

Whatcom County

Population and Employment: Growth Projections and Preliminary Allocations

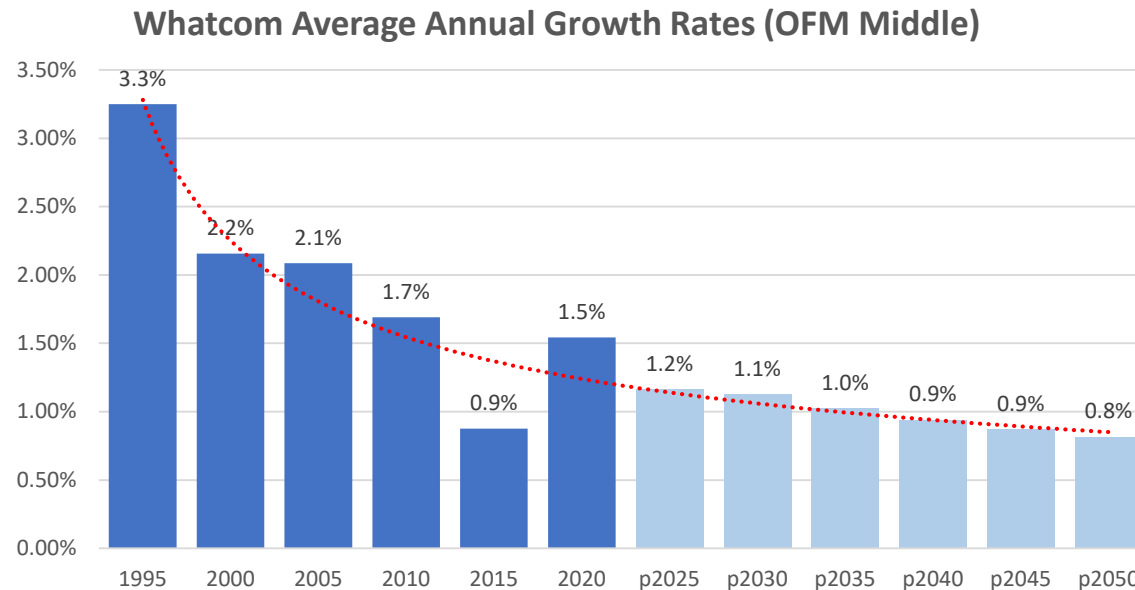
Elected Officials | May 8, 2024



Population and Employment Forecasts

Growth Fundamentals

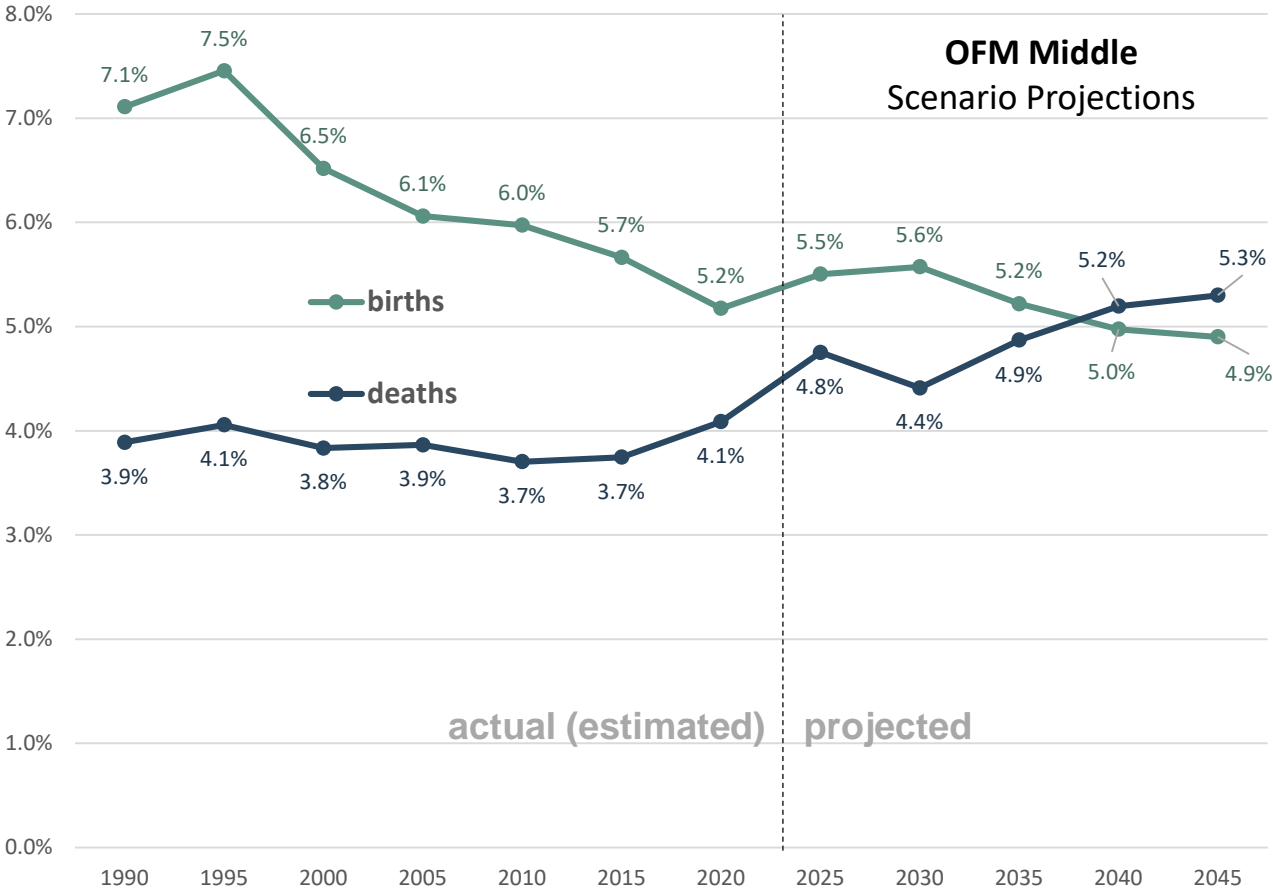
- The State of Washington OFM makes demographic projections at the state and county level
- Statewide and Whatcom County forecasts both assume decreasing average annual % growth in future years



