Understanding California's Demographic Shifts

Drawing Implications

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Drawing Implications from the Demographics:
Questions to Address

The Demographic Profiles in this report include charts and data tables that illustrate powerful demographic changes already underway in communities throughout California. Understanding these changes and evaluating how they might unfold will be critical for developing effective library services that meet the changing needs of the local areas. Answering the questions outlined below will help guide development of strategies that reflect the changing demographics.

Population Growth
California’s population increased by 10% over the past decade. The Hispanic and Asian populations each grew by about 30%. The white, non-Hispanic population declined by 5% and the black population declined by 1%. At the same time, the older age groups grew faster than the young population. Overall, the population has become more Hispanic as well as older.

- How has growth in your community differed from the statewide pattern? Which age groups or racial and ethnic groups have had the largest gains or losses?
- What factors have contributed to the growth or decline of your community’s population in the last decade? What factors might influence future population gains or losses?
- How, if at all, were your library services different in 1990, 2000, and 2010?
- How have your library users changed from 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2010?
- How can your library change its services to reflect the population shifts that have occurred? In particular, what changes in services or operations might you consider in light of the increase or decrease in particular age groups or racial and ethnic groups?
- Do nearby communities face similar or different demographic shifts? Might there be opportunities to share services or offer complementary services?

Diversity: Racial and Ethnic Mix
The population mix in California continues to shift. Over the past ten years, the white, non-Hispanic population declined from 47% to 40% of total, while the Hispanic population increased from 32% to 38%. The Asian share of total population increased from 11% to 13% while the black share remained at 6%.

- What are the racial and ethnic characteristics of your actual user groups and do they correspond with the racial and ethnic composition of your community?
- What services might be added or adapted to serve specific racial and ethnic groups?

Age Structure
Over the last decade, California’s overall age structure has shifted toward older brackets. In California overall, the School Age population (ages 6 to 10) decreased by 8% while the number of Teens (ages 14 to 18) increased by 13%. The Adult population (ages 33 to 45) decreased by 5%, while the Midlife Adult population (ages 46 to 64) increased by 36%. The population age 65+ increased by 18%, with the fastest growth occurring in the population age 85 and older.
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- Did your community follow a similar pattern? If not, what pattern occurred in your community?
- Which age groups grew or declined the most in your community over the past ten years? Were these groups among your major users?
- What services might be added to serve the needs of specific age groups? What additional services might be needed as the baby boomers age and swell the population age 65+?

Aging and Ethnicity

The Hispanic population in California is significantly younger than the white, non-Hispanic population. The Hispanic age structure is "pyramid shaped" with a broad base of young people and a relatively narrow top (38% of the population is 0 to 19 and only 5% is age 65+). In contrast, the age structure of the white, non-Hispanic population is more cube-like and has a smaller base of young people and a higher concentration of people in the upper age brackets than the Hispanic population (Only 19% of the white, non-Hispanic population is age 0 to 19, and another 18% is age 65+). As a result, 51% of the state's young population is Hispanic and only 28% is white, non-Hispanic. Conversely, the upper age brackets are predominantly white, non-Hispanic. Of the population age 65+, only 18% is Hispanic, while 62% is white, non-Hispanic.

- How does the age structure in your community differ by race and ethnicity? Which if any age groups are predominantly Hispanic? Predominantly white, non-Hispanic?
- What services could be added or modified to reflect the ethnic composition of various age groups?

Income

The statewide median household income is $60,000. Income varies greatly across racial and ethnic groups, with median household income ranging from $43,000 for black households to $74,000 for Asian households. Twelve percent of all households have incomes of $150,000 or higher, while 20% have incomes of less than $25,000.

- Is income inequality a significant issue in your area? How does median household income in your community differ across racial and ethnic groups? What share of your community has household income of $150,000 or more? What share has household income of less than $25,000, or less than $10,000?
- How can your library help address the needs of low-income households?
- How can your library reach households that could lend financial support to the library, including recruiting individuals to join library leadership teams?

Unemployment

California’s unemployment rose steeply from 4.9% in 2006 to 12.4% in 2010. The June 2011 unemployment rate was 12.1%, well above the national rate of 9.3%.

- Based on the level of unemployment in your community, what types of job search resources can your library provide? What services might be provided to older people seeking re-entry into the workforce?
- Who else in your community is offering such services or resources? Is collaboration feasible? Can local or nearby employers be involved?
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Education
One-fifth of adults in California have not completed high school. Among Hispanic adults, 44% have not completed high school compared with 14% of Asians and blacks. College completion also varies by race and ethnicity: 48% of Asian adults have a Bachelor’s degree compared with just 10% of Hispanics.

- Which groups in your community are most at risk of low educational attainment? What library services could support educational attainment for the various at-risk groups?
- What types of partnerships should your library consider in order to help teenagers and adults complete their educations?

Households
Statewide, the traditional family household—a married couple with children—has been on the decline. In contrast, the share of family households without children has increased. While most individuals age 65+ live with a spouse or other relatives, one quarter live alone, and most of those living alone are women.

- Which household types are most common in your community?
- What additional services or changes might be implemented to accommodate the living arrangements most prevalent in your community
- How might programs differ for families with and without children and for older people living alone?

Foreign Born
More than one quarter of California’s population is foreign born. Mexico is the country of origin for 44% of the immigrants; another 11% of immigrants came from other Latin American countries, and a third of the immigrants came from Asia.

- What are the major countries of origin for the immigrants in your community?
- Does your library offer services to help immigrants participate more fully in the community? Which of these services do you think are useful?
- What services do you think your library could offer that would target the needs of the specific immigrant groups reflected in your demographics?

Language
Across California, 10% of all households are linguistically isolated, meaning that no one in the household age 14 or older can speak English at least “very well.” In addition, 30% of all households speak at least one other language besides English.

- How can your library better assist people who are linguistically isolated? What collaborations might be feasible?
- Does your library have bilingual staff on hand to assist non-English speakers, as well as library materials in languages other than English? Do your staff and collections reflect your community’s demographics?