

# CHAPTER 3 REGIONAL TRENDS THROUGH 2030: HOW ARE WE GROWING AND CHANGING?

## DEMOGRAPHICS

## CHAPTER CONTENTS

At the turn of the century, the San Diego region resumed its familiar pattern of growth. Between 2000 and 2004 population growth in the region averaged about 46,000 persons per year. During the late 1980s the region was adding as many as 90,000 persons per year, an annual growth rate of 3 percent. The SANDAG 2030 Regional Growth Forecast Update projects that between 2000 and 2030, the region will add about one million more people, 290,000 new homes, and roughly a half-million new jobs.

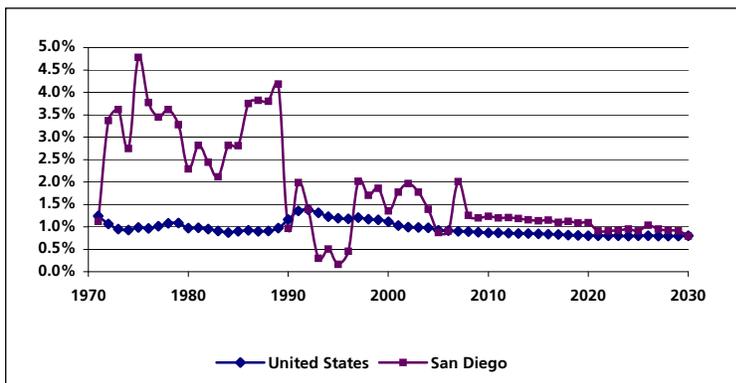
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In spite of those figures, our growth rate is actually slowing, and that trend will continue. By the early-2020s, our annual growth rate will fall below 1 percent. Currently, Riverside County, Imperial County, and Tijuana are all growing at faster rates than San Diego.

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All population growth comes from just two sources: natural increase (births minus deaths) and net migration (people who move here minus those who move away). Migration consists of two components: domestic migration and foreign immigration. The amount of legal foreign immigration is controlled by the federal government and has remained fairly constant over the past decade. No major change in immigration levels is expected in the foreseeable future. Domestic migration — people moving to and from other parts of the state or the nation — fluctuates each year, usually based on the condition of the local economy. During the recession years in the early 1990s, for example, more people left the region to search for economic opportunities elsewhere. Figure 3.1 compares the region’s historic and future growth rates to those of the nation.

**Figure 3.1—Population Growth Rate**



*As the region grows over the next 25 years, some basic demographic characteristics of the population will change. As a group, we will become both older and more ethnically diverse.*

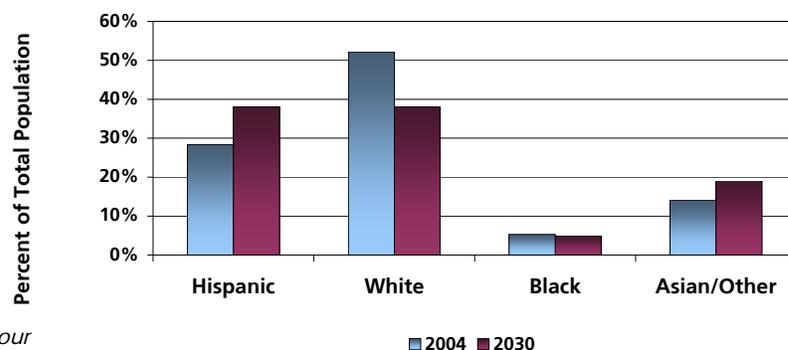
The main reason our growth rate is slowing is a continuing decline in fertility rates (the average number of children born to each woman). Recent data show that this is occurring across most ethnic groups and that the sharpest drop is seen among the Hispanic population.

As the region grows over the next two and a half decades, some basic demographic characteristics of the population will change. As a group, we will become both older and more ethnically diverse. The increase in diversity is the result of the various ethnic groups growing at different rates. While the region as a whole is expected to grow by about 32 percent by 2030, the Hispanic and the Asian/Other groups will each grow by more than 75 percent during that time period. The Black population will grow by 21 percent, somewhat below the regional rate. In contrast, the non-Hispanic White population may decline by 3 percent. This pattern is similar to what has been observed for the last couple of decades.

Figure 3.2 shows that by 2030 the Hispanic proportion of the region’s population will rise from today’s 28 percent to 38 percent. The Asian/Other group will increase to 19 percent of the total population from its current 14 percent. The Black population will stay relatively constant at about 5 percent. The biggest change will be seen in the non-Hispanic White group, whose portion of the total population will drop from today’s 52 percent down to 38 percent. When their share falls below 50 percent — probably before 2010 — there will be no ethnic majority in the region. Statewide, that is true today. The 2000 Census found that just 47 percent of Californians are non-Hispanic Whites.

