



## Ten Key Forecasts for the U.S. Population in 2017

**What will the U.S. population look like in 2017?** No one can predict the future, but demographic research provides tools for developing informed forecasts of future population trends and challenges. The following forecasts are based on information about population trends produced by the nation's statistical agencies and from demographic research supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), part of the National Institutes of Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

**1. In 2017, the 21 million children who are now under age 5 will be in middle and high school, where they will be preparing for productive roles in the economy.** Yet, 1 in 5 American children currently belongs to a poor family. As NICHD research demonstrates, these children have much lower odds of completing high school and going on to college. Research also shows that early intervention with these children makes a difference. According to work done by James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics and NICHD grantee, investments in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills among disadvantaged

youth have the highest economic rate of return when concentrated in early childhood, before the child enters first grade.

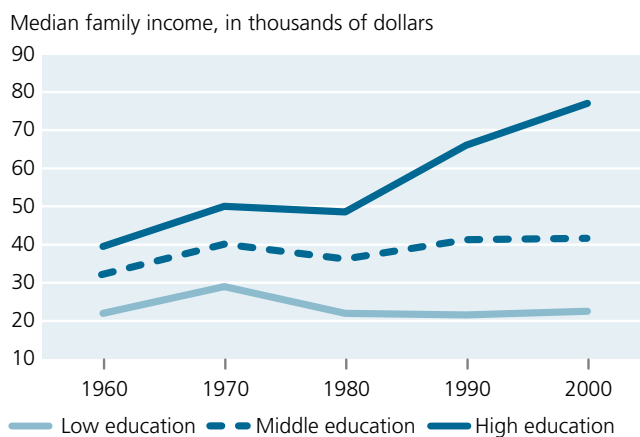
**2. Inequalities among children may continue to increase.** Since 1960, young children whose mothers are highly educated have gained steadily in time and money resources, while children whose mothers have low education levels have fallen behind. Over time, differences among these groups in family income, mother's employment, and intact parental marriages have all increased significantly. Even the amount of time that fathers spend with children differs by fathers' education, and this difference has also increased over time.

**3. Rates of unintended pregnancy may continue to increase among the nation's poor.** Between 1994 and 2001, the rate of unintended pregnancy increased by 29% among poor women but fell 20% among women with moderate or high incomes. If poor and near-poor women had achieved the same reductions in unintended pregnancy as better-off women, the abortion rate would have declined by 32%, instead of 12%, during this period.

**4. Health disparities will persist.** The U.S. has made some progress in reducing health disparities in recent years, but the relative disparity in infant mortality rates for African Americans and whites is larger now than in the 1980s and the relative disparity in overall death rates is larger than in 1960. In 2004, infants born to African American mothers died at a rate 2.4 times that for infants born to white mothers and overall death rates were about 31% higher for African Americans compared to whites. Equalizing access to high-quality health care can help to reduce health disparities, but major gains will also require addressing widespread social and economic disadvantages that undermine the health of minority populations.

**5. The elderly population will grow.** Between 2007 and 2017, the nation's baby boom generation will begin

### The Income Gap Widens for Children



Source: McLanahan, 2004

to enter the prime retirement years. Currently, there are 5 working-age Americans (ages 18-64) for every person age 65 and older; this ratio will decline to less than 4 by 2017. Population aging will affect both families and taxpayers. Health care costs for the elderly are expected to rise dramatically, putting a strain on publicly funded programs. At the same time, the structural changes that have occurred in America's families may reduce their ability to care for dependent elders. Research funded by the NICHD suggests that older divorced men may be especially likely to lack support from family members.

**6. American families will become more complex.** In 2005, 37% of children were born to unmarried parents, continuing a steady upward trend. Although as many as 50% of these children are born to parents who are living together, research shows that such informal unions are much less stable than marriages. In the mid-1990s, 2 out of 5 white children and 3 out of 5 African American children experienced some kind of family instability by the time they were 12 years old. As parents separate and form new unions, families extend to include step-siblings, half-siblings, absent fathers, stepfathers, and multiple sets of grandparents. When absent fathers have children with their new partners, their previous children tend to receive less economic and social support from them.

**7. Fertility may, or may not, remain near replacement levels.** Replacement-level fertility is important because it helps to reduce elder-dependency burdens and is suggestive of a nation's ability to maintain itself in the future. In 2005, Americans were having children at a rate of 2.05 births per woman—nearly at the level

required for population replacement. This contrasts sharply with European countries where fertility averaged 1.4 births per women in 2005.