Births minus Deaths = Natural Increase

- The fundamental dynamics behind that assumption are decreasing birth rates in the face of increasing death rates.

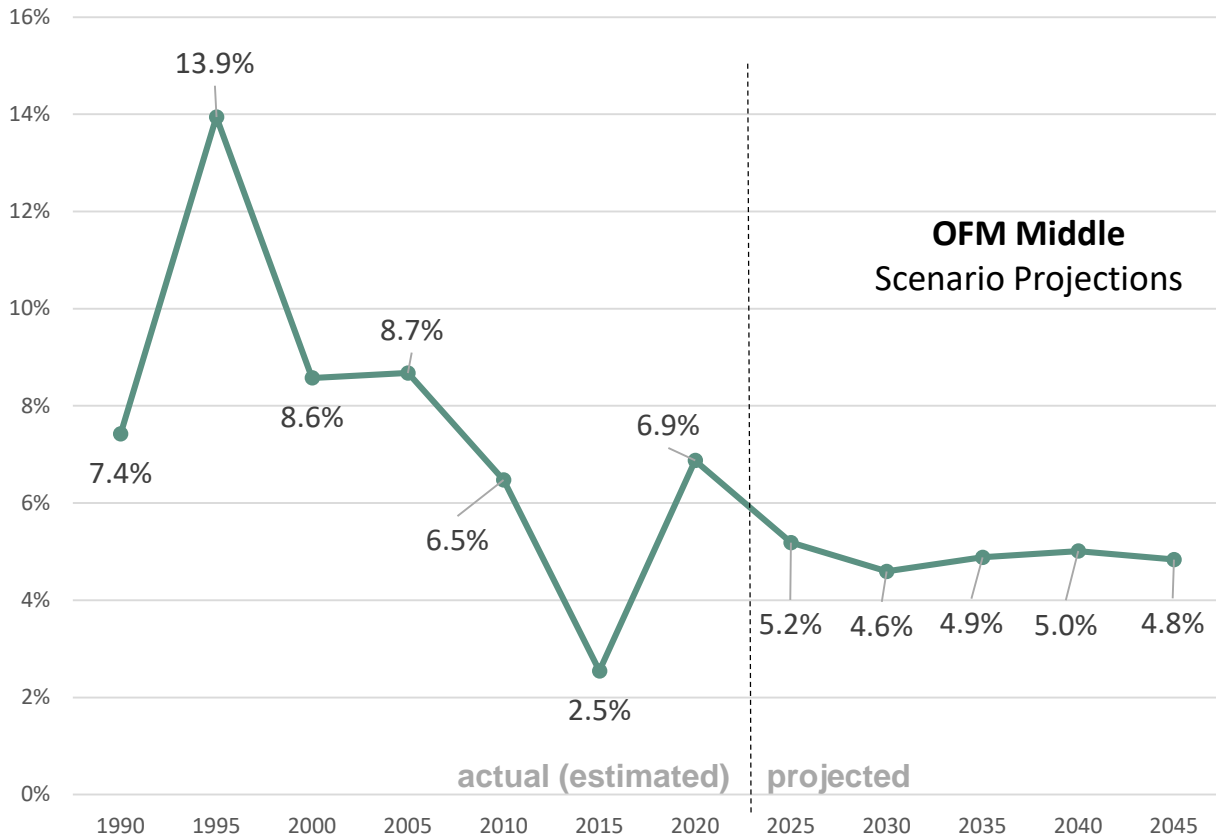
5-yr Births & Deaths as a Pct. of Population



