
Foreword

How is California's child population changing, and what are the implications of those changes for policymakers? Those were the questions that prompted the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health to commission this demographic analysis by USC Professor Dowell Myers.

One of his more startling findings is that in 1970 children made up 33 percent of California's population, but by 2030 that figure is expected to decline to just 21 percent. As the report indicates, the economic and social impact of such a change will be significant for all Californians. Of particular note is the upcoming major shift in the ratio of seniors to working age adults, with far fewer children available to fill adult roles as employees, citizens and consumers.

The dearth of children is due to declining birth rates, but also to decreasing migration to California from other states and countries, with the result that most of the children who will compose the next generation of adults will be born and raised in the state.

The social and economic well being of California's future residents therefore will depend on how well we nurture the current generation of children. As children become an increasingly rare and precious resource, the case becomes even more compelling to provide them with best health care and education possible. We also must address the growing rate of child poverty, which is twice as high among children as adults, and the persistent health disparities found among children of different ethnic and racial groups. We need all our children to be healthy and ready to learn so that they may become flourishing and productive adults.

Our hope is that this report will encourage policymakers to recognize the population trends identified in this report and address the issues they raise. Our response will affect the prosperity and the quality of life for Californians of all ages for decades to come.

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