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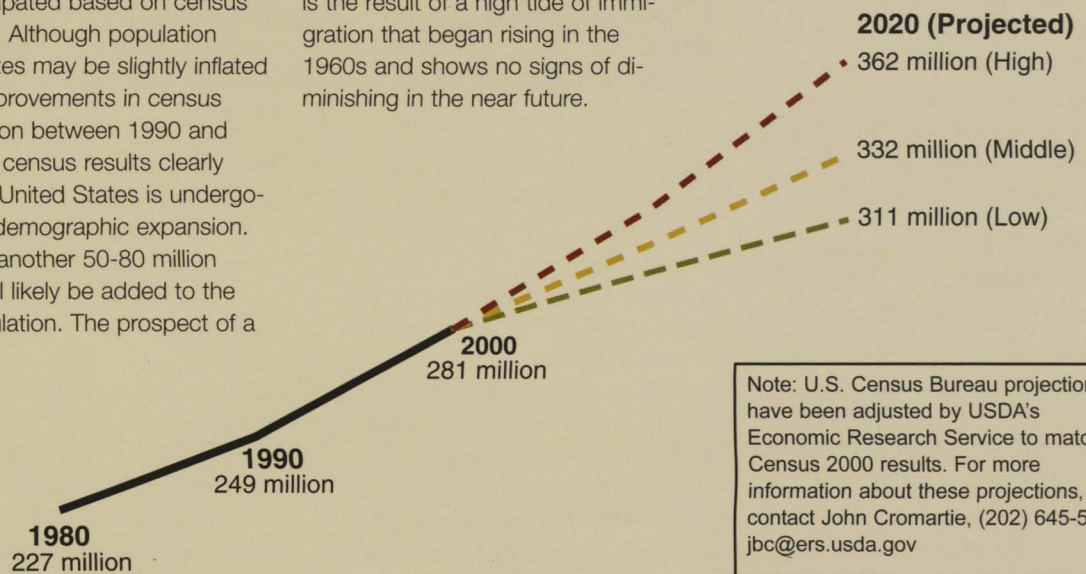
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Population Growth and Demographic Change, 1980-2020

Figure 1—U.S. Population May Top 350 Million in 20 Years

Census 2000 counted 281 million Americans, 54 million more than in 1980 and 7 million more than anticipated based on census estimates. Although population growth rates may be slightly inflated due to improvements in census enumeration between 1990 and 2000, the census results clearly show the United States is undergoing rapid demographic expansion. By 2020, another 50-80 million people will likely be added to the U.S. population. The prospect of a

dynamic demographic future, setting apart the United States from most other industrialized countries, is the result of a high tide of immigration that began rising in the 1960s and shows no signs of diminishing in the near future.



Note: U.S. Census Bureau projections have been adjusted by USDA's Economic Research Service to match Census 2000 results. For more information about these projections, contact John Cromartie, (202) 645-5421, jbc@ers.usda.gov

Figure 2—Hispanics Are Fastest Growing Segment of the U.S. Population

The growing diversity of U.S. food choices is likely to echo the growing diversity of the U.S. population. Over the next two decades, the Hispanic population is expected to grow by 1.2 million annually, compared with annual growth of 500,000 among non-Hispanic Whites and 400,000 each among Blacks and Asians. Growth among

Whites, Blacks, and Native Americans comes largely from natural increase (births minus deaths), while growth among the Hispanic and Asian populations comes from a combination of natural increase and immigration. Higher birth, death, and immigration rates all contribute to a younger age structure among minority populations and, consequent-

ly, a built-in growth momentum, as a higher proportion of the minority population will be in its childbearing years. Currently, the median age of non-Hispanic Whites is 38.1, compared with 26.5 for Hispanics and 30.3 for Blacks. Only one-fourth of Whites are under age 18, compared with one-third of minorities.

