# Sharper Drop in D.C. Population Foreseen; Census Bureau, Revising Two-Year-Old Estimate, Predicts Decrease of 31,000 by Year 2000

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## Body

The District's ***population*** will ***drop*** more sharply than previously forecast because a growing influx of new immigrants will fail to offset an increasing flow of people out of the city, according to new ***census*** projections released yesterday.

The city's ***population***, now 554,000, will ***drop*** to 523,000 by ***2000***, according to the new forecast. That figure is 14,000 lower than a ***census*** projection published two ***years*** ago. In their new forecast, officials increased their ***estimates*** both for immigration and outmigration, resulting in a larger net loss than previously projected.

The continuing ***population*** hemorrhage -- of blacks and whites alike, if current trends continue -- is likely to shrink the city's already eroding tax base and further reduce its ability to provide basic services. At the same time, the District will be confronted with an expanding ***population*** of low-income immigrants.

As it ***predicted*** two ***years*** ago, the U.S. ***Census Bureau*** forecasts that the District's ***population*** will rebound after ***2000*** because of immigration, but at a slower pace than previously forecast: It will be in 2020, not 2015, that the city's ***population*** will surpass the 1990 ***Census*** count of 606,900.

The change in the District's forecast is driven to some extent by national trends that also will affect suburban jurisdictions. For Maryland and Virginia, the new ***census predictions*** show more immigrants moving in and fewer people moving from other states than previously forecast. Over the next three decades, Virginia is ***predicted*** to rank eighth among states in the number of new immigrants; Maryland is ***predicted*** to rank ninth.

Both Maryland and Virginia will grow steadily, according to projections. Maryland, which has 5 million people, is ***predicted*** to have 5.3 million by ***2000***. Virginia, which has 6.6 million people, is expected to have 7 million by ***2000***.

Demographers and economists said the ***census prediction*** for the next few ***years*** appears reasonable, although the pace of immigration could be slower than anticipated because of a crackdown on benefits to non-citizens in the new federal welfare reform law. They said the region's growth increasingly will be driven by immigration and births, not -- as in the booming 1980s -- by a flood of new residents from other states.

"This is probably the pattern we're going to be looking at for quite a long time," said economist Stephen Fuller, of George Mason University.

One reason is that U.S. residents are less willing to move because of tighter job markets, slow housing markets and the difficulty of moving a two-career family. Immigrants tend to be young, mobile and ready to relocate to a better economy than the one they left, he said.

"Capital cities tend to be attractive to immigrants," Fuller said. "In almost every other country . . . the capital city is the most important city. The capital city here -- even though not the most important city in the country -- is an attractive city" despite the problems that are driving middle-class residents away.

Overall, Fuller sees immigration as a plus for the local economy. Immigrants often "will do any kind of work" and are less likely than the ***population*** overall to claim welfare. He said immigrants often are entrepreneurial; this region ranks among the top cities nationally in Hispanic-owned businesses, for example.

But Robert Manning, a sociologist at American University, said the immigrants feeding the District's ***population*** growth are more likely to need help than those who move to the suburbs. They are less likely to speak English and are more likely to be poor, single, without relatives or other social ties. He's also concerned about "the next crisis: Nobody talks about the second-generation Latinos who don't speak English and who have a high dropout rate."

The growing number of immigrants in the area has fueled complaints from blacks about Asian-owned businesses in the city and protests from some suburban parents about the growing cost of services to foreign-speaking children.

But immigration is not a widely perceived crisis here, as it is in California. When Ken Billingsley, a demographer with the Northern Virginia Planning District Commission, was in San Diego recently, many people said immigration was the area's biggest problem.

One reason for Washington's popularity with immigrants, he said, is "the word may be getting back that you're not going to run into the same kind of hostility, and the jobs are still there."

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