

Whatcom County

Population and Employment: Growth Projections and Preliminary Allocations

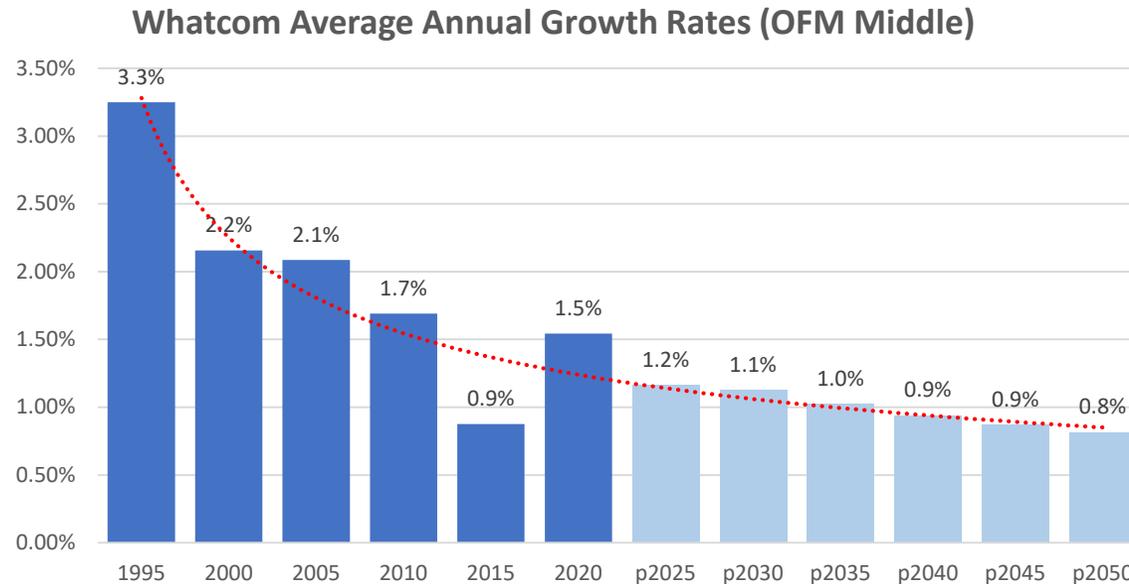
Whatcom County Council Planning and Development Committee | June 4, 2024



Population and Employment Forecasts

Growth Fundamentals

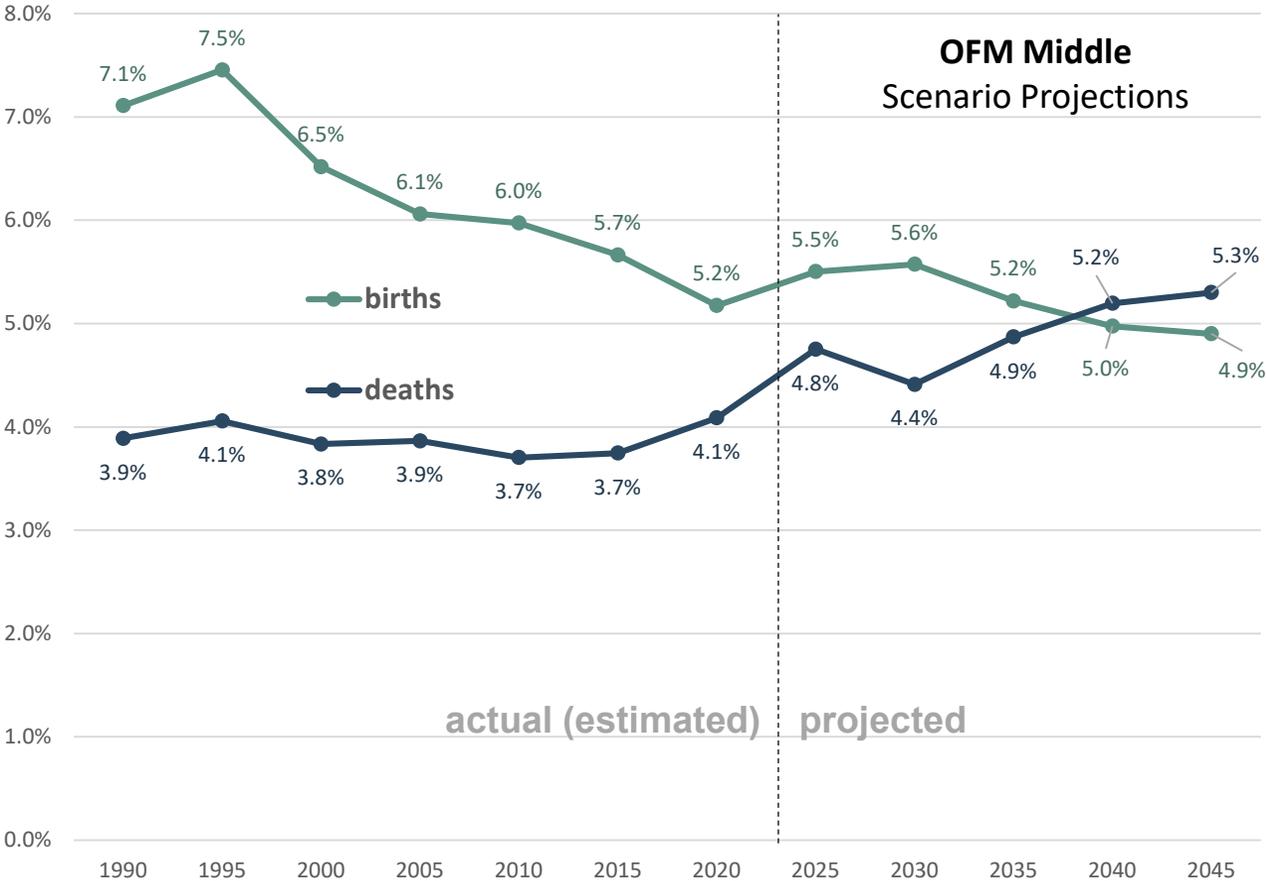
- The State of Washington OFM makes demographic projections at the state and county level
- Statewide and Whatcom County forecasts both assume decreasing average annual % growth in future years



