or married but the spouse is not in the household.

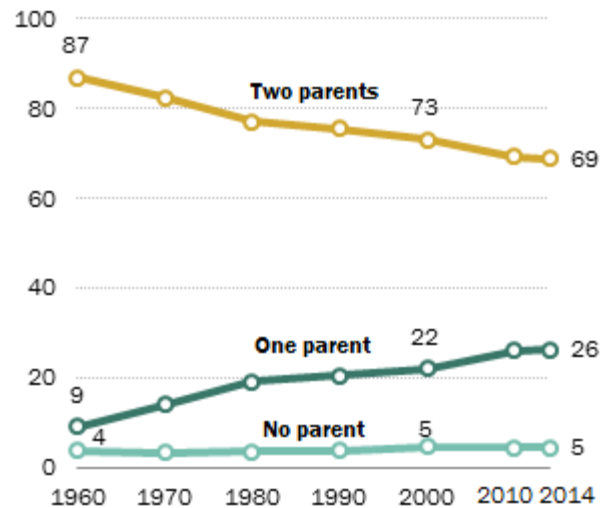
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the Decennial Census and American Community Surveys (ACS) Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample (IPUMS) files

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7

The two-parent household in decline

% of children living with ...



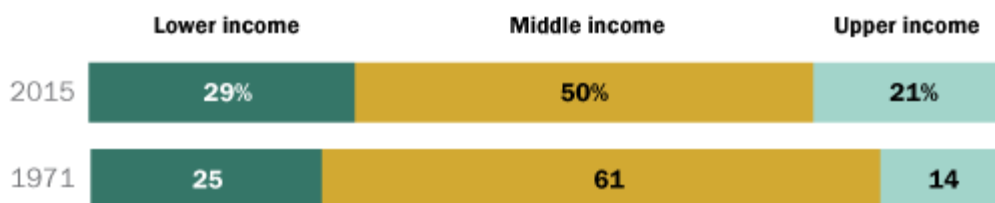
Note: Based on children under 18. From 1990-2014, a child living with cohabiting parents is counted as living with two parents. Prior to 1990 cohabiting parents are included in "one parent."

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1960-2000 Decennial Census and 2010 and 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS)

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Share of adults living in middle-income households is falling

% of adults in each income tier



Note: Adults are assigned to income tiers based on their size-adjusted household income in the calendar year prior to the survey year

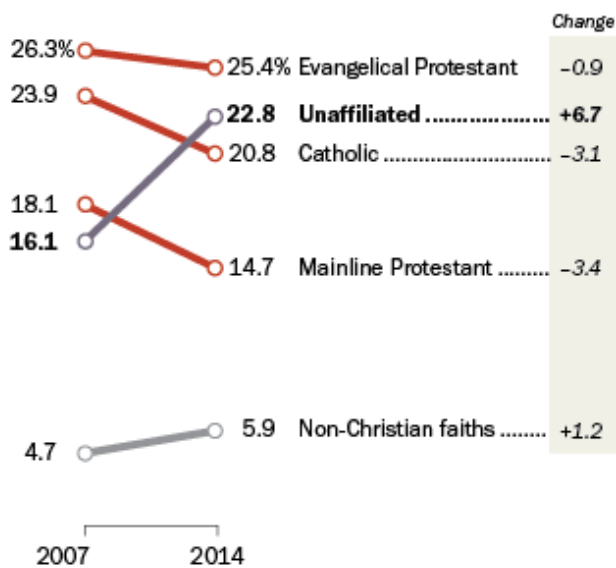
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8 **Christians are declining as a share of the U.S. population, and the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion has grown.** While the U.S. remains home to more Christians than any other country, the percentage of Americans identifying as Christian (<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>) dropped from 78% in 2007 to 71% in 2014. By contrast, the religiously unaffiliated have surged seven percentage points in that time span to make up 23% of U.S. adults

last year. This trend has been driven in large part by Millennials, 35% of whom are religious “nones.” (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/>) The rise of the “nones” is not a story unique to the U.S.: The unaffiliated are now the second-largest religious group (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/06/22/what-is-each-countrys-second-largest-religious-group/>) in 48% of the world’s nations. Americans are well aware of this shift: 72% say religion’s influence on public life is waning, and most who say this see it as a bad thing.

Changing U.S. Religious Landscape

Between 2007 and 2014, the Christian share of the population fell from 78.4% to 70.6%, driven mainly by declines among mainline Protestants and Catholics. The unaffiliated experienced the most growth, and the share of Americans who belong to non-Christian faiths also increased.



Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014

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9 The world’s religious makeup will look a lot different (<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>) **by 2050:** Over the next four decades, Christians will remain the largest religious group, but Islam will grow faster than any other major religion, mostly because Muslims are younger and have more children than any other religious group globally. By 2050, the number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians. In the U.S., the Muslim population will remain small (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/06/a-new-estimate-of-the-u-s-muslim-population/>), but is projected to grow rapidly.

Projected Change in Global Population

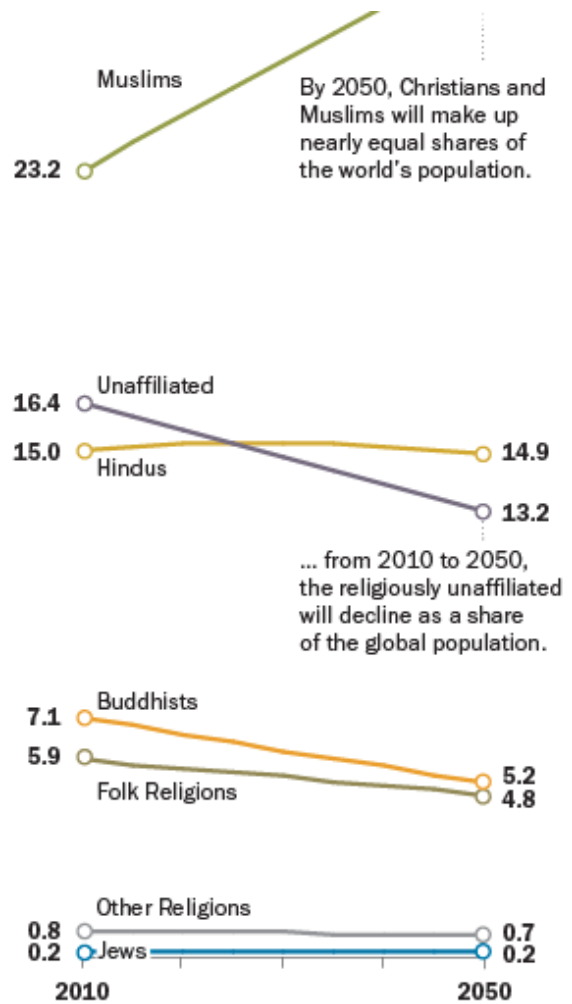
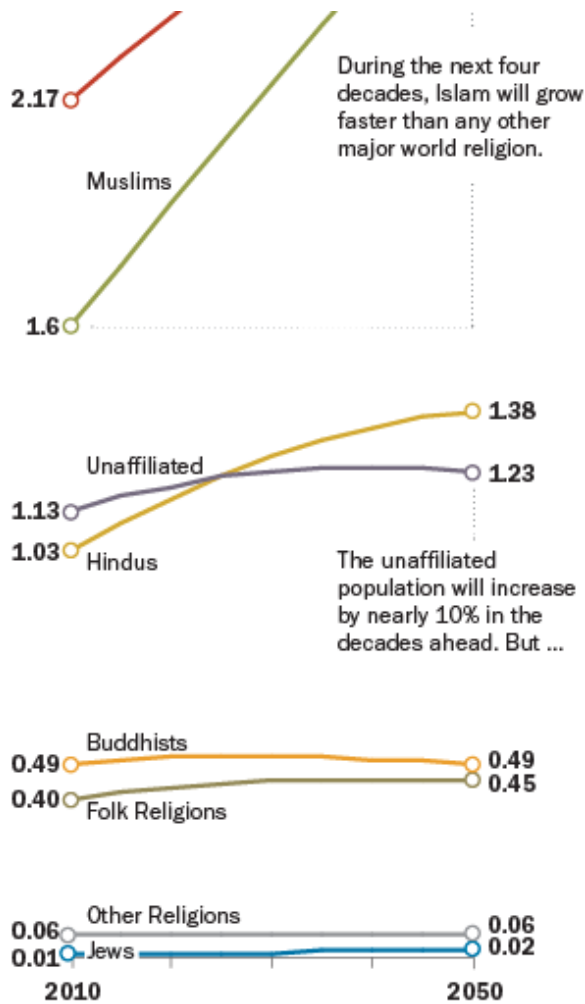
With the exception of Buddhists, all of the major religious groups are expected to increase in number by 2050. But some will not keep pace with global population growth, and, as a result, are expected to make up a smaller percentage of the world’s population in 2050 than they did in 2010.

