

US white majority to linger if immigration slows

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Whites would lose their majority in the U.S. three years later than expected if immigration growth slows, according to census estimates released Wednesday.

The new numbers show how projections could vary from last year's government prediction that white children will become a minority in 2018 and the overall white [population](#) will become a minority in 2043, based on what happens to the country's economy and [immigration policy](#). [Immigration laws](#) now face their first major overhaul in two decades.

If immigration growth slows, the nation's population would not reach 400 million until after 2060, a decade or more later than forecast, the Census Bureau said.

The U.S. population is projected to climb to 400 million by 2051. Such a date remains the official census projection, based on the assumption that immigration continues to climb.

The 2046 estimate of a white minority is one of three new alternative projections based on rates for births and deaths and a scenario in which immigration follow its recent slower pace of adding more than 700,000 foreigners each year.

The Census Bureau's varying sets of projections show immigration's role in replenishing the population. As in many industrialized nations, the U.S. is slowly aging due to rising [median age](#) and lower birth rates.

Several demographers say the current immigration bill under discussion in the Senate could change the U.S. race makeup by tightening [border security](#) and placing a higher priority on granting employment-based visas for high-[skilled workers](#). Those changes are likely to result in a greater influx of [Asian immigrants](#) compared to Latinos.

The Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank, estimates that 150,000 fewer [immigrants](#) will enter the U.S. if the [Senate bill](#) becomes law. That is due mostly to an estimated sharp decline in illegal border crossings.

The United States has 315 million people today. Less than 64 percent are non-Hispanic whites.

In a situation where immigration levels remain constant for the next half-century, the total population would climb to 392.7 million by 2060, with whites making up 44.7 percent of the population. Blacks would make up 12.7 percent, virtually unchanged from today. Hispanics, now 16 percent of the population, would rise to 29 percent by that year. Asians would increase from 5 percent of the population to 7.5 percent.

Under the official projections released in December, immigration will become the main driver of U.S. growth by 2032. That would be the first time that natural increase from births was not the leading cause of population increase since at least 1850, putting the U.S. in the company of many other industrialized nations such as Japan and Italy that long have struggled with low growth rates.

"As a whole, the U.S. population is projected to grow more slowly, the older population is expected to grow much larger, and the minority population will grow faster," said Jennifer Ortman, a [Census Bureau](#) demographer. "Most of the immigrants coming into the U.S. population are roughly 15 to 45 years old, so we see that immigration is bolstering

the working-age population and helping it to grow."

The agency also released numbers showing projections based on "high" rates of immigration—more likely if government policies become more flexible and a booming U.S. economy attracts large numbers of [foreigners](#)—as well as "low" rates of increasing immigration, a possible scenario if U.S. policies don't change much while the economy improves.

With high immigration, the minority "tipping point" is moved up to 2041, two years earlier than the previous estimate. At that time, Asians would have a much larger share, at 9 percent, because their population growth is more dependent on immigration than [birth rates](#). The U.S. population would reach 400 million by 2044.

With low immigration, the "tipping point" arrives by 2045.

"Despite projected declines in fertility, these projections make plain that we are on the road to becoming a highly diverse nation," said William H. Frey, a Brookings Institution demographer. "Even under the lowest immigration assumptions, the nation will become minority white in 33 years. So those who believe that barring immigration will make the nation appreciably less diverse need to take heed of these projections."

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