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**CONFERENCE ON U.S. IMMIGRATION REFORM,
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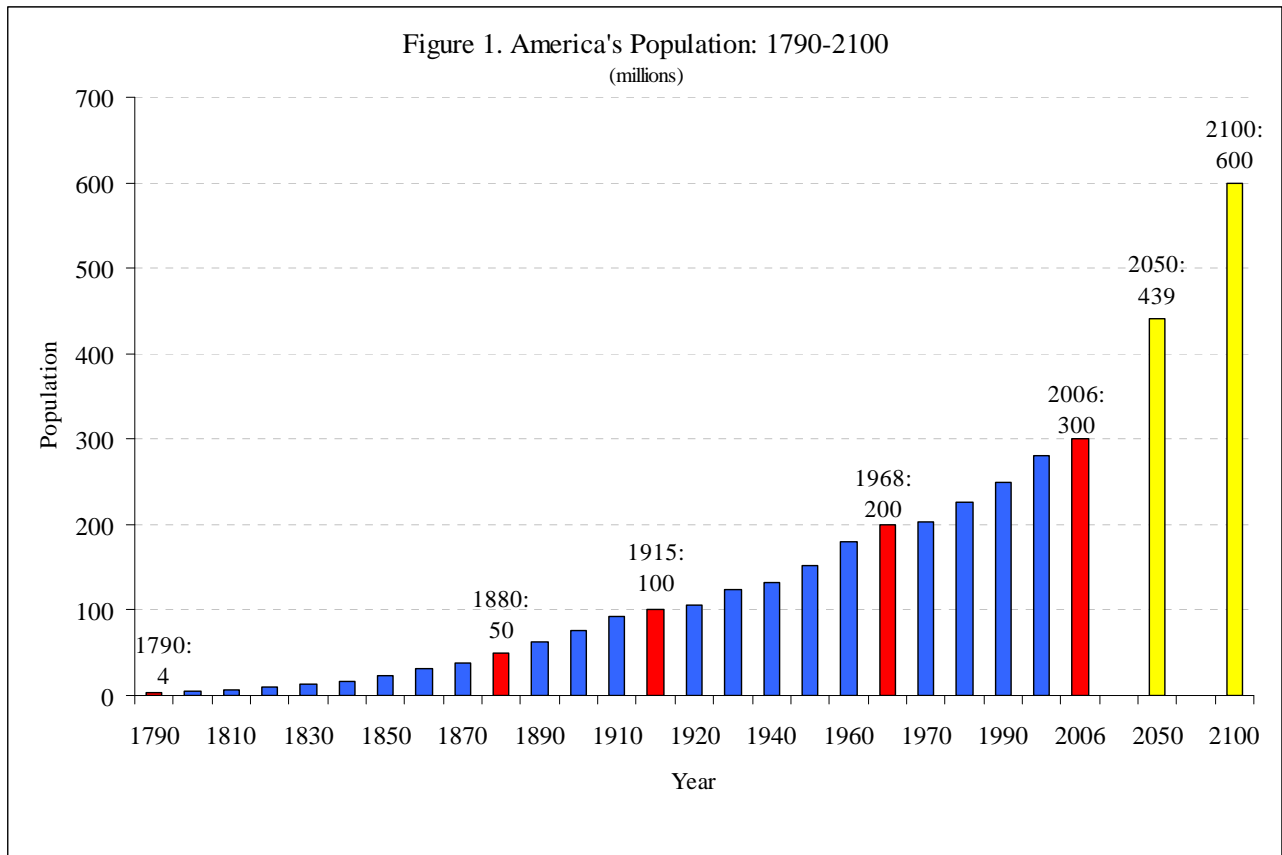
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America & Immigration

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At the time of the first US census in 1790 America's population was nearly 4 million. By 1880, the country had grown to 50 million (Figure 1). Thirty-five years later, the 100 million population mark was reached and the 200 million mark was attained in 1968. In 2006 America's population reached the 300 million mark.