Births minus Deaths = Natural Increase

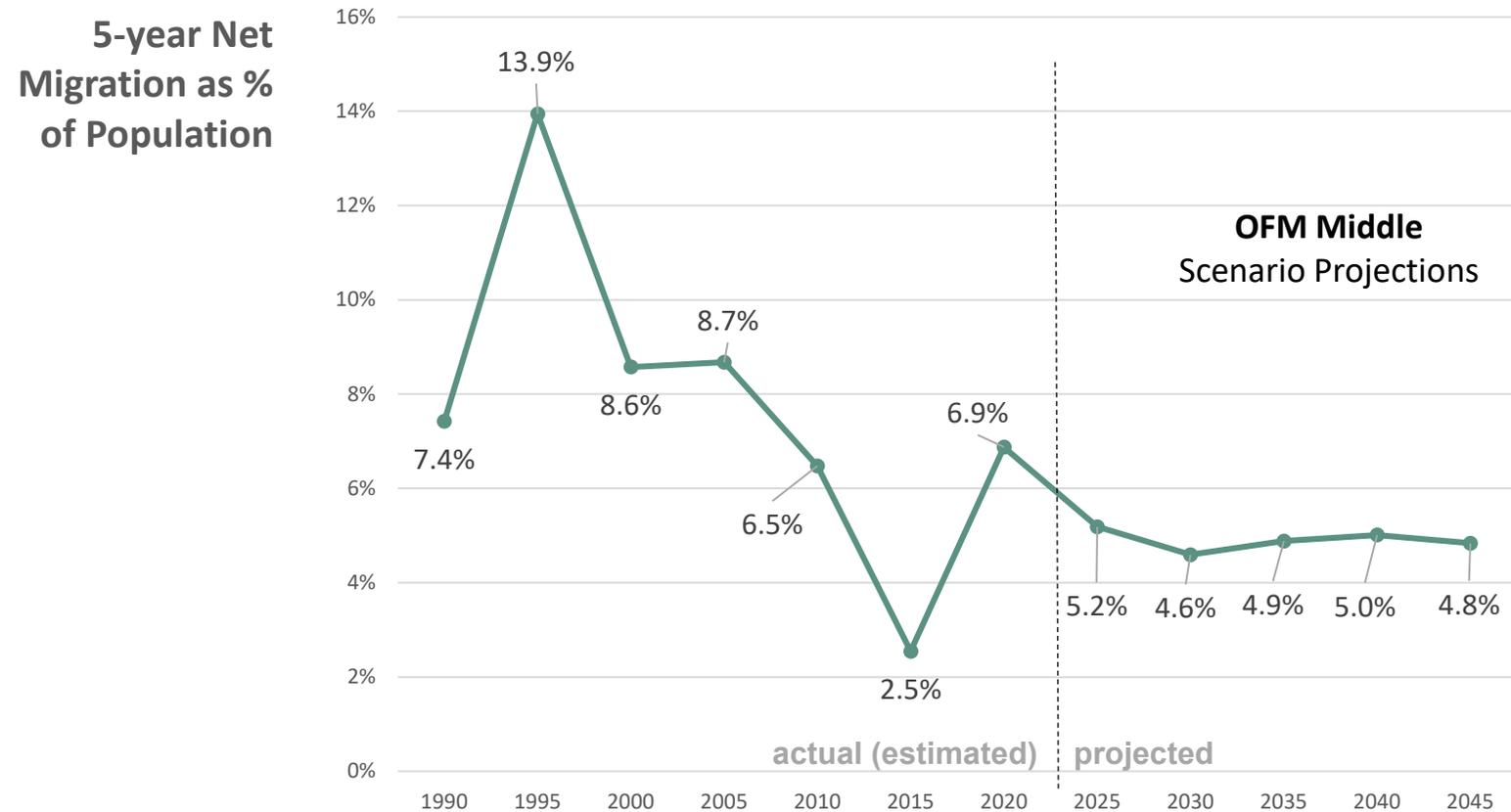
- The fundamental dynamics behind that assumption are decreasing birth rates in the face of increasing death rates.

