

# California's Population Growth, 1990-2002:

## *Study reveals virtually all growth is from immigration*

### Summary and Comments

by Diana Hull, Ph.D.

Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), a non-profit corporation based in Santa Barbara, California, reports the findings of its new two-part research on the reasons for the state's accelerating and unsustainable growth.

The first study, by demographer Leon Bouvier, is based on information from the California Department of Finance; the second study, by environmental consultant Dick Schneider, combines state statistics with reports from the Census Bureau, the former INS (now the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services) and research on domestic migration.

Among the findings:

- These studies end definitively any possible argument about the relative contribution of immigration versus unplanned or unwanted births to California's overpopulation problems. Total Fertility Rate for the state has reached replacement level at 2.1 and virtually all population growth in California is due to direct immigration and births to immigrants.

- Using official state figures alone, Dr. Bouvier concluded that immigration was responsible directly and indirectly for 98 percent of California's increasing population, a trend that continued through 2002. Direct immigration was responsible for about 57 percent of California's growth in the decade 1990-2000, and the rest came from births to foreign-born women.

- Combining state and federal sources, and independent research, Dick Schneider found that 100

percent of California's growth was the result of immigration and immigrant births, and that migration from other states was no longer a factor in California's present size. He found the contribution of immigration was actually larger than reported by the State of California, because the Census Bureau admitted undercounts of both legal and illegal immigrants.

- No matter whether single or multiple databases were used, there was only a 2 percent difference in the results of the two studies, giving the overall conclusions high reliability.

Although immigration is virtually the sole cause of California's continuing growth surge, that fact is obscured whenever "births to foreign-born women" are identified euphemistically as "natural

increase" (*Public Policy Institute of California*, 2002) or as "births to new Californians" (*Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2003). This language conveys the inaccurate impression that over 40 percent of the state's population gains are caused by *Californians having more children*. The persistence with which public policy groups and media use these misleading phrases is an obstacle to the public's understanding of the reasons for growth and thwarts the taking of appropriate remedial action.

Does "births to *new* Californians" mean "*new* births to Californians" or births to new residents of California from another country or even another state? Besides confusing readers trying to grasp the cause of the state's unmanageable size, we can wonder whether terms like "natural increase," when used in this context, are detached demographic descriptions, or reluctance to defy Mexico's assertions that its citizens

This Demographic Data Report was commissioned by Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), © June 2003, and is reprinted by permission.

have a right of residence beyond their own borders. When births to immigrants are called “natural increase,” that implies that the US and Mexico have, as a practical matter, merged and bolsters the claim that the northward migration is “structural, inevitable and unstoppable.”

If the “natural increase” of established Californians was, indeed, the reason for growth, then only family planning programs would likely be able to reduce those numbers. While limiting unwanted births in this state is a laudable goal, which CAPS supports, as far as California’s increasing population is concerned, it is largely irrelevant.

The state has achieved replacement level fertility because both established residents and immigrants from all other groups-Asians, Blacks, Whites, American Indians and Pacific Islanders-are all now reproducing well under replacement. Nevertheless, the births to all Californians as a component of growth would have been smaller if not for the 3.25 Total Fertility Rate of Hispanics. Continuing immigration primarily from Mexico and Central America will continue higher than average birthrates for this segment of the population for many generations to come.

Despite replacement level fertility, Leon Bouvier reports that California made its largest population jump in history – 13 percent in the 1990s, adding 4,208,000 people (more than the total population of Ireland). In the 2-year period from April 1, 2000, to July 1, 2002, California’s population increased by 1,244, 385. If we continue this 1.74 percent growth each year, the state will double its size in 40 years.

But the total contribution from immigration during the decade must factor in not only births to immigrants minus deaths, but domestic out-migration by both natives and the foreign born moving to other states. Dick Schneider’s research considers these issues. In CAPS’ Study No.2, he concludes that immigration accounts for 100 percent of California’s growth. This is partly because the native-born population only increased by 2 percent over the decade, a result of so many native-born residents

leaving the state.

