



## Report

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# California's Diminishing Resource: Children

Prepared by



Dowell Myers, PhD

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## Acknowledgments

This report had the challenging mission of summarizing and interpreting the most important trends revealed in the 2010 census and the American Community Survey. By our count we must have reviewed 100 tables of data. Michelle Decker provided impeccable assistance in helping me sort through the possibilities, preparing analytical tables in many variations, and then designing exhibits. Other students associated with the Population Dynamics Research Group in the USC Price School also contributed. I specially thank Hyojung Lee and Susie Choi, as well as Linda Lou, who is now graduated but gladly shared her advice. For the generational projections used to spotlight 2030, I should acknowledge my research partner John Pitkin. Gratitude is owed to the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health for commissioning this project, and particularly to JoAnna Caywood for skillfully shepherding it to completion. I am most thankful for the opportunity to cast a spotlight on the growing importance of children in California, which proved a great satisfaction.

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ABOUT DOWELL MYERS: Dowell Myers is a demographer and professor in the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California, where he directs the Population Dynamics Research Group. Myers is the author of the award-winning 2007 book *Immigrants and Boomers* and numerous studies promoting the intergenerational perspective in planning and policy making.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION: The Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health works in alignment with Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital and the child health programs of Stanford University. The mission of the Foundation is to elevate the priority of children’s health, and to increase the quality and accessibility of children’s health care through leadership and direct investment. The Foundation is a public charity, founded in 1997.

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## Foreword

**H**ow 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.

David Alexander, MD  
*President and CEO*  
*Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health*

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## Abstract

**A**n historic transition is under way in the make-up of California's children. Rarely have changes been so surprising and significant. After decades of growth, the state faces a protracted decline in the number of children, amounting to losses of 187,771 (3.6%) children under age 10 between 2000 and 2010, with another 101,187 (2.0%) loss expected in the present decade. This stems from a falling birth rate that is now below replacement level in California (1.94), declining since 2000 in every major racial/ethnic group. Especially troublesome is that the loss of children coincides with unprecedented growth expected among retirees whom the children will grow up to replace as new workers, taxpayers, voters and in other capacities.

California's children are highly diverse, with the largest group being of Hispanic or Latino origin (51.2%), with non-Hispanic whites the second largest group (27.4%), followed by Asians and Pacific Islanders (10.7%), African Americans (5.6%), and all others (5.1%). California also is in the midst of a homegrown revolution, in which the majority of future young adults will have been born, educated, and raised in this state, unlike in the past, when most were migrants from other states and nations. About 90% of the state's children are native-born Californians. Poverty rates currently are twice as high among children as adults, which can limit children's access to food, housing, health care and education, thus hindering their development and restricting their potential. Given the ever-rising importance of California's children to the state's future, it is more critical than ever that every child have the necessary support and opportunities to become a maximally contributing member of society.

## I. Introduction

California's most valuable asset for a flourishing future is its children. After decades of burgeoning population and economic growth, however, the state now faces a very different prospect. This report provides a summary of California's demographics based on the most recent census, and finds that dramatic changes are under way among California's children. Growth trends have shifted and children's life circumstances have been altered in significant ways.

The most salient finding is that children have been declining in number, concentrating initially under age 10 but now spreading to all those under age 18. This is a sharp reversal from past trends when births were growing.<sup>1</sup> The projected decline in children becomes even more significant when viewed in relation to the growing number of retirees these children will be expected to replace as employees, taxpayers, voters, and home buyers. The relative scarcity of children highlights their crucial future value. The growing scarcity also underscores the need to invest more heavily in their care, health, and education, not only to support their personal success, but also to ensure the future of California.

**By 2015, each newborn child will carry fully twice the weight of social and economic responsibility as a child born in 1985.**

All children, of course, have intrinsic personal value, which should be recognized and nurtured, regardless of the generation to which they belong. This report concentrates on the growing social and economic importance of today's children from the viewpoint of changing demographics.

This statistical report draws on the 2010 census and a companion survey from the Census Bureau, the 2010 American Community Survey. Additional data come from recent forecasts by the State of California Department of Finance and the University of Southern California. The report describes the characteristics of California's children, including their population size, racial/ethnic diversity, foreign-born status, languages spoken, family structure, poverty, and receipt of public assistance. Policies and programs to advance the well-being and development of children must be guided by these factors.

1. From 1973 to 1990, annual births in California increased by 105.4%, rising from 297,834 to 611,666, the all-time high. After 1990, births steadily declined each year, falling to 502,023 by 2011, a number 17.9% lower than the peak year. (Source: California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit, [www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/births/](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/births/))

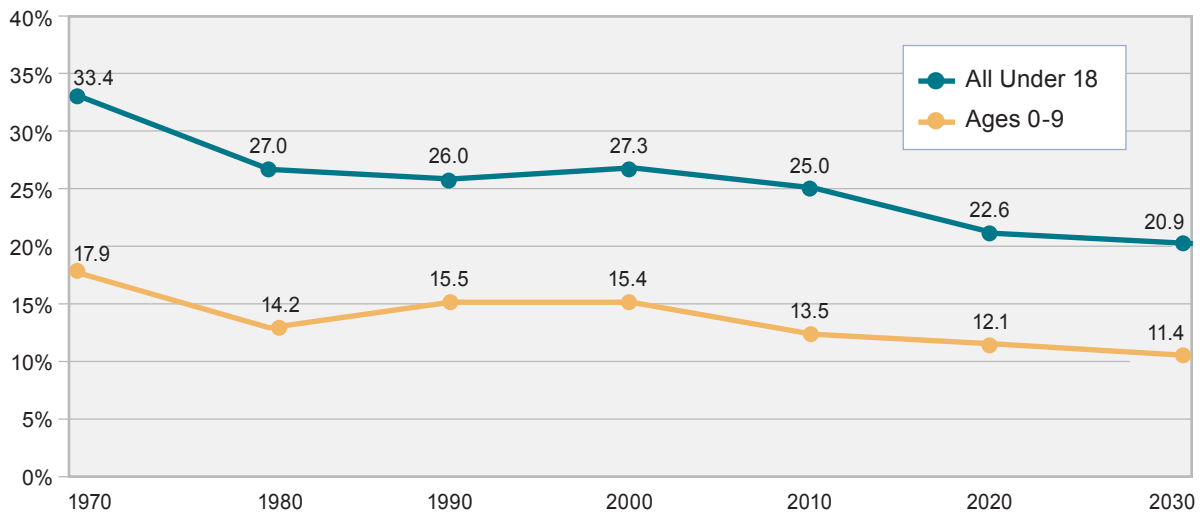
## II. Trends in the Number of Children

The most basic facts about children concern their expected decline in number over time. Rarely have changes been so surprising and the results so significant.

### A. Declining Numbers of Children

In 2010, a total of 9,295,040 children under the age of 18 resided in California. Growth has slowed sharply, and the age group under 10 fell 187,771 (3.6%) below the level recorded in 2000. The percentage of the state's population that comprises children has been declining markedly since at least 1970 and is projected to continue falling in coming decades (Exhibit 1). At the end of the Baby Boom era, in 1970, 33.4% of the state's population was made up of children. After dropping, that share rose briefly in the 1990s, as the Baby Boomers were having their own children and also because of rapid migration of young families to California in the 1980s. However, by 2010, the percentage of children had resumed its decline. By 2030, children are expected to comprise only 20.9% of the state's population.