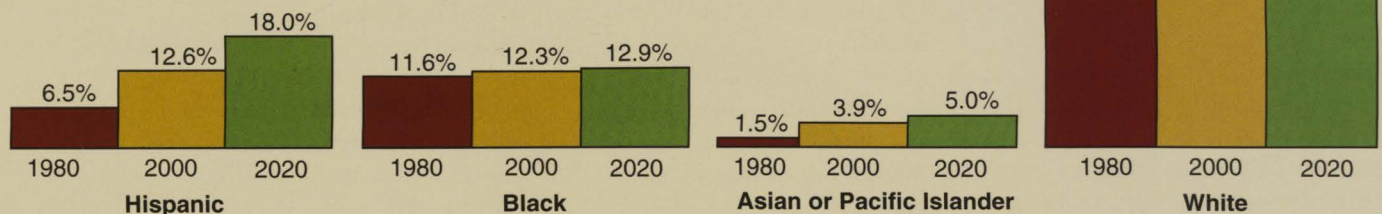


Figure 3—Baby Boom Generation Hits Retirement Age

The growth of America's older population will rank among the most far-reaching and challenging developments of the next two decades and beyond. The remarkable increase in life expectancy during the 20th century, from 44 to 77 years on average at birth, laid the groundwork for an older society. Average life expectancy in the United States is predicted to rise another 2 years by 2020. However, the coming retirement-age boom has less to do with further breakthroughs in health and medicine and more to do with the baby boom, the rapid rise in fertility levels following World War II that briefly interrupted the long-term decline in childbearing among American women. With the aging of the baby boom generation, whose members currently range in age from 37 to 55, the number of Americans older than age 65 will jump from 35 million in 2000 to 54 million in 2020. Without another baby boom, the U.S. population under age 18 will increase by 7 million by 2020 but decline as a share of the total.

The age profile in the United States is shifting from an unequal distribution dominated by the baby boom bulge and younger age groups toward an older age structure and a more even balance among age groups. As the baby boom generation crosses the retirement-age threshold, most of the growth among older Americans will be among the relatively more vigorous "young-old" population up through 2020. The number of people age 65 to 74 will increase from 6 to 10 percent of the population by 2020, while those age 75 and older will increase from 6 to 7 percent.