The use of data from different branches of government brings additional credibility to the CAPS studies. State and federal agencies are not always in agreement. The US Census Bureau maintains that people are still leaving the state, while the California Department of Finance asserts that there is now a net inflow to California from other parts of the country. But Schneider points out that even if that flow has reversed and the portion of growth attributable to immigration in the future will be smaller, the amount and rate of population growth will be even higher.

Mass immigration is the cause of most of California’s most pressing problems: too many people living in poverty, the shortage of schoolrooms and teachers, the closing of hospitals and the impact of overpopulation on biodiversity. For all the above reasons, California’s present and predicted future size is a wakeup call for the state and the nation.

Unfortunately for politically-correct reasons, elected officials, most foundations and university-funded population programs are reluctant to encourage a halt to overpopulation if reducing immigration is even part of the solution. Thus, change in immigration policy requires the involvement of a better-informed public, and these studies were undertaken with that mission in mind.

	CALIFORNIA POPULATION GROWTH		Total
	Native-Born	Foreign-Born	
1990 Population (7/01)			29,828,000 (est)
Births	3,073,759	2,514,894	5,588,653
Deaths	-1,661,420	-553,807	-2,215,226
Net Domestic Migration	-1,322,219	251,870	-1,070,349
Immigration	NA	2,408,762	2,408,762
2000 Population (7/01)			34,056,000 (est)
Population Growth	90,020	4,117,979	4,208,000 (est)
Percent Share	2.0	98.0	100.00

Table 1.

## California's Population Growth 1990-2000

by Leon Bouvier, Ph.D.

According to the state of California's Demographic Division of the Department of Finance, the state's population was estimated to be 29,828,000 July 1, 1990. It rose to an estimated 34,036,000 in 2000. Thus the population increased by 4,208,000 between July 1, 1990 and July 1, 2000.<sup>1</sup> To gain a better perspective on the meaning of this number, consider the fact that all the northeastern states from Maine to Virginia, combined, gained less than 4 million people over the same period.

This begs the question: How did California grow so rapidly? The answer is deceptively simple: immigration. Actual direct immigration accounted for about 57 percent of all growth over this decade. The two-generation indirect immigration (i.e. including the births to foreign-born mothers) explained an incredible 98 percent of California's growth between 1990 and 2000. (See Table 1 for detailed statistics).

What about births and deaths? Aren't there many more births than deaths? Yes. Reproductive change (or natural increase as it is often called) explains some of the growth. Let's clarify this. Three factors determine population change: people are born; people die and in between some people move domestically (e.g. from Maine to California or vice-versa) and some people move across international borders (e.g. From Mexico to the United States). To better understand "how California grew so rapidly?" we turn again to very recent data (January 2003) prepared by the Demographic division of California's Department of Finance.

Over that ten-year period, there were 5,588,653 births and 2,215,226 deaths in the state.<sup>2</sup> If only births and deaths (i.e. reproductive change or natural increase) were involved, the state's population would total 33,201,427 in 2000.<sup>3</sup> (This is based on the Department of Finance estimate of 29,828,000 on July 1, 1990). Moreover, people move quite a bit in the United States and this is an important factor in determining population growth. Over the just-completed decade, 1,574,189 more people left the state than entered from other states. Let's enter that into our calculations. Subtracting this number from 33,201,427 gives us a July 2000 population of 31,657,238. But, as noted above, the estimated July 2000 population is

34,036,000. This suggests that immigration to the state was 2,408,762. We conclude from these data that direct immigration accounted for about 57 percent of all growth in the state.

