

California's Population

Hans Johnson

MARCH 2017

➤ **California is the most populous state in the nation.**

With slightly more than 39 million people (according to 2016 estimates), California is the nation's most populous state—its population is almost one and a half times that of second-place Texas (28 million). One of every eight US residents lives in California. By 2050, California's population is projected to reach 50 million people.

➤ **During the 20th century, California experienced tremendous population growth ...**

In 1900, California was home to less than 2 million people; by 1950 the population had reached 10 million. California's population nearly tripled in the last half of the 20th century, and its growth rate remained much higher than that of the rest of the United States.

➤ **... but growth has slowed in recent decades.**

Over the past 20 years, California has experienced its slowest rates of growth ever recorded and an unprecedented migration of residents to other states. From 2006 to 2016, California's population grew by 9%, which was low for the state and barely higher than the rest of the nation (8%). International migration to California has remained strong over the past 10 years: the state experienced a net inflow of 1.6 million. But about 1.2 million more people left California for other states than came to California from other states. Natural increase—more births than deaths—added 2.8 million residents. Overall, California gained 3.1 million residents over the past 10 years.

➤ **California's population is one of the world's most diverse.**

No race or ethnic group constitutes a majority of the state's population: 39% of state residents are Latino, 38% are white, 14% Asian American, 6% African American, 3% multiracial, and less than 1% American Indian or Pacific Islander, according to the 2015 American Community Survey. In 2015 Latinos surpassed whites as the state's single largest ethnic group.

➤ **More than 10 million Californians are immigrants.**

According to 2015 estimates, 27% of Californians (10.7 million) are foreign born—a higher proportion than in any other state (New York is second with 23%) and twice the nationwide share (13%). The leading countries of origin for California immigrants are Mexico (4.3 million), the Philippines (864,000), China (728,000 excluding Taiwan; 910,000 including Taiwan), Vietnam (511,000), India (477,000), El Salvador (428,000), and Korea (328,000). In recent years, almost twice as many immigrants have been arriving from Asia as from Latin America.

➤ **California is aging but is young compared to the rest of the country.**

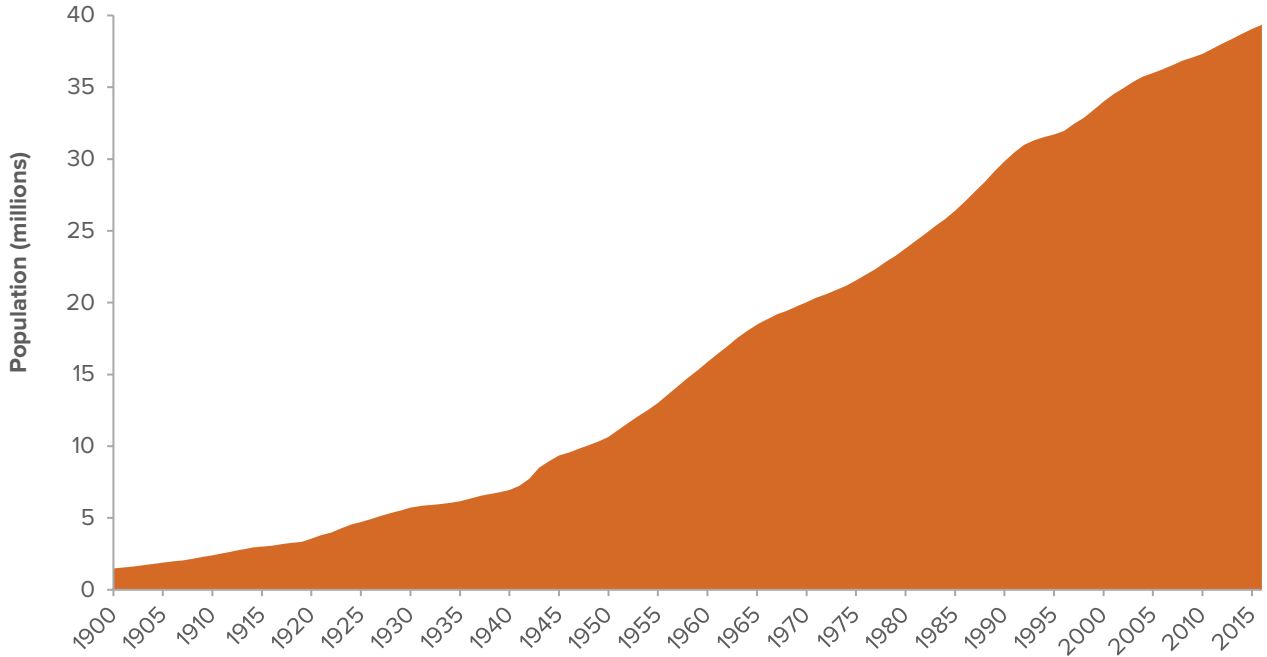
California's population is slightly younger than that of the rest of the nation: according to 2015 Census Bureau estimates, the median age in California is 36.2, compared to 37.8 for the entire country. California has the seventh-youngest population in the country (Utah has the youngest). However, California's population is aging along with the baby boom: by 2030, about one in five Californians will be age 65 or older.