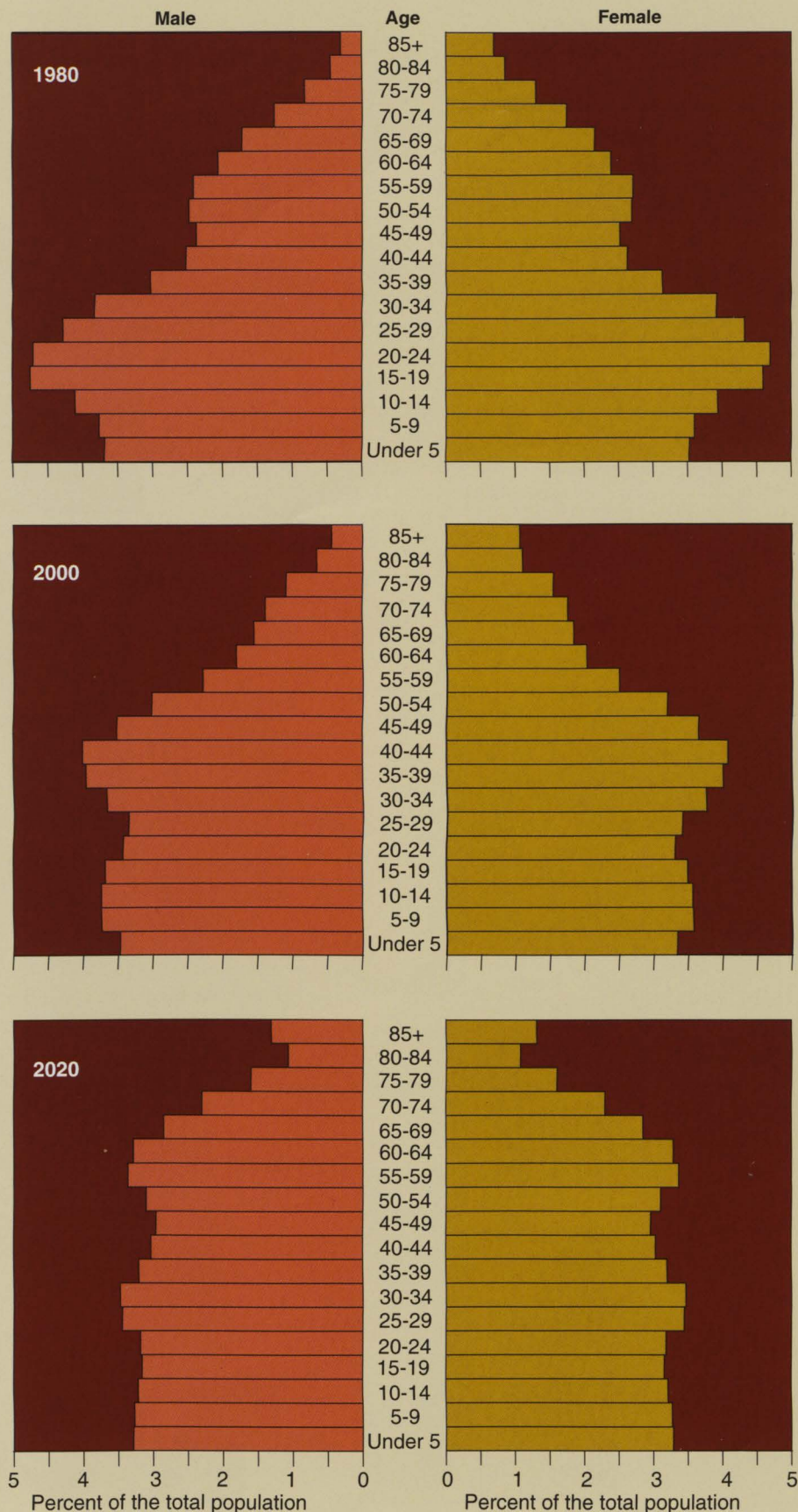


Figure 4—As U.S. Population Ages, Shares of Empty Nesters and Persons Living Alone Increase

The rate of household formation in the United States has exceeded population growth for decades, resulting in a steady decrease in average household size. Although the pace of household formation has slowed since the 1970s when baby boomers first entered the housing market and did so in record numbers, average household size has continued to fall, from 2.8 persons in 1980 to around 2.5 persons in 2000. During this period, the share of U.S. households consisting of a married couple with children dropped from 30 to 24 percent, while the share of single-person households rose from 23 to 26 percent. Average household size will continue shrinking over the next two decades, dropping below 2.4 persons by 2020 as the number of "empty-nest" households rises from 28 to 31 percent. The aging of the U.S. population will also contribute to a higher proportion of single-person households.

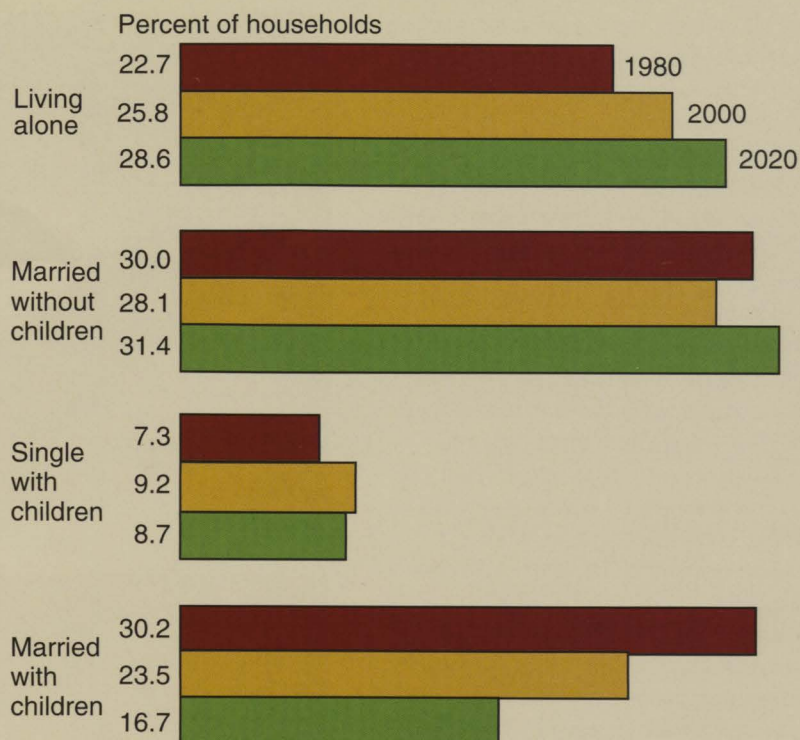
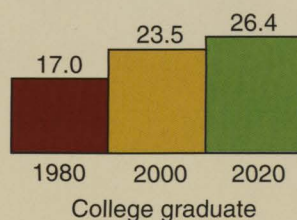


Figure 5—U.S. Adult Population Continues Long-Term Upward Trend in Educational Attainment

Percent of persons age 25 and older



Educational progress in the United States has been one of the demographic hallmarks of this past century, as the share of the population completing high school rose from 40 to 83 percent and the share graduating from college rose from 10 to 24 percent. Average educational attainment has advanced over the past several decades, in part, because older, less-educated generations



have been replaced by more-educated younger generations. The education gap between generations has begun to close, but will remain large enough to continue to raise average educational attainment for the next two decades. According to Jennifer Day and Kurt Bauman of the U.S. Census Bureau, it is also reasonable to assume that college attendance will continue to rise, especially among females, and that overall education levels among the rapidly increasing foreign-born population will rise toward the higher levels seen in native-born population groups of the same race and ethnic background. Thus, by 2020, a projected 86 percent of the U.S. population will have a high school degree and 26 percent will have finished college.