

North Carolina's Population: Short-term Challenges, Long-term Growth Factors



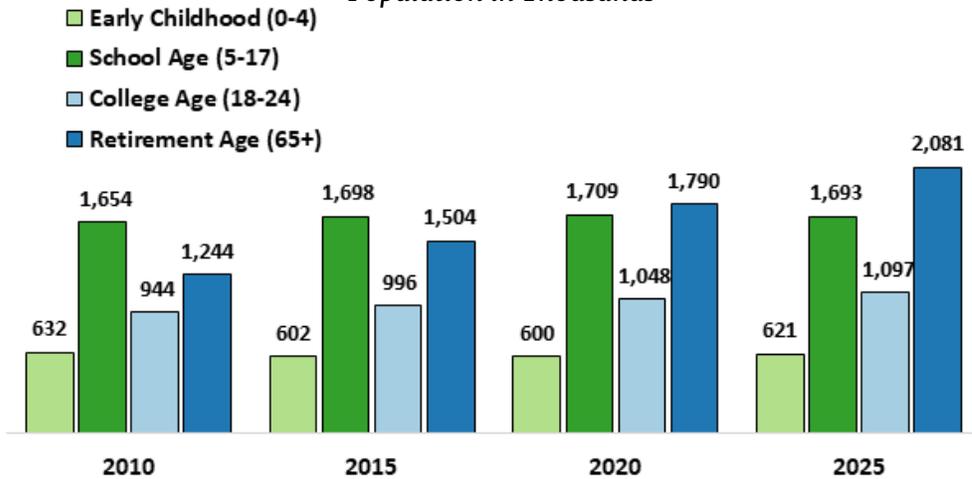
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Executive Summary

- There were 10.4 million people living in North Carolina in 2020 – the ninth largest state in the nation.
- North Carolina had the sixth largest state population gain over the last decade.
- North Carolina gained one additional congressional seat as a result of population growth.
- The COVID-19 pandemic slowed North Carolina's population growth over the last year but the State Demographer expects the growth to return to higher rates of growth once more of the population is fully vaccinated.
- Net migration has been a key component of the state's growth and is likely to remain a driver of population growth over the next decade.
- NC's rural population remains significant, but most growth has occurred in or around larger cities, with more than half of 2010-19 growth occurring in just six counties.
- The population is aging and the fastest growth of the 65+ population is in urban areas.
- North Carolina is becoming more diverse, with children of color comprising almost half of the under 18 population by 2019.
- OSBM will provide technical expertise and training opportunities so local governments and state agencies understand how to access and use 2020 Census data.

This report was prepared by the State Demographer of North Carolina. All population projections included in the report were created prior to the release of the Census 2020 results. For more information on the demographics of North Carolina, visit: www.osbm.nc.gov/facts-figures/population-demographics

Figure 4
Historical and Projected Age Group Populations
Population in Thousands



Source: NC OSBM Population Projections, Vintage 2019 and Population Projections, Vintage 2020

Meanwhile, the early childhood age group (0-4) is projected to grow by only 1,000 over the biennium, with most of the growth occurring during the last year, assuming full recovery from the pandemic.

Once the state is fully recovered from the pandemic, annual births are projected to increase over the course of this decade with concomitant growth in the number of women of childbearing age (and especially growth in women in the ages of 25 to 44).

The changes in these key population groups highlight the fact that North Carolina’s population, like the population of the United States as a whole, is becoming older. By 2028, the State Demographer projects that one in five North Carolinians will be at least 65 years old, and by 2031 there will be more older adults (ages 65+) than children (ages less than 18).

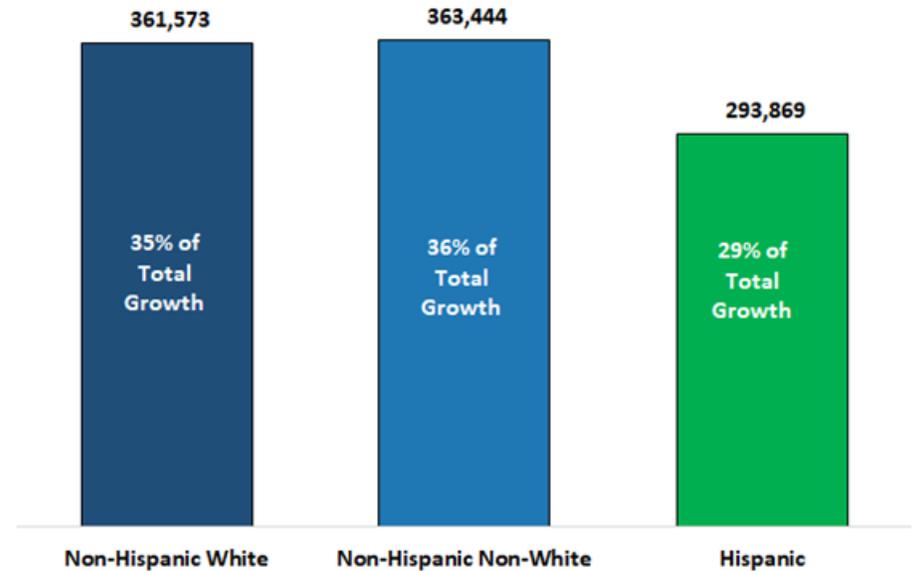
NORTH CAROLINA IS BECOMING MORE DIVERSE

In addition to an aging population, North Carolina, like the nation, is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.

At least 38% of North Carolinians are Black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, or multiracial. These race/ethnic groups have accounted for almost two-thirds of total population growth since 2010 and will account for approximately two of every three persons added between now and 2030 (Figure 5).

The latest population projections suggest that by 2030, 41% of North Carolinians will be a person of color (4.8 million of 11.7 million total people). This transformation can be seen in the diversity of our schools. By 2019, close to half of the under 18 population was a child of color, and Hispanic, Asian, and multiracial children accounted for all the growth in the childhood population since 2010.

Figure 5
Five of Eight People Added Through 2030 Will Be a Person of Color
Population Growth for Each Group (proportion of total growth), 2021-30



Note: Hispanic includes population of any race. Non-Hispanic Non-White includes Non-Hispanic Black, Asian & Pacific Islander, and American Indian, as well as those Non-Hispanics identifying as two or more races.

Source: North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management, Vintage 2020 Population Projections.

