

Changing Demographics: A Research Odyssey

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Introduction

- In 2050, one in five Americans in the United States will be an immigrant.
- In 2050, one-third of United States residents will be Hispanic.
- In 2050, the number of people over the age of 65 in the United States will be almost double compared to today.
- In 2050, the number of people over the age of 85 in the United States will be 4.5%, as compared to 1.9% in 2012.
- In 2050, the number of working-age Americans (age 18 to age 64) will decrease to 57.6%, as compared to 62.8% in 2012.
- In 2050, multigenerational families will make up one in five households.

The poster will explore the impacts of these changing demographics on ensuring that energy savings and avoided emissions are real. This poster will both: (1) highlight the potential research pitfalls to studying these changing customer segments that represent diverse cultures, social structures, behavior, and attitude patterns; and, (2) demonstrate practical solutions to deriving meaningful and actionable insights.

Researching diverse and vulnerable populations requires unique considerations. While energy evaluation and market researchers have begun to embrace translating research instruments to other languages, we will demonstrate that this is just the tip of the iceberg to successfully drawing insights from these increasingly diverse populations. We will discuss how low literacy skills can negatively impact the quality of research data collected by inappropriate questioning or complex qualitative projective techniques. We will characterize the challenges of surveying and interviewing elderly populations due to the strong associations between age, cognition, and health status as well as highlight key elements to consider when utilizing more technologically dependent survey methods with elderly populations. We will also

We will share example adaptations to discussion guides, survey instruments, and questioning approaches to allow the voices of these customers to be heard. We will also examine projective techniques that work well for particular cultures, the elderly, or less educated consumers with low literacy skills that enable more meaningful understanding and insights. We will address how to ensure comparability and equivalency of results across research measures to inform formative and summative evaluation design. We will finally consider the unique ethical challenges a researcher must consider when studying diverse and vulnerable populations.