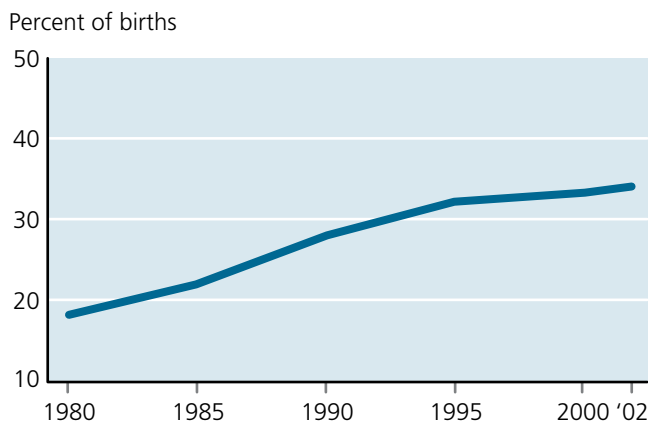
However, there is no guarantee that U.S. fertility will remain near replacement levels. A sharp decline in Hispanic birth rates (such as that seen among African Americans since 1990) and/or further delays in the age of childbearing (in 2005, 37% of births occurred to women age 30 or older) could reduce U.S. fertility to much lower levels. Fertility could also decline if child care and other resources that families need to juggle the demands of work and childrearing become less available.

**8. More of the nation's children will belong to immigrant families.** Even today, more than 1 in 5 children in the United States is an immigrant or the child of an immigrant parent. These children are about 50% more likely to be poor than other children, a change from forty years ago when they had lower poverty rates. Nevertheless, children in immigrant families are doing well. Once differences in socioeconomic status are taken into account, immigrant children perform as well as or better academically than their native peers and high school graduates from immigrant families are at least as likely to go on to college as their peers from American-born families.

**9. High levels of immigration will touch all Americans.** By 2017, an estimated 50 million Americans—about 15% of the population—will be foreign-born. The percentage of foreignborn Americans has grown steadily for decades, from 5% in 1970 to 12% in 2005. Immigration began to settle not only in coastal regions and large cities, but also in suburbs and in small towns and rural areas in the Midwest and South. By 2000, 1 in 5 counties had populations that were 5% or more foreign-born. NICHD research documents the importance of immigrant networks in influencing where new Americans settle, how they find work, and the processes through which they assimilate into American society. Immigrant enclaves tend to draw other immigrants from the same country and to deter their foreign-born residents from moving to new communities. Those immigrants who do move on tend to be well educated, have high incomes, speak English, become U. S. citizens, or have contact with non-Hispanic white populations.

**10. America will become more diverse as traditional race and ethnic divisions become more blurred.** By 2017, the U.S. population will be 17% Hispanic,

### Births to Unwed Mothers Continue to Rise



Source: National Center for Health Statistics.

13% African American, and 5% Asian, compared with 2007 figures of 15%, 13%, 4%, respectively. The youngest generation of Americans will be even more diverse: about 1 in 4 children under age 5 will be of Hispanic origin, 15% will be African American, and 6% will be Asian. Intermarriage between African Americans and whites is increasing, and about 20% of Hispanics and between 26% and 39% of Asians marry across racial or ethnic lines. The growing number of children born to interracial and interethnic couples has increased the share of Americans who are multiracial and multi-ethnic, a trend which is likely to accelerate in the future.

## Technical Notes

1. Percent of children under 6 in poverty from DeNavas-Walt, C., Proctor, B. D. and Lee, C. H., U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports, P60-231, Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 2006. Findings on educational achievement of poor children from Duncan, G. J. and Brooks-Gunn, J. 1997. *The Consequences of Growing Up Poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Research by James Heckman reported in Heckman, J. J. 2006. "Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing in Disadvantaged Children." *Science*. 312:1900-1902.

2. All findings are from McLanahan, S. 2004. "Diverging Destinies: How Children Fare Under the Second Demographic Transition." *Demography* 41(4): 607-627. Education is classified into high (most educated quartile), low (least educated quartile), and middle (middle two quartiles). Statement on time fathers spend with children based on widening differences by education in % of children in 2-parent homes and higher paternal time investment in these homes.

3. Data on trends in unintended pregnancy and abortion rates drawn from Finer, L.B., and S. K. Henshaw. 2006. "Disparities in Rates of Unintended Pregnancy in the United States, 1994 and 2001." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*: 38: 90-96. Unintended pregnancies are those that, according to women's reports, occurred sooner than desired or were not desired at any time. Poor and near-poor are defined as having household incomes <100% and 100-199% of the federal poverty level, respectively. The hypothetical reduction in the abortion rate of 32% was derived by (a) calculating the number of unintended pregnancies to poor and near-poor women in 2001, assuming a decline during 1994-2001 in the rate of unintended pregnancy equal to that experienced by women with household incomes 200+% of poverty; (b) calculating the number of abortions that would have occurred in 2001 to women in each of the three poverty categories using the actual percents of each group's unintended pregnancies that ended in abortion as observed in 2001; and (c) calculating the hypothetical abortion rate by summing the numbers of abortions across poverty categories and dividing

by the total number of women of reproductive age. The resulting abortion rate (16.3 per 1,000 women) is 32% lower than the 1994 rate of 24 per 1,000 women.

4. Infant mortality rates, death rates, and life expectancy data are from National Center for Health Statistics, Miniño AM, Heron M, Smith BL, Kochanek KD. Deaths: Final data for 2004. Health E-Stats. Released November 24, 2006. Death rates are age-adjusted. "Relative disparity" refers to the percent by which African American death rates exceed those of whites. As death rates fall, the numerical difference between rates may decrease at the same time as the relative disparity increases.