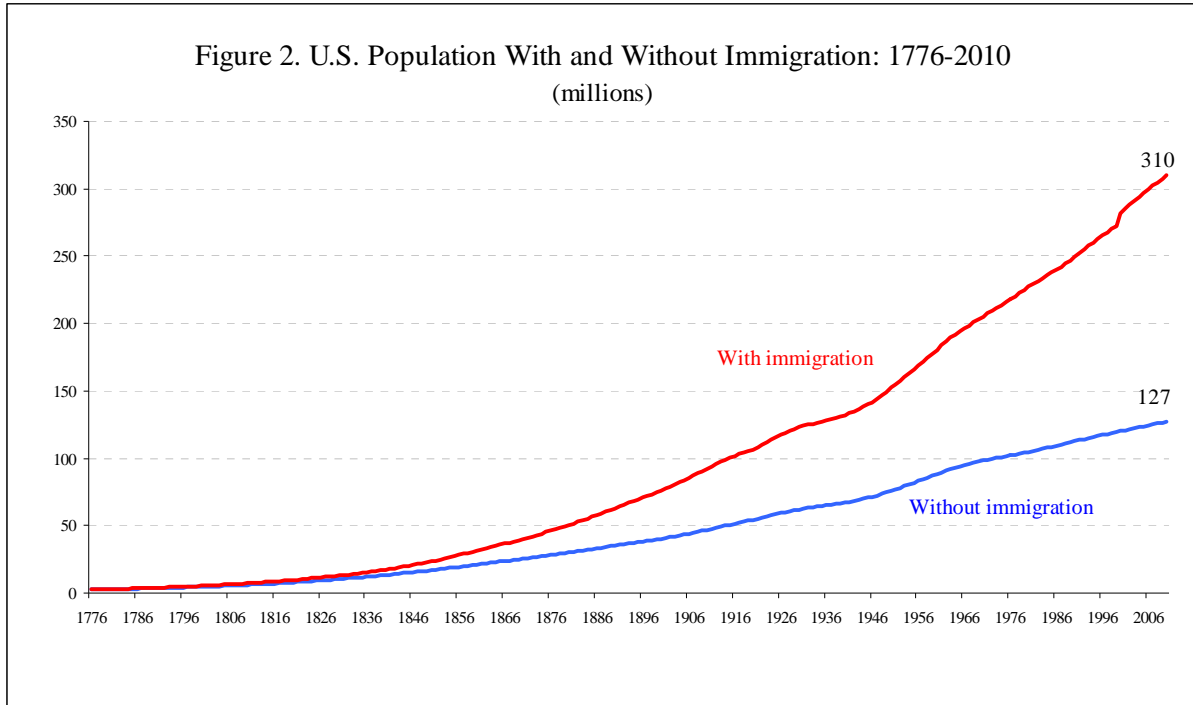


Source: Based on various reports of the U.S. Census Bureau.

The growth of the US population is expected to continue throughout the 21st century. By 2050, for example, America's population is projected to grow to about 439 million; and by the century's end, the projected population is approaching close to 600 million (Figure 1).

Contrary to popular thought, the dominant force fueling America's demographic growth is not natural increase, but immigration. This is because immigrants not only add their own numbers to the nation's overall population, but also contribute a disproportionate number of births whose effects are compounded over time. A couple of examples help to illustrate this important point.

The first example considers the contribution of immigration to America’s population growth since its founding in 1776. If international migration had ceased after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, America’s population would have likely been no more than 127 million today and perhaps closer to 100 million, far short of its current size of 310 million (Figure 2). Over this 234-year period, migration’s contribution (migrants and their descendants) is dominant, accounting for at least 60 percent of America’s population growth.