Number of people, 2010-2050, in billions



% of global population, 2010-2050





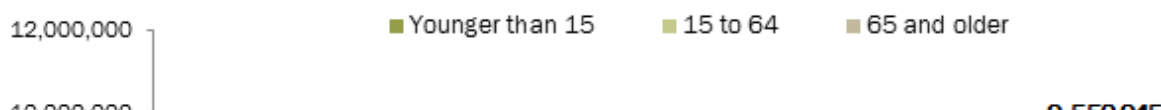
Source: The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050

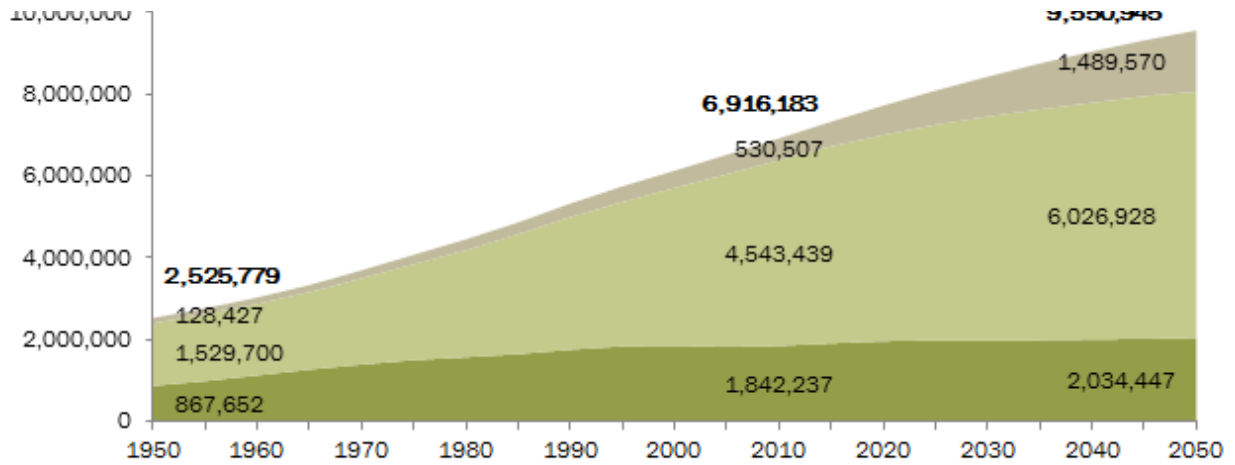
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10 The world is aging. The demographic future for the U.S. and the world looks very different than the recent past. Growth from 1950 to 2010 was rapid — the global population nearly tripled, and the U.S. population doubled. However, population growth from 2010 to 2050 is projected to be significantly slower and is expected to tilt strongly to the oldest age groups (<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/01/30/global-population/>), both globally and in the U.S. Public opinion on whether the growing number of older people is a problem varies dramatically around the world (<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/01/30/attitudes-about-aging-a-global-perspective/>). Concern is highest in East Asia where large majorities describe aging as a major problem for their countries.

Estimates of the Global Population, by Age, 1950 to 2050

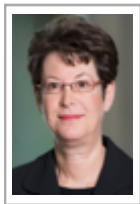
Thousands





Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects: 2012 Revision*, June 2013, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>

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Andrea Caumont (<http://www.pewresearch.org/author/acaumont/>) is the social media editor at Pew Research Center.

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25 Comments



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-667354)

I love America and its diversity. This data is amazing. America will continue to be the most important nation in world in this century. Dr Gupta



Larry Bradley • 6 months ago (#comment-666573)

Curious as to why no one ever considers abortion as a factor in the demographic mix of the United States. Since 1973, there have been roughly 50 million abortions. Statisticians, demographers and actuaries can

give us the real impact, but for arguments sake let's say that babies aborted in 1973 (A-73) would themselves be having babies by at least 2000, and the babies born to them (B-00) would start having their own babies (C-27) by at least 2027. In 2015, there would have been an additional population of 20,930,232 people over the age of 25 if abortion had not been legalized. During that same time frame, based on an average of 1,000,000 per year and estimating that 1 in 4 was over the age of 25 when he came to this country, at least 4.5 MM people over the age of 25 were added to the population. So, our population of people over the age of 25 is short by roughly 16 MM, subtracting immigrants from aborted babies. Again, these stats might need tweaking, but my point is that abortion has had a profound affect on the demographics of the United States, including, but certainly not limited to elections, but no one seems willing to discuss that aspect of abortion. Maybe the PEW Center will consider doing this?