**Exhibit 1: Declining Percentage of Children within the California Population**



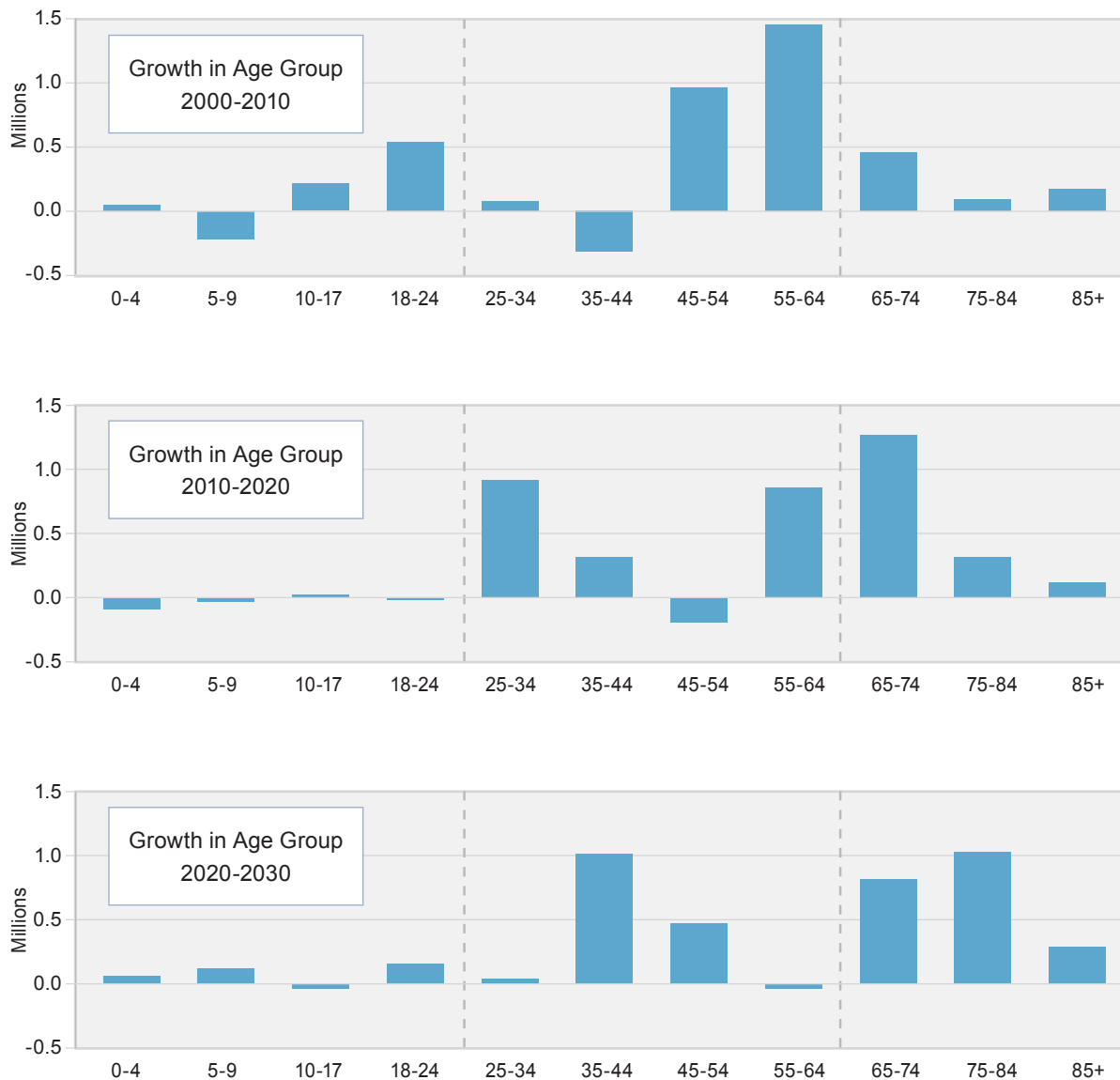
Source: Census Bureau; Pitkin-Myers CA 2012 Generational Projections

The reduced number of children in the state's population is best illustrated by looking at the growth of different age groups. Exhibit 2 provides a comparison of growth in the last decade and the projected growth for the next two. This figure highlights the dominance of the Baby Boom generation, which last decade produced an increase of more than two million people in the age

range between 45 and 64. In the current decade, that bulge of growth begins to move beyond age 65. Meanwhile, very little growth is observed in any age groups under 25, with actual shrinkage observed among the state’s younger children. Even in the 2020s, the projected growth of children remains slight while the ranks of the elderly expand by more than two million.

The giant Baby Boom generation has required greatly expanded public services throughout its entire life course. Beginning with the post-war burgeoning demand for maternity wards and elementary schools, the wave of Boomers worked its way into high school and then flooded college campuses, later swamping the housing market and driving up prices, initially in so-called “starter

**Exhibit 2: Growth by Age Group in California: 2000s, 2010s, and 2020s**



Source: Census Bureau; Pitkin-Myers CA 2012 Generational Projections



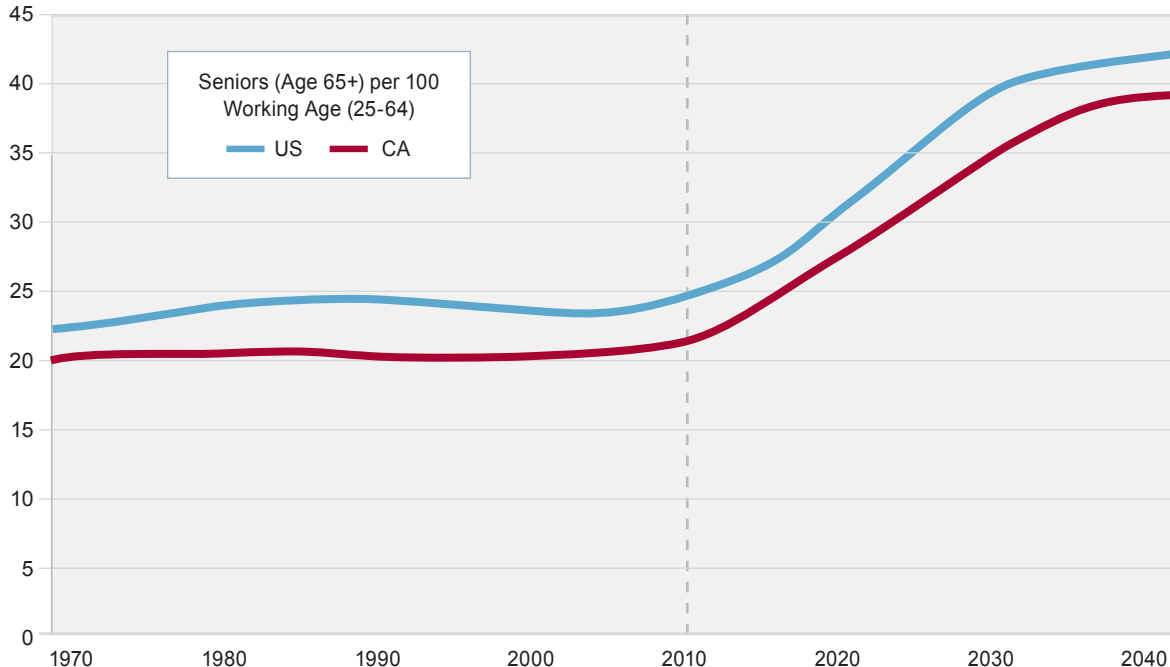
homes,” and then in larger homes for families with teenage children. Now these Boomers are on the threshold of retirement, placing massive pressure on institutions and programs for an aging population. The children of today will be called upon to finance these demands and to carry out many roles of middle-aged adults vacated by the Boomers.

## B. Rising Value of Children as Numbers Decline

It becomes apparent, then, that children will be even more important because of the growing ratio of Baby Boomers of retirement age to the size of the current and future workforce.

Born between 1946 and 1964, the first Boomers reached 65 in 2011. Consider the growing ratio between the number of elderly (ages 65 and older) and prime working age adults (ages 25 to 64). As this senior ratio grows larger, the activities and needs of the elderly will become more dominant in society and generate ever-greater demands on public programs and resources. These senior services require an increasing per capita contribution from each person in the prime working ages.<sup>2</sup> Thus, between 2010 and 2040 the senior ratio will rise dramatically, according to every forecast (Exhibit 3). After remaining constant since 1970 at 20 or 21 seniors per 100 working age adults, the ratio leaps in California to 28 in 2020, and then to 36 a decade later.<sup>3</sup> This amounts to a two-thirds increase in the economic weight that must be supported by each working age adult. These future, supporting adults are today's children.