As high a proportion as that is, it remains a direct measure. Immigrants have children after they move to California. Of the 5,588,653 births between 1990 and 2000, 45 percent were to foreign-born women. We estimate that 25 percent of all deaths were to immigrants (553,807). If you look at the two-generation indirect impact of immigration on population growth, it is clear that the indirect two-generation contribution to population growth accounted for 98 percent of California's growth between 1990 and 2000.<sup>4</sup> To this we could add those illegal immigrants

---

*"The two-generation  
indirect immigration  
(i.e. including the births to  
foreign-born mothers)  
explained an incredible  
98 percent of California's  
growth between  
1990 and 2000."*

---

who were not counted in the Census of 2000.<sup>5</sup> That number may well be larger than anticipated. The Census Bureau, for example, estimates that nationwide international migration between April 1 and December 31, 2002, amounted to 3,279,240. This is far greater than any earlier estimates by the Bureau and, while the report doesn't distinguish between legal and illegal, clearly this suggests significant increase in the latter.

Looking at this growth from a different perspective, the foreign-born population was 21.7 percent of the state population in 1990; by 2000 that share had increased to 26.2 percent, 37 percent of whom had moved to California within the past ten years.

To recap, the native-born population (i.e. not including the births to foreign-born women) only increased by 90,000 over the decade. This was in part because so many people left the state. As a result

immigration was an overwhelmingly large contributor to population growth. If there had been no net out migration, the share of immigration would have been smaller, which brings us to a topic beyond the scope of this report. Why do people leave California – 86 percent of them being native-born? Here it should be added that the causes of population growth can differ from place to place. In many developing countries, the cause is high fertility. In Florida, while immigration is a contributor, domestic migration from the Northern and Central states is the prime factor in the rapid population growth in that state.

Just-published information from both the Census Bureau and the California Department of Finance indicate that the population growth pattern noted for the 1990-2000 decade continues to this very day.<sup>6</sup> According to the recently-published report from the Demographic Unit of California's Department of Finance, the state's population grew by 1,265,000 between July 1, 2000, and July 1, 2002. According to the Census Bureau estimates, California's population increased by 1,242,497 between April 1, 2000, and July 1, 2002. Of that growth 59 percent (738,015) came directly from immigration. Domestic out-migration continues (-167,755). Data are not as yet available to allow us to calculate the indirect impact of immigration for this period. Net migration (domestic and international) was estimated at 672,000. Migration into California continues to provide the majority of California's population increase.

Whatever its causes, rapid population growth is a significant problem wherever it occurs. Unfortunately most of the media and policy makers don't see it that way. The solution to traffic problems is to build more highways; the solution to pollution problems is to find better ways to adapt to it. We are not saying that controlling population growth will totally solve the many problems associated with the state; we are saying that growth is a major factor and should be seriously considered in trying to solve such problems. In this brief article, let's limit ourselves to three examples: highways, water and education.

Traffic congestion is almost beyond description in the state's major metropolitan areas. What is causing these increases in traffic which oftentimes lead to road rage, especially on the thruways in the Los Angeles area? The answer is obvious – by increasing the state's population by over four million, more than three million vehicles have been added. To compound the

issue, there are more two- and three-car families than ever. To reduce such congestion, the state could (1) build more and more roads or (2) try to limit population growth. It is clear that option one is the "chosen" solution. It will fail as population growth keeps up (at least) with highway building. Furthermore, three million additional vehicles will contribute in a significant way to increased pollution as the emission of carbon dioxide increases. This is exacerbated by the growing number of SUVs on the highway. These new highways will also replace dirt with cement. Dirt takes in water; cement doesn't.

---

*"Whatever its causes,  
rapid population growth  
is a significant problem  
wherever it occurs.  
Unfortunately most  
of the media and policy  
makers don't see it  
that way."*

---

Water is already a crisis in the state. It has been a challenge for some time. California's water problems were described in the late Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert*. Disputes over use of the Colorado River are increasing and the state of California is in the process of suing the province of British Columbia for their failure to provide sufficient water, as mandated by NAFTA.<sup>7</sup> The quantity of water is becoming a world problem and it is pretty difficult to argue that population growth is not a major cause. Yet, at the recent UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, little if any mention of population growth was addressed. In California, the increasing shortage of water is obvious. Californians should also be wary of any attempts to privatize that water. This could lead to the heretofore unbelievable situation of having to pay exorbitant fees for water – with the poor literally unable to purchase it. This is already happening in South Africa. Again, population growth is a major contributor to this alarming shortage; it isn't the only one. "Water promises to be to the 21st century

what oil was to the 20th century: the precious commodity that determines the 'wealth of nations.'"<sup>8</sup>