5. Data on dependency ratios calculated from U.S. Bureau of the Census, (NP-T3-E) Projections of the Total Resident Population by 5-Year Age Groups, and Sex with Special Age Categories: Middle Series. Research findings on divorced older men based on Cooney, T. and Uhlenberg, P.1990. "The Role of Divorce in Men's Relations with Their Adult Children after Mid-Life," *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52 (3), 677-688.

6. Data on percent of children born to unmarried parents from National Center for Health Statistics, Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Ventura SJ. Births: Preliminary data for 2005. Health E-Stats. Released November 21, 2006. Cohabitation status at time of nonmarital birth from National Center for Health Statistics, Series 23, No. 25. Fertility, Family Planning, and Reproductive Health of U.S. Women: Data from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth. (PHS) 2006-1977 and Mincieli, L., Manlove, J., McGarrett, M., Moore, K., and Ryan, S. 2007. "The Relationship Context of Births Outside of Marriage: The Rise of Cohabitation." *Child Trends Research Brief*. Washington, D.C.: Child Trends. Other research findings from: Raley, R. K. and Wildsmith, E. 2004. "Cohabitation and Children's Family Instability." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 66:210-219; Harknett, K. and Knab, J.T. 2007. "More Kin, Less Support: Multipartnered Fertility and Perceived Support Among Mothers." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69(1): 237-253; and Manning, W.D. and Smock, P. J. 2000. "Swapping" Families: Serial Parenting and Economic Support for Children." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62 (1): 111-122.

7. Replacement level fertility is a total fertility rate of 2.1, or 2.1 births per woman. Data on U.S. total fertility rate and other U.S. birth statistics from National Center for Health Statistics, Hamilton BE, Martin JA, Ventura SJ. Births: Preliminary data for 2005. Health E-Stats. Released November 21, 2006. Data on European total fertility rate from Population Reference Bureau, *2005 World Population Data Sheet*, [http://www.prb.org/pdf05/05WorldDataSheet\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.prb.org/pdf05/05WorldDataSheet_Eng.pdf) (accessed 7/5/07).

8. Percent of children who are immigrants or children of immigrants based on data from U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, 2002. Other findings from: Van Hook, J., Brown, S.L. and Kwenda, M.N. 2004. "A Decomposition of Trends in Poverty among Children of Immigrants." *Demography*. 41:649-670; Glick, J. E. and White, M. J. 2003. "The Academic Trajectories of Immigrant Youth: Analysis Within and Across Cohorts." *Demography*, 40: 759-784; Glick, J. E. and White, M. J.

2004. "Parental Aspirations and Post-Secondary School Participation among Immigrant and Native Youth in the United States." *Social Science Research*, 33: 272-299; and Fuligni, A. J., and Witkow, M. 2004. "The Post-Secondary Educational Progress of Youth from Immigrant Families." *Journal of Research on Adolescence*. 14:159-183.

9. Data on trends 1990-2000 from U.S. Census Bureau, Gibson, C.J. and Lennon, E., "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-born Population of the United States: 1850-1990," *Population Division Working Paper No. 29* (March 1999), Table 1 and U.S. Census Bureau, Malone, N., et. al., "The Foreign-Born Population: 2000," Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR-34 (December 2003). Foreign-born population in 2017 are projected assuming that percent foreign-born increases by an increment of 1% during each 5-year period after 2005 (this percent increased 1.6% per 5-year period during 1990-2000 and 1.3% during 2000-2005 (see above citations and U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey, Table B05002). Research findings are from Alba, R.D., Logan, J.R., Stults, B. R., Marzan, G. and Zhang, W. 1999. "Immigrant Groups in the Suburbs: A Reexamination of Suburbanization and Spatial Assimilation." *American Sociological Review* 64: 446-460; Frey, W.H. and Liaw, K-L. 2005. "Migration within the United States: Role of Race-Ethnicity." In G. Burtless and J. Pack, *Brookings-Ur-*

*ban Papers on Urban Affairs, 2005*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press; and South, S. J., Crowder, K.D., and Chavez, E. 2005. "Geographic Mobility and Spatial Assimilation among U.S. Latino Immigrants." *International Migration Review* 39: 577-607.

10. Projected population by race and ethnicity from Bureau of the Census, U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, Table 1a. Projected Population of the United States, by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2000 to 2050. These are revised projections based on the 2000 census; estimates for 2007 and 2017 are derived by interpolation. Percentages African American and Asian are for those reporting only one race. Projections for children under 5 based on final projections consistent with the 1990 census: (NP-D1-A) Annual Projections of the Resident Population by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: Lowest, Middle, Highest Series and Zero International Migration Series, 1999 to 2100: Middle Series. Intermarriage findings drawn from Qian, Z., Lichter, D.T. 2007.

"Social Boundaries and Marital Assimilation: Interpreting Trends in Racial and Ethnic Intermarriage." *American Sociological Review* 72:68-94. Percents intermarrying are for married individuals aged 20-34 in 2000.