

California's Population Growth 1990-2000

by Leon Bouvier, Ph.D.

According to the state of California's Demographic Division of the Department of Finance, the state's population was estimated to be 29,828,000 July 1, 1990. It rose to an estimated 34,036,000 in 2000. Thus the population increased by 4,208,000 between July 1, 1990 and July 1, 2000.¹ To gain a better perspective on the meaning of this number, consider the fact that all the northeastern states from Maine to Virginia, combined, gained less than 4 million people over the same period.

This begs the question: How did California grow so rapidly? The answer is deceptively simple: immigration. Actual direct immigration accounted for about 57 percent of all growth over this decade. The two-generation indirect immigration (i.e. including the births to foreign-born mothers) explained an incredible 98 percent of California's growth between 1990 and 2000. (See Table 1 for detailed statistics).

What about births and deaths? Aren't there many more births than deaths? Yes. Reproductive change (or natural increase as it is often called) explains some of the growth. Let's clarify this. Three factors determine population change: people are born; people die and in between some people move domestically (e.g. from Maine to California or vice-versa) and some people move across international borders (e.g. From Mexico to the United States). To better understand "how California grew so rapidly?" we turn again to very recent data (January 2003) prepared by the Demographic division of California's Department of Finance.

Over that ten-year period, there were 5,588,653 births and 2,215,226 deaths in the state.² If only births and deaths (i.e. reproductive change or natural increase) were involved, the state's population would total 33,201,427 in 2000.³ (This is based on the Department of Finance estimate of 29,828,000 on July 1, 1990). Moreover, people move quite a bit in the United States and this is an important factor in determining population growth. Over the just-completed decade, 1,574,189 more people left the state than entered from other states. Let's enter that into our calculations. Subtracting this number from 33,201,427 gives us a July 2000 population of 31,657,238. But, as noted above, the estimated July 2000 population is

34,036,000. This suggests that immigration to the state was 2,408,762. We conclude from these data that direct immigration accounted for about 57 percent of all growth in the state.

As high a proportion as that is, it remains a direct measure. Immigrants have children after they move to California. Of the 5,588,653 births between 1990 and 2000, 45 percent were to foreign-born women. We estimate that 25 percent of all deaths were to immigrants (553,807). If you look at the two-generation indirect impact of immigration on population growth, it is clear that the indirect two-generation contribution to population growth accounted for 98 percent of California's growth between 1990 and 2000.⁴ To this we could add those illegal immigrants

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who were not counted in the Census of 2000.⁵ That number may well be larger than anticipated. The Census Bureau, for example, estimates that nationwide international migration between April 1 and December 31, 2002, amounted to 3,279,240. This is far greater than any earlier estimates by the Bureau and, while the report doesn't distinguish between legal and illegal, clearly this suggests significant increase in the latter.

Looking at this growth from a different perspective, the foreign-born population was 21.7 percent of the state population in 1990; by 2000 that share had increased to 26.2 percent, 37 percent of whom had moved to California within the past ten years.

To recap, the native-born population (i.e. not including the births to foreign-born women) only increased by 90,000 over the decade. This was in part because so many people left the state. As a result

immigration was an overwhelmingly large contributor to population growth. If there had been no net out migration, the share of immigration would have been smaller, which brings us to a topic beyond the scope of this report. Why do people leave California – 86 percent of them being native-born? Here it should be added that the causes of population growth can differ from place to place. In many developing countries, the cause is high fertility. In Florida, while immigration is a contributor, domestic migration from the Northern and Central states is the prime factor in the rapid population growth in that state.

Just-published information from both the Census Bureau and the California Department of Finance indicate that the population growth pattern noted for the 1990-2000 decade continues to this very day.⁶ According to the recently-published report from the Demographic Unit of California's Department of Finance, the state's population grew by 1,265,000 between July 1, 2000, and July 1, 2002. According the Census Bureau estimates, California's population increased by 1,242,497 between April 1, 2000, and July 1, 2002. Of that growth 59 percent (738,015) came directly from immigration. Domestic out-migration continues (-167,755). Data are not as yet available to allow us to calculate the indirect impact of immigration for this period. Net migration (domestic and international) was estimated at 672,000. Migration into California continues to provide the majority of California's population increase.

Whatever its causes, rapid population growth is a significant problem wherever it occurs. Unfortunately most of the media and policy makers don't see it that way. The solution to traffic problems is to build more highways; the solution to pollution problems is to find better ways to adapt to it. We are not saying that controlling population growth will totally solve the many problems associated with the state; we are saying that growth is a major factor and should be seriously considered in trying to solve such problems. In this brief article, let's limit ourselves to three examples: highways, water and education.