**Exhibit 3: The Senior Ratio Take-Off Post 2010 in California and U.S.**



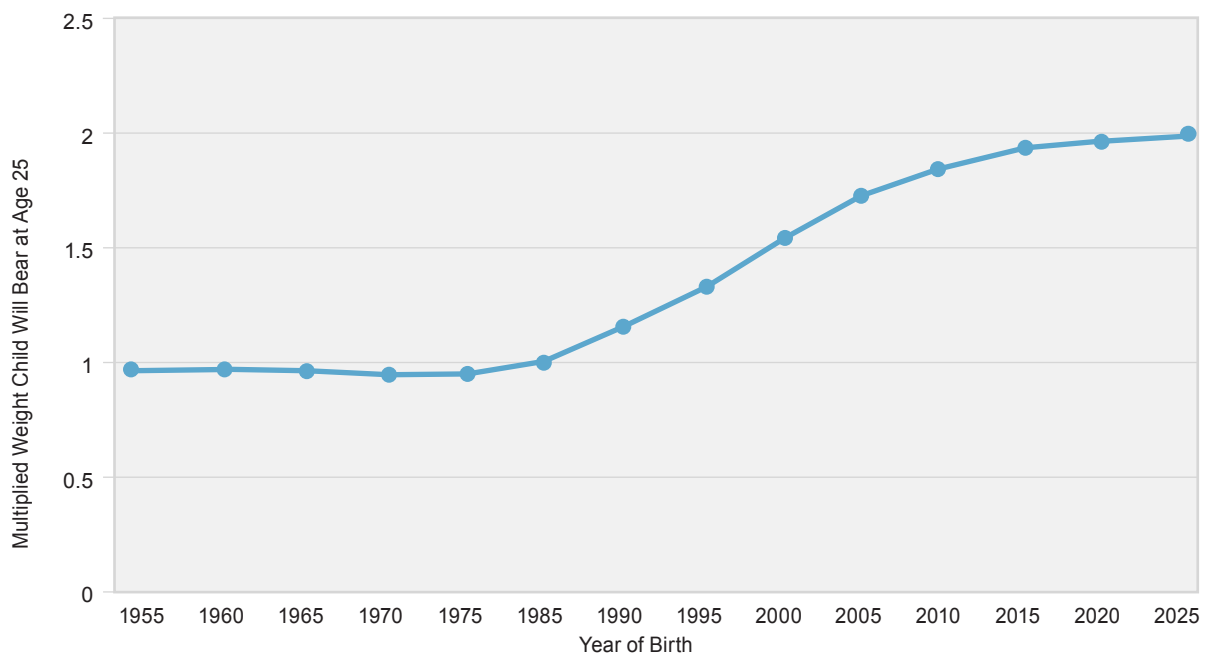
Source: Census Bureau; age projections issued May 2012 by the California Department of Finance

2. As one example of the growing weight to be borne by each working age person, the Social Security Administration projects that payroll taxes (based on the “per-worker cost rate”) will need to increase from 10.4% in 2000 to 16.7% in 2030 (Board of Trustees Annual Report 2011).

3. These ratios are calculated from projections prepared by the Demographic Research Unit, California Department of Finance, May 2012. Very similar ratios are produced by the Pitkin-Myers 2012 California Generational Projections.

The growing senior ratio suggests how much more important each child is becoming because of their financial contributions to be relied upon after they reach adulthood. To quantify the growing relative importance of children, the following graph shows an index that compares the economic weight expected to be carried by children born in different years. The index is assigned to children at their time of birth, based on the expected future senior ratio indicating the economic and social weight to be carried when the children reach age 25. For example, a child born in 1985 (and hence arriving at age 25 in 2010) enters his or her major adult years when the senior ratio is 21.5. This has been the “norm,” and so it is given the value of 1.0 (see Exhibit 4). For a child born in 1995 and expected to reach age 25 in 2020, the relative importance increases to 1.33 and, for a child born in 2010, the relative importance grows to 1.86, judged today by future economic burden. In this way, the rising index of children’s relative importance helps measure the growing value of children to society.

**Exhibit 4: Index of Children’s Rising Social and Economic Importance for California, Based on Expected Adult Roles 25 Years Ahead**



Source: Constructed by the author from raw data of the Census Bureau and age projections (May 2012) by the California Department of Finance

### C. Summary

Children are not only less numerous than they once were, but the retirement of the Baby Boomers highlights the growing importance of children as critical replacements required by the economy and in so many social roles.<sup>4</sup> Businesses will require skilled workers to replace their many older workers who will be retiring, and the growing ranks of older home sellers will require proportionally more home buyers, most of whom will be drawn from younger ranks.

These far-reaching changes are not yet broadly recognized. It will behoove state policymakers to take these population shifts into account as they develop programs and policies that serve the public.

4. A compelling summary is presented in Stephen Levy, “Workforce Challenges and Generational Connections.” Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, Palo Alto, California, 2012 ([www.ccsce.com/PDF/Issues-Nov2012-Workforce.pdf](http://www.ccsce.com/PDF/Issues-Nov2012-Workforce.pdf)).

### III. Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Children

Who are these children on whom society will rely so heavily? This section reviews details collected in the 2010 census, and summarizes the racial/ethnic diversity and broad changes that have occurred since 1990 and are anticipated in California by 2030. This diversity is accompanied by declining birth rates in all groups, and so all are contributing to the reduced growth in the child population.

#### A. Rich Diversity Among Children

Racial and ethnic diversity is well established among California's children, foreshadowing what is expected for the nation as a whole in coming decades.<sup>5</sup> A 2010 detailed profile for the population of California and children under age 18 is provided in the Appendix.

Latinos constitute a slight majority of all children under age 18 (51.2%), a higher percentage than of the entire population (37.6%). However, in the case of Asians, fertility is lower, and migration of adults relatively high, so that a *smaller* share of children are of Asian descent than is found among the total population (10.4% versus 12.8%). Among African Americans and American Indians/Alaska Natives, the children's percentage is about equal to the total population percentage.

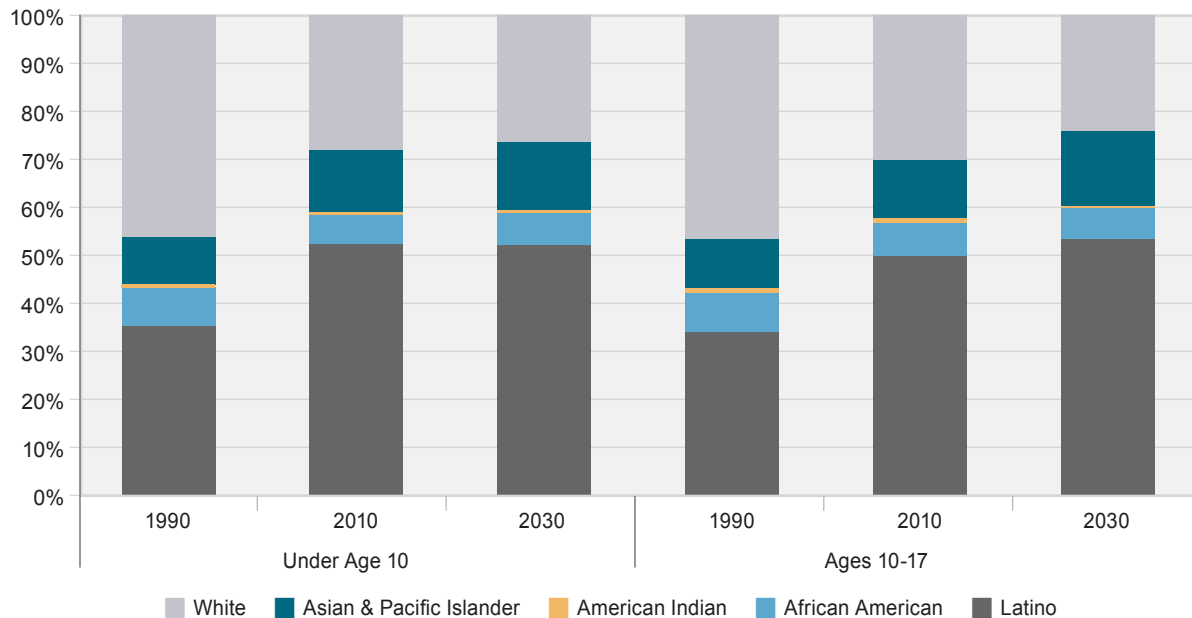
Latino children in California derive from many different specific ancestries, as detailed in the Appendix. The largest group by far is of Mexican heritage (43.1%). Central Americans account for another 3.3% of children, with the largest group being of Salvadoran descent (1.7%), followed by Guatemalan (1.0%). Another 0.7% are of South American heritage (Peruvian, Colombian, or other nationalities).

All Pacific Islander origins combined amount to 0.3% of California children, and another 10.4% of all children are of Asian descent. Among the Asians, the largest subgroups are Filipino (2.6% of children) and Chinese (2.2%), with another 0.2% specifically Taiwanese. After Chinese, the next largest group consists of Asian Indians (1.5%), followed by Vietnamese (1.5%) and Korean (0.9%). As shown in the Appendix, many other heritages also are represented among children living in California.

