Vice President's Conversation on the Future

Trend Research: Population Growth, Age Distribution, Immigration, and Diversity

Descriptor Definition

This descriptor white paper centers on the changes in the total number of people living in Ohio, with a particular emphasis on immigration and subsequent diversity of backgrounds. It provides information on out-migration as well is immigration. It includes addition demographic information on gender and urban population. It also mentions age distribution, which is closely related to total population growth and immigration.

Author Insights[1]: Descriptor Relevance

The population of Ohio is important for the future of the state because it serves as a cause and an effect of economic growth, public services, and the general quality of life. Typically, states with a rapidly growing population are also the states with high economic growth and a strong vitality. They typically have a relatively young population, while states with little or no population growth tend to have an unchanging and aging population. Population growth can also affect a variety of social issues. For instance, states with a growing population often also have higher levels of immigration and demographic diversity, which may be associated with social tensions and conflict related to differences in racial, ethnic, religious, educational, and social-economic ideals and interests. The size and composition of the population may also determine the amounts of tax and fee revenues for municipal, county, and state governments, while placing more strains on public services, including law enforcement, family services, public education, services for the elderly, and unemployment and health benefits.

Trend Information and Interpretation

Population Growth

During the last 50 years, the population of Ohio has been growing, but slowly. In 2013, it was estimated that Ohio ranked 45th among all 50 states for population growth (Exner, 2014). In 1960 the state population was 9,706,397. In the 2010 census, it had increased to 11,536,504, reflecting a growth of over 1.8 million residents, or a 19% increase in 50 years. In the estimated census of 2013, Ohio's population was listed at 11,570,808, not many more people than in 2010. In 1960, Ohio had ranked as the fifth largest state in the U.S.; by 2010 it had fallen to seventh. In the decade of the 1960s, the population of Ohio had grown strongly at about 10% over 10 years, but it dropped to less than 1% increase in the 1970s, and less than .05% in the 1980s. This was reflected in the general shift of the national population, since the 1970s, from the areas in the Northeast and Midwest to the states located in the Sun Belt of the South and Southwest. While Ohio has attracted some immigrants, the flow of immigration into Ohio has been minimal. The slow growth in the population of the state further reflects the decline of some traditional industries, including the manufacturing of iron and steel, rubber tires and products, glass, and paper. There was a new period of growth in the digital boom times of the 1990s, with a nearly 5% increase in the population, but the growth rate slowed again to less than 2% average per decade in the 21st century (CensusScope, 2014).

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Authors' Insights

Having tracked this trend for many years, the author has observed that Ohio is often thought of as a state characterized as an older, prosperous, and politically powerful state in slow decline. It is often compared to Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, New York, and Pennsylvania, formerly strong industrial states that are losing power to the rapidly growing states of Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida, where millions of Ohioans have frequently vacationed and gone to live in retirement. In addition, although Ohio contains many software and digital enterprises, it does not generally enjoy the popular image as a high technology state with as many digital and Internet companies that operate in, and attract talent for high tech jobs to, Silicon Valley, the Seattle-Redmond region, or the greater Boston-Cambridge area.

In 2013, there was a net population growth of 90,000 due to births and deaths in Ohio. In the same year, 50,000 immigrants came into Ohio, while 107,000 Ohioans left the state to establish residence in other states in the U.S. In contrast, Texas gained 207,000 people from other countries and 404,000 people from other states (Exner, 2014).

Because of the slow growth in the population of Ohio relative to some other states, Ohio has been losing political power in Congress through the gradual reduction in proportioned seats in the U.S. House of Representatives (and with it, a reduced number of votes in the Electoral College for the Presidency). In 1970, Ohio had 24 seats; since then it has lost 8 seats, with 16 seats assigned to Ohio for representatives in the Congresses from the elections of 2012 to the elections of 2022 (Wang, 2010).

