

2011 Trends: Census Highlights Demographic Shifts

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Future growth in the digital population will come from minority audiences

The overall growth of the online population in the US is stagnating, and most future growth will come from increases in minority audiences including Hispanics, blacks, seniors and children.

Hispanics are the fastest-growing segment of the US population, and eMarketer expects the Hispanic online population to grow by nearly 10 million people between 2010 and 2014.

Next year, eMarketer forecasts 32.2 million Hispanics, or 62.9% of the US Hispanic population, will be online. The results of the 2010 census could push those estimates up even further.

While the bureau has consistently projected strong growth within minority populations through 2050, the new figures for all races may change more than the bureau projected.

The census's open-ended questions on racial and ethnic background—including a write-in answer for filers who did not feel their background could be explained by a single check-box answer—caused much confusion and comment.

It is still unclear how respondents identified themselves and their families.

The black internet user population is somewhat smaller but also on the rise. eMarketer forecasts nearly 26 million blacks will go online at least monthly in 2011, for a penetration rate of 66.9%. By 2014, 72.3% of blacks will be online.

Marketers who are beginning to up their budgets as they put the recession behind them will do well to remember that minority groups are only increasing in importance online.

Advertisers must remember they make up an ever-greater portion of the audience of all media, but spending on Spanish-language and African-American media is also a must.

According to research from the Association of National Advertisers, more than half of US marketers would be increasing multicultural spending on both traditional and newer media.

“These audiences appreciate genuine efforts by marketers to understand them and communicate messages that resonate, which means more than including a demographically diverse cast in a mainstream television commercial or high-gloss magazine ad,” said Lisa E. Phillips, senior analyst at eMarketer.

“Brands that ignore the multicultural audience will find themselves ignored by a powerful segment of the population.”

For more information on marketing developments expected next year, stay tuned for the forthcoming eMarketer report “11 Trends for 2011.”

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