5. Census Bureau, "2012 National Population Projections," issued December 12, 2012, available at: [www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2012.html](http://www.census.gov/population/projections/data/national/2012.html). In the 2010 census, racial identification and Latino/Hispanic heritage is self-designated by each respondent or by household representatives reporting on behalf of their family members. The 2010 census form collected information on five broad racial groupings: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. A separate question asked people to report their Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin, offering categories for Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban, and providing write-in space for other Hispanic origins. Similarly, additional categories and write-in space were provided for the racial subgroupings. For a national overview of racial and Hispanic identification in the census, see Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez (2011), "Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010," U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>.

Exhibit 5 shows the broad changes in racial and ethnic heritage of children over time, from 1990 to 2030. Among both teenagers and children under age 10, the Latino percentage has grown steadily while the non-Hispanic white portion has declined. As shown, changes are roughly similar among both younger and older children. By 2030, the Latino share will have increased to 52.5% among children under age 10 and 53.4% among ages 10 to 17. Racial and ethnic change is anticipated to be slower in the next 20 years because of greatly decreased migration of Latinos, and falling birth rates for all groups.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the Asian and Pacific Islander share is projected to moderately increase by 2030, reaching 15.0% of the young children and 16.0% of the older children.

**Exhibit 5: Broad Changes in Racial and Ethnic Make-up of California Children, Ages 0-9 and 10-17 in 1990, 2010, and 2030**



Source: Census Bureau; Pitkin-Myers CA 2012 Generational Projections

## B. Declining Birth Rates Among All Groups

Differences in birth rates are one factor explaining why some groups contribute more to the growth in the number of children than others. However, fertility is declining in all groups and the remaining differences between groups are relatively modest. Birth rates have trended down since a peak around 1990, when the largest number of births ever recorded in California occurred. Even though the state's overall population has grown by about 25% since 1990, births have failed to increase.

Migration from outside California also has declined, making births a larger share of total growth, and causing overall growth to be a third to a half lower in decades since 1990.<sup>7</sup> Part of the explanation for lagging births is that relatively fewer women are of childbearing age, now that the Baby Boomers have grown older, and because the state is attracting fewer migrants. Nonetheless, even

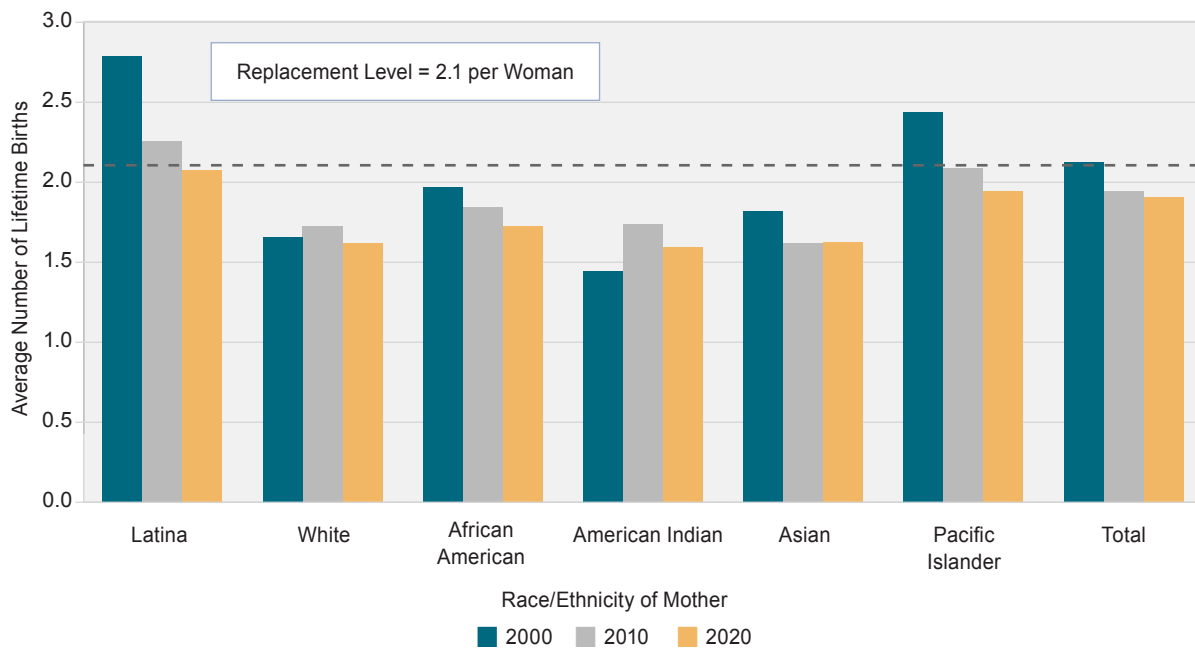
6. For details about population projections to 2030, see John Pitkin and Dowell Myers (2012), "Generational Projections of the California Population By Nativity and Year of Immigrant Arrival," Special Report, Population Dynamics Research Group, USC Price School of Public Policy.

7. Pitkin and Myers, op.cit., Exhibit 2.1. [http://www.usc.edu/schools/price/research/popdynamics/futures/2012\\_Pitkin-Myers\\_CA-Pop-Projections.pdf](http://www.usc.edu/schools/price/research/popdynamics/futures/2012_Pitkin-Myers_CA-Pop-Projections.pdf).

for those women who are of childbearing age, average birth rates have simply declined. Among all California women, expected lifetime births (known as the “total fertility rate” or TFR) have decreased from 2.14 babies in 2000 to 1.94 in 2010, with a further decline projected to 1.89 in 2020 (Exhibit 6).<sup>8</sup>

Demographers generally assume that 2.1 babies per woman constitutes the steady level of fertility needed to maintain a given population size over the long term. California has now slipped below that replacement level. The decline in the birth rate between 2000 and 2010 of 0.2 babies per woman of childbearing years equates to roughly 1 million fewer children between ages of 0 and 9. Had the birthrate not declined, there could have been 20% more children under age 10 resident in 2010 than were actually recorded by the census in California.<sup>9</sup> The recession played some role in causing the number of births to dip after 2007, but the lifetime expected births had already been declining, and even lower levels are expected in the future.

**Exhibit 6: Average Lifetime Births for California Women of Childbearing Age, By Race/Ethnicity**



Source: Historical births and birth projections by the California Department of Finance

The lowest birth rates in 2010 are among Californians of Asian descent and among the small number of women who declare themselves of multiple racial origins. In fact, every racial and ethnic group except one has a birth rate below the replacement level (2.1 babies per woman, as noted). The one exception is among Latinas/Hispanics, and their birth rate (2.27) in 2010 is only slightly above replacement level.

8. October 2011 projections by the Demographic Research Unit, California Department of Finance; [www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/births/](http://www.dof.ca.gov/research/demographic/reports/projections/births/).

9. Advice and assistance by Walter Schwarm with these calculations is appreciated.

Even with this higher than average rate, the state's overall birth rate is still below replacement (1.94). It bears notice that without the contributions of Latinas, California's birth rate would be even lower—1.68.<sup>10</sup> However, Latina birth rates are experiencing the steepest declines of any group and are expected to fall to the replacement level in 2020. At that time, the state's total birth rate is expected to be depressed to 1.89, even further below replacement than today's rate.

### C. Summary

California's children have a diverse racial and ethnic heritage. While Latinos make up just over half (51.2%) of children under age 18, that is due less to the fact that the birth rates of Latinas are high than to the fact that the birth rates of other groups are so low (and that the number of women in childbearing ages also is lower in other groups).

Birth rates are falling for mothers in all racial/ethnic groups, which contributes to the declining number of children in the state. Only Latinas are having babies in numbers that approach replacement levels. Without their contribution, the California birth rate would be depressed far below replacement levels and the shortage of children would grow even more severe.

**Birth rates are falling for mothers in all racial/ethnic groups, which contributes to the declining number of children in the state.**

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10. The hypothetical calculation of California birth rates in the absence of Latina births is based on data provided in the birth data and projections issued by the California Department of Finance in October 2011.

