Regional Snapshot:
ARC's Regional Forecasts

Atlanta Regional Commission, January 2023
For more information, contact:
MCarnathan@atlantaregional.org

In Summary...

The latest ARC forecasts (Series 17) show that the 21-county Atlanta region will be home to 7.9 million people by 2050, an increase of 1.8 million new residents above a 2020 baseline. This forecast series represents slower growth compared to the last forecast series (Series 16).

The biggest reasons for the decline in expected overall population growth? Declining fertility rates and declining in-migration-- two trends that accelerated during the pandemic.

Today, roughly half of the Atlanta region's growth is attributed to natural increase, i.e. births minus deaths. By 2050, only about 20 percent of the region's growth will come from natural increase.

Practically all the population growth the region will receive in the next 30 years will come from populations of color.

We as a region will also be a lot older. The only age cohorts forecast to grow in share of overall population are those 55 and older.

We forecast that the Professional/Scientific/Technical Services sector will be the region's largest industry by 2050. Technical occupations became even more important during the pandemic as we relied heavily on these technologies to power our lives during stay-at-home and social distancing measures, and we expect these trends to continue.

# First, Let's Look At Some National Factors Affecting Population Growth

Fertility Rates Dropping

Total Fertility Rate
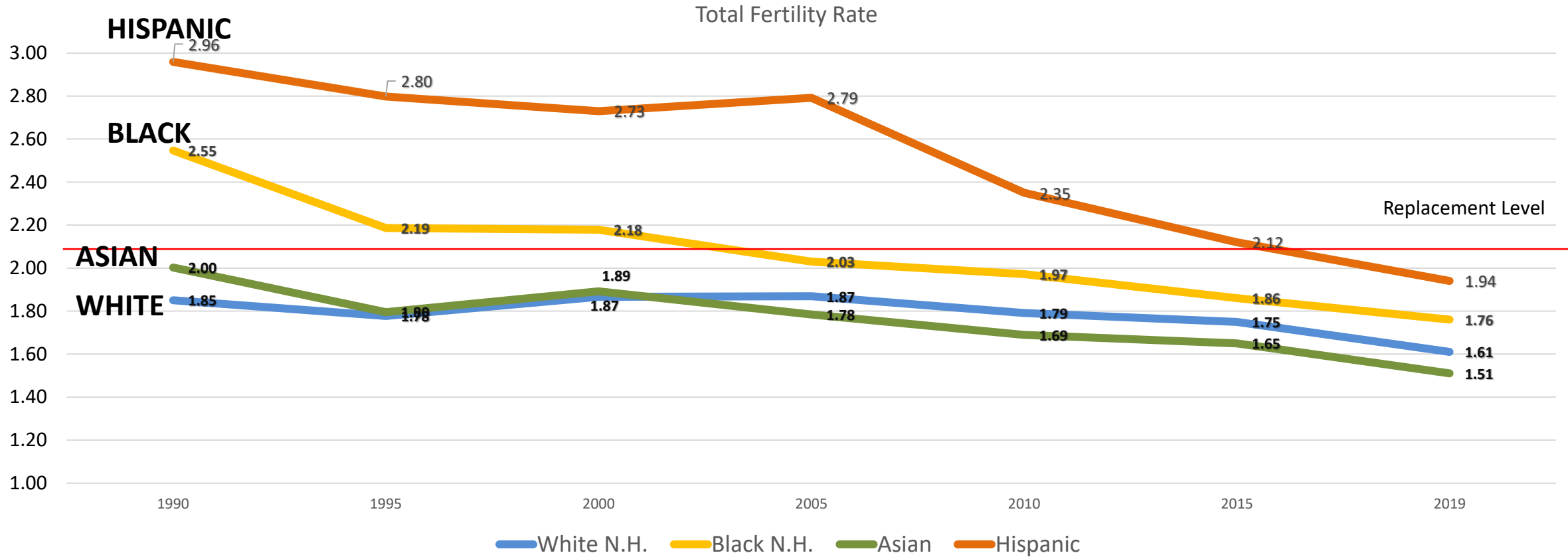
Population in a nation grows in two ways: Natural increase (births less deaths) and international in-migration . For the former, we see that regardless of race or ethnicity, the fertility rate has dropped below replacement level (approximately 2.1 children per woman). This trend will obviously have huge ramifications on how population grows here in the Atlanta region over the next 30 years or so. **Key takeaway: We won't be growing that much via natural increase in the future.**

In-Migration Also Slowing

Figure 2. US annual net international migration and natural increase, 2000 to 2021

- Natural increase
- Net international migration

256,869
148,043
