

# ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, APPLICATION

## What Can Population Trends Mean for Our Parish?

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Population trends in MissionInsite reports can vary greatly depending on the community in which your parish resides. While some areas within the Archdiocese will see little change projected over the next 10 years, other areas can expect moderate growth, or even a decline. MissionInsite also gives population changes since 2000, drawing a more complete picture.

But those overall population numbers can become much more meaningful if we analyze which segments of the population are expected to change. Let's consider population changes among various age groups. Here are some ways to evaluate and apply the data.

### Simple Analysis

After defining a geographical area around your parish, with either a polygon outlining where your members reside or a radius around your parish, look at the population trends for the area. By 2029, will there be little change, moderate decline, significant growth? What was the trend since 2000? How did your parish membership and attendance trends compare to area population trends? Consider rerunning the report for a different geographic area, such as surrounding communities, or the entire county or Deanery, for comparison.

Although ExecutiveInsite, QuickInsite and FullInsite reports all provide population trends, QuickInsite and FullInsite reports color code 10-year population trends in their StoryView on page 2 of the reports.

### Interpretation

Below are portions of MissionInsite reports for two different areas in Milwaukee's Archdiocese.

In this first example, population aged 25-34 is projected to grow by 60%, whereas overall population will increase only 10%. Not only will the population of singles and young families grow significantly in this area, but it will far outpace the overall population growth for the area. In fact, based upon growth rates of certain age segments, this same area showed a decline in median age, from 44 to 42 over the next 10 years - a reverse of the usual graying population trend.

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Phase of Life	Actual Population by Year & Phase			
	2010	2019	2024	2029
Before Formal Schooling: 0 to 4	1,548	1,356	1,529	1,949
Required Formal Schooling: 5 to 17	6,201	4,445	3,921	3,967
College/Career Starts: 18 to 24	1,873	3,760	3,432	2,659
Singles & Young Families: 25 to 34	2,381	3,377	4,887	5,410
Families & Empty Nesters: 35 to 54	9,831	7,054	5,944	6,405
Enrichment Yrs Singles/Cpls: 55 to 64	3,962	5,680	5,731	4,741
Retirement Opportunities: 65 & over	3,142	5,471	7,360	9,271
<b>Total:</b>	<b>28,938</b>	<b>31,143</b>	<b>32,804</b>	<b>34,402</b>

← 60% growth 2019-2029 (pointing to 5,410)

← 10% growth 2019-2029 (pointing to 34,402)

In this next example from another area, the population of school-aged kids is expected to decline by 1% within five years, however, upon further investigation, population of early elementary kids will actually *increase* by 10%, late elementary to middle school kids will *decrease* by 11%, and high school kids will decline by nearly half that rate at 6%. Both ExecutivInsite and FullInsite reports detail population trends in school-aged kids.

Study Area	Study Area		
	2010	2019	2024
<b>School Age Population Trends</b>			
Early Elem: 5 to 9	1,144 34.22%	943 35.12%	1,034 39.42%
Late Elem-Mid: 10 to 14	1,320 39.49%	1,093 40.71%	977 37.25%
High School: 15 to 17	879 26.29%	649 24.17%	612 23.33%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>3,343 100.00%</b>	<b>2,685 100.00%</b>	<b>2,623 100.00%</b>

← 10% increase (pointing to 1,034)

← 1% decline (pointing to 2,623)

## Application

After reviewing population trends in your reports, what can you learn from this information to strengthen your ministries? Which age groups will be growing in numbers? How might you reach out to those groups in the community? How could growth in the 25-34-year-old population and subsequent birth rates affect sacramental numbers and associated preparation, as well as faith formation? Consider how changes in the number of adults with families, empty nesters, or retiring might affect ministry involvement and leadership at your parish. Will significant changes in the number of older adults change your outreach and spiritual support to seniors who are no longer able to get to Mass or will it inspire more end-of-life conversations?

Exploring population trends among age groups, discovering the story they tell, and applying them to your mission can be fascinating. How can I help you analyze, interpret and apply data for your parish? I look forward to hearing from you.

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