Net Migration is a More Volatile Factor

- OFM assumes a relatively steady, but conservative net migration rate going forward

5-year Net Migration as % of Population

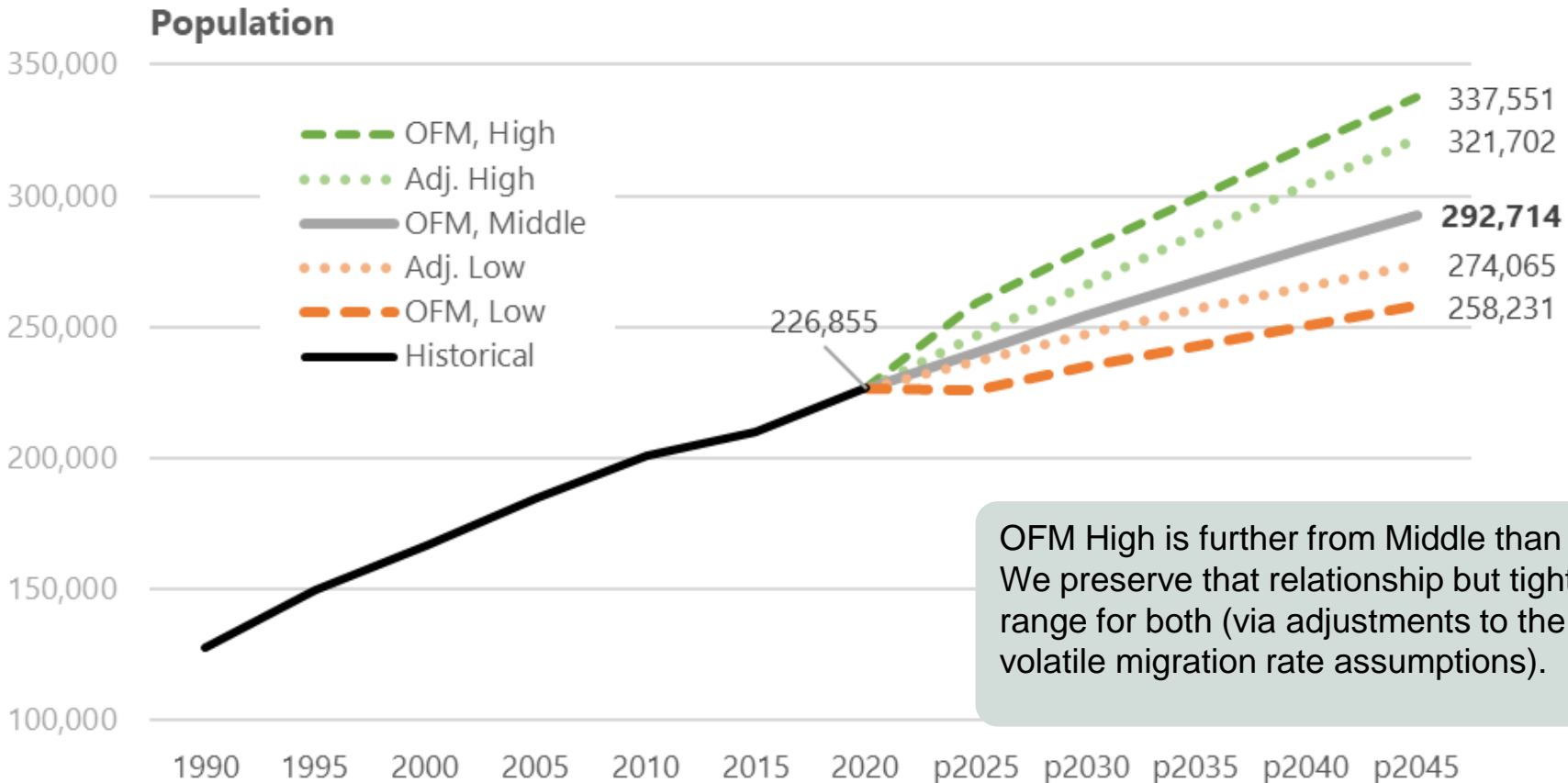


Updating Countywide Growth Projections

- Updates to countywide population and employment growth projections – and allocations of that growth to UGAs – generally followed methods used in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update.
 - Review of OFM **Middle** projections for population, 2023 to 2045
 - Revision of **Low** and **High** ranges -- general tightening to make extremes more actionable for jurisdictions' planning purposes
 - As with 2016, the OFM **Low** range was deemed too conservative relative to historical growth
 - OFM **High** range projection was also adjusted -- but not as much, to remain conservative for infrastructure planning (i.e. avoiding risk of under-building infrastructure in the face of higher-than-expected growth pressure).

OFM vs. Adjusted Population Growth

- Baseline (Middle) growth trajectory is tapering as natural increase declines and region depends more on net migration inflows.



OFM High is further from Middle than Low is. We preserve that relationship but tighten the range for both (via adjustments to the more volatile migration rate assumptions).

Allocation of Population Growth to UGAs

- After settling on a countywide growth trajectory and high/low range, we allocated overall population gains to UGAs

- Based on shares of recent (10-year) growth within each UGA boundary (and areas outside UGAs as a rural/resource lands category)

UGA	Pop. 2013	Pop. 2023	Growth 2013 to 2023	Share of County Population 2023	Share of 10-yr. County Growth
