

Metro Future

MAKING A GREATER BOSTON REGION
AN INITIATIVE OF THE METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

Our Changing Population

MetroFuture is an effort to understand *what our region will probably be like* if current trends continue, and *how communities can change* those trends to make a brighter future.

This is one in a series of briefs describing our findings. Learn more at www.metrofuture.org.

Key Findings:

- The region is on track to add **465,000 people** by 2030.
- Many **suburbs will continue to grow rapidly**. Meanwhile, the region's urban centers may grow faster than in recent decades.
- The region will be aging, with **fewer school-age children** in 2030 and a dramatic **spike in the over-55 population**.
- We will be losing people to other states, but **international immigration** will be a critical part of our region's growth.
- We will have **more diversity** as minorities grow to almost a third of the total population.

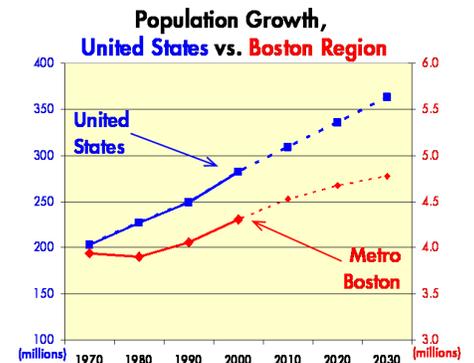


Steady—but Slow—Growth

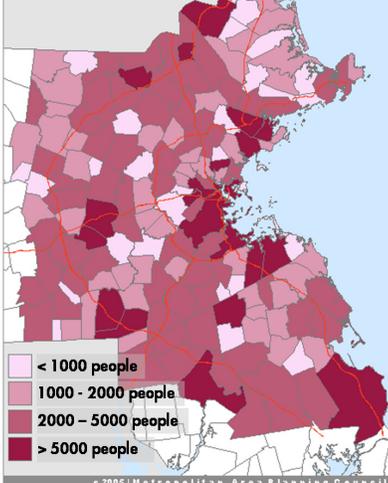
Based on historic trends in birth rates, mortality, and migration, we expect an additional 465,000 residents by 2030, an increase of 10.8%. This is in line with recent U.S. Census projections for Massachusetts, but much slower than the projected national growth rate of 28%. Average household size may decrease from 2.6 to 2.4 people per household.

What it means:

- The region will need to build 300,000 new housing units.
- Slow growth could turn into no growth if more people move out of the region or fewer immigrants move in.



Population Growth, 2000 - 2030



Large Gainers and Fast Growers

The largest population increases are expected in urban centers such as Boston, Cambridge, and Lynn and in a half-dozen suburban towns (such as Plymouth and Weymouth) with very large housing developments on the horizon. In terms of percentage gain, the fastest growth rates will be in developing suburbs along I-495 with abundant unprotected open space. In these towns, moderate population gains of 1,000 to 5,000 people yield 30-year growth rates of 20% or more—slower than recent decades, but fast enough to cause significant change. The maturing suburbs along Route 128 can expect moderate growth, despite a dwindling supply of vacant land.

What it means:

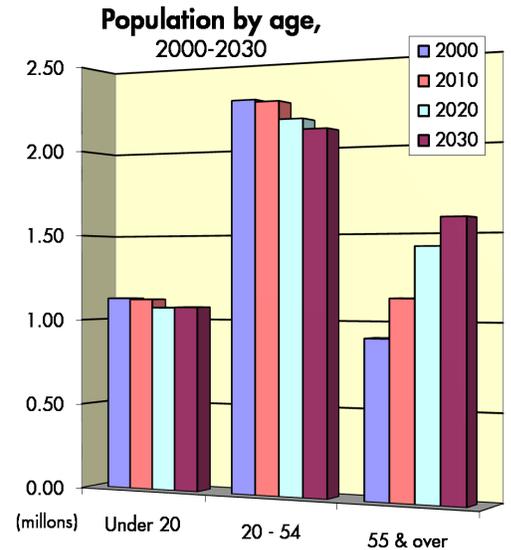
- Continued development in urban centers and maturing suburbs will require redevelopment of commercial and industrial properties, and increased emphasis on apartment buildings and townhouses. New zoning will be needed in many suburbs to accommodate this growth.
- Rapid growth in outlying suburbs—beyond the reach of regional water and transit systems—will increase pressure on local roads and watersheds. 130,000 acres of open space may be lost to residential development.