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

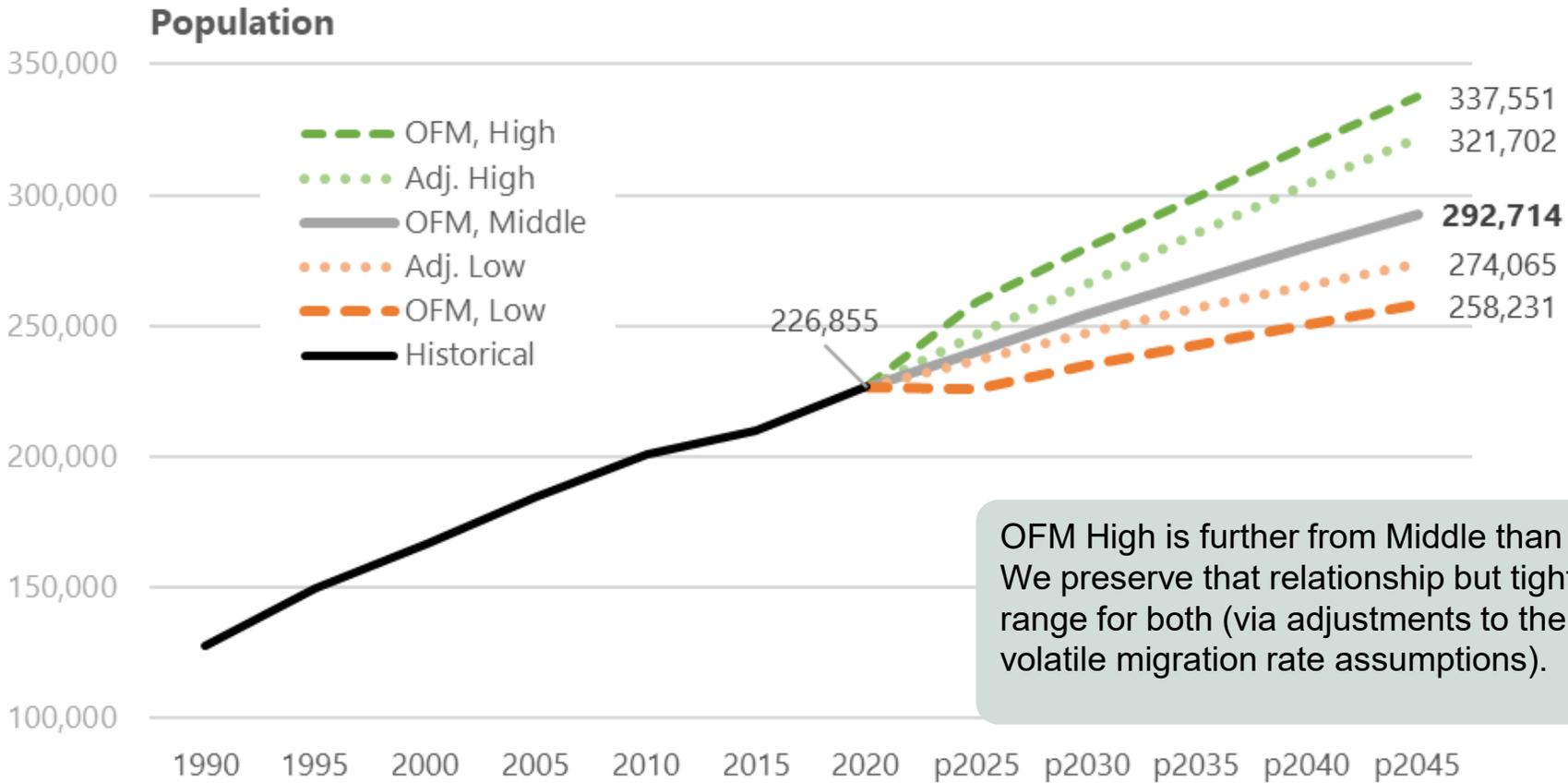


Updating Countywide Growth Projections

- 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.



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	206,021	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...
- then computed shares by industry (Industrial, Retail, Commercial, Resources) and by UGA for allocation across UGAs for the 2023-2045 planning period:

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