What is a Population Projection?
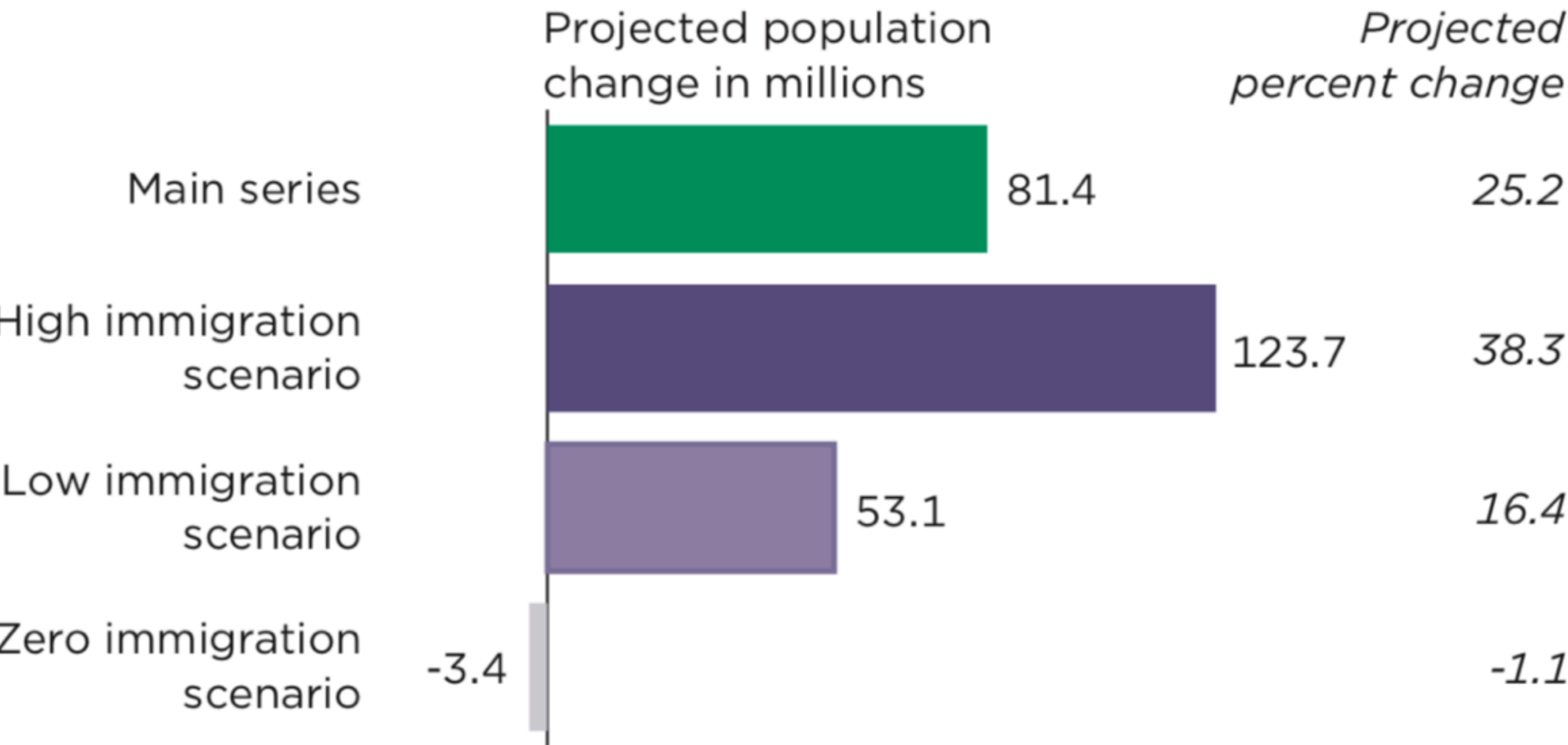
Zero immigration scenario. Assumes that immigration into the United States falls to zero (the theoretical minimum). Under this scenario, there is no immigration, but we still allow for emigration out of the United States. This offers the most dramatic picture of demographic change.

High immigration scenario. Assumes immigration increases by 50.0 percent compared with levels from 2011 to 2015 for all projected years. This scenario shows what the outcome would be if we were underestimating immigration by half in the main series.

Low immigration scenario. Assumes that immigration rates are roughly cut in half from their 2011 to 2015 levels. This scenario is not strictly 50.0 percent less, but is log symmetrical to the values for the high migration scenario. As a result, the projected migration rates vary between 40 and 50 percent less than those projected for the main series in any of the given years, starting with 2017.

Figure 2.
Projected Population Change Between 2016 and 2060 by Immigration Scenario

Population change between 2016 and 2060 ranges from −3.4 to 123.7 million, depending on immigration.

	Projected population change in millions	Projected percent change
Main series	81.4	25.2
High immigration scenario	123.7	38.3
Low immigration scenario	53.1	16.4
Zero immigration scenario	-3.4	-1.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 National Population Projections.

Back to Forecasts…

Forecasts focus on…
- Making a statement about the most likely future
- Evaluation of various possible assumptions and determination of what is most likely
- Forecasting is more of an art than a science