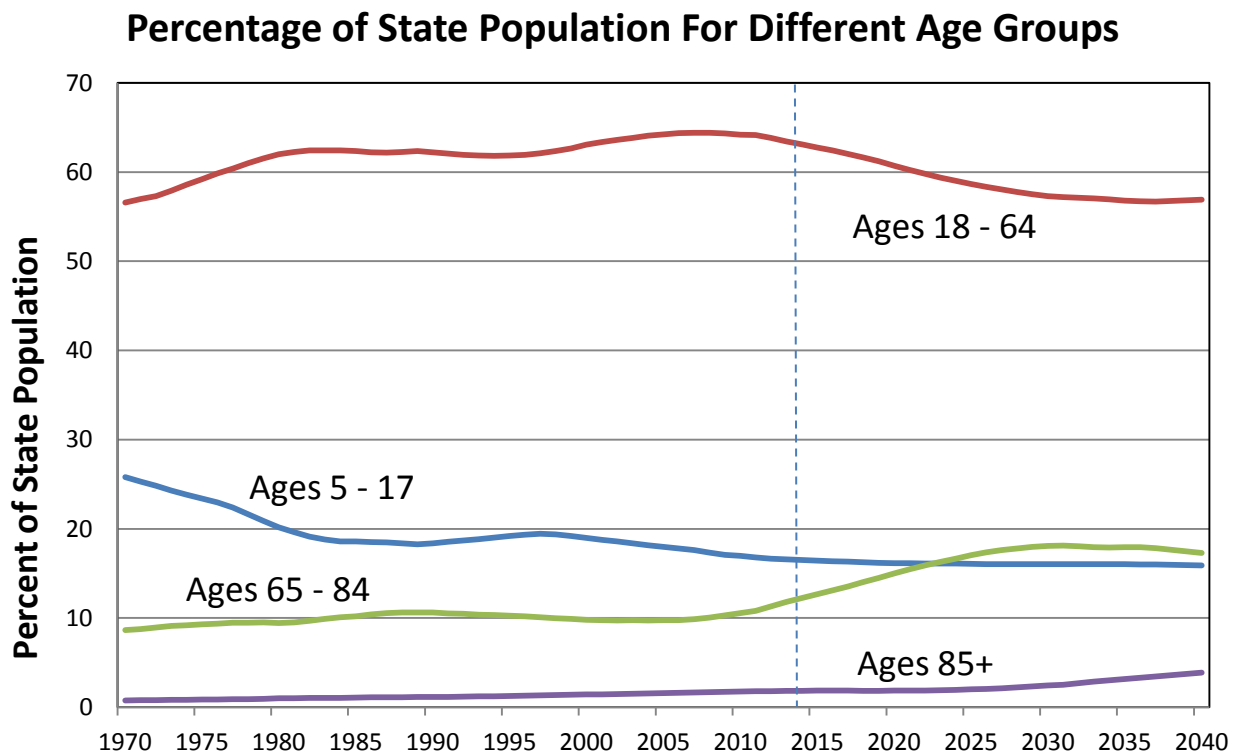


# Washington State Population Trends and Implications For Outdoor Recreation

Prepared for the Washington Blue Ribbon Task Force on Parks and Outdoor Recreation  
J. Fox, RCO, March 3, 2014

Washington State's population is expected to reach seven million by the end of 2014 and eight million by 2028.<sup>1</sup> In the last few years, Washington has ranked among the top ten fastest growing states in the country, with the growth fueled primarily by net natural increase (births minus deaths).<sup>2</sup> However, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) predicts that after 2015, growth will be due primarily to in-migration. It is important to note that OFM forecasts near-term migration using "an econometric model which weighs Washington's relative attractiveness to job seekers against that of California and other states."<sup>3</sup>

The demographic composition of Washington's population is also changing, with the portion of the population 65 years old and older projected to grow disproportionately faster than the population as a whole. By 2020, the percentage of the state's population 65 or older is expected to be nearly 17%, exceeding the school-age population (ages 5-17).<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), 2013

