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California boomin'

Dramatic changes in demographics are seen coming by midcentury.

By **Judy Lin - Bee Capitol Bureau**

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Based on her own family experience, Christina Garcia, 27, envisions a growing role for Hispanics in California's future economy.

While Garcia's father toils at a tomato paste cannery, she is an assistant manager at a bank. And the lifelong Yuba City resident talks to her nieces about the importance of education, hoping they will do even better in life.

"We want to instill in them the opportunities are there," Garcia said Monday while taking her 9-year-old niece, Tatiana Ramirez, to the city pool.

Based on demographic projections announced by the state Department of Finance, California's economic future could well be shaped by the success -- or setbacks -- of Hispanics, the coming majority population.

By 2050, likely most of California's largely white baby boomers will have died, giving way to younger, second- or third-generation Hispanic families. Hispanics are forecast to make up 52 percent of the state's population by midcentury. The rest will be 26 percent white, 13 percent Asian, 5 percent African American, 2 percent multiracial and 1 percent American Indian or Pacific islander.

The projections also showed California will add more than 25 million people by 2050, bringing the state's population to just under 60 million. According to state statistics, the Golden State is projected to hit the 40 million mark in 2012 and 50 million by 2032. In contrast, the state had fewer than 34 million residents in the 2000 census.

The largest growth, percentage-wise, will come in Sutter County, where Garcia pondered the future Monday.

Hispanics will constitute the majority of Californians by 2042, according to the projections, which are based on births, deaths and migration -- domestic and foreign, legal and illegal.

"The sky is the limit for Latino children today," said Dowell Myers, a University of Southern California professor who recently wrote the book "Immigrants and Boomers." "They're going to have a world of opportunities handed to them as the baby boomers, who are largely white, retire. We haven't felt in the past that we needed them that much. But we're going to feel it."

But Latino political leaders and policy researchers say the demographic shift brings considerable challenges.

Francisco Estrada, public policy director for the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund, said Hispanics currently earn less than whites, are more likely to drop out of high school and are less likely to attend college.

"There's concern because Latinos are now the largest ethnic group and the numbers of Latinos going on to college are still relatively small," he said.

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Hispanics had a median household income of \$33,676 in terms of 1999 figures, compared with \$44,687 for whites. The national average was \$41,994.

Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez said in a statement that California leaders need to consider the needs of a changing population when making decisions on education, housing and other issues.

"Those of us entrusted with shaping public policy today have to keep an eye on the realities of tomorrow," he said.

Hispanic advocates have been discouraged by what they consider to be setbacks.

In 2005, California agreed to pay \$1 billion to settle a highly publicized lawsuit alleging students in many low-income communities were being shortchanged on books and equipment. Now more programs are on the cutting block. For example, a University of California-run academic program to help disadvantaged youths toward a four-year college degree in math has seen funding cut in half since the late 1990s.

It's unclear whether the governor will keep the Mathematics, Engineering, Science, Achievement (MESA) program in the budget, said Executive Director Oscar F. Porter.

"It's a great paradox," Porter said. "The work force needs of the state are substantial in science and engineering, yet for the past four years MESA has not been included in the governor's budget."

The Legislature has proposed restoring funding as Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and lawmakers negotiate a tight budget. Administration spokesman H.D. Palmer said the Republican governor is supporting other programs, such as a \$50 million English Tutoring Program that had been scheduled to expire this year.

Núñez said state leaders need to be attuned to such realities or the state will face unwanted consequences.

"If we don't work now to end the achievement gap that sees Latino dropout rates still too high and test scores of poor students and English learners too low, we'll have significant numbers of the majority population coming out underserved and underprepared for real participation in the state and its economy," the speaker said.

Myers said that Hispanics not only will make up a large part of California's work force, they will represent much of the population growth inland.

Fast-growing Riverside County, now the state's sixth-largest county in population, is expected to zoom to second by 2050 with an estimated 4.7 million people. Sacramento County is expected to gain almost 1 million, bringing the population to nearly 2.2 million residents. Placer County will gain half a million more people.

Of all California counties, Los Angeles will add the most people -- 3.5 million -- to reach 13 million residents.

In Sutter County, where a population increase of 255 percent is projected, a new community -- Sutter Pointe -- is being developed by Lennar Corp. and AKT Development near the Sacramento County border.

Sutter County Administrator Larry Combs said county planners are doing all they can to brace for the boom. However, he fears elected state and regional officials are being shortsighted in planning mass transit needs and reducing freeway congestion.

"Once the population hits," he said, "it will be 10 times what you pay if you put it in now."

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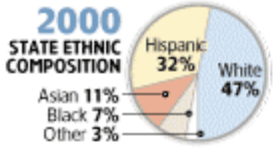
Regional demographic changes

County	Year	Population estimate/ projection	ETHNIC COMPOSITION				
			White	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Other*
Amador	2000	35,357	83.0%	8.7%	0.9%	4.1%	3.3%
	2050	68,487	69.2%	24.1%	1.1%	2.4%	3.2%
El Dorado	2000	158,621	85.3%	9.3%	2.1%	0.5%	2.8%
	2050	314,126	77.9%	18.1%	1.4%	0.3%	2.3%
Nevada	2000	92,532	90.7%	5.6%	0.8%	0.3%	2.6%
	2050	136,113	86.8%	9.8%	0.6%	0.2%	2.5%
Placer	2000	252,223	83.8%	9.7%	2.9%	0.8%	2.8%
	2050	751,208	61.6%	28.1%	7.6%	0.3%	2.4%
Sacramento	2000	1,233,575	58.5%	16.0%	11.2%	9.8%	4.5%
	2050	2,176,508	35.3%	30.2%	15.4%	10.0%	9.2%
Sutter	2000	79,632	60.6%	22.2%	11.8%	1.8%	3.6%
	2050	282,894	30.0%	55.4%	12.4%	0.6%	1.6%
Yolo	2000	170,190	58.8%	25.9%	10.0%	1.9%	3.3%
	2050	327,982	37.1%	41.4%	11.9%	5.1%	4.5%
Yuba	2000	60,598	65.8%	17.4%	7.7%	3.0%	6.1%
	2050	201,327	45.9%	43.4%	4.2%	1.5%	5.1%

