

VII. Assessment Area Summary

Selected Trends in the Southern California Socioeconomic Assessment Area

An analysis of selected indicators for the socioeconomic assessment area was conducted, in addition to the regional and county level analyses presented in the preceding sections of this volume. Findings were:

(1) Focused on population growth:

- In 1990, Los Angeles County had the highest population followed by San Diego County. In 2000, Orange County replaced San Diego County as the county with the second highest population. Also in 2000, San Bernardino surpassed Santa Clara County, Riverside County surpassed Alameda County, and Monterey County surpassed Santa Barbara County in population.
- While increase in population is expected through 2040 in all counties, the Central Valley Region is expected to have the largest increase in population across the forecast period.

A comparison of the projections provided by the State of California Department of Finance and results from Census 2000 reveals that projections for the overall growth in the region are on target. However, there is some variation at the county level because the available county level projections from the State of California are based on 1990 Census data and adjustments to that data. The reader should note that the U.S. Census and Department of Finance numbers are somewhat fluid because of adjustments and updates routinely provided by both agencies. Additionally, adjustments to State data in light of Census 2000 were not complete at the point this document was finalized.

(2) Focused on ethnic and racial diversity:

- The most ethnically and racially diverse area was the SCAG region in 1990, followed closely by the Central Valley. Hispanics of any race were a higher percentage of the regional population within the SCAG region, while the largest percentages of non-Hispanic Blacks and non-Hispanic Asians were found in the ABAG region.
- In 1990, the SCAG and ABAG regions had the highest percentages of population that were foreign-born. Among counties, San Francisco and Los Angeles had approximately one-third of their populations as foreign-born and San Luis Obispo had the lowest percentage (less than one-tenth).
- Across regions the Central Coast had the greatest percentage of persons age 5 and older speaking Spanish at home in 1990; the ABAG region had the highest percentage of persons age 5 and older speaking a language other than Spanish or English at home.

- The proportion of LEP students in 1990 was highest in Imperial, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, and San Francisco Counties. Across regions, SCAG showed the highest proportion of students that were LEP.
- The largest percentage of LEP students spoke Spanish in 24 of the counties, with San Francisco and Sacramento having languages other than Spanish represented in the majority LEP language(s).
- Whites and American Indians are expected to decline as a proportion of the population in the majority of counties. Blacks vary by county in expected increase or decrease, falling within a range of 5 percent variation. The most dramatic changes are expected for Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders; both groups are expected to increase as a proportion of the total population in the majority of counties. Hispanics are expected to increase the most in four of the regions, while Asian/Pacific Islanders are projected for the greatest increase in the ABAG region.

(3) Focused on changing age structures:

- Median ages are expected to vary across gender, race/ethnicity, and county through 2040. A trend of increasing median age, steepest among the American Indian, White, and Black populations, is expected. The age structure among Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders is much younger across the forecast period.

(4) Focused on development and housing:

- The largest share of construction dollars was for residential construction in incorporated areas from 1987 to 1998. An increase in construction within unincorporated areas was not evident across the decade of data examined, nor was it evident in areas approaching build-out. Annexation may account for a portion of this finding. The recession during the late 1980s and early 1990s was evident in reduced construction across all counties.
- The percent of owner-occupied housing units was highest in the Central Valley region, while the highest renter-occupied housing percent was in the SANDAG region. In 1990, the highest percent of vacant housing units was in the Central Coast region.
- The average median value of owner-occupied housing in 1990 was highest in the ABAG region, followed by the Central Coast region and SANDAG. Median rents parallel this same cost structure.

(5) Focused on transportation, commuting, and employment:

- San Diego County had very few workers employed outside the county in 1990; conversely San Mateo and Marin Counties had slightly less than half of their workers employed outside the county. Both counties are within the ABAG region, which reported the highest average region-wide (an average of 31.7 percent).
- There was little variation in the average number of vehicles per household in 1990 across regions, although the Central Coast had a slightly higher average. County variations were a bit larger, though still comparable.
- The SCAG and Central Valley regions had the highest percent of workers driving alone to work, while the highest percent of workers using public transportation was in the ABAG region.
- The average travel time to work in minutes varied across regions, with the ABAG region having the highest average of 26.6 minutes. Average travel time was shortest in the Central Coast region.

(6) Focused on education:

- Across all counties, elementary schools served the largest number of students in 1998-99, with the highest average enrollment at the high school level.
- Academic performance among county schools participating in the Stanford 9 achievement test varied widely, with San Diego County showing the highest average performance across schools. Central Valley counties had the greatest numbers of schools performing below, or well below average.