## IV. Birthplace Origins of Children

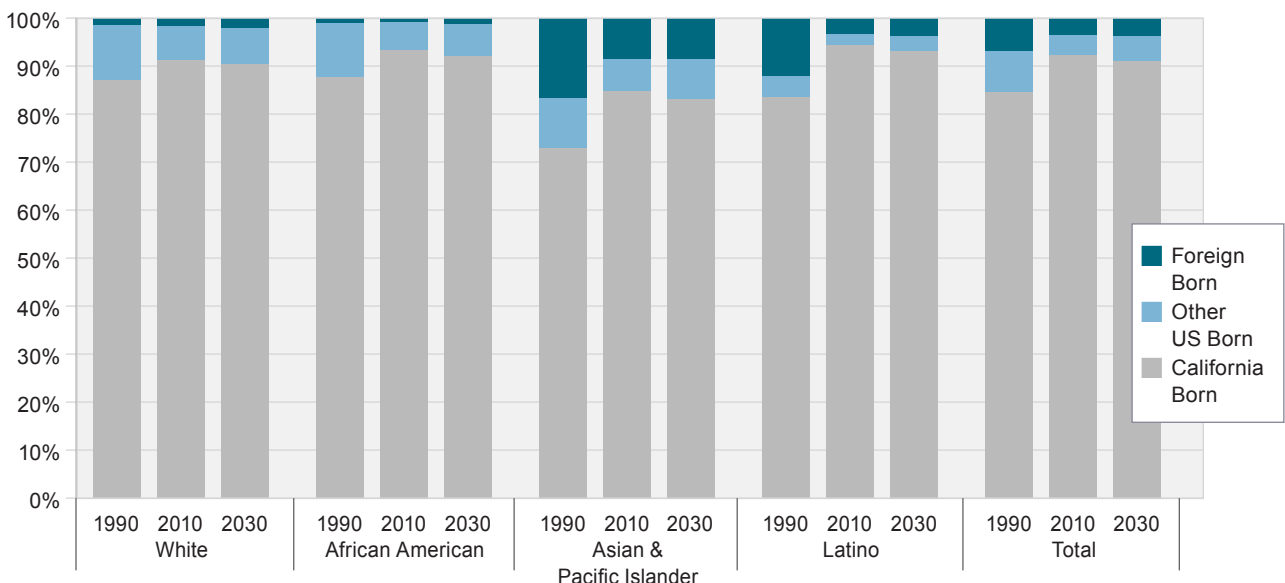
Almost all California children are born and raised in the state, unlike in past decades when many migrated from other states or nations. As these children grow into adulthood, they are beginning to remake the state. The historic transition to a “homegrown” majority is so recent, first reported in 2009,<sup>11</sup> that its significance is not yet appreciated.

### A. Born in State

Place of birth—whether a person was born in his or her current state of residence, somewhere else in the U.S., or in a foreign country—is one of the few precise indicators about every individual that is useful in population comparison of different decades. The vast majority of children under age 10 living in California in 2010 were born in the state, including more than 90% of whites (91.3%), African Americans (93.5%), and Latinos (94.5%), and 85.2% of Asians and Pacific Islanders.

This in-state-born share of children has increased since 1990, rising most for Asians/Pacific Islanders and Latinos, as shown in Exhibit 7. Of the children born outside California, very few among whites and African Americans were foreign-born. However, among Asian/Pacific Islander and Latino children, small percentages were born in other countries: 8.4% of all Asians/Pacific Islanders and 3.3% of Latinos in 2010. On the whole, even though many of their parents are foreign-born (see below), the great majority of children in California were born in the state.

**Exhibit 7: Place of Birth By Race/Ethnicity in California, Ages 0-9, 1990, 2010 and 2030**



Source: Census Bureau; Pitkin-Myers CA 2012 Generational Projections

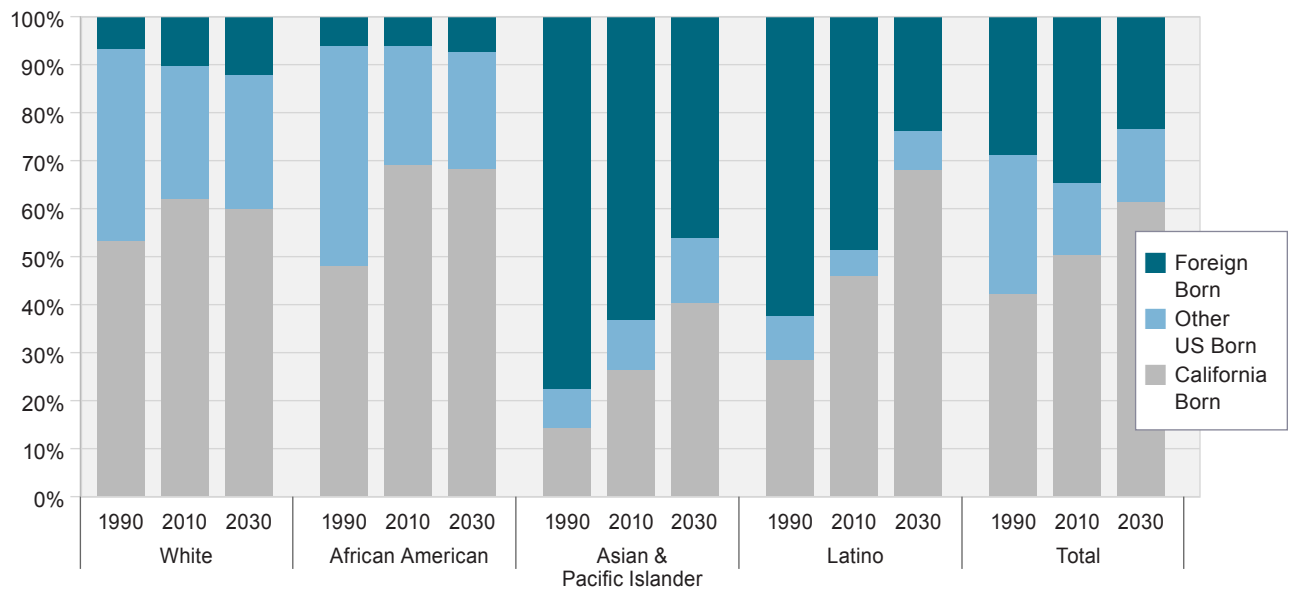
11. Dowell Myers, John Pitkin, and Ricardo Ramirez. (2009). “The New Homegrown Majority in California: Recognizing the New Reality of Growing Commitment to the Golden State,” Special Report, Population Dynamics Research Group, USC Price School of Public Policy.

## B. The “Homegrown Revolution”

Already in 2010, 53.8% of the total California population was California-born, a number that is heavily weighted by the homegrown children. Twenty years from now, young adults in California will look quite different from young adults today. The rising share of children who are born and raised in California, and the reduced migration into the state means that, in the future, most young adults will be native Californians. Ever since the Gold Rush, the majority of Californians have been born elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> The great majority of labor needs were provided by this migration from outside California, people who arrived from Texas, Iowa, and other states, or who moved from Mexico, the Philippines, or other nations. Only a portion of the adult workers and contributors in the state in earlier decades came from the grown children of California; that is no longer the case.

This old pattern of reliance on outsiders has changed since 1990. An increasing share of all young adults now are native Californians, growing to a majority first among whites and African Americans, and then among Latinos (Exhibit 8). By 2010, 50.6% of all adults ages 25-34 were native Californians, projected to increase to 61.5% by 2030.

**Exhibit 8: Place of Birth By Race/Ethnicity in California, Ages 25-34 in 1990, 2010 and 2030**



Source: Census Bureau; Pitkin-Myers CA 2012 Generational Projections

## C. Summary

The historic transition to a homegrown majority is so recent that its significance has yet to be recognized. Increasingly, the skills and human capital needed to maintain and increase the California economy must be home grown. With the state becoming more dependent on its own children, their nurturing, care and education becomes more than a moral imperative: It becomes essential to the future of the state.

12. See the discussion in Myers et al. (2009). “The New Homegrown Majority in California: Recognizing the New Reality of Growing Commitment to the Golden State,” Special Report, Population Dynamics Research Group, USC Price School of Public Policy..



## V. Family Characteristics Influencing Children

Living conditions in which children grow up have substantial influence on their well-being and strongly influence their preparation for success in school and the workforce later in life.<sup>13</sup> This section describes key trends related to family structure, children in immigrant families, and primary languages spoken in California.