Immigration

One major reason for the slow growth of the Ohio population is the low rate of immigration into Ohio from abroad. A century or so ago, Ohio absorbed large numbers of Italians, Germans, and Slavs from Central and Eastern Europe. They lived and worked in the vigorous industrial cities of Cleveland, Youngstown, Akron, Canton, Toledo, Dayton, and Cincinnati and have since been thoroughly assimilated into mainstream American society. By the 21st century, Ohioans were predominantly white and native born, but their position in Ohio society has been gradually declining due to new immigrants, largely from Latin America, India, China, and Africa. The predominantly American-born white population in Ohio has gradually declined from 88% in 1990 to 83% in the 2013 estimated census, which is still well above the estimated native-born white proportion of 78% in the U.S. (CensusScope, 2014).

Author Insights

Based on this author's observations, Ohioans' perceptions of immigration range between two extreme views. One extreme point of view is that Ohio has to have more immigration, which will broaden the labor base and further stimulate the economy with more local consumers, renters, and house owners. This view favors increasing the state population, which is most likely to occur with foreign-born immigrants rather than in-state births and in-migration from other states. An alternative extreme point of view is that immigration exacerbates existing social and economic problems, creating competition for jobs and stressing already overburdened social services. This view dislikes much change in social composition or economic structure.

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In 2011 it was estimated that there were 456,422 immigrants living in Ohio. The total number of foreign-born immigrants in Ohio has slowly increased since the 1980s. In 1990 all foreign-born immigrants comprised only 2.4% of all Ohioans; by 2000, it had increased to 3% (Immigration Policy Center, 2014). In the 2010 census, only 4% of all Ohioans were born in foreign countries (CensusScope, 2014). The three top countries of origin for non-American born people in Ohio were Mexico, India, and China (CensusScope, 2014).

Meanwhile, Ohio continues to experience significant out-migration of residents to other states. In the period between July 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013, Ohio lost over 28,000 residents to out-migration, ranking Ohio 7th in the country for out-migration behind New York, Illinois, California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Michigan (Burke, 2014).

Author Insights

Some Ohioans will leave the state to find job and career opportunities in other states, especially to states with faster growing economies and rich job opportunities. In addition, there may be a significant number of Ohioans over the age of 65 migrating to Sun Belt states, especially Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina, to enjoy warm weather during retirement. Some may also migrate to Tennessee, which has no state income tax (like Florida) and is not so far away from Ohio.

It has been estimated that about half of the foreign-born population in Ohio is registered to vote. Among all registered voters in Ohio, "New Americans" comprise about 3% (Immigration Policy Center, 2014).

Diversity

The largest racial minority in Ohio in the early 21st century consists of African Americans, who comprise 12.5% of the total number of Ohioans. This proportion is slightly up from the 11% in 1990, but less than the average of 13.2% rate of African Americans in the country (CensusScope, 2014). Most of these black Americans have been in America and in Ohio for many generations, although there has recently been an increase of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, especially in the greater Columbus area. Columbus has the second largest concentration of Somalis in the U.S. and has been attracting immigrants from Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya (Immigration Policy Center, 2013). The Somali community is primarily Muslim, and Muslims may comprise 1.3% of the Columbus population, which is slightly higher than the national average but well under 1% of the total population of the state (Heagney, 2011; World Population Statistics, 2013).

The largest growing population within the U.S. is Hispanic, but the Hispanic population in Ohio is still relatively small. In 1990, the Hispanic population accounted for only 1.3% of the state's total population; by 2000 it had risen to 1.9%, and by 2011 it was an estimated 3.2% (Immigration Policy Center, 2014). Even if it were as much as 4% in 2014, the Hispanic population of Ohio would be far lower than the 17.5% total Hispanic population in the nation (CensusScope, 2014).

Author Insights

The experience in Ohio appears to mirror common experiences across the country. The first generation of Hispanic immigrants shares many of the cultural characteristics of their home countries, especially Mexico. They provide greater diversity to the locales where they live and work. Hispanics have a strong sense of extended family and keep mostly to their own communities. They speak

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Spanish and observe traditional Hispanic customs. They are overwhelmingly Catholic and typically attend mass regularly. With the passing of generations in America, they speak English and adapt to general American ways.

