

California's population growth expected to slowdown

By Rebecca Trounson, Los Angeles Times

California's population will grow more slowly in the next few decades than it has in the past – and that is good for the state's still-struggling economy, according to a new USC report.

The study projects that the state's population, now 37.3 million, will continue to increase at a healthy clip – about 1 percent annually – for years to come. But at least through 2050, we are unlikely to see the boom rates of recent decades, especially the 1980s.

“This is more manageable growth and that's good news for California,” said Dowell Myers, a USC demography and urban planning professor who co-wrote the report with colleague John Pitkin. “We're returning to a more normal rate of growth.”

The cooling pace means the state, city and county governments and other entities will have more time to prepare for a bigger population than they did in years past, allowing for more effective planning, Myers and other experts said. That could ensure that new roads and parks, for example, are put in areas where they are most needed and where growth is likely to be sustained, they said.

The researchers said the slowdown will mainly stem from a sharp drop in immigration to California, part of a nationwide trend detailed in other recent studies.

Although the slower pace of growth may be a net positive for California, it will require revisions to an array of public and private plans, including for schools, water projects, transportation, hospitals, highways and other infrastructure.

“Those of us who’ve been here for a while think of California as a place that’s grow, grow, grow – and go, go, go – but this shows that we’re not that anymore,” Hans Johnson, a demographer with the Public Policy Institute of California, said of the USC study released Tuesday. “We’re now more typical of the rest of the nation.”

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