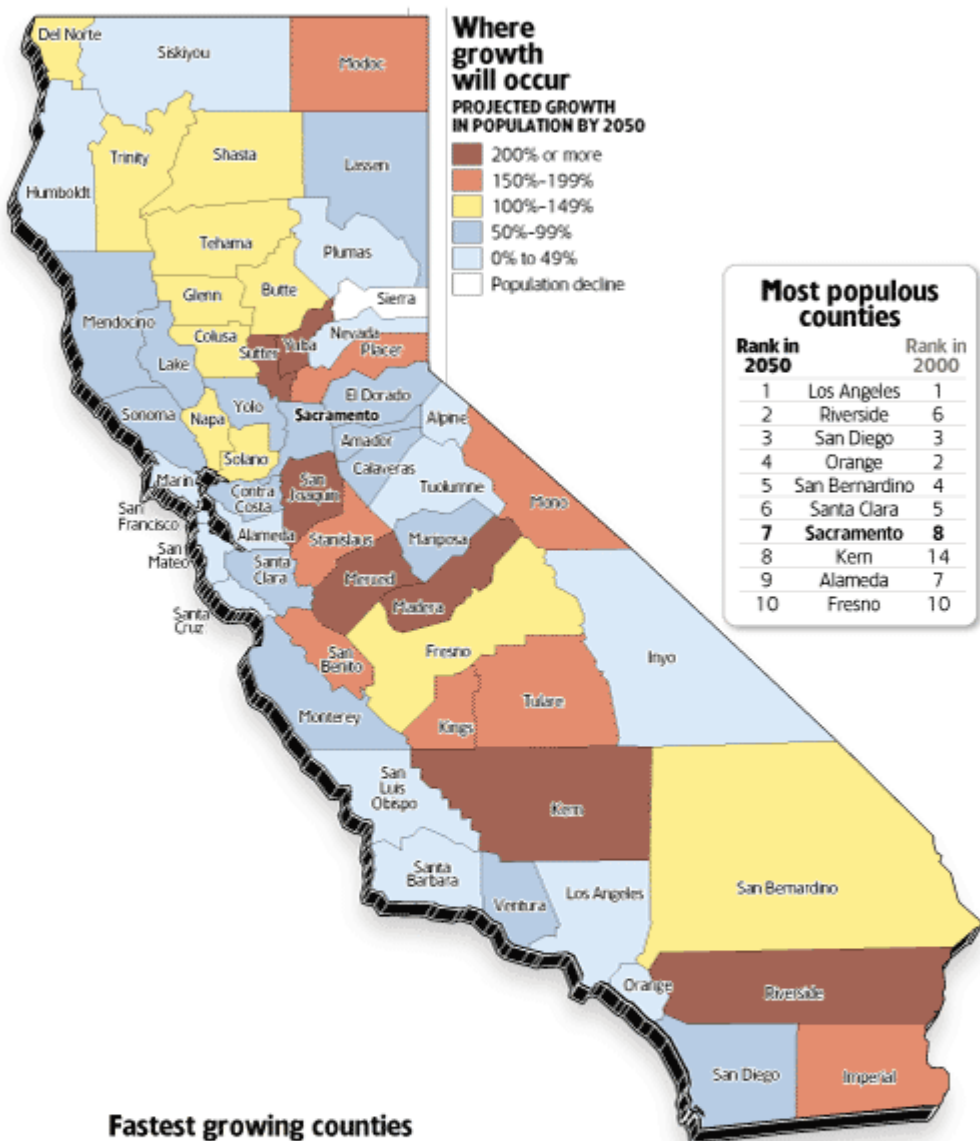
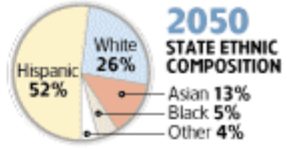
*Includes Pacific Islander, American Indian and multirace

Source: California Department of Finance

Sacramento Bee



According to new projections, the state's population will soar to nearly 60 million people by 2050 and Hispanics will constitute the majority by 2042.



Fastest growing counties

BY PERCENT INCREASE

County	Population in 2000	Projected increase by 2050
1. Sutter	80,000	255%
2. Yuba	61,000	232%
3. Madera	125,000	232%
4. Kern	666,000	216%
5. San Joaquin	569,000	213%
6. Merced	211,000	209%
7. Riverside	1,559,000	204%
8. Placer	252,000	198%
9. Tulare	370,000	178%
10. Mono	13,000	177%

BY NUMERICAL INCREASE

County	Population in 2000	Projected increase by 2050
1. Los Angeles	9,579,000	3,483,000
2. Riverside	1,559,000	3,172,000
3. San Bernardino	1,722,000	1,940,000
4. San Diego	2,836,000	1,672,000
5. Kern	666,000	1,441,000
6. San Joaquin	569,000	1,215,000
7. Fresno	805,000	1,124,000
8. Orange	2,864,000	1,124,000
9. Sacramento	1,234,000	943,000
10. Santa Clara	1,693,000	932,000

Note: 2000 population figures are estimated. All figures are rounded.
 Source: California Department of Finance

Sacramento Bee/Nathaniel Levine