

Eagle's Nest Foundation Centennial Planning Discovery Unit II – Demographic Impacts

As Eagle's Nest Foundation moves toward its centennial year, it is important to examine several factors that will influence the future of the organization. A vital consideration in planning for the next 15 years and beyond is the evolving demographic landscape of the United States. After studying who our past and current program participants are, the locations from which they come, and the economic status of their sending families, we determined three significant areas of interest: increasing diversity in the United States, the nation's aging population, and the shift of wealth and people to the Southeast, South Central, Southwest, and Western United States.

The United States' racial and ethnic minority groups are growing more rapidly than the non-Hispanic white population. Between 2000 and 2010, minorities, defined as individuals who are not single-race non-Hispanic white, accounted for 91.7% of the nation's growth. 56% of that increase was due to growth in the Hispanic population. This trend is projected to continue, and by 2050 the non-Hispanic white population will drop below 50% of the United States' overall population. While the non-Hispanic white population will remain the largest single group, the United States will become a "plurality nation", meaning no ethnic group holds the majority. The significant growth of racial and ethnic minority groups over the next several decades will be caused primarily by immigration and children born to immigrants.

As the number of older Americans (specifically the Baby Boomer generation) increases, the percentage of children between birth and 17 years of age will decrease over the next 15+ years. While the number of children as a percentage of the overall population is forecasted to shrink, the number of young children (birth to 11 years old)

will experience a strong growth rate over the next two decades. Keeping with the trend of growing racial and ethnic minority groups, the minority population of children is rapidly increasing and the number of white children is decreasing. No single racial or ethnic group under the age of 18 will be a majority by 2019.

Because of growth of the elderly population, the dependency ratio – the number of people of working age compared with the number of young and elderly – will rise sharply. In 2005, there were 59 children and elderly people per 100 working age adults. That number is expected to rise to 72 dependents per 100 adults of working age over the next three decades. An increase in the number of dependents means a decrease in the amount of disposable income available to many Americans. Discretionary income will be split between youth and the increasing elderly population.

Studies of median household incomes in the United States have found that the wealthiest counties in the nation are generally located in the Boston-to-Washington, DC corridor and in coastal areas throughout the country. The area from Washington, DC to Boston is also the most densely populated region of the United States, but population and wealth are shifting. Over the past 20 years, the largest increases in population have occurred in the South and West. Florida, Texas, and Arizona have seen the fastest growth, and population density studies suggest that this trend will continue over the next 15+ years. Racial and ethnic diversity is also growing most rapidly in these regions. Non-Hispanic white children under the age of 15 are now in the minority in 31 large metropolitan areas in the Southeastern, Southwestern, and Western regions of the United States.

As we consider the growth of racial and ethnic groups, it is important to examine the median household incomes of these populations. For the past ten years, Asian Americans have earned the highest median household income of any other race. Compared to Asians, Whites, and African Americans, the Hispanic population as a whole earns the lowest median household income in the United States. Data suggests that this trend will continue.

The increasing diversity in the United States, the nation's aging population, and the shift of wealth and people to the South, Southwest, and West are trends that are significant to the future of Eagle's Nest Foundation. As we move forward, it is important to consider who we are marketing to, the regions where we should concentrate our efforts, ways that we communicate our value to different populations, and increasing diversity within the organization as a conscious and reactive decision.