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## State Demographer Details Arizona Trends Affecting Education

Projected drops in overall K-12 enrollment as a result of declining birth rates in Arizona may impact the [state's goal](#) to increase educational attainment, according to demographic data presented to the Arizona Board of Regents.

State demographer Jim Chang, Ph.D., shared state and national population trends and forecasts pertaining to education populations. Trends reveal drops in birth rates, evident in kindergarten enrollment in Arizona that peaked in 2012 and started to decline in 2013. Total K-12 enrollment is projected to be flat for the next few years but start to decline soon. Depending on net migration, the decline could start as early as 2021 and will almost certainly happen by 2024, according to the data presented.

Despite the reductions, Dr. Chang forecasts Arizona's K-12 ethnic diversity will remain relatively consistent over the next two decades. Hispanics currently account for 44 percent of all Arizona children 17 and under. That percentage is projected to increase to 45 percent by 2035.

In addition to declining K-12 populations, Dr. Chang noted a number of additional headwinds to increasing educational attainment in Arizona.

- High poverty rates: Poverty rates in Arizona are consistently above the national poverty rate, currently ranking 11th among states.
- Low attainment rates among younger Arizonans: When comparing bachelor degree attainment among 25-34 year olds, Arizona ranks 40th. Bachelor's degree attainment for this group is a full 7 percentage points below the national average (34 percent to 27 percent).
- Arizona young men attain at rates significantly below the national average: Twenty-four percent of Arizona's young men between the ages of 25-34 have a bachelor's degree or higher. Nationally, 30 percent of young men and 39 percent of women in this age group hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

- A low percentage of Arizona children are born to mothers with a bachelor's or advanced degree: Among Arizona births in 2017 to mothers 25 years and over, approximately 33 percent were to mothers with a bachelor's or advanced degree, a full 9 percentage points below the national average. Arizona ranks 47th in this metric.

"It is absolutely essential for us to understand these important demographic trends so we can focus our efforts in the most impactful way," said ABOR Chair Ron Shoopman. "As we work with statewide partners to increase educational attainment in Arizona, this is a call to action to ensure we communicate with all students in the state about the importance of completing a degree or certificate after high school."

According to the data, Arizona currently ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in terms of the proportion of the population 25 and over with a bachelor's or advanced degree, yet the state ranks 40<sup>th</sup> nationally for individuals who are 25 to 34 years old.

This trend represents a reversal of the general trend across the nation where younger generations are better educated than older generations. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Projection from 2016-2026, 38 percent of all new jobs will require a bachelor's degree or higher and 52 percent will require some post high school education.

"These are very real issues we must consider as we work with statewide partners on strategies to increase educational attainment," said ABOR Executive Director John Arnold. "We are very appreciative of Dr. Chang's informative presentation and will consider all of these trends as we continue our work."

Dr. Chang's presentation is [available here](#) and also includes trends on total fertility rates, deaths, natural population change, migration and public school enrollment.

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