### A. Living Arrangements: Parents, Other Relatives, or Nonrelatives

Virtually all children ages 0 to 17 in the April 2010 census were living in households, i.e., in housing units occupied by families or unrelated individuals (Exhibit 9). Fully 97.5% of children were living in a household headed by a parent or relative, with 84.3% living in a household headed by their own parent. Of the other relatives heading a child's household, the most common was a grandparent, sheltering 8.9% of all children in 2010, up from 6.8% in 2000 (Exhibit 9). The child's mother or father also may be living in this extended family, but for 3.2% of all children, the grandparent is the sole caregiver.<sup>14</sup>

At birth, 64.3% of California babies in 2005 had mothers who were currently married. This fraction has been declining and most recently (2009) was 59.4%.<sup>15</sup> In 2010, nearly two-thirds of all children under 18 (61.4%) were living in households headed by married husband-wife couples, while 16.4% were living in households headed by a single mother. The share living with single fathers is small (6.5%) but noteworthy for the fact it has grown since 2000. In a separate survey, the Census Bureau provides data on unmarried partners in households with children. In 2010, 8.1% of children were living in families headed by their mother or father, or another relative, who was living with an unmarried partner. More of these children were living in families headed by women (4.4%) than men (3.7%).<sup>16</sup>

The quality of the parent-child relationship is among the most important factors in raising well-adjusted children.<sup>17</sup> Family structure also can affect children, particularly in terms of socioeconomic status. For example, single-parent families are more likely than two-parent families to have

13. The adult gains achieved from nurturing children when they are young are coming to be well-recognized. For example, see Michael E. Lamb. 2012. Mothers, fathers, families, and circumstances: Factors affecting children's adjustment. *Applied Developmental Science* 16(2): 98-111. Also, the Nobel prize-winning economist James Heckman has proposed a formulation for maximizing the economics of human potential, stressing the great gains to be made from nurturing children under age 5 ([www.heckmanequation.org/heckman-equation](http://www.heckmanequation.org/heckman-equation)).

14. Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health. (n.d.). Family Structure. In Kidsdata.org. Retrieved October 29, 2012, from [http://www.kidsdata.org/data/topic/table/grandparent\\_care20.aspx](http://www.kidsdata.org/data/topic/table/grandparent_care20.aspx)

15. Analysis by author of birth data from the California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics.

16. These data on children's residence with householders who have unmarried domestic partners come from the 2010 American Community Survey, California, table B09008.

17. Michael E. Lamb. 2012. Mothers, fathers, families, and circumstances: Factors affecting children's adjustment.

lower incomes and experience financial hardship.<sup>18</sup> Financial hardship can affect families' ability to provide the environment and experiences a child needs for optimal cognitive, emotional, and physical development.

In addition, a substantial body of research indicates that the gender of the family head, or the presence of same sex partners, poses neither detriment nor advantage for the well-being of children.<sup>19</sup>

### Exhibit 9: Living Arrangements and Family Type for Children Under 18 in California

	2000	Percent	2010	Percent
Total Child Population	9,249,829	100%	9,295,040	100%
Children in Households	9,203,641	99.5%	9,263,709	99.7%
Teens Who Are Head of Household or Spouse	7,240	0.1%	3,801	0.0%
Living with a Parent or Relative	8,988,779	97.2%	9,060,493	97.5%
With Own Parent as Head of Household	8,035,222	86.9%	7,839,242	84.3%
In Husband-Wife Family	6,021,830	65.1%	5,709,616	61.4%
In Other Family	2,013,392	21.8%	2,129,626	22.9%
Father (Without Wife) Is Household Head <sup>(a)</sup>	497,065	5.4%	607,347	6.5%
Mother (Without Husband) Is Household Head <sup>(a)</sup>	1,516,327	16.4%	1,522,279	16.4%
With Other Relatives as Head of Household	953,557	10.3%	1,221,251	13.1%
Grandparents	625,934	6.8%	826,037	8.9%
Other Relatives	327,623	3.5%	395,214	4.3%
Living with Nonrelatives Only	207,622	2.2%	199,415	2.1%
Children Living in Group Quarters <sup>(b)</sup>	46,188	0.5%	31,331	0.3%
Institutionalized Population	17,554	0.2%	16,812	0.2%
Non-Institutionalized Population	28,634	0.3%	14,519	0.2%

Source: Census 2000 (SF1:P28), Census 2010 (SF1:P31)

Notes: (a) An unmarried household head may or may not have an unmarried partner. (b) Group Quarters: Includes all children not living in households. This term includes those people residing in group quarters as of the date on which a particular survey was conducted. Two general categories of people in group quarters are recognized: 1) the institutionalized population, which includes people under formally authorized, supervised care or custody in institutions at the time of enumeration (such as juvenile institutions); and 2) the non-institutionalized population, which includes people who live in group quarters other than institutions (such as college dormitories, military quarters, and group homes).

18. Z. Redd, et al. (2011). "Two generations in poverty: Status and trends among parents and children in the United States, 2000-2010." Child Trends Research Brief No. 2011-25.

19. T. J. Biblarz & J. Stacey. (2010). How does the gender of parents matter? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, 3-22; M. E. Lamb. (2012). Mothers, fathers, families, and circumstances: Factors affecting children's adjustment. *Applied Developmental Science*, 16(2), 98-111.

## B. Nativity of Parents

As noted, very few children living in California are foreign born—5.9% of all those under age 18, and only 1.9% of those under age 6 in 2010 (Exhibit 10). At the same time, half of all California children (50.1%) have one or more immigrant parents. That means that a very large share of children are living in mixed nativity households, potentially with mixed citizenship. In 2010, 44.4% of California's children were U.S.-born with at least one foreign-born parent, while 49.7% were native-born with native-born parents.

**Exhibit 10: Nativity of Children and Parents in California, 2010**

	Ages 0 to 5	Ages 6 to 17	All Under 18
Children Who Are Foreign Born	1.9%	7.9%	5.9%
Children with at least One Foreign-Born Parent	47.7%	51.2%	50.1%
U.S. Born Children with a Foreign-Born Parent	46.0%	43.6%	44.4%

Source: ACS 2010 (C05009)

## C. Linguistic Diversity

Given the large number of California parents who are foreign born (4.4 million, rearing almost half of all children in the state), many children (45.7% among ages 5-17) are growing up in households where English is not the primary language. These children are on the path to acquiring bilingual skills that will prove a lasting advantage; however, the lack of familiarity with English among their parents may present difficulties in daily life while the children are young.

Fully 35.8% of California children ages 5 to 17 are being raised in families where Spanish is the primary language at home, according to 2010 data. No other single language at home is prevalent for more than 3.0% of children, suggesting that special effort should be made to direct communications to parents in both Spanish and English. Overall, 11.6% of all California's school-age children are growing up in homes termed "linguistically isolated," meaning that no one in the household age 14 or older is conversant in English (Exhibit 11). This isolation is as high as 25.0% among children in homes with Spanish as a primary language. Linguistically isolated parents may have more difficulty in a number of areas, such as helping with children's homework or interacting with health care providers.

Overall, an additional 10.0% of children are being raised in homes with primary languages other than English or Spanish, especially one of the languages spoken in Asia. As detailed in Exhibit 11, the most frequent of these home languages is any of the Chinese dialects (1.9%), followed by Vietnamese (1.2%), Tagalog (0.9%), and Korean (0.7%). Approximately one-quarter of children in Asian households also are linguistically isolated, but that ranges from a high of 36.5% in households that primarily speak Vietnamese to a low of 10.7% among those that primarily speak Tagalog.

**Exhibit 11: Primary Home Language and Linguistic Isolation Among California Children Ages 5-17, 2010**

	Percent of Children	Percent of Children in Households with Each Home Language that Are:		
	Primary Language Spoken at Home <sup>(a)</sup>	Linguistically Isolated <sup>(b)</sup>	Not Isolated	All Children Ages 5-17
English	54.3%	0%	100%	100%
Spanish	35.8%	25.0%	75.0%	100%
Other Indo-European	3.0%	13.3%	86.7%	100%
Chinese	1.9%	27.9%	72.1%	100%
Vietnamese	1.2%	36.5%	63.5%	100%
Tagalog	0.9%	10.7%	89.3%	100%
Korean	0.7%	29.7%	70.3%	100%
Others	2.2%	6.3%	93.7%	100%
Total Children Ages 5-17	6,783,796	11.6%	88.4%	100%

Source: ACS 2010 PUMS

Notes: (a) Language skills are recorded only among people ages 5 and older. (b) "Linguistically Isolated" is defined as no one at home age 14 or older who speaks English "very well."

## D. Summary

The children of California are being raised in wide-ranging family types and conditions, which can influence their health and well-being. While nearly two-thirds live in households headed by married couples, that percentage has decreased in recent decades. Fully 88% of the state's children under age 18 are native Californians, though about half have immigrant parents. Nearly half of children also are being raised in households where English is not the primary language. Many of these children are developing bilingual skills that will prove valuable in their future lives, but in the short term they may require tailored social, health, and educational services.