In addition to ethnic changes, our region also is aging. Approximately one quarter of the region’s population are Baby Boomers, the huge group of people born between 1946 and 1964. Their presence will help to raise the median age in the region from 33.7 years old in 2004 to 39 years old in 2030 — an increase of 16 percent. By 2030 the number of people age 65 and older will increase by 125 percent. Fully 19 percent of the region’s population will be in that age group then, which is a higher percentage than is seen today in the state of Florida.

**Figure 3.2—The Region’s Changing Ethnic Composition**



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## EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING

Population growth is directly linked to job growth. When there is an abundance of jobs in a region, domestic in-migration increases as people move to take advantage of the economic opportunities. The SANDAG 2030 Regional Growth Forecast Update predicts that the region will add approximately 465,000 new jobs by 2030.

Jobs will be created across all industry sectors; however, the largest gains will be seen in the relatively low-paying Services sector, which is expected to grow by roughly 40 percent. We are already beginning to see the effects of the disparity between local wages and housing costs. More and more people, particularly those in lower-paying sectors, are choosing to keep their jobs in the region, but live in more affordable homes in Imperial County, Riverside County, Orange County, and northern Baja California, Mexico.

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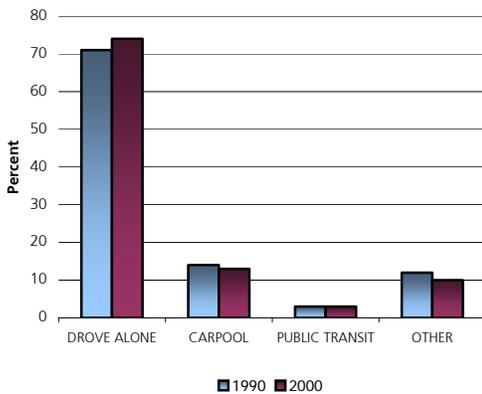
This interregional commuting will continue to increase and is reflected in the 2030 Regional Growth Forecast Update. During the 26-year period, it is estimated that 99,000 more households will have residents living in Imperial, Riverside, and Orange counties, or in Baja California while working in the San Diego region. Long-distance commuting, both interregional and from within the region, has a tremendous impact on our transportation facilities; however, increases in interregional commuting will have some dampening effect on local housing demand. Providing homes for an additional one million people during the next 26 years still will require at least 290,000 new housing units within the region.

Currently, about 62 percent of the region's housing stock consists of single-family units, and about 34 percent are multi-family. (The remaining 4 percent are mostly mobile homes.) The combination of a scarcity of vacant, developable, single-family land and increasing congestion on our roads and highways will lead to a shift in housing characteristics. Of the 290,000 units the region will build over 26 years, it is expected that more than half will be some sort of multi-family configuration, including stacked flats, attached town homes, and mixed-use projects. Much of this development will occur as redevelopment in older communities.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) and housing publications, such as *Solving the Region's Housing Crisis*, identify policies and strategies that can help address the housing needs of the San Diego region. Implementation of these strategies and the smart growth strategies discussed in Chapter 5 would provide more housing opportunities and travel choices for the region's employees.

**TRAVEL PATTERNS**

**Figure 3.3—Commuting To Work  
– 1990 vs. 2000 Census**



Source: U.S. Census

*Projected 2030 vehicle miles traveled would be three times higher than 1980 levels, although increased Smart Growth development could reduce that trend.*

Travel behavior is influenced by many factors, including demographics, land uses, lifestyles, the economy, employment locations, and work practices. An understanding of travel patterns has helped shaped the 2030 RTP.

