

1. Demographics

Demographic indicators describe the characteristics of human populations and population segments, and are especially helpful in determining consumer spending patterns. Knowledge about the age, ethnic, and cultural aspects of the population provides more specific information regarding consumer preferences. This approach, known as market segmentation, is particularly useful for businesses needing to determine the extent of the market for a particular good or service. This information is also useful in evaluating education, housing, and employment opportunities and needs. In addition, demographic information is useful to grant writers and local governments during the process of determining the need and acquiring funding for specific public services in the area.

Demographic trends are typically the foundation upon which other community indicators are built. While this section focuses mostly on population counts and breakdowns of population (by age, race/ethnicity, etc.), most other sections focus on the characteristics of the population (such as Community Health, section nine) or of portions of the population (such as Labor Market, section four).

When analyzing population data, it is important to understand the difference between an estimate and a projection. An estimate is based on other related data or change in this data, during the year for which the estimate is made. A projection is based on data trends, calculated over a number of years, and is used to forecast or project future levels, assuming past trends are unchanged. For example, total population is an estimate because it is based on housing growth (among other factors) during the year in which total population is estimated.

Population by age is a projection because there is no data after the 2000 Census that can be used to accurately estimate how many people there are in each age group.

The projection is based on 2000 Census data and past trends, including those for in migration and death rates by age group. The resulting forecast is only reliable if those trends continue for the years between the census data and the year for which the projection is made.

Between 1999 and 2009, population increased 10 percent in Butte County. Analysis of the population by age reveals that in Butte County, there are a considerable amount of people aged 20-29 entering the area. This in migration may be caused by the pull of both the University and the community college. However, further analysis indicates that many who come to the area for college do not stay in the area. This out migration may be a result of fewer employment opportunities for college graduates in the area and more professional employment opportunities in urban areas. The analysis also indicates slight gains in population of ages 40-69, suggesting that people may be retiring to the area.

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