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-666695)

The abortion rate doesn't mean those women don't go on to have children at a later time when they can afford to give that child a better future.



Gary Schark • 7 months ago (#comment-666289)

There is a lot of interesting info here. Check out @2, For one thing, it makes clear that from 2009 to 2014, there was net negative immigration from Mexico to the U.S. It sort of makes Trump's claims about Mexico and the need to build a wall to keep Mexicans out ridiculous.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666305)

EXACTLY!



David Lloyd-Jones • 7 months ago (#comment-666340)

They work. They pay payroll taxes. They don't collect Social Security.

It's obvious: a wall to keep them in is the long term solution to all America's budget worries.

-dlj.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-666802)

That is a dangerously simplistic view of how to deal with the countries budget issues. A better solution would be to actually make people and corporations that don't pay taxes actually pay them. They are the ones that amass the most significant numbers in actual dollar amounts over the relatively slave labor rates migrant workers contribute. Just some friendly advice, know what you are talking about before you start typing.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-666600)

Only ridiculous if you are OK with the drugs and criminals coming over, much to our ruin. BTW.. there was negative immigration from Mexico because our ruined economy could no longer provide jobs for them (or us for that matter). What do you think happens when our businesses close down or move elsewhere ?



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666202)

At some point, the racist left, which includes Pew and the Democratic Party, is going to be forced to stop declaring Hispanics “non white”. Over half of all Hispanics in the US are white, according to their own answers on the Census.

The left is telling white Hispanics “You’re not white! Now shut up and listen to what we tell you!”.

Ted Cruz is white. Marco Rubio is white. And so on. Intermarriage between non-Hispanic whites and Hispanics is common, and the children of those marriages rarely call themselves Hispanic.

Secondarily, these are all straight line projections based on “static analysis”, which presumes that everything will continue forward exactly as it has in the recent past, forever. Hispanic immigration and birth rates have dropped substantially in recent years.

Simply put, this is wishful thinking on behalf of the Democratic Party, combined with racism that denies white Hispanics are white. It is completely unacceptable.



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-666733)

Hispanic is an ethnicity, not a race. They can be black or white, or whatever else they designate themselves to be. This has nothing to do with being a Democrat or racist. This is about getting a little knowledge about the subject.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666182)

We have been destroying our Country from within for decades. We’ve been to accommodating to immigrants as well as liberal rhetoric. How sad to throw our decency and heritage out the window for power and money.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666178)

It still blows my mind that Asian’s are the largest immigration group. I live in North Carolina, and there seems like there are more Latinos here, some places are like a little Mexico w/ stores, restaurants, churches that all speak Spanish, and don’t really care for others to visit. I seen a huge Arab/Indian increase too. It’s really a problem, that I don’t think anyone’s going to fix.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666232)

FYI Indians are Asians too.



Ken Dine • 6 months ago (#comment-666528)

Anonymous • (6 days ago)

“FYI Indians are Asians too.”

///

American Indians are classified as Asians, but not necessarily the inhabitants of India.

The demographics that make up India (or sub-continental Asia) is genetically diverse. Nevertheless, when forced to put Indians into a particular category of the different major race types (i.e., Asian, Caucasian, Australoid, or African), Indians are usually put into the Caucasian category since they are closer to Caucasoids than they are to any of those other groups, so they usually go into that category by default.

In addition to similar hair type, skull shape and facial features (etc), Indians and (most) Europeans also share a common root language (PIE: Proto-Indo-European):

[academia.edu/4156043/The_Proto-I... \(https://www.academia.edu/4156043/The_Proto-Indo-Europeans_and_Their_Early_Descendants_Proto-Languages_and_Homelands\)](https://www.academia.edu/4156043/The_Proto-Indo-Europeans_and_Their_Early_Descendants_Proto-Languages_and_Homelands)

In criminal forensics, the FBI categorizes an Indian’s hair as “Caucasoid” (European) and not Asian due to the cross-section shape of their hair:

—snip—

Caucasoid (European)

Hairs of Caucasoid or Caucasian origin can be of fine to medium coarseness, are generally straight or wavy in appearance, and exhibit colors ranging from blonde to brown to black. The hair shafts of Caucasian hairs vary from round to oval in cross section and have fine to medium-sized, evenly distributed pigment granules.