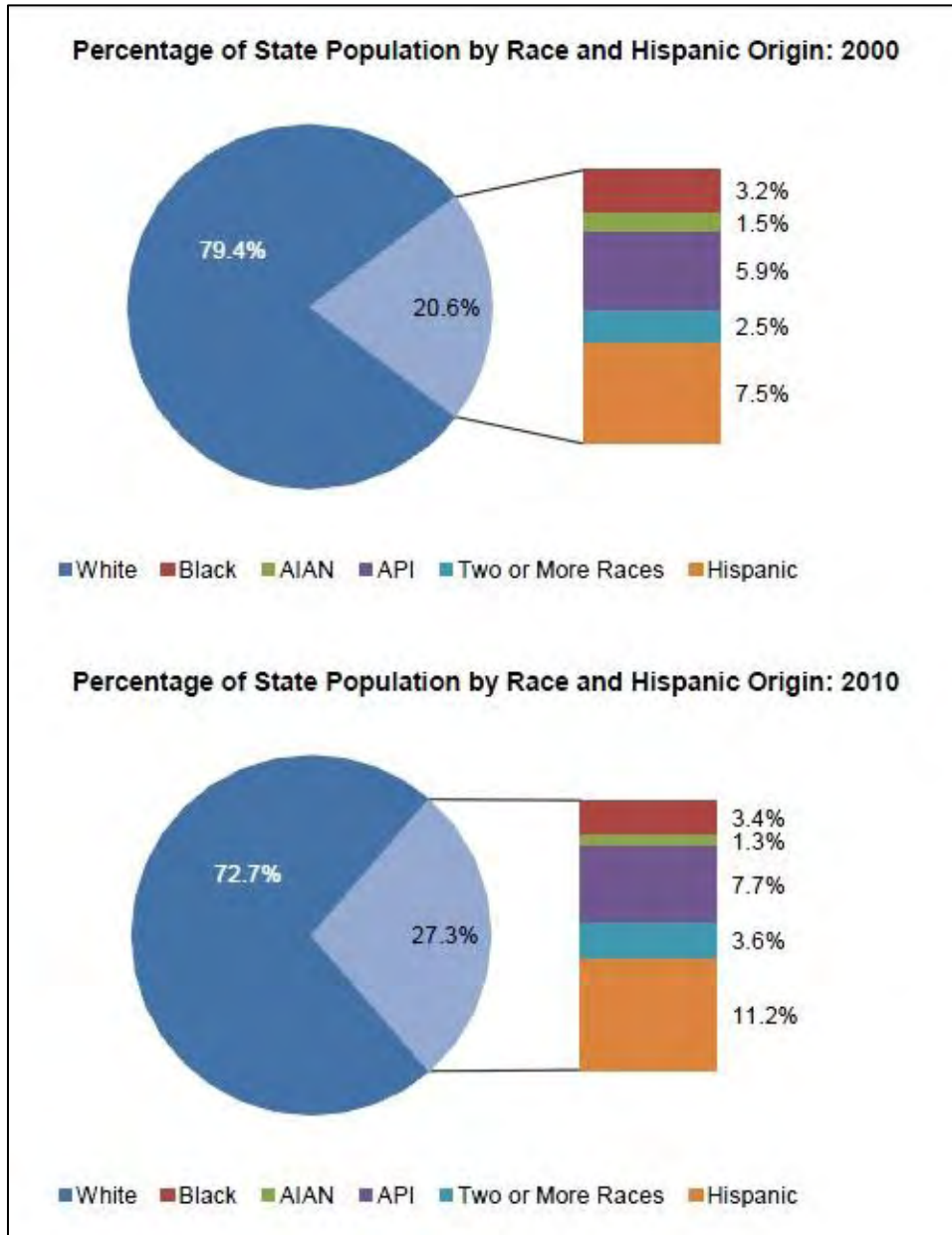
<sup>2</sup> Fox, J. 2014 *Washington State Almanac: An Economic and Demographic Overview of Counties and Cities*. Electronic Handbook Publishers, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> *Forecast of the State Population, November 2013 Forecast*, OFM, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