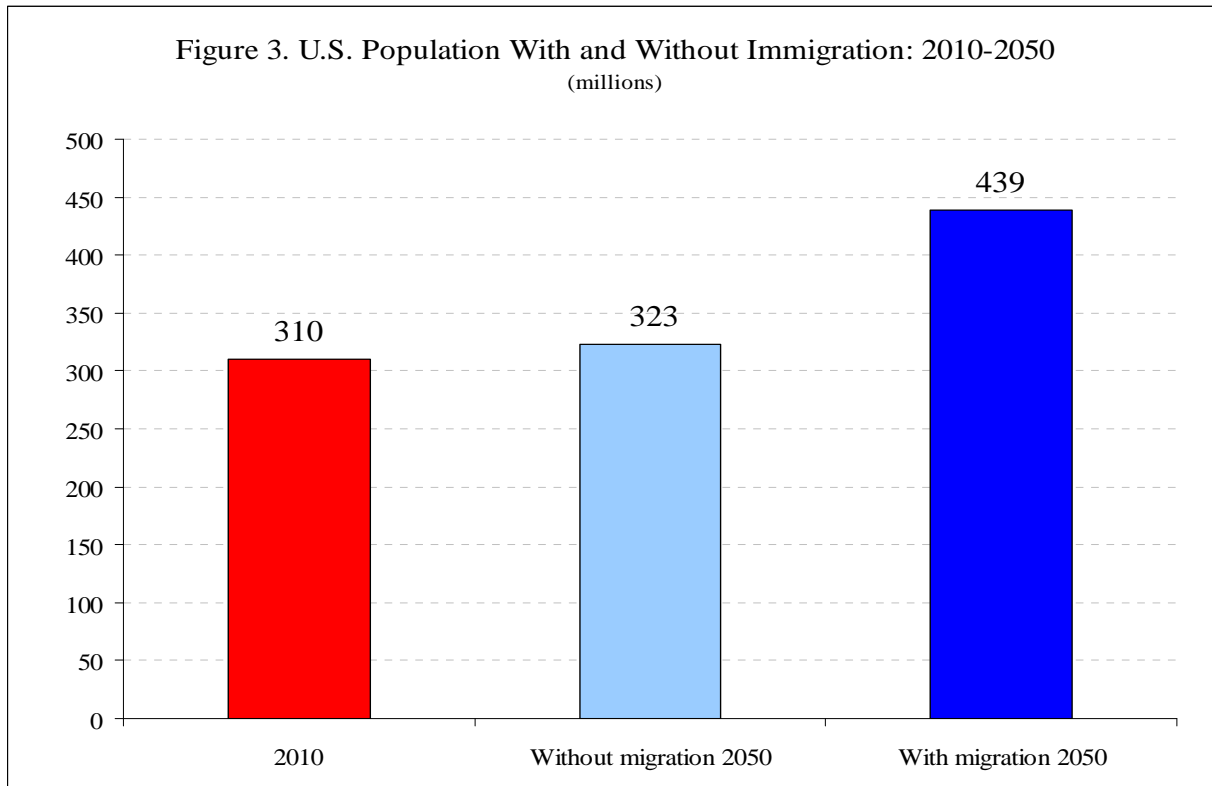


Source: Based on various reports of the U.S. Census Bureau and author’s estimates for population without immigration.

Future population projections for America assume: (a) fertility remains close to replacement levels, i.e., 2.1 births per woman; (b) mortality rates steadily improve with increasing longevity; and (c) net flows of international migrants (both legal and illegal) continue and even increase. As a result, most of America’s projected population growth during the 21st century will be the direct and indirect result of migration, i.e., immigrants and their descendants.

For example, by mid-century the US population is projected to reach 439 million, assuming current annual net migration of about 1.3 million (Figure 3). However, if further immigration were to cease, the US population in 2050 would likely be about 116 million less, i.e., roughly 323 million. Again, the major force behind the projected future growth of America’s population, approximately 90 percent in this instance, is the addition of immigrants and their descendants.

In addition to growing larger, America's population is also getting older. The median age of the US population (the age dividing the population into equal halves) increased from 30 years in 1950 to 36 years today, and by 2050 it is projected to be 41 years. Also, the proportion of the US population 65 years or older is expected to rise from 12 percent today to 21 percent by mid-century. Furthermore, Americans are expected to be living longer in the future. For example, life expectancy at birth has now reached 78 years (75 for men and 80 for women) and by 2050 it is expected to reach 82 years (80 for men and 85 for women). Also, while today there are about five people in the working ages for every person 65 years or older, by mid-century this number will likely be cut in half. These expected changes in the age structure of America's population will increasingly have significant social, economic and political consequences, especially in areas such as health care, pensions and social security, consumption and investments patterns, living arrangements and voting behavior.



Source: Based on various reports of the U.S. Census Bureau.

