

# AMERICA AT THE DAWN OF A NEW CENTURY:

## An Introduction

### Findings from the U.S. Census Bureau reveal the complexity of American life at the beginning of the 21st century.

Researchers scour thousands of official documents, media reports, books, and letters chronicling the key events and people of the last 100 years and looking for trends that will take this country into the next century. But where do they turn when they want to find the facts about the everyday lives of people living in the United States? Throughout most of the 20th century, the U.S. Census Bureau has been the source for information on things that matter — family, income, poverty, education, and more.

The Census Bureau uses censuses, surveys, and administrative records to get the numbers that policymakers and government officials must have to make informed decisions. Educators need to know if existing schools will be adequate to house the next generation of students. Human resource planners demand the facts on today's working-age adults. Healthcare providers want to know how they can best balance the competing requirements of young and old. Nonprofit organizations look to Census Bureau numbers to evaluate both their clients' needs and their sponsors' resources. Moreover, the facts that the Census Bureau collects are versatile. The same statistics that are of interest to educators are also of interest to toy manufacturers. The facts on working-age adults serve both employers and union leaders. The information on the well-being of the American public is a concern for everyone living in the United States.

*The Population Profile of the United States: 2000* (Internet Release), which is available only on the Internet, is an update of *The Population Profile of the United States: 1999*, which was published in 2001. Using the new numbers from Census 2000 and recently available surveys,<sup>1</sup> it carries the reader into the

<sup>1</sup> Estimates from Census Bureau survey data are calculated using sample data, weighted by population controls based on the 1990 decennial census. As such, these estimates will differ from population estimates computed from either the intercensal estimates program, or the 2000 decennial census.

21st century. The wide variety of available information indicates that the population of the United States is both diverse and dynamic.

### WHAT'S NEW in the *Population Profile of the United States: 2000*

- The 33 million people added to the U.S. population between 1990 and 2000 is the largest census-to-census increase ever. (See the chapter on population distribution and composition.)
- Between March 1999 and 2000, 1.7 million people moved into the United States from abroad. Two-thirds of these movers were foreign-born and not U.S. citizens. And most (1.2 million) moved into the South and West. (See the chapter on geographical mobility.)
- Almost one in every five people who moved within the United States wanted a new or better house or apartment. More than one in ten moved out of a rented home and into an owned home. (See the chapter on geographical mobility.)
- In 2000, only 11 percent of women ended their childbearing years with four or more children, compared with 36 percent of women in 1976. (See the chapter on fertility.)
- Families represented 81 percent of households in 1970, but only 69 percent of households in 2000. The decline in the proportion of married-couple families with children under age 18 was especially evident, falling from 40 percent of all households in 1970 to 24 percent in 2000. (See the chapter on families and living arrangements.)
- Eighty-eight percent of children living with two parents lived with both their biological mother and biological father in 1996. An additional 9 percent lived with a biological parent and a stepparent. Just over 2 percent of children in two-parent households lived with two adoptive parents or a combination of adoptive, biological, or stepparents. (See the chapter on the living arrangements of children.)

- Much of the growth in elementary and high school enrollment has been driven by the increase in births that took place between 1981 and 1994 as women born during the baby boom reached their peak child-bearing ages. In 2000, 65 percent of students had a baby-boomer parent.<sup>2</sup> (See the chapter on school enrollment.)
- The educational attainment of young adults may be leveling off. The percentage of people aged 25 to 29 in 2000 who had completed high school was 88 percent, no different than it was in 1998 or 1999. (See the chapter on educational attainment.)
- Even small amounts of postsecondary education are associated with higher earnings. People who had “some college, but no degree” studied, on average, less than 1 year past high school. However, this additional education was enough to increase their average earnings by \$340 per month. (See the chapter on educational attainment.)
- The majority of students (57 percent) had access to a computer both at home and at school in 2000. Twenty-three percent of children had computer access only at school, while 10 percent had access only at home. The remaining 10 percent of students had no access. (See the chapter on computer use.)
- Real median household income did not change significantly between 1999 and 2000 after experiencing 5 consecutive years of annual increases. (See the chapter on income.)
- Although children under age 18 were only 26 percent of the total population in 2000, they represented 37 percent of the poor. (See the chapter on poverty.)
- Among the native population in the United States, 12 percent were not covered by health insurance in 2000 at any time during the year. However, 16 percent of naturalized citizens and 41 percent of non-citizens were not covered. (See the chapter on health insurance coverage.)

<sup>2</sup> The term “baby-boomer parent” refers to native parents and does not include foreign-born parents.

- Thirty-nine percent of the foreign-born population entered the United States in 1990 or later and 28 percent in the 1980s. More than one in every three foreign-born people in the United States was a naturalized citizen. Among those who entered the country before 1970, eight out of ten were naturalized. (See the chapter on the foreign-born population.)
- Among children aged 6 to 14 in 1999, 6 percent had a physical, learning, or mental condition that affected their ability to do regular schoolwork. (See the chapter on people with disabilities.)
- Sixty-one percent of women aged 16 and older were working or looking for work in 2000, compared with 74 percent of men, according to the Current Population Survey. Earnings were lower for women than they were for men. The 1999 median earnings for women aged 15 and older who worked full time, year-round was \$26,300, compared with \$36,500 for their male counterparts.<sup>3</sup> (See the chapter on women and men.)

<sup>3</sup> Information on income was collected in the March 2001 Current Population Survey and reflects incomes in the previous calendar year.

## The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

- Read on to find out more about people living in the United States.
- Use the box at the end of each chapter to find easily accessible Internet sources, e-mail addresses, and telephone contacts for more information.
- Check Appendix A, “The Census Can Tell You More,” for the names of important Census Bureau reports and how to obtain them. Also listed in this section are important contacts in your area: Regional Census Offices, State Data Centers, and Census Depository Libraries.