

Conclusions

Both population and demographic changes have dynamic effects that may occur very rapidly or evolve over a very long period of time. In 2020, Arkansas may not be unrecognizably different from today, but there may have occurred significant changes among the population of the state. The projected changes are the result of assumed fertility and mortality rates and migration, both into and out of Arkansas. There are three major trends that may affect Arkansas' population, their needs, and the resources available to them. The trends are:

Aging of Arkansans

As in other states of the U.S., the aging of the Baby Boom generation is driving the shape of the population of Arkansas. The median age of Arkansas is expected to increase from 36.0 years to 37.3 years; and the old age dependency ratio is expected to increase from 24.3 to 29.2. The ratio of aged persons to youth in 2020 is anticipated to be 60.7 aged persons per 100 youth, a climb from 49.2 in 2000. This increase in the number and proportion of aged persons has implications for health and social services, education, available workforce, and many other facets of life in Arkansas.

Greater Diversity in the Arkansas Population

Since 1990, there has been a trend of increasing racial and ethnic diversity among the Arkansas population. This trend is expected to continue into 2020, at which time the nonwhite population is projected to approach 30% of the total population. Additionally, a significant increase in the population of the Hispanic ethnic group in Arkansas from 1990 to 2000 is projected to continue.

Increasing Urbanization of Arkansas

Arkansas populations are expected to slowly shift from rural to more urban areas of the state by 2020. Urban and rural populations differ significantly in age, income, and growth rates, with growth rates highest among the Metropolitan Statistical Areas of the state, and lowest in the rural areas.