In addition to Hispanics who may come to Ohio to live and work, the state also attracts migrant workers, mostly from Mexico, who come for seasonal agricultural work. The number of agricultural migrant workers is relatively low and it is declining. In 2011 it was estimated that there were a total of 12,516 migrant workers in Ohio, about 9% fewer than in 2010 and 14% less than in 2009. One reason for the decline may be that economic conditions in Mexico have improved and Mexican agriculture is expanding in the markets north of the Rio Grande River, providing more plentiful agricultural jobs in Mexico. In addition, the acreage of crops that must be hand-picked, such as tomatoes, has greatly declined in Ohio. Increased uses of technologies provide more automation of crops and a lower demand for migrant workers in general (Frolik, 2012).

One of the fastest growing foreign-born groups of people found in Ohio is Asian (including both India and China), which rose from 1% of all Ohioans in 1990 to about 2% in 2013. Asians remain a very small percentage of Ohio's population (CensusScope, 2014).

About one-fourth of all foreign-born immigrants in Ohio reside in the greater Columbus area (Immigration Policy Center, 2014). Some of these immigrants may be poor, but mostly they appear to be middle-class people, often with advanced degrees, finding employment in the growing information technologies industry, health care, higher education, banking and insurance, and state government. Greater Columbus continues to be area for the strongest population growth in the state.

In 2000, it was determined that 94% of all Ohioans spoke only English, while 6% spoke primarily a foreign language with English as a second language, with various degrees of fluency. The largest language other than English was Spanish, spoken by 2% of state's population. Other languages spoken by less than 1% of Ohioans included German, French, and Italian ("Ohio Languages," 2014).

In the 2010 census, 78% of the population of Ohio was classified as urban, which was less than the national average of 81%. At the same time 22% of Ohioans lived in rural areas, within 89% of the square mileage of the state, as compared with 19% for the entire country. Ohio, therefore, is a little less urban and a little more rural than the national average (U.S. Census, 2014).

It has been estimated that about 14% of Ohioans are engaged in agriculture directly or indirectly (Secretary of State of Ohio, 2014).

Age Distribution

About 23% of Ohioans are age 18 or younger, while 15% are age 65 or older. The national average is 14% aged 65 or older, reflecting a general national trend of an aging population (U.S. Census, 2014). It is generally expected that the population of 65 or older in the U.S. will continue to increase with the aging Baby Boomers (those born from 1946 to 1964) during the next two decades. The historical demographic pattern in the U.S. has been that immigrants tend to be young adults with small children; middle-aged and elderly immigrants are not typical (Daniels, 1990). Therefore, the level of immigration tends to reduce the average age of the population; so that low levels of immigration often mean that the population will increase in average age.

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In the 2010 Census, the population of young people under age 18 dropped 5.5% relative to 2000. In terms of a declining younger population, Ohio ranked third in the nation behind New York and Michigan. (In contrast, Texas ranked first in gaining young people with about 1 million more people under age 18.) The drop in the youth population has been attributed to out-migration to other states. The biggest youth population drops occurred in greater Cleveland and greater Cincinnati, including much of southwest Ohio (McCall and Budd, 2011).

There are more females than males residing in Ohio. The Ohio population in 2013 consisted of 51.8% women, above the national average of 50.8% female (CensusScope, 2014).

Overall Summary of Trend Information

The Ohio Development Agency projects the total population of Ohio to increase to just 11,598,670 by 2025 (see Figure 1). This would mean virtually no net growth in Ohio's population for the next 10 years. This agency further projects that the age cohort of 15-24, the prime age group for post-secondary education, will decline from 1,586,660 (13.7% of the state's population) in 2015 to 1,550,630 (13.4% of the state's population) by 2025. Meanwhile, the number of people age 65 or older will increase from 1,794,810 (15.5% of the state's population) in 2015 to 2,243,870 (19.3% of the state's population) by 2025. These projections assume that there will be little or no net immigration into or migration out of the state. In other words, the population levels in Ohio will remain constant with an increase in the population over age 65 (Ohio Development Services Agency, 2014).