(7) Focused on environmental quality:

- Water quality was variable by watershed, with many watersheds crossing over counties within a region, and across regions. The best water quality ratings were within the SANDAG and SCAG regions, the highest averages (indicating poorer quality) were within the Central Valley. Watershed quality averages are provided only for purposes of comparison and should be viewed with caution.
- Emissions for 1996 varied widely by type and level across counties. However, across all counties and regions a general trend for reduced emissions was forecasted, with the exception of PM and PM10 types.

Tables supporting the above summaries appear in *appendix G*, provided for readers with an interest in contrasting the 26 counties.

Regional Trends

Dramatic change is forecasted for southern California. The population in the region is expected to double through 2040, increasing direct and indirect impacts on the surrounding natural areas. Racial and ethnic diversity is expected to increase, and the median age of all racial and ethnic groups except Hispanics is expected to increase (*figs. 192, 193*). Although there is some variation to this by region or county, as illuminated in each region's write-up, the overall forecast remains the same.

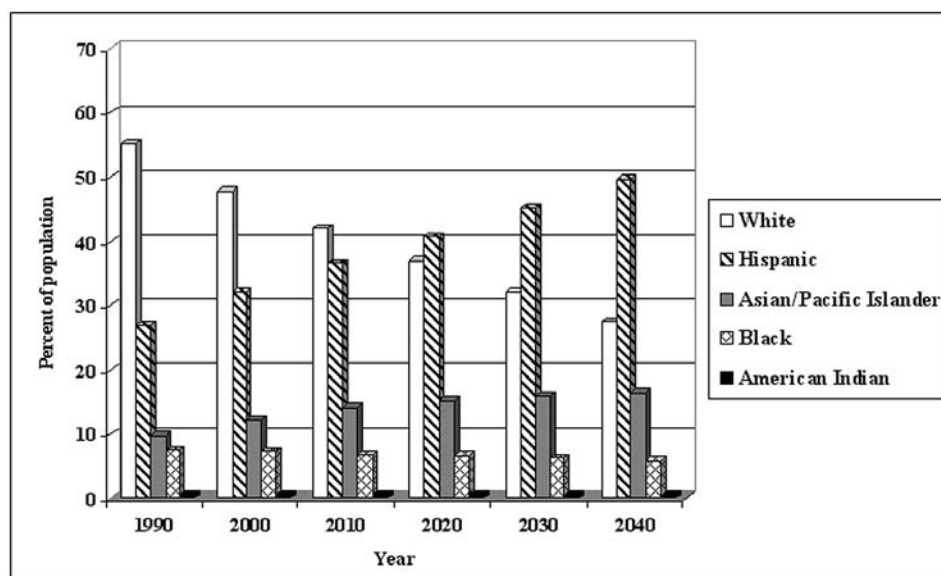
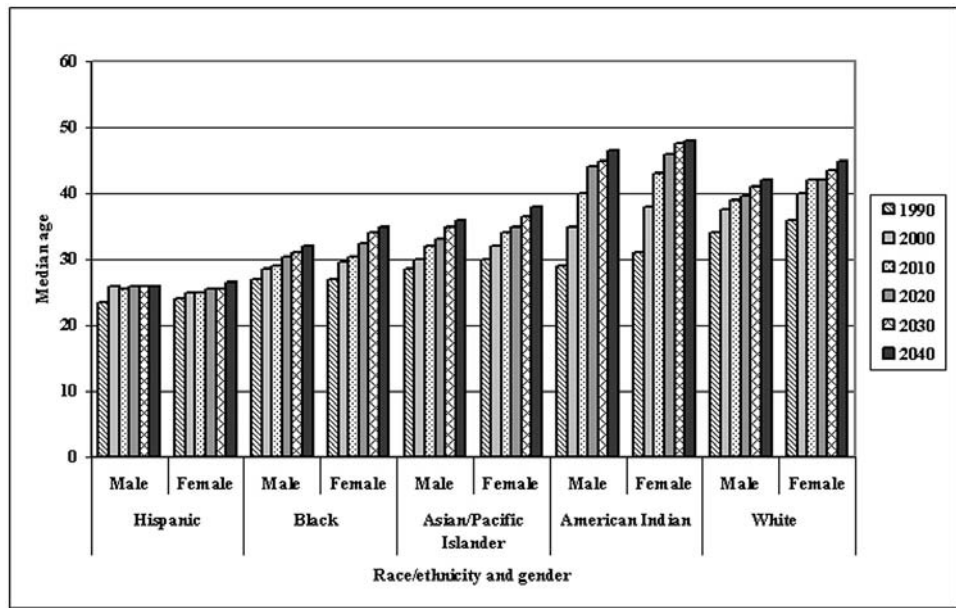


Figure 192—Racial and ethnic diversity trends for the assessment area.