The population of racial and ethnic minority groups has also been growing disproportionately faster than the state population as a whole. Due to recent changes in methodology, OFM will not be releasing population forecasts for these groups until later this year. However, state trends from 2000 to 2010 and national forecasts indicate that the population of these groups will continue to increase faster than the white population.<sup>5,6</sup>

## Washington State

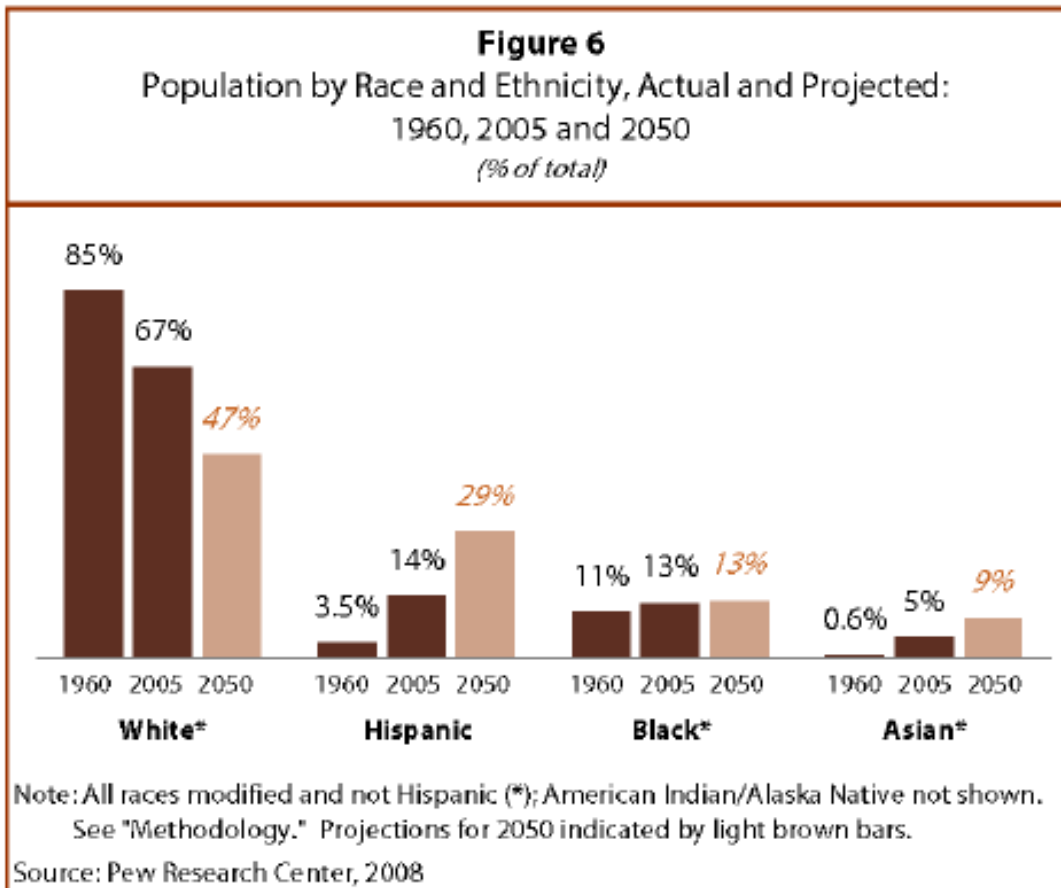


AIAN = American Indian and Alaskan Native; API = Asian and Pacific Islander

<sup>5</sup> *Population by OMB Race Categories and Hispanic Origin 2000 and 2010*. OFM, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Passel, J. and Cohn, D. *U.S. Population Projections: 2005 – 2050*. Pew Research Center, 2008.

# United States Population Projections



## Implications for outdoor recreation and the recreation economy

Washington's projected population growth and changing demographics will have a significant effect on outdoor recreation and associated economic sector. A few of the major implications are:

- Population growth—a major economic driver—is expected to be primarily the result of in-migration, which, in turn, is strongly affected by the attractiveness of Washington as a place to live.
- Accommodating increasing population will necessitate the development of more recreational facilities and a wider spectrum of recreational opportunities.
- Population growth may lead to exceeding the capacity of some recreation areas and facilities and resulting in use and user conflicts. In the past, this has often resulted in changes in management strategies (for example, requiring back country permits or restricting automobile traffic in national parks).