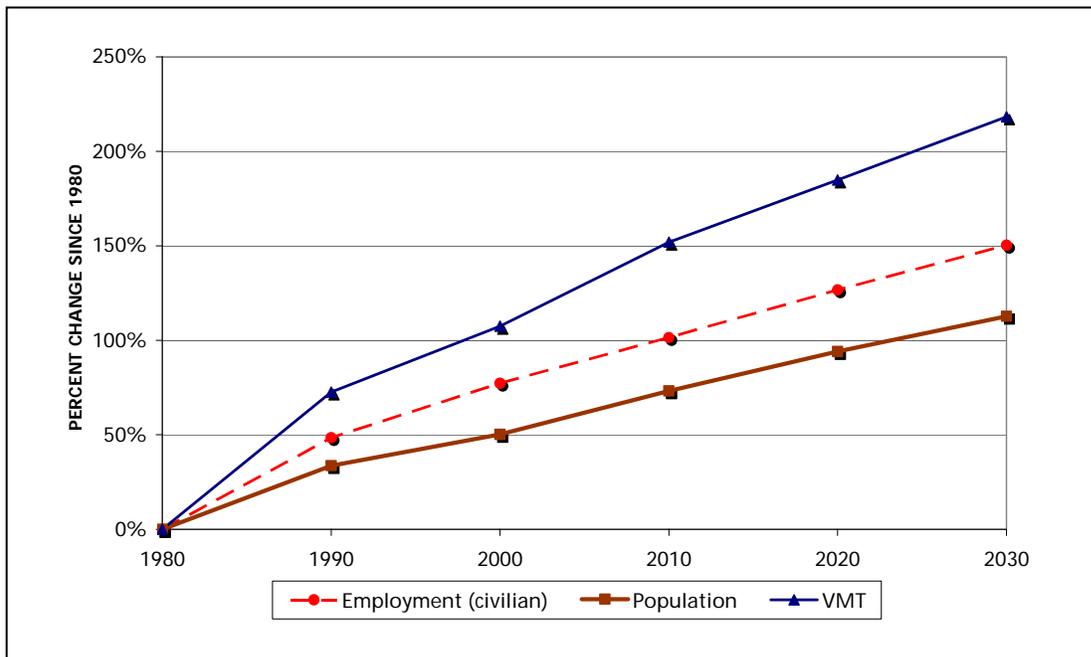
Like most major metropolitan areas around the country, the San Diego region has seen a gradual decline in commuting by carpool and transit in favor of driving alone. Between 1990 and 2000 the percentage of residents who drove alone to work increased, while commuting by all other modes decreased or stayed the same (see Figure 3.3). In part, this shift to solo commuting reflects the increase in two-worker households – which in turn, has increased the need for car trips – and the convenience and flexibility of the personal automobile.

Throughout the 1980s, travel (as measured in vehicle miles traveled or VMT) grew about twice as fast as population, primarily because of growth in two-worker households and longer-commute distances. During the 1990s, growth in vehicle miles traveled was 50 percent higher than population growth.

The region faces a large increase in vehicles miles traveled during the next two decades. In 1990 daily travel demand was nine million trips. The region’s current population makes an estimated 16.7 million daily trips by some form of motorized travel today. Travel demand is projected to increase to 22 million daily trips by 2030.

Figure 3.4 compares the percentage change since 1980 in travel (measured in VMT), population, and employment. Growth in travel consistently has outpaced growth in population and employment during the past two decades. This trend is projected to continue through 2030. Projected 2030 vehicle miles traveled would be three times higher than 1980 levels, although increased Smart Growth development could reduce that trend. Forecasted population and employment increase by 113 percent and 150 percent, respectively, over the same period.

**Figure 3.4—Growth in Travel, Population, and Employment**



Source: SANDAG

Many of the region’s major transportation facilities are operating at or beyond their capacity – the result of dramatic increases in motorized travel and limited financial capacity to keep pace with demand. Traffic congestion in urban areas like the San Diego region generally will worsen over time unless we take actions to directly address travel demand and have options to get people out of their single occupant vehicles, especially during peak travel periods. Actions to encourage these options are discussed in Chapter 8, Demand Management.

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Of all trips taken by all transportation modes, the average trip length is more than six miles. Work travel, as measured in vehicle miles traveled, comprises 26 percent of all highway travel, while non-work travel makes up 74 percent of travel on our highways. Work trips tend to be longer than non-work trips; today’s average work trip length is 11.9 miles compared to 5.7 miles for the non-work trip.

Figure 3.5 shows average daily trip ends by hour of the day and trip purpose. Work trips make up the largest portion of travel demand during the morning and afternoon peak periods, although there are large shares of other trips (e.g., shopping, recreation, etc.), particularly in the afternoon hours. Morning trips tend to be commute trips, going directly from home to work. Evening trips involve a greater variety of origins and destinations,

causing the evening peak period to spread out over a longer period of time. School trips constitute the smallest share throughout the day.

It is the peaking of travel demand during short periods of the day that strains the regional transportation system, which has excess capacity during off-peak periods. Despite increases in travel demand, traffic congestion in the San Diego region is not as severe as other areas around the country. Based on Census 2000, the San Diego metropolitan area ranks 22nd in population and 28th in average travel time. The average commute time in the region grew by only three minutes between 1990 and 2000, indicating that people make personal adjustments to keep commute times reasonable.

**Figure 3.5—Average Daily Trip Ends by Hour and Trip Purpose**