Figure 1. Ohio Population Change 1960-2025

*estimated
**projected

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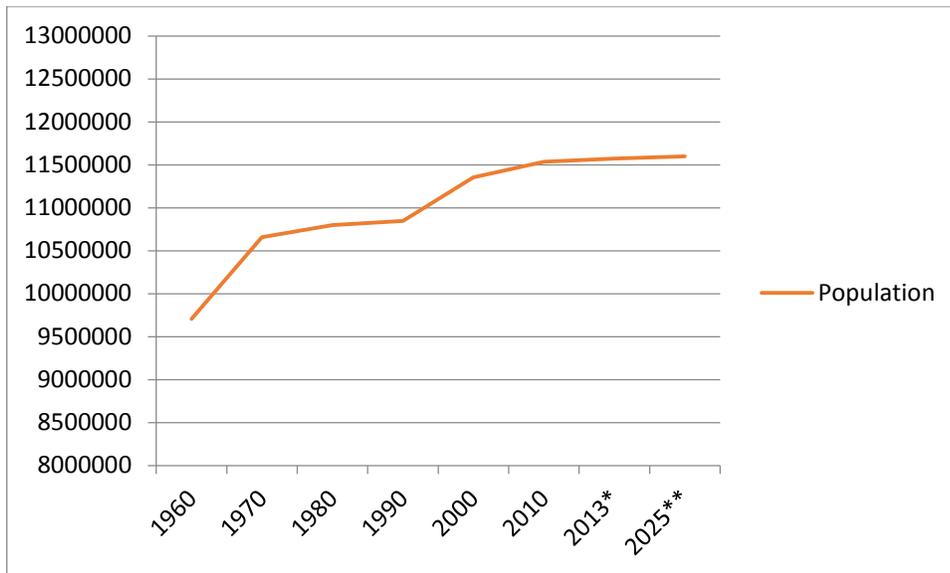
Author Insights – Possible Trends for the Future

Looking out to the year 2035, there are three likely outcomes for the trend in population growth, immigration, and diversity including *a priori* probabilities of occurrence. Probabilities of occurrence are estimations (given the information available and knowing it will likely change) that provide a starting point for conversations about the future. They can be illustrated as: (1) best outcomes possible or trends that go one direction; (2) the status quo are maintained; or (3) trends go a different/opposite direction.

A.   The population of Ohio will grow faster, much like it did in the 1990s, due primarily to increasing immigration, which is most likely to be Hispanic, Asian (especially Indian and Chinese and possibly Middle Eastern), and African. The large immigration of Hispanics that has occurred in Alabama, for example, could come to Ohio, too. This might be due to a rapidly expanding economy offering many job opportunities from low to very high skill levels. It might also occur with education attracting more young people to the state and the in-migration of people seeking job and career opportunities in industry, business management, and the professions. An increasing population is expected to lead to more social diversity, and possibly to more social tensions and the need for expanded government police and assistance programs. Also, increased immigration and in-migration will likely increase the number of children and young adults and thereby reduce the proportion of retired and elderly people in the state. Based on 2014 trend information, this outcome has an *a priori* probability of occurrence of 0.30.

B.   The population of Ohio will continue to grow, but at a slow pace consistent with 2014 demographic projections. There will be some immigration, primarily from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, but it will continue at relatively low rates. There will continue to be out-migration, but not as much as in the early 21st century.   In this outcome, diversity will decline as immigrants live longer in Ohio, learn the English language and attend Ohio schools, and adapt to traditional mainstream American ways of living. In addition the proportionality of young people will go down and the percentage of older people will go up. The greater Columbus area will likely continue to grow, but Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo may see population declines. Based on 2014 trend information, this outcome appears to be the most likely with an *a priori* probability of occurrence of 0.45.

C. The population of Ohio will actually decline with more people leaving the state than coming into it. Immigration might be low and the out-migration might get higher with young adults seeking jobs and careers in other states (especially states like Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and California) and with increasing numbers of older people seeking retirement in states like Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee. As more people leave Ohio, the remaining Ohio population will likely decline in diversity and increase in the proportionality of the older population, more so than expected in 2014. Based on 2014 trend information, this outcome has an *a priori* probability of occurrence of 0.25. What makes this probability the lowest is the prospect for continued strong growth of population, including immigrants, in the greater Columbus area and the potential for further population and economic growth in the Cincinnati-Dayton corridor and northeastern Ohio.

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