- By 2030, more than one of every five Washingtonians will be 65 years old or older. This age group is becoming increasingly fit, but will be seeking different recreational experiences, for example car or RV camping rather than backpacking.
- The increasing numbers of older Washingtonians and veterans from recent military conflicts will likely lead to the need for more recreational opportunities for people with a wide range of disabilities.
- The number of people belonging to racial and ethnic minorities will likely continue to grow faster than the general population. However, outdoor recreational opportunities have traditionally been underutilized by these groups, especially in more rural areas such as state and national parks and national forest lands. Among the reasons for lower participation are issues such as access, exposure, economics and cultural tradition.<sup>7,8</sup> In addition, preferred recreational activities differ between racial and ethnic groups.<sup>9</sup>

A detailed analysis of recreation trends in Washington, including those affected by demographics, can be found in *Outdoor Recreation in Washington: The State 2013 Outdoor Recreation Plan*.<sup>10</sup> The report discusses trends in types and levels of recreational activities over time and by different age, racial and ethnic groups.

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<sup>7</sup> Covelli, E., Burns, R. and Greafe, A. *Perceived Constraints By Non-Traditional Users On the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest*, Proceedings of the 2006 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium, GTR-NRS-P-14.

<sup>8</sup> Edmondson, D. *Black and Brown Faces in America's Wild Places*. Adventure Publications, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Grossman, J. *Expanding the Palette: As America's population become more diverse, will its changes be reflected in park visitors?* National Parks Conservation Association, Summer, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Washington Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO), 2013.

## Washington State Population By Age Group\*

1970-2010, 2011-2013 (estimated), and 2014-2040 (forecast)

	<b>All ages</b>	<b>5 thru 17</b>	<b>18 thru 64</b>	<b>65 &amp; over</b>	<b>65 thru 84</b>	<b>85 plus</b>
1970	3,413,244	881,040	1,930,617	320,712	294,767	25,945
1971	3,436,299	868,718	1,957,673	327,354	300,559	26,795
1972	3,430,299	851,130	1,965,840	334,337	306,848	27,489
1973	3,444,299	835,981	1,994,639	341,696	313,460	28,236
1974	3,508,700	835,470	2,055,573	351,261	321,732	29,529
1975	3,567,901	834,668	2,112,705	361,246	331,082	30,164
1976	3,634,904	834,888	2,175,441	372,009	340,706	31,303
1977	3,715,400	831,879	2,243,350	384,909	351,973	32,936
1978	3,836,199	829,279	2,339,841	398,734	363,957	34,777
1979	3,979,199	831,451	2,448,700	414,471	377,862	36,609
1980	4,132,156	833,237	2,561,234	431,562	390,086	41,476
1981	4,229,278	829,672	2,633,023	445,116	402,450	42,666
1982	4,276,549	818,415	2,669,976	457,173	413,457	43,716
1983	4,307,247	809,390	2,689,201	471,342	426,630	44,712
1984	4,354,067	809,474	2,717,466	484,286	438,394	45,892
1985	4,415,785	820,108	2,753,276	497,708	450,658	47,050
1986	4,462,212	826,508	2,776,731	512,219	463,428	48,791
1987	4,527,098	835,931	2,815,295	527,983	477,896	50,087
1988	4,616,886	847,720	2,874,610	541,731	490,097	51,634
1989	4,728,077	862,705	2,947,663	556,077	502,519	53,558
1990	4,866,692	893,252	3,027,679	571,405	515,978	55,427
1991	5,021,339	930,866	3,117,160	586,369	528,316	58,053
1992	5,141,178	960,367	3,183,246	598,818	538,097	60,721
1993	5,265,691	992,179	3,256,267	609,764	546,436	63,328
1994	5,364,342	1,020,268	3,315,574	619,380	553,381	65,999
1995	5,470,108	1,050,730	3,382,644	629,389	560,851	68,538
1996	5,567,764	1,077,440	3,446,981	639,389	567,542	71,847
1997	5,663,763	1,101,252	3,516,527	645,253	570,286	74,967
1998	5,750,030	1,113,531	3,584,746	652,707	574,332	78,375
1999	5,830,833	1,119,908	3,653,058	658,832	577,127	81,705
2000	5,894,143	1,119,533	3,718,165	662,141	578,058	84,083
2001	5,970,330	1,121,086	3,781,809	669,672	583,239	86,433
2002	6,059,316	1,125,692	3,854,135	678,254	589,422	88,832
2003	6,126,885	1,125,535	3,911,073	688,679	596,791	91,888
2004	6,208,515	1,127,775	3,977,081	699,642	604,657	94,985
2005	6,298,816	1,132,190	4,044,280	713,844	614,874	98,970
2006	6,420,258	1,143,545	4,131,621	731,237	627,595	103,642
2007	6,525,086	1,148,590	4,202,580	751,043	642,541	108,502
2008	6,608,245	1,145,629	4,254,838	776,137	664,403	111,734

