

Pew Projection for U.S. Population in 2065: A Challenge to Clinton and Trump

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The Pew Research Center published last September an eye-opening, 127-page report on the demographic future of the United States, given current trends in immigration and fertility. This report provides a firm foundation for questions that moderators of the upcoming Clinton-Trump debates, and honest journalists of any stripe, should put to the candidates.

Below are excerpts of the most important points in the report, as well as a link to the full report.

Here's my idea of a question that would cut to the core issue.

PREAMBLE

Few matters under direct federal governmental control will affect the U.S. more and in more ways than how large its population becomes. Last fall, the Pew Research Center put out a major report projecting U.S. population growth out to the year 2065. It assumed "business as usual" trends in immigration and fertility. The report projects: that immigration rates will increase from the current 1.2 million per year to 2.0 million per year by 2065; that the U.S. population will grow from its current 325 million to 441 million in 2065; and that 88 percent of that growth will be due to post-2015 immigrants (legal and illegal) and their descendants. The report emphasizes that a very different scenario would result were there to be changes in immigration policies.

QUESTION

Should we allow the U.S. population to grow to 441 million and beyond despite the tremendously negative economic, social and environmental impacts of doing so? If you think we should not, what immigration policies would you recommend be implemented to prevent that? If you think we should, explain why you think the environmental consequences, in particular, of doing so should be considered acceptable.

Based on their vague statements to date (and in Clinton's case, her Senate voting record), it would seem that Clinton would like to double immigration

rates immediately, while Trump would like to cut them in half. Both candidates surely are dying for a chance to clarify their positions.

Excerpts from

Modern Immigration Wave Brings 59 Million to U.S., Driving Population Growth and Change Through 2065

Pew Research Center, Washington DC, September 2015, 127 pp.

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/09/28/modern-immigration-wave-brings-59-million-to-u-s-driving-population-growth-and-change-through-2065/>

About This Report

This report provides a 100-year look at the impact of immigration on the nation's demographics since passage of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act. It explores how the nation's population has changed since the law was enacted and includes new Pew Research Center population projections through 2065. The new projections are based on detailed assumptions about births, deaths and immigration levels—the three key components of population change. All these assumptions are built on recent trends, but it is important to note that these trends can change. As a result, **all population projections have inherent uncertainties, especially for years further in the future, since they can be affected by changes in behavior, new immigration policies or other events.**

The report also examines the economic and demographic characteristics of immigrants in the U.S. today as well as trends in the characteristics of immigrants who have arrived since the 1960s. ...

Overview

Fifty years after passage of the landmark law that rewrote U.S. immigration policy, nearly 59 million immigrants have arrived in the United States, pushing the country's foreign-born share to a near record 14%. For the past half-century, these modern-era immigrants and their descendants have accounted

for just over half the nation's population growth and have reshaped its racial and ethnic composition.

Looking ahead, new Pew Research Center U.S. population projections show that if current demographic trends continue, future immigrants and their descendants will be an even bigger source of population growth. Between 2015 and 2065, they are projected to account for 88% of the U.S. population increase, or 103 million people, as the nation grows to 441 million.

Post-1965 Immigration Drives U.S. Population Growth Through 2065

Immigration since 1965 has swelled the nation's foreign-born population from 9.6 million then to a record 45 million in 2015. (The current immigrant population is lower than the 59 million total who arrived since 1965 because of deaths and departures from the U.S.) By 2065, the U.S. will have 78 million immigrants, according to the new Pew Research population projections.

The nation's immigrant population increased sharply from 1970 to 2000, though the rate of growth has slowed since then. **Still, the U.S. has—by far—the world's largest immigrant population, holding about one-in-five of the world's immigrants.**

Between 1965 and 2015, new immigrants, their children and their grandchildren accounted for 55% of U.S. population growth. They added 72 million people to the nation's population as it grew from 193 million in 1965 to 324 million in 2015.

This fast-growing immigrant population also has driven the share of the U.S. population that is foreign born from 5% in 1965 to 14% today and will push it to a projected record 18% in 2065.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act made significant changes to U.S. immigration policy **At the time, relatively few anticipated the size or demographic impact of the post-1965 immigration flow. In absolute numbers, the roughly 59 million immigrants who arrived in the U.S. between 1965 and 2015 exceed those who arrived in the great waves of European-dominated immigration during the 19th and early 20th centuries.**

The nation's population grew by 131 million people from 1965 to 2015, and 72 million of them are linked

to immigration—that is, they are immigrants who arrived during this period or they are their children or grandchildren.

If no immigrants had entered the country after 1965, when the U.S. population numbered 193 million, the nation's population still would have grown—to 252 million people by 2015, rather than 324 million. The population would have grown by less than half as much as it actually did (30% vs. 67% growth).

Over the next five decades, the U.S. immigrant population of 45 million is projected to grow to a record 78 million. The growth rate of 74% will be more than double that for the U.S.-born population (30%).

Foreign-born U.S. residents will make up 18% of the population by 2065, higher than the previous record share of nearly 15% during the late 19th- and early 20th-century wave of immigration. The U.S.-born children of immigrants—the second generation—will more than double in number by 2065, from 38 million to 81 million, and will become 18% of the total population.

Appendix A: Methodology: Immigration (p. 96)

The immigration assumptions are critical for both the projections and the historical analyses.... Immigration has been the most difficult demographic component to forecast. **It is directly affected by national policies** in ways that fertility and mortality are not. In addition, some immigration flows, especially of unauthorized immigrants can be very sensitive to economic conditions in the U.S. and abroad.....

Overall then, our projection for 2015-2020 is about 1.2 million immigrants per year or approximately the same as during the 2010-2015 period. **[And we project that] the average number of immigrants per year will climb from about 1.2 million during 2010-2015 to 1.5 million for 2030-2035 to about 2.0 million in 2060- 2065.**

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