## VI. Greater Poverty Among Children

As noted, economic disadvantage can have profound effects on the development of children and can limit their eventual contributions as adults. According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, “low family income can impede children’s cognitive development and their ability to learn. It can contribute to behavioral, social, and emotional problems...and it can cause and exacerbate poor child health.”<sup>20</sup> Inadequate nutrition, unhealthy behaviors, and problems accessing health care can disrupt schooling and directly undermine future life outcomes.

### A. Poverty Highest Among the Young

The percentage of California children living below the federal poverty level has increased in recent years.<sup>21</sup> While there is wide agreement about the negative consequences of poverty, the definition of poverty proves more problematic. The federal government has developed a method of calculating the income level (or poverty line) below which families and their individual members are said to be living in poverty.

In 2010, a family of four was assumed to need an annual income of \$22,314 in order to stay above the federal threshold for poverty.<sup>22</sup> That income threshold is applied equally across the country, regardless of differences in cost of living. However, living costs in California are substantially higher than in other states, most prominently in regard to housing. For example, the median gross rent recorded in California in 2010 was \$1,162 per month, while that in the nation as a whole was only \$855.<sup>23</sup> Thus the rent level, which is a major part of living expenses for lower income families, was 1.36 times higher in California than the average for the nation.

Using the housing cost ratio as a proxy for the overall higher cost of living in California, a better threshold of poverty in California would be an income level that is 1.36 times higher than the national average (\$30,347). If this higher income threshold were applied, more people would be counted as “poor” in California than officially measured by the federal poverty level. In fact, even in regard to the national threshold, poverty experts often regard the effective threshold for escaping the effects of income deprivation to be two times higher than the official federal poverty line.<sup>24</sup>

20. Nancy K. Cauthen and Sarah Fass. (Dec. 2009). “10 Important Questions: Child Poverty and Family Economic Hardship,” National Center for Children in Poverty.

21. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, as cited on [www.kidsdata.org](http://www.kidsdata.org). <http://www.kidsdata.org/data/topic/trend/income-level250.aspx?loc=2>. Retrieved Dec. 6, 2012

22. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. [http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032011/pov/new35\\_000.htm](http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/cpstables/032011/pov/new35_000.htm)

23. U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, 1-Year estimates, Table B25064.

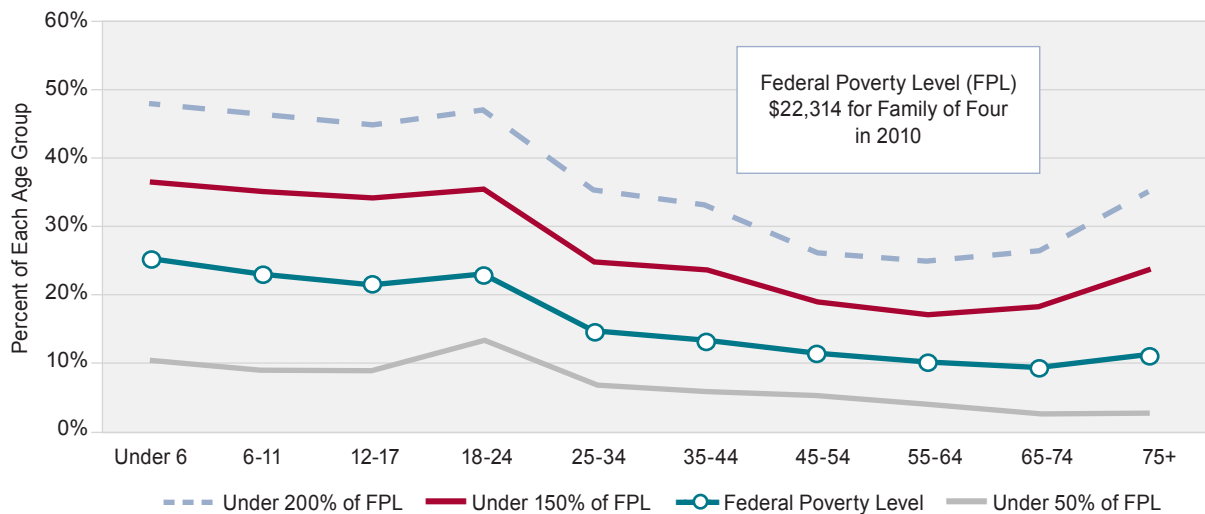
24. Zakia Redd, Tahilin Sanchez Karver, David Murphey, Kristin Anderson Moore, and Dylan Knewstub. (Nov. 2011). “Two Generations in Poverty: Status and Trends among Parents and Children in the United States, 2000-2010,” Child Trends Research Brief.

Regardless of the exact definition used, poverty rates for children are much higher than for adults in California, and poverty exerts its greatest negative impact during childhood. Exhibit 12 shows the percentage of each age group living in households below the official federal poverty level (FPL), as well as the percentages below alternate levels:

- 50% of FPL, representing a severe poverty condition
- 150% of FPL
- 200% of FPL, which could be considered “near poverty”

The higher poverty threshold of twice the federal level often is recommended for measuring how many people experience income deprivation (Redd et al. 2011). Regardless, under every standard, poverty is roughly twice as frequent among children as for adults (Exhibit 12).<sup>25</sup>

**Exhibit 12: California Poverty Rate, 2010: Percent of Age Groups Below Alternative Income Thresholds for Defining Poverty**



Source: ACS 2010 (B17024)

## B. Poverty and Public Assistance by Family Type

Childhood poverty is a more common problem in single-parent families, because there are fewer earners contributing income and fewer parents to help with child care. While 16.5% of California’s 3.1 million families with children headed by married couples are living in poverty, fully 45.4% of the 1.1 million female-headed single-parent families with children are in poverty (Exhibit 13). Among the much smaller number (0.2 million) of male-headed single-parent families with children, a very high poverty rate also is encountered (56.6%).<sup>26</sup>

25. Under the official federal definition of poverty thresholds, the exhibit shows that the poverty rate at ages 6 to 11 (21.9%) is nearly double that at ages 45 to 54 (11.3%). Or at the threshold defined as 150% higher, the poverty at ages 6 to 11 (35.1%) also is nearly double that at ages 45 to 54 (19.2%).

26. The definition of poverty used in the American Community Survey table supporting this family analysis is income falling below 130% of the federal poverty level.

The presence of children in households makes poverty much more likely. Consider how much lower the incidence of poverty is in the same family types when children are not present: only 6.5% of married couples, 14.9% of female-headed families, and 12.5% of male-headed families in 2010 (Exhibit 13). Across the board, the likelihood of poverty is only one-third as great if children are absent.

In the case of single parents, the presence of children not only increases income requirements, but also requires more time for parenting and thus could limit the time available for paid employment. This has been part of the rationale for tying eligibility for social programs to family structure.

### Exhibit 13: California Family Households in Poverty, with and without Children Present, 2010

	Families with Children Present		Families with No Children	
	Number	Poverty Rate	Number	Poverty Rate
All Family Households	4,373,149	25.8%	3,954,917	8.3%
Married Couple Family	3,064,002	16.5%	3,018,564	6.5%
Male, No Wife Present	232,635	56.6%	324,201	12.5%
Female, No Husband Present	1,076,512	45.4%	612,152	14.9%

Source: ACS10 (B17022)

Note: Children are under age 18 and living with a parent; Poverty is defined in the source table as less than 130% of the federal poverty line.

Children growing up in immigrant families also have a greater likelihood of living in poverty. This can be seen for children growing up in two-parent or one-parent families. Of California children living with two foreign-born parents in 2010, 22.6% are below the federal poverty level (FPL) and another 32.7% can be termed “near poor” because their family income is less than twice the federal poverty line. In contrast, only 6.3% of children with two native-born parents are in poverty and another 13.0% are near poor (Exhibit 14). Poverty rates for children with one native and one foreign-born parent lie in between (10.5% in poverty and 20.2% near poor). Among children with a single parent, poverty is higher for those with a foreign-born rather than native-born parent (44.2% and 32.8%, respectively). Two-parent families predominate among both foreign-born families (74.2%) and native-born families (65.9%). As noted, the vast majority of these children with immigrant parents are themselves born in California and are U.S. citizens by birth.

