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Editors and Reporters: "Growing Diversity Among America's Children and Youth: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions" is available for download at http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/docs/Johnson_Growing_Diversity_Mar2010.pdf.

Youngest Americans at Forefront of Rapid Changes in U.S. Demographic Makeup, New Research Finds

DURHAM, N.H. – In 2009, 48 percent of the children born in the United States were minorities, underscoring trends that show America's youth are at the forefront of the country's rapidly shifting demographic makeup, according to new research from the University of New Hampshire.

The new research by Kenneth Johnson, UNH professor of sociology and senior demographer at the UNH Carsey Institute, and Daniel Lichter, Ferris Family Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University, is published today in the journal *Population and Development Review* in "Growing Diversity Among America's Children and Youth: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions."

Using the latest U.S. Census data, the researchers found the nation is becoming more diverse from youngest to oldest. Among the nation's youngest residents (children under 5 years old), 47 percent are minority, and among those 15 to 19 years old, the percentage minority is 40 percent. In contrast, only 31 percent of the population 20 years old and over is minority.

"Widely quoted Census projections suggest America may become a minority-majority country by the middle of the century. Our research shows that for America's children and youth, that future is here already," the researchers said.

Between 2000 and 2008, the number of minority children grew by 4.8 million (15.5 percent), and the non-Hispanic white youth population declined by 2.6 million (5.3 percent). Overall, two-thirds of the growing diversity among the youth population can be attributed to the growing number of minority children, but the other third is due to the diminishing number of non-Hispanic white children.

A key reason for the growing child diversity is the changing mix of women in their prime child-bearing years (20-39 years old). From 1990 to 2008, the number of non-Hispanic white women in prime child-bearing years decreased 19 percent while the number of minority women increased 40 percent. In 1990, 63 percent of all births were to non-Hispanic white women; in 2008, 52 percent were to non-Hispanic white women.

The researchers also found that the Hispanic fertility is higher at 2.99 children per woman than that of non-Hispanic white women (1.87). However, the fertility levels of other minority groups are quite similar to whites. Black fertility, in particular, has declined significantly in recent years.

Immigration also plays a key role in the rising number of Hispanic births, both because immigrants tend to have higher fertility and because many Hispanic immigrants are young adults in their prime child-bearing years.

Youth diversity traditionally has been concentrated in large urban cores and to historically black areas in the southeast and Hispanic areas in the southwest, but the researchers found that the new growth of minority children is spatially broad based.

"Minority youth gains were greater in suburban and smaller metropolitan counties than they were in the urban cores. And, in rural areas, minority child gains only partially offset the large losses in the non-Hispanic white youth population. Though the minority child population is dispersing spatially, our research reveals broad regions of the country where there are few minority children. Thus, the geographic landscape of minority children suggests the emergence of two Americas: an increasing racially diverse region and a largely white region," they said.

"In sum, our research reveals a more nuance view of the important role that fertility is playing in the reshaping of the country, and that this change is being reflected first among the national's youngest residents. In a policy environment fixated on immigration, this is no small achievement," the researchers said.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

PHOTO

Kenneth Johnson, professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire and senior demographer at the UNH Carsey Institute
http://www.unh.edu/news/img/ken_johnson.jpg

ANALYSIS

"Growing Diversity Among America's Children and Youth: Spatial and Temporal Dimensions"
http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/docs/Johnson_Growing_Diversity_Mar2010.pdf

IMAGE

Counties classified by concentrations of the population under age 20 classified by race/Hispanic origin, 2008.
http://www.unh.edu/news/img/johnson_graph.jpg