

Media Relations

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UNH Carsey Institute: The Increasing Diversity of America's Youth

DURHAM, N.H. – Diversity is increasing among America's youth because of unprecedented population increases of minority children, particularly Hispanic, as well as a significant decline in the number of non-Hispanic white children, according to research from the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire. America's rapidly changing racial and ethnic composition was seen in increased child diversity between 2007 and 2012 despite the negative effect of the Great Recession, which reduced births among women in their 20s by nearly 15 percent.

This research is summarized in the Carsey Institute brief "The Increasing Diversity of America's Youth." Kenneth Johnson, senior demographer at the Carsey Institute and professor of sociology at UNH, wrote the report along with Daniel Lichter, director of the Cornell Population Center and Ferris Family professor in policy analysis and management at Cornell University, and Andrew Schaefer and Luke Rogers, research assistants at the Carsey Institute and doctoral students in sociology at UNH.

"America is becoming an increasingly diverse society though this diversity is experienced unevenly," Johnson said. "Natural population increase—particularly fertility rates—will continue to reshape the racial and ethnic mix of the country, and this change will be reflected first among the nation's youngest residents. Issues of race and racial inclusion will continue to fuel debates about multiculturalism and social, economic, and cultural fragmentation."

In 1990, 32 percent of the population younger than age 20 was minority, increasing to 39 percent in 2000. By July of 2012, 47 percent of the 82.5 million people under age 20 in America were from minority populations. In contrast, minorities represented only 33 percent of the 231.4 million residents age 20 or older. Diversity is increasing because the minority child population is growing, while the non-Hispanic white child population dwindles. There are 7.7 million more minority young people now than in 2000, but 5.7 million fewer white children.

From a demographic standpoint, Hispanics are driving rapid increases in diversity among America's children. In fact, most of the growth in the minority child population between 2000 and 2012 was attributable to Hispanic births. Immigration was an important source of growth in the Hispanic population, but more than 95% of Hispanic children under the age of 5 were U.S. born. Indeed, three-fourths of the entire Hispanic population gain between July 2011 and July 2012 came from natural increase—the difference between births and deaths—rather than immigration. And this trend will likely continue. Hispanics are younger, which influences mortality as well as fertility. In 2010 there were 6.6 births for every Hispanic death; in contrast, the ratio was 1.1 and 2.1 births for every death among non-Hispanic whites and blacks, respectively.

"While conventional wisdom says that increasing diversity is primarily a big city phenomenon, the evidence suggests otherwise. In fact, the largest absolute and percentage gains are outside the urban core counties of metropolitan areas with more than 1 million residents. The suburban and smaller metropolitan counties are home to 45.1 million of the nation's 82.5 million young people," Johnson said.

The Carsey Institute brief about this research is available at <http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publication/1109>.

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Agricultural Experiment Station, and an anonymous donor.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy research on vulnerable children, youth, and families and on sustainable community development. The institute gives policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. For more information about the Carsey Institute, go to www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu.

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 12,200 undergraduate and 2,300 graduate students.

Media Contact: [Erika Mantz](#) | 603-862-1567 | UNH Media Relations | [@unhnews](#)

UNH Experts available for comment:

- [Ken Johnson](#)

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