**Exhibit 14: California Children Under Age 18 in Poverty, in Relation to Nativity and Number of Parents, 2010**

	Children Residing with Two Parents				Children Residing with One Parent Only		
	Both Parents Native Born	Both Parents Foreign Born	One Native & One Foreign Parent	Total Residing with Two Parents	One Native Born Parent	One Foreign Born Parent	Total Residing with One Parent
Below Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	163,971	545,151	91,577	800,699	590,329	506,206	1,096,535
100%-199% of FPL	341,179	787,923	176,841	1,305,943	471,592	359,212	830,804
200% or More of FPL	2,112,187	1,076,610	606,256	3,795,053	738,513	279,140	1,017,653
Total	2,617,337	2,409,684	874,674	5,901,695	1,800,434	1,144,558	2,944,992
Below Federal Poverty Level (FPL)	6.3%	22.6%	10.5%	13.6%	32.8%	44.2%	37.2%
100%-199% of FPL	13.0%	32.7%	20.2%	22.1%	26.2%	31.4%	28.2%
200% or More of FPL	80.7%	44.7%	69.3%	64.3%	41.0%	24.4%	34.6%

Source: ACS 2010 B05010

Lower-income families with children are eligible for a number of government programs that provide support for families who are struggling to meet their children's basic needs. While each program has its own eligibility requirements, the overall rate of families receiving public assistance is summarized in the 2010 American Community Survey. Nearly one-quarter (23.8%) of all California children in family households are receiving benefits, including food stamps, supplemental security income (SSI), and other public assistance (Exhibit 15). This ranges from a low of 16.3% among children living with married parents to a high of 43.4% of children who live in single-mother families.

**Exhibit 15: California Children Under Age 18 in Households Receiving Food Stamps, SSI or Public Assistance Income by Household Type, 2010**

Living Arrangement	Percent of Children Receiving Assistance
In family households	23.8%
In married-couple families	16.3%
In families headed by males, no wife present	30.2%
In families headed by females, no husband present	43.4%
In non-family households	27.4%

Source: ACS 2010 (B09010)

Note: A non-family household consists of an occupied housing unit where no one is related to the household head.



Major public assistance for children's health care is supplied through the Medi-Cal program. A total of 3,247,675 children under the age of 16 were enrolled at the end of 2010. This amounted to 39.7% of children in this age group statewide. Enrollment rates differ sharply by age (Exhibit 16). Public policies allow nearly two-thirds of children less than a year old to be enrolled in Medi-Cal (61.7%), but this declines to 47.2% of children ages 1 to 5, 36.6% ages 6 to 10, 31.4% of ages 11 to 15, and 25.6% of ages 16 to 20.

**Exhibit 16: California Children and Youth Enrolled in Medi-Cal, by Age Group, 2010**

Age	Total Population	Medi-Cal Enrollment	Percent
All Under 16	8,174,908	3,247,675	39.7%
Under Age 1	494,058	304,682	61.7%
1 - 5	2,542,450	1,199,181	47.2%
6 - 10	2,512,016	919,446	36.6%
11 - 15	2,626,384	824,366	31.4%
Ages 16 - 20	2,850,776	730,504	25.6%

Source: 2010 Census SF-1, State of California, Department of Health Care Services, Population Distribution—Medi-Cal Enrollment, January 2011, Report Date: January 2012.

Note: Age categories for children and youth reflect Medi-Cal classifications

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## VII. Conclusion

This report provides a broad overview of California’s changing child population. One overarching conclusion is clear: California’s children now are more important to the state’s future success than ever before. The evidence is compelling.

Three trends add fresh impetus to the case for nurturing the children of California.

- Foremost, after decades of growth, the child population is diminishing in number, and further decline is anticipated for a decade to come.
- Meanwhile, the retirement-age population is beginning to sharply increase due to the aging of the massive Baby Boom generation that is now crossing age 65.
- With migration greatly reduced to California over the last 20 years, and for the foreseeable future, outsiders are much less likely to come to the rescue. Instead, California is becoming much more dependent on its own children for filling many essential adult roles. Yet an increasing number of children are growing up in poverty, which limits their future potential.

Children always have been important and deserving of our most diligent care, but the stakes have never been higher. The challenge is that the urgency of these issues is not yet recognized among all policymakers or the public at large.

The index of children’s relative societal significance introduced in this report can be used to illustrate this crucial fact: By 2015, each newborn child will carry fully twice the weight of social and economic responsibility as a child born in 1985. Clearly, major contributions will be required of today’s children, but it remains uncertain how this will be achieved.

All of these trends point in one direction: If California is to prosper in the decades to come, every child must have the necessary support and opportunities to become a maximally contributing member of society. As the vital foundation for that success, California’s policies, programs and investments must promote the health and well-being of the state’s most valuable resource—its children.

## Appendix

## California Children and Total Population in 2010, by Specific Racial or Latino Heritage

	Under 18	%	All Ages	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,295,040</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>37,253,956</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Latino/Hispanic	4,756,220	51.2	14,013,719	37.6
Non-Latino/Hispanic	4,538,820	48.8	23,240,237	62.4
White	2,546,395	27.4	14,956,253	40.1
African American/Black	523,525	5.6	2,163,804	5.8
American Indian and Alaska Native	37,230	0.4	162,250	0.4
Asian	965,988	10.4	4,775,070	12.8
Pacific Islander	32,178	0.3	128,577	0.3
Other	26,563	0.3	85,587	0.2
Two or More Races (multirace)	406,941	4.4	968,696	2.6
<b>Total Latino/Hispanic</b>	<b>4,756,220</b>	<b>51.2</b>	<b>14,013,719</b>	<b>37.6</b>
Mexican	4,009,953	43.1	11,423,146	30.7
Puerto Rican	55,928	0.6	189,945	0.5
Cuban	20,494	0.2	88,607	0.2
Dominican	2,907	0.0	11,455	0.0
Central American (excluding Mexican):	303,391	3.3	1,132,520	3.0
Costa Rican	5,498	0.1	22,469	0.1
Guatemalan	89,051	1.0	332,737	0.9
Honduran	21,626	0.2	72,795	0.2
Nicaraguan	23,381	0.3	100,790	0.3
Panamanian	3,935	0.0	17,768	0.0
Salvadoran	157,567	1.7	573,956	1.5
Other Central American	2,333	0.0	12,005	0.0
South American:	69,023	0.7	293,880	0.8
Argentinean	10,527	0.1	44,410	0.1
Bolivian	3,351	0.0	13,351	0.0
Chilean	5,645	0.1	24,006	0.1
Colombian	16,786	0.2	64,416	0.2
Ecuadorian	7,097	0.1	35,750	0.1
Paraguayan	240	0.0	1,228	0.0
Peruvian	21,254	0.2	91,511	0.2
Uruguayan	642	0.0	4,110	0.0
Venezuelan	1,612	0.0	11,100	0.0
Other South American	1,870	0.0	3,998	0.0

**Appendix: California Children and Total Population in 2010, by Specific Racial or Latino Heritage (cont.)**

	Under 18	%	All Ages	%
Other Hispanic or Latino:	294,524	3.2	874,166	2.3
Spaniard	33,768	0.4	142,194	0.4
Spanish	25,067	0.3	98,956	0.3
Spanish American	1,310	0.0	3,603	0.0
All other Hispanic or Latino	234,379	2.5	629,413	1.7
<b>Total Asian (including Hispanic Asian)</b>	<b>973,771</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>4,861,007</b>	<b>13.0</b>
Asian Indian	138,288	1.5	535,287	1.4
Bangladeshi	2,561	0.0	9,693	0.0
Cambodian	22,477	0.2	91,228	0.2
Chinese	208,510	2.2	1,195,013	3.2
Filipino	237,492	2.6	1,214,040	3.3
Hmong	35,904	0.4	87,807	0.2
Indonesian	5,337	0.1	27,030	0.1
Japanese	29,547	0.3	286,527	0.8
Korean	79,876	0.9	458,474	1.2
Laotian	15,652	0.2	61,410	0.2
Malaysian	0	0.0	3,778	0.0
Pakistani	14,463	0.2	48,125	0.1
Sri Lankan	2,446	0.0	10,562	0.0
Taiwanese	15,839	0.2	100,046	0.3
Thai	5,941	0.1	54,319	0.1
Vietnamese	136,211	1.5	601,667	1.6
Other Asian, specified	11,172	0.1	28,324	0.1
Other Asian, not specified	12,054	0.1	47,677	0.1

Note: Numbers in each section of the table sum to more than the total population, because the more detailed Hispanic and Asian origin is derived, in part, from the American Community Survey instead of the Decennial Census, and Latinos may be counted in more than one category.

“Other Asian, specified” includes Bhutanese, Burmese, and Nepalese.

Source: Census 2010 SF-1, P9, P11, PCT5, PCT11; 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Public Use Microdata Sample.