Education may be the most important of social institutions as the state attempts to remain ahead of the technological revolution presently taking place. The state's university system, once the envy of the nation, has fallen in quality combined with increased demands for admission by an ever-growing number of applicants. According to the Demographic Research Unit of the California Department of Finance, K-12 enrollments rose from 4.8 million in 1990-91 to almost 6 million ten years later. Thus well over one million students were added to the state's already crowded schools and classrooms.<sup>9</sup> This increase will continue into the future. Over the past decade, white enrollments fell by about 500,000 students while that of Hispanics rose by close to one million. By 2000, there were more Hispanics than other children enrolled in the state's schools. This illustrates the impact of immigration.

A school district such as Los Angeles has students that speak over 60 different languages. Although finding teachers is a problem throughout the nation, consider the difficulty in districts like this. (Statewide there are over 200 different languages spoken in the schools). In 2001-2002, there were 6,147,375 students enrolled in California schools. Of these students, 2,347,387 had a native language other than English. Of these students, 878,139 were fluent in English and 1,560,000 had limited English proficiency. California spends \$6,837 per student, so more than \$16 billion was spent last year on students whose native language was other than English.

Bringing up the difficulties of increasing diversity leads to one final issue. If the fertility rate of any large group of the foreign-born remains higher than that of the native-born; if domestic out-migration continues as it has recently when only 16 percent of those leaving the state were foreign-born; can the remaining citizens adjust to a new California where the foreignborn and their children outnumber the native-born? As for sheer population growth, irrespective of its source, can California accommodate itself to another 10 or 20 million inhabitants?

These are the questions that the people of the Golden State must face today and not tomorrow.

\* \* \*

## California's Population Growth 1990-2000: A Second View

by Dick Schneider

Demographer Leon Bouvier shows that immigration and the natural increase (births minus deaths) of immigrants accounted for an astounding 98 percent of California's population growth during the 1990s. Bouvier uses the most recent California Department of Finance (DOF) statistics together with conservative demographic assumptions to arrive at this result. There are good reasons for believing, however, that Bouvier's estimate is only a lower bound. A more likely result is that 100 percent of California's net growth during the 1990s – all 4.2 million persons – was due to immigrants and their offspring.

The most significant explanation for our somewhat different results has to do with state-to-state migration. During the 1990s California experienced a huge outpouring of residents moving to other states in the nation. The DOF estimates this exodus at 1.6 million people. Of those leaving, an estimated 85 percent, or 1.3 million, were native-born. During the same period, natural increase of the native born was 1.4 million. The native born therefore made a small but positive net contribution of just 100,000 persons, or 2 percent to the state's growth during the decade using DOF statistics.

However, demographer William Frey has come up with a different estimate. Frey is one of the country's foremost authorities on state-to-state migration. He analyzed Census 2000 data and determined that 1.5 million native-born residents left California for other states during the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Using Frey's figure means that California had a net loss of 100,000 native-born residents instead of a net 100,000 gain (natural increase of 1.4 million minus net out-migration of 1.5 million). As a result, *all* of California's net growth over the decade resulted from immigration and the natural increase of immigrants and the children of immigrants.

A second reason for believing that Bouvier's result is a lower bound concerns illegal immigration. Department of Finance figures significantly understate growth in the illegal population. Recent statistics from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services formerly the INS show that the state's illegal population grew by 732,000 over the 1990s, reaching a total California illegal population of 2.2 million as of January 2000.<sup>11</sup> State statistics only reflect growth of

400,000 in the illegal population over this period.<sup>12</sup> As a result, an additional 332,000 should be added to the immigration contribution to state growth during the decade.