Source: State of California Department of Finance 1998

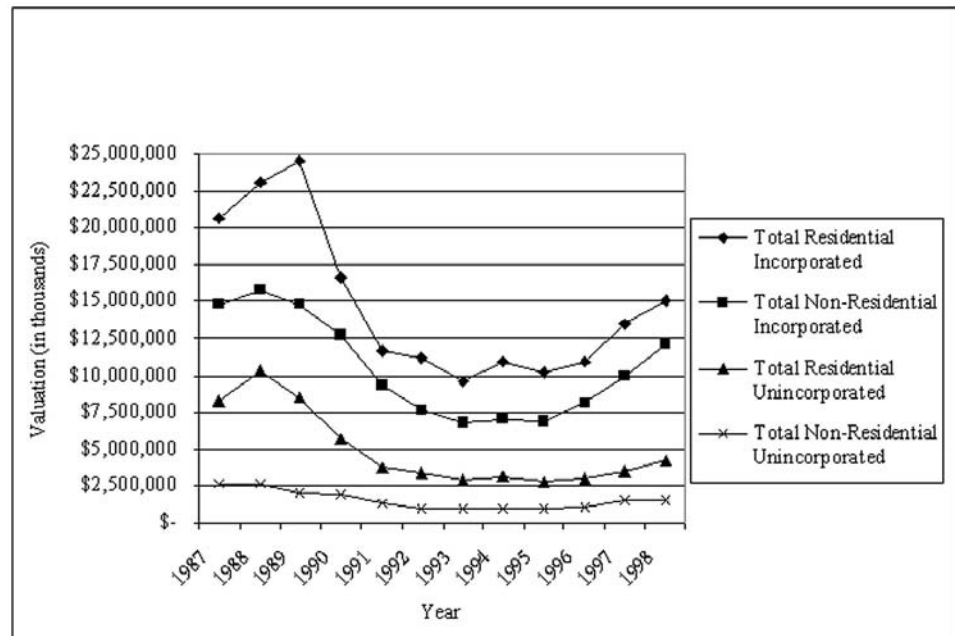
Figure 193—Median age by race/ethnicity and gender, assessment area, 1990-2040.



Source: State of California Department of Finance 1998

An analysis of past building trends provides insight into whether growth is likely to occur in incorporated or unincorporated areas of counties. Building trends from 1986 to 1998 act as a guide to how these areas might grow in the future. An analysis of building trends for the assessment area shows the highest proportion of building in incorporated areas (*fig. 194*). Construction declined after 1989 due to the recession, but was on the rise in 1997, although it did not reach pre-1989 levels. With the projected population growth for California, most growth is likely to continue in incorporated areas, but there may also be significant growth in unincorporated areas as people search for cheaper housing. This is particularly a concern in California’s Central Valley where, if current rates of growth continue, 1 million acres of prime farmland would be lost by 2040, the population is expected to reach 15.6 million people by 2040 from a 1998 population of 5.4 million, and rates

Figure 194—Building trends, assessment area, in 1998 dollars, 1987-1998.



Source: Construction Industry Research Board 1988-1999

of growth are projected to be 20 to 25 percent higher than the State's coastal areas (Great Valley Center 1998). Other regional growth areas include the Inland Empire of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties in the SCAG region (The Business Press 2000) and counties in the eastern portion of the ABAG region (Association of Bay Area Governments 1998). All areas are experiencing a conversion of agricultural land and open space to suburban development. Suburban development leads to increased impacts on National Forest land because this growth is occurring at the urban-wildland boundaries. Additionally, the increase in sprawl and the number of commuters will increase traffic congestion, air pollution, highway repairs, and the consumption of natural resources for highway expansion and construction (Association of Bay Area Governments 1997).

Summary and Implications for Assessment Area

The results above suggest that changes highlighted for each region and county are reflected in the assessment area as a whole. The dramatic changes expected for the region, and its broader implications, are discussed in the Conclusions section.

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