Traffic congestion is almost beyond description in the state's major metropolitan areas. What is causing these increases in traffic which oftentimes lead to road rage, especially on the thruways in the Los Angeles area? The answer is obvious – by increasing the state's population by over four million, more than three million vehicles have been added. To compound the

issue, there are more two- and three-car families than ever. To reduce such congestion, the state could (1) build more and more roads or (2) try to limit population growth. It is clear that option one is the "chosen" solution. It will fail as population growth keeps up (at least) with highway building. Furthermore, three million additional vehicles will contribute in a significant way to increased pollution as the emission of carbon dioxide increases. This is exacerbated by the growing number of SUVs on the highway. These new highways will also replace dirt with cement. Dirt takes in water; cement doesn't.

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Water is already a crisis in the state. It has been a challenge for some time. California's water problems were described in the late Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert*. Disputes over use of the Colorado River are increasing and the state of California is in the process of suing the province of British Columbia for their failure to provide sufficient water, as mandated by NAFTA.⁷ The quantity of water is becoming a world problem and it is pretty difficult to argue that population growth is not a major cause. Yet, at the recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, little if any mention of population growth was addressed. In California, the increasing shortage of water is obvious. Californians should also be wary of any attempts to privatize that water. This could lead to the heretofore unbelievable situation of having to pay exorbitant fees for water – with the poor literally unable to purchase it. This is already happening in South Africa. Again, population growth is a major contributor to this alarming shortage; it isn't the only one. "Water promises to be to the 21st century

what oil was to the 20th century: the precious commodity that determines the 'wealth of nations.'"⁸

Education may be the most important of social institutions as the state attempts to remain ahead of the technological revolution presently taking place. The state's university system, once the envy of the nation, has fallen in quality combined with increased demands for admission by an ever-growing number of applicants. According to the Demographic Research Unit of the California Department of Finance, K-12 enrollments rose from 4.8 million in 1990-91 to almost 6 million ten years later. Thus well over one million students were added to the state's already crowded schools and classrooms.⁹ This increase will continue into the future. Over the past decade, white enrollments fell by about 500,000 students while that of Hispanics rose by close to one million. By 2000, there were more Hispanics than other children enrolled in the state's schools. This illustrates the impact of immigration.

A school district such as Los Angeles has students that speak over 60 different languages. Although finding teachers is a problem throughout the nation, consider the difficulty in districts like this. (Statewide there are over 200 different languages spoken in the schools). In 2001-2002, there were 6,147,375 students enrolled in California schools. Of these students, 2,347,387 had a native language other than English. Of these students, 878,139 were fluent in English and 1,560,000 had limited English proficiency. California spends \$6,837 per student, so more than \$16 billion was spent last year on students whose native language was other than English.

Bringing up the difficulties of increasing diversity leads to one final issue. If the fertility rate of any large group of the foreign-born remains higher than that of the native-born; if domestic out-migration continues as it has recently when only 16 percent of those leaving the state were foreign-born; can the remaining citizens adjust to a new California where the foreignborn and their children outnumber the native-born? As for sheer population growth, irrespective of its source, can California accommodate itself to another 10 or 20 million inhabitants?

These are the questions that the people of the Golden State must face today and not tomorrow.

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California's Population Growth 1990-2000: A Second View

by Dick Schneider

Demographer Leon Bouvier shows that immigration and the natural increase (births minus deaths) of immigrants accounted for an astounding 98 percent of California's population growth during the 1990s. Bouvier uses the most recent California Department of Finance (DOF) statistics together with conservative demographic assumptions to arrive at this result. There are good reasons for believing, however, that Bouvier's estimate is only a lower bound. A more likely result is that 100 percent of California's net growth during the 1990s – all 4.2 million persons – was due to immigrants and their offspring.

The most significant explanation for our somewhat different results has to do with state-to-state migration. During the 1990s California experienced a huge outpouring of residents moving to other states in the nation. The DOF estimates this exodus at 1.6 million people. Of those leaving, an estimated 85 percent, or 1.3 million, were native-born. During the same period, natural increase of the native born was 1.4 million. The native born therefore made a small but positive net contribution of just 100,000 persons, or 2 percent to the state's growth during the decade using DOF statistics.

However, demographer William Frey has come up with a different estimate. Frey is one of the country's foremost authorities on state-to-state migration. He analyzed Census 2000 data and determined that 1.5 million native-born residents left California for other states during the 1990s.¹⁰ Using Frey's figure means that California had a net loss of 100,000 native-born residents instead of a net 100,000 gain (natural increase of 1.4 million minus net out-migration of 1.5 million). As a result, *all* of California's net growth over the decade resulted from immigration and the natural increase of immigrants and the children of immigrants.

A second reason for believing that Bouvier's result is a lower bound concerns illegal immigration. Department of Finance figures significantly understate growth in the illegal population. Recent statistics from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services formerly the INS show that the state's illegal population grew by 732,000 over the 1990s, reaching a total California illegal population of 2.2 million as of January 2000.¹¹ State statistics only reflect growth of