A third and final reason why the immigration contribution to growth should be increased relates to Census Bureau undercounts. Immigrants – both legal and illegal – are among the hard-to-count groups in the decennial census. Typically census counts are adjusted upward to compensate for this sampling error. When the DOF corrects its official statistics to conform to decennial census data, those upward adjustments are included.

---

*“The undercount could be anywhere from tens to hundreds of thousands of legal and illegal persons.”*

---

Census 2000 was not adjusted for undercounts, however, so the DOF figures which conform to them are too low. The undercount in California is especially significant because 30 percent of all U.S. immigrants reside here. The undercount could be anywhere from tens to hundreds of thousands of legal and illegal persons.<sup>13</sup> This undercount should be added to the foreign-born component of state growth, thereby raising its percentage contribution.

In summary, various factors not included in official state statistics indicate the direct and indirect contribution of the foreign born to California’s growth during the 1990s was very likely to have been 100 percent.

Anyone thinking about addressing the state’s massive problems of traffic congestion, air pollution, increasing water and energy demands, conversion of prime agricultural land, loss of wildlife habitat and open space, housing affordability, school overcrowding, and a host of other critical issues, must forthrightly address over-immigration if they hope to make any headway. •

#### THE AUTHORS

**Leon F. Bouvier, Ph.D.**, received his B.S. degree, cum laude, in Sociology and History from Spring Hill College in

Mobile, Alabama, and his masters and doctorate in Sociology and Demography from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. He taught at Georgetown University and the University of Rhode Island. Dr. Bouvier was a demographic adviser to the U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Population and later to the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. In 1980 he was named research director at the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C., later serving as vice president of that organization. He retired from the Population Reference Bureau in 1986 and became a Senior Fellow at the Center for Immigration Studies, Washington, DC.

Dr. Bouvier has served as a consultant to numerous concerned environmental and population organizations such as the Sierra Club, Negative Population Growth and the Carrying Capacity Network. He is one of the founders of Floridians for a Sustainable Population. Currently, Dr. Bouvier is Visiting Professor of Sociology at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, V A. He is also Adjunct Associate Professor of Demography at Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Dr. Bouvier has published extensively in the field of Demography. His most recent monographs include *How Many Americans? Population, Immigration, and the Environment* (Sierra Club Books 1994), *Peaceful Invasions: Immigration and Changing America* (University Press of America 1992), *Fifty Million Californians* (Center for Immigration Studies, 1991), *Florida in the 21st Century: The Challenge of Population Growth* (Center for Immigration Studies 1993), *Immigration and Social Diversity* (Walker Pub. Co. 1990), and the college textbook, *Population: Demography and Policy* (St. Martin’s Press 1984). He has appeared on numerous radio and television programs including ABC’s “Good Morning America,” NBC’s “Nightly Evening News,” CNN’s “The Two of Us,” and NPR’s “All Things Considered.”

Dr. Bouvier currently resides in Norfolk, VA.

**Dick Schneider** is an environmental writer, policy analyst and activist. He received his B.A. (Physiology) and M.S. (Energy and Resources) degrees from the University of California at Berkeley. His graduate work focused on the effects of acid rain and metals pollution on high altitude lakes of the Sierra Nevada and Rocky Mountains. He helped establish the first acid rain monitoring station on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains in the late 1970s.

From 1999 to 2002, Mr. Schneider was Conservation Chair of the Sierra Club San Francisco Bay Chapter and led passage of an Alameda county-wide open space protection initiative. Since 1995, he has chaired the Sierra Club Bay Chapter Population Committee and frequently lectures on

the role of population growth in degrading natural ecosystems and eroding quality of life.

He serves on the Board of Trustees of The Head-Royce School in Oakland, California, is a director of the Bay Area Transportation and Land Use Coalition, and co-authored *Toxics A to Z: A Guide to Everyday Pollution Hazards* (University of California Press).

**Diana Hull, Ph.D.**, received her undergraduate degree from City University of New York, a masters degree from the University of Michigan, and a Ph.D. from the University of Texas School of Public Health. A Behavioral Scientist trained in Demography, she is a retired Clinical Associate Professor, Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry, Houston, Texas.