➤ **California has distinct regions with very different population characteristics.**

California has some of the country's largest cities—Los Angeles, with a population of more than 4 million, is the second largest. But large swaths of the state are sparsely populated. Fewer than 34,000 people live in Alpine, Mono, and Inyo Counties—an area in the eastern Sierra Nevada that covers 14,000 square miles. Since the 2010 Census—and for the first time in many decades—the Bay Area has experienced the fastest rate of growth of any region in the state.

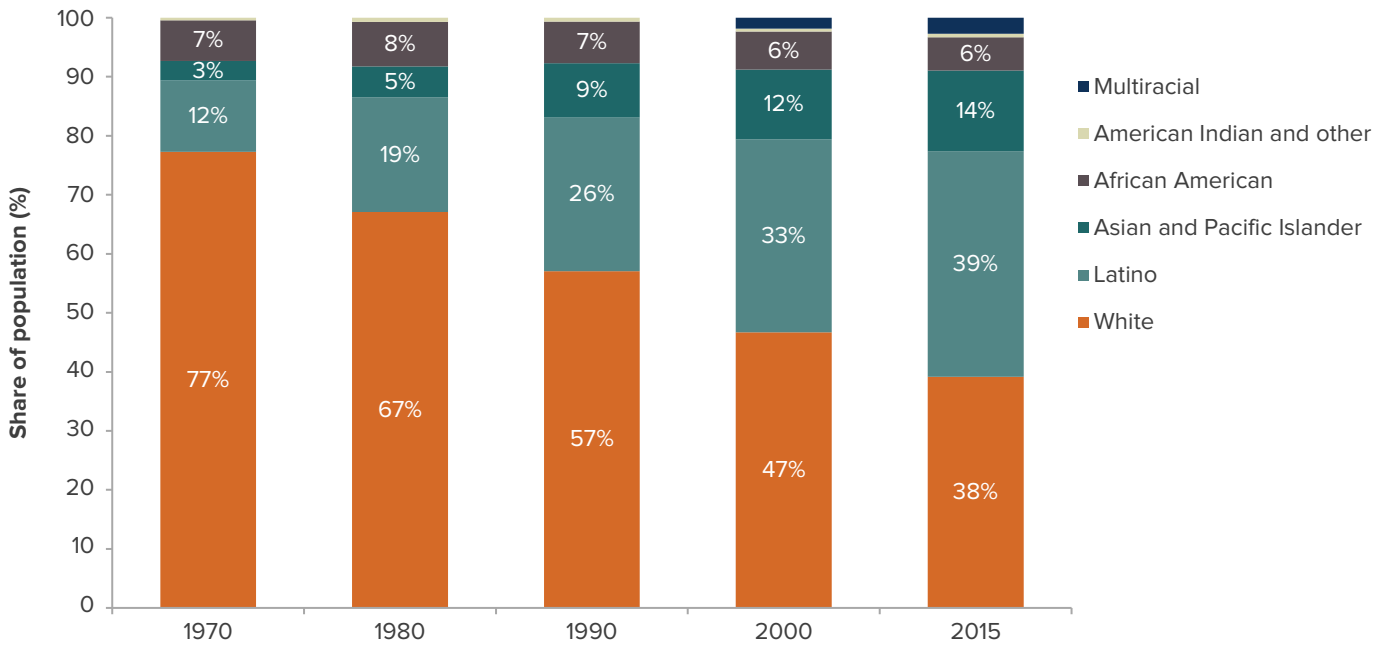


California has experienced rapid population growth



Source: California Department of Finance estimates.

California has become a “minority majority” state



Source: California Department of Finance 1970–2000; American Community Survey 2015.

Sources: California Department of Finance estimates and projections; US Census Bureau estimates; Decennial censuses; American Community Survey

Contact: johnson@ppic.org