America's population is also undergoing a major shift in its regional distribution in favor of states in the South and West. In addition to gaining internal migrants, these two "sun-belt" regions continue to receive a higher influx of immigrants than other parts of the country. Over the next 25 years, the five fastest growing states are expected to be Nevada, Arizona, Florida, Texas and Utah. In contrast, the Northeast and Midwest regions are experiencing a continuous loss of population. States from those regions, such as North Dakota, West Virginia, Iowa, Ohio, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania, are projected to experience negative or close to zero population growth over the next quarter century.

Along with the regional shift, America's population is also becoming progressively more urbanized. Today, roughly eight out of ten Americans live in urban places; by 2030, nine out of ten are expected to be living in urban areas. However, Americans are increasingly choosing to move out of many of the larger U.S. cities and adjacent suburbs of those cities, and to settle into smaller urban areas as well as new outer-ring suburbs. Between 2000 and 2004, 18 of the 25 largest metropolitan statistical areas had average annual net out-migration. Outflows were heaviest in the New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Francisco/Oakland metro areas, each of which averaged net out migration of more than 60,000 a year. In contrast, 21 of the country's 25 largest "micropolitan" areas—areas with populations between 10,000 and 49,999 and that have strong commuting networks with neighboring counties—had net in-migration.

A further important change taking place in America's population is the shift in its ethnic composition, the result of changing immigration patterns. Throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, the U.S. foreign born population was predominately from European countries, e.g., Germany, Ireland, Italy and the U.K. In 1900, for example, German immigrants accounted for 26 percent of the foreign born, followed by immigrants from Ireland with 16 percent (Table 1). By 1970, however, Mexico had moved up among the top five immigrant sending countries, accounting for 8 percent of the foreign born; and by 1980 Mexico was in first place with 16 percent of the U.S. foreign born population. In addition, according to the 2000 census, the top five countries are no longer of European origin; they are now Mexico, China, Philippines, India and Vietnam (Table 1), with Mexico accounting for 30 percent of the foreign born.

Table 1. Percent of Foreign Born in the United States by Country of Origin: 1900, 1970, 1980 and 2000.

1900	Percent	1970	Percent	1980	Percent	2000	Percent
Germany	26%	Italy	10%	Mexico	16%	Mexico	30%
Ireland	16%	Germany	9%	Germany	6%	China	5%
Canada	11%	Canada	8%	Canada	6%	Philippines	4%
U.K.	11%	Mexico	8%	Italy	6%	India	3%
Sweden	6%	U.K.	7%	U.K.	5%	Vietnam	3%
Others	30%	Others	57%	Others	62%	Others	55%
Total	100%	Total	100%	Total	100%	Total	100%
Number	10,341,276	Number	9,619,302	Number	14,079,906	Number	31,107,889

Source: US Census Bureau

As noted earlier, over the coming decades, America's population is expected to continue increasing due to replacement level fertility and continuing high levels of immigration. As a result, the U.S. will remain the world's most populous developed country, growing approximately one percent annually, and adding about 3 million people per year. Due to this comparatively high rate of growth, America's population will continue to be between four to five percent of the world's total population. In addition, America's demographic standing relative to the billion-plus populations of China and India will remain more or less unchanged for the next few decades, i.e., about four Chinese or four Indians per American. However, its demographic standing among developed countries as a whole will increase from one-quarter today to close one-third by 2050.

In brief, America's future population will be substantially larger, gaining its fourth 100 million before the middle of this century, with immigration being the major force behind this demographic growth. The age structure of the population is also expected to become older, with one out of five Americans aged 65 years or over by 2050, and many living considerably longer lives than previous generations. These changes will be accompanied by increased urbanization, especially to the more distant suburbs and smaller cities, and regional shifts to states in the South and West. Also due to immigration, America's population will also likely continue to experience major shifts in its ethnic composition, with greater proportions of Americans having their ethnic origins from countries south of the U.S. border, especially from Mexico. Furthermore, while America's population is expected to remain around four to five percent of the world total, its demographic standing among developed countries will increase substantially. All in all, America's population is expected to undergo major demographic changes during the 21st century, which will no doubt have significant and far-reaching consequences and repercussions for the country itself as well as for the international community of nations.