An Aging Population

As the Baby Boomers move into their 60s and beyond, the over-55 population will increase 75%, until one in three residents is 55 or older. Meanwhile, all other age groups will shrink—including school-age children.

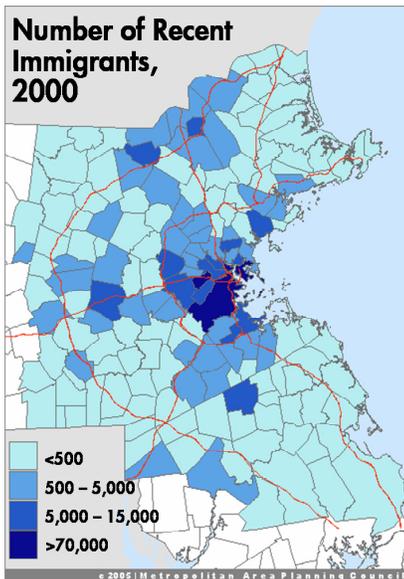
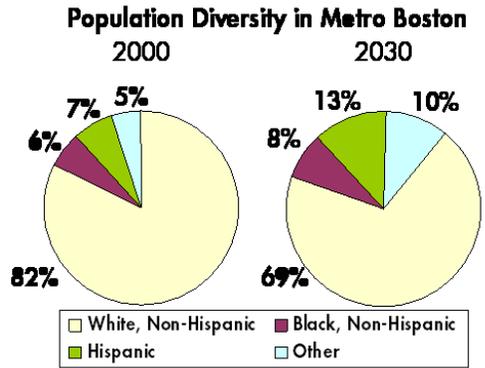
What it means:

- The demand for senior housing will remain strong, and there will be increased demand for senior services and transit.
- If more seniors decide to retire elsewhere due to high housing costs in the region, the projected population growth may evaporate.
- A 6% decline in the region-wide school-age population will reduce pressure on most public school systems. However, the number of students will increase in almost a third of the region's communities.



Increasing Diversity and Segregation

Our region will become more diverse over the coming years. By 2030, we expect that 31% of the region will be Black, Hispanic, Asian, or another non-White race. If recent trends continue, most growth in non-White populations may be confined to a dozen urban cities, and the racial mix of the region's suburbs will change very little. Currently, foreign-born residents make up 14% of the region's population and are a key part of our region's growth, since international immigration makes up for our net loss of population to other states (driven by the out-migration of professionals and their families, seniors, and recent college graduates). Many immigrants have a bachelor's degree and arrive prepared to work in high-skill jobs; others have little education and come seeking new opportunities.



What it means:

- Failure to provide housing opportunities for minorities in suburban communities will worsen regional segregation.
- The increasing number of children from homes where English is not the primary language will create challenges for many public school systems.
- Post-9/11 immigration restrictions, if extended or tightened, may create long-term declines in immigration among skilled workers and students.
- High housing costs or a sluggish economy may drive more residents to move to other states, depleting the region's supply of skilled labor.

How We Did the Projections

MAPC projected population changes for the region as a whole based on birth rates, mortality, and migration, by age, sex, and race. The share of the total regional population belonging to each individual city and town was projected based on growth rates since 1970, as well as repeated consultation with city and town officials about expected future housing development. The primary data sources were the Massachusetts Community Health Profile (MassCHIP) and the U.S. Census. For more information, visit www.mapc.org.

About MAPC and MetroFuture



The Metropolitan Area Planning Council represents the people who live and work in 101 communities in Metropolitan Boston. MetroFuture is our effort to develop a long-range regional plan for growth and development. Learn more at www.metrofuture.org.