

Tourism and Demography

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Edited by

**Ian Yeoman, Cathy H. C. Hsu,
Karen A. Smith and Sandra Watson**

US Tourism: Arizona at the Leading Edge

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US Tourism: Arizona at the Leading Edge



Cheryl Cothran

Objectives

The purpose of this chapter is to examine:

- ◆ How US demographic trends track with the industrialized world generally, using one rapidly-growing US state – Arizona – as a case study for US tourism;
- ◆ The challenges to Arizona tourism from population growth, immigration, and other major social trends;
- ◆ How new approaches will be required to respond to changing international and domestic tourism markets;
- ◆ How declining interest in outdoor recreation threatens Arizona's traditional tourism drivers: national parks and scenic lands;
- ◆ Examine how changes in family composition, income, and the role of women will affect the economic impact of tourism.

Introduction

The 19th century French philosopher Auguste Comte, the father of modern sociology, is reputed to have said that 'demography is destiny'. If this is so, then it is possible to anticipate future challenges facing the tourism industry. Demographic change is neither positive nor negative; it merely is what it is. The issue for tourism industry professionals is how to use demographic projections to prepare for coming changes and guide tourism planning in more sustainable and less volatile directions.

As others in this book have established, almost all future population growth will occur in developing rather than developed nations. In contrast, many industrialized countries will experience significant population declines due to low fertility rates; by the year 2050, Italy's population will decline by about a fifth, Japan's by a fourth, and Russia's by a third. The US is facing significant demographic challenges, but population decline is not among them. In fact, the US population is expected to continue growing due to the combination of continued immigration and higher birth rates among immigrant groups. The US reached the milestone of 300 million people in late 2006, and is expected to reach the 400 million mark in 2039. As a nation of immigrants, the US is racially and ethnically diverse, and by 2042 what is now the minority population in the US will constitute a majority, as Hispanics triple to around 30%, African-Americans increase to 15%, and Asians climb to 9% – together accounting for 54% of total population (see Table 9.1).

Located on the southern US border with Mexico, Arizona is at the leading edge of population and demographic changes. It has been one of the fastest-growing US states, averaging more than 35% population growth every decade since World War II; from 2000–2005, it grew at three times the national average – 15.3% compared to 5.3%. The reasons for this growth include several historic trends: migration West and South within the US to the 'Sunbelt'; accelerated out-migration from neighbouring California; lower taxes and cost of living in Arizona; renewed flow of immigrants from Latin America; and, the higher birth rates of Hispanic residents. Thus, Arizona's growth is due to both high immigration and high in-migration from other states, and is expected to remain the first or second fastest-growing state through 2050. Arizona's net migration gains come from almost every US state, with the largest number from California, which sends an average of 316,000 net migrants annually to Arizona. Plus, Arizona gets at least 10,000 net migrants annually from states including Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, and Washington (US Census Bureau, 2007a).

Chapter extract

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