Dr. Hull is a former member of the Sierra Club's Population Committee and the Southern California Demographic Forum. She wrote, "Hispanic Press at the Southern Borders of the United States" as the American contributor to a book on international migration published by *Verlag* (Switzerland). Her research on the health effects of changed environments on individuals and groups has been published in *Social Science and Medicine*, *Psychological Review*, *International Journal of Psychosomatic Research* and many other journals. She was a founding member of both the Media Division and the Health Division of the American Psychological Association and is a member of the University of California at Santa Barbara Foundation Board of Trustees (emeritus). She has contributed opinion pieces on immigration-related subjects to the print media for the past decade and to the Knight Ridder News Service and appeared on numerous TV and radio programs across the country as a spokesperson for population stabilization.

Dr. Hull is currently President of Californians for Population Stabilization.

#### ENDNOTES

1. State of California, Department of Finance, "*Historical California Population Estimates, with Components of Change and Crude Rates, July 1, 1941-2002*" Sacramento, California, January 2003.

2. Total numbers for births, deaths, net immigration, and net domestic migration for July 1, 1990 to July 1, 2000 are from State of California, Department of Finance, "Updated Revised Historical County Population Estimates and Components of Change, July 1, 1990-1999," Sacramento, California, January 2003.

<http://www.dof.ca.gov/html/DemograpIE-6.xls> and "County Population Estimates and Detailed Components of Change, July 1, 2000-2002, with Historical 1999 Estimates and Census 2000 Counts," Sacramento, California, January 2003. <http://www.dof.ca.gov/html/DemograpIE-6cntv.xls>

3. It should be noted that natural increase was greater among the foreign-born than among the native-born. As Table 1 indicates, natural increase for the former was 1,961,087. For the native-born it was 1,412,389.

4. Native-born women accounted for 55 percent of California's births during the 1990s; foreign-born women accounted for 45 percent. State of California, Department of Finance, "Percent of births with selected demographic characteristics, by race/ethnicity of mother – 1990-2000." Native-born persons accounted for 75 percent of California deaths; foreign-born persons accounted for 25 percent." State of California, Department of Finance, "California Current Population Survey Report: March 2000 Data," Sacramento, California, March 2001. March 2001.

5. It should be pointed out that other sources yield slightly different scenarios. We have examined all possibilities. The very latest data from the California Department of Finance appear to be reliable. However, differences among these various sources are minimal at best.

6. U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Cumulative Births, Deaths, and Migration by States," December 2002.

7. Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, "Who owns water?" *The Nation*, September 29, 2002, p. 13.

8. *Fortune* as cited in *The Nation*, *ibid.* p. 11.

9. Actual school enrollment through 2001-2002 was provided by the California Department of Education, California Basic Educational System; projected enrollment, by the Department of Finance, Demographic Research Unit. California Youth Authority and State Special Schools are excluded.

10. Frey, William F. "Census 2000 Reveals New Native-Born and Foreign-Born Shifts Across U.S." *Research Report No. 02-520*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Population Studies Center, August 2002. Appendix Table A. <http://www.frey-demographer.org/reports/rr02-520.pdf>

11. U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service. Office of Policy and Planning. "Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: 1990-2000," January 31, 2003. P. 8 and Table 1 (page 15).

12. DOF E-6 reports show total immigration of 2.4 million during the 1990s. (See Bouvier's article for citations.) Separately, the DOF reports legal immigration growth as 2 million during the 1990s. (State of California, Department of Finance, "Legal Immigration to California by County: Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 1990-2000," Sacramento, California, October 2002.) The difference of 400,000 represents the State's implied estimate of growth in the illegal population. This figure compares with the INS estimate of 732,000 growth in the illegal California population.

13. J. Gregory Robinson, U.S. Census Bureau. "ESCAP II: Demographic Analysis Results," October 13, 2001. Appendix Table 6, page A-12. <http://www.census.gov/dmd/www/pdf/ReportI.PDF>