2009	6,672,159	1,140,370	4,292,777	801,676	686,458	115,218
2010	6,724,540	1,141,697	4,315,509	827,677	710,406	117,271
2011	6,767,900	1,135,372	4,341,667	851,440	731,114	120,326
2012	6,817,770	1,135,839	4,350,500	893,661	770,538	123,123
2013	6,882,400	1,141,536	4,366,679	936,991	811,449	125,542
2014	6,951,785	1,148,173	4,387,202	977,738	850,064	127,674
2015	7,023,968	1,155,271	4,407,424	1,020,025	890,207	129,818
2016	7,096,907	1,161,908	4,429,112	1,060,926	929,287	131,639
2017	7,173,270	1,169,721	4,450,454	1,103,969	971,199	132,770
2018	7,250,248	1,177,148	4,468,044	1,150,919	1,017,068	133,851
2019	7,327,330	1,185,279	4,484,523	1,197,872	1,063,043	134,829
2020	7,404,391	1,196,314	4,495,729	1,247,128	1,110,105	137,023
2021	7,482,190	1,207,588	4,508,165	1,295,127	1,155,787	139,340
2022	7,560,188	1,218,923	4,522,053	1,342,753	1,200,595	142,158
2023	7,638,335	1,230,655	4,536,464	1,390,560	1,244,474	146,086
2024	7,715,544	1,242,823	4,553,073	1,435,382	1,285,127	150,255
2025	7,791,702	1,252,512	4,570,219	1,481,666	1,326,606	155,060
2026	7,866,648	1,261,991	4,589,137	1,525,760	1,365,077	160,683
2027	7,940,352	1,273,029	4,608,927	1,566,244	1,398,357	167,887
2028	8,012,837	1,284,437	4,628,318	1,605,549	1,427,153	178,396
2029	8,083,956	1,296,810	4,649,275	1,640,969	1,452,325	188,644
2030	8,153,740	1,308,284	4,672,974	1,673,168	1,474,826	198,342
2031	8,222,259	1,319,447	4,703,423	1,697,492	1,491,025	206,467
2032	8,289,683	1,330,438	4,735,448	1,719,163	1,495,221	223,942
2033	8,355,636	1,340,906	4,766,741	1,740,497	1,499,959	240,538
2034	8,420,290	1,351,376	4,795,534	1,762,893	1,508,384	254,509
2035	8,483,929	1,360,735	4,819,709	1,789,832	1,521,171	268,661
2036	8,546,647	1,368,962	4,846,519	1,814,177	1,532,324	281,853
2037	8,608,651	1,376,569	4,881,114	1,830,423	1,534,999	295,424
2038	8,670,073	1,383,716	4,920,891	1,841,166	1,530,710	310,456
2039	8,730,931	1,390,527	4,963,159	1,848,997	1,524,233	324,764
2040	8,791,389	1,397,560	5,001,066	1,860,390	1,520,693	339,697

\*From Washington State Office of Financial Management Excel Utility to Interactively Summarize Population by User-Defined Age Group, downloaded 3-1-2014.