Bellingham	92,915	105,529	12,614	44.8%	42.4%
Birch Bay	7,698	8,908	1,210	3.8%	4.1%
Blaine	5,277	6,728	1,451	2.9%	4.9%
Cherry Point	35	61	26	0.0%	0.1%
Columbia Valley	3,060	3,577	517	1.5%	1.7%
Everson	2,683	3,171	488	1.3%	1.6%
Ferndale	12,962	16,762	3,800	7.1%	12.8%
Lynden	13,208	16,696	3,487	7.1%	11.7%
Nooksack	1,389	1,573	184	0.7%	0.6%
Sumas	1,445	1,810	365	0.8%	1.2%
Areas outside UGAs	65,349	70,985	5,637	30.1%	18.9%
Total	207,937	235,800	29,779	100.0%	100.0%

Allocation of Population Growth to UGAs

- Distributing shares for each of the scenario/ranges:

UGA	Allocation Share	Allocated Growth by Scenario (2023 to 2045)		
		Low	Middle	High
Bellingham	42.5%	16,242	24,158	36,462
Birch Bay	4.1%	1,555	2,313	3,490
Blaine	4.9%	1,865	2,774	4,186
Cherry Point	-	-	-	-
Columbia Valley	1.7%	665	988	1,492
Everson	1.6%	627	933	1,408
Ferndale	12.8%	4,883	7,262	10,961
Lynden	11.7%	4,481	6,665	10,060
Nooksack	0.6%	237	352	531
Sumas	1.2%	468	697	1,052
Areas outside UGAs	18.9%	7,243	10,773	16,260
Total Population Growth	100%	38,265	56,914	85,902

Employment Growth

- After looking at historical small area employment by industry, GIS-matched to UGA boundaries
- We computed shares by industry type (in broad groups of Industrial, Retail, Commercial, Resources) and by UGA to guide allocation across UGAs:

Middle Scenario	UGA	Resources	Industrial	Retail	Comm'l	Total
	Bellingham	138	2,820	1,841	10,373	15,172
	Birch Bay	0	22	10	92	124
	Blaine	4	327	48	322	701
	Cherry Point	0	450	0	43	493
	Columbia Valley	0	6	3	4	13
	Everson	10	88	24	81	203
	Ferndale	19	961	201	961	2,141
	Lynden	20	606	183	991	1,799
	Nooksack	0	29	7	44	79
	Sumas	2	98	8	43	150
	Area outside UGAs	736	927	172	1,567	3,403
	Whatcom Total	928	6,333	2,497	14,521	24,279