Mongoloid (Asian)

Hairs of Mongoloid or Asian origin are regularly coarse, straight, and circular in cross section, with a wider diameter than the hairs of the other racial groups. The outer layer of the hair, the cuticle, is usually significantly thicker than the cuticle of Negroid and Caucasian hairs, and the medulla, or central canal, is continuous and wide. The hair shaft, or cortex, of Mongoloid hair contains pigment granules that are generally larger in size than the pigment granules of Caucasian hairs and which often appear to be grouped in patchy areas within the shaft. Mongoloid hair can have a characteristic reddish appearance as a product of its pigment.

[fbi.gov/about-us/lab/forensic-sc... \(https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/forensic-science-communications/fsc/july2000/deedric1.htm\)](https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/forensic-science-communications/fsc/july2000/deedric1.htm)



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666306)

Why is it a problem?



Anonymous • 6 months ago (#comment-666397)

why problem??????



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666125)

#7 Should include income ranges for each category. What exactly is “middle income” which can vary greatly depending on location?



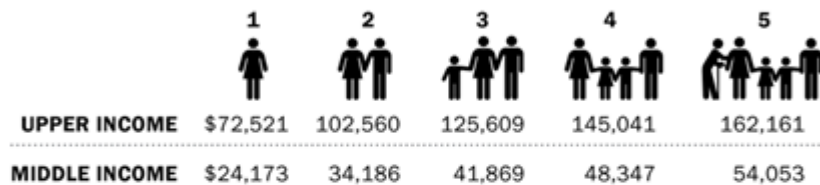
Andrea Caumont • 7 months ago (#comment-666126)

Hello, Our report defined “middle-income” households as those with an income that is 67% to 200% (two-thirds to double) of the overall median household income, after incomes have been adjusted for household size.

This chart shows what that means in dollar terms in the U.S., by household size:

Who is “middle income” and “upper income”?

Minimum 2014 household income needed to qualify for middle- and upper-income tiers, by household size



Note: Middle-income Americans are adults whose annual size-adjusted household income is two-thirds to double the national median size-adjusted household income. Lower-income households have incomes less than two-thirds of the median and upper-income households have incomes that are more than double the median.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the 2015 Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement

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Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666122)

It would be very helpful, indeed, if you (i.e. whoever did the research) would learn that an ethnicity, such as Hispanic, is NOT a race. Most Hispanics in the U.S. are by race caucasian.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666203)

It states clearly under the graph that any race can identify as Hispanic ethnically and the graph demonstrates what percent of the population identifies themselves as Hispanic independently of race. Section one pretty clearly delineates between racial and ethnic categories.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666299)

If the English language wins, hispanic/white will go away like Irish/Italian did three decades ago in the North East. The differences there have become as trivial as restaurant menu designs. I can barely see a difference between hispanic/not now until a conversation or a soccer game starts.

Appearance emphasizes differences. How can the darkest and lightest to not notice, and how can noticing not lead to assuming. Inevitable.



Reinhard Joelli • 7 months ago (#comment-666114)

Great summary of key demo trends. One comment possibly for future updates. I think it would be clearer to focus on either US or global picture. The mix (first 8 US, last 2 global) can be a bit tricky for readers. Thanks. RJ



Larry Johnson • 7 months ago (#comment-666099)

I've noticed a sharp rise in the number of Muslims I encounter here in Atlanta, so I suspect the estimates for the metro Muslim population are low of the mark. It's far from scientific, largely based on the number of women I see wearing hijabs, and the number of people I know who openly identify as Muslim, but twenty years ago I only knew a few Muslims and almost never saw women in hijabs. Now my interaction is frequent and routine.

My observations may not have much meaning. Young Muslim women, who might have avoided the attention of a hajib in the past, seem much more willing to wear it as a sign of identity with their religion. It could also be a trend only in Atlanta.

But I suspect that my observation is due to sharply rising Muslim population.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666184)

I suspect that living in a major Urban setting is why you see the increases you describe. Until recently I lived in Houston, where I observed what you describe. Now I live in a rural community in N. California, and have not seen a woman wearing a hajib in months. I suspect that Muslim families are here but keep a low profile because of the intolerant views of people who have never gotten to know Muslim people well.



Anonymous • 7 months ago (#comment-666225)

Take some time to learn about data collection and statistics and why our everyday experience doesn't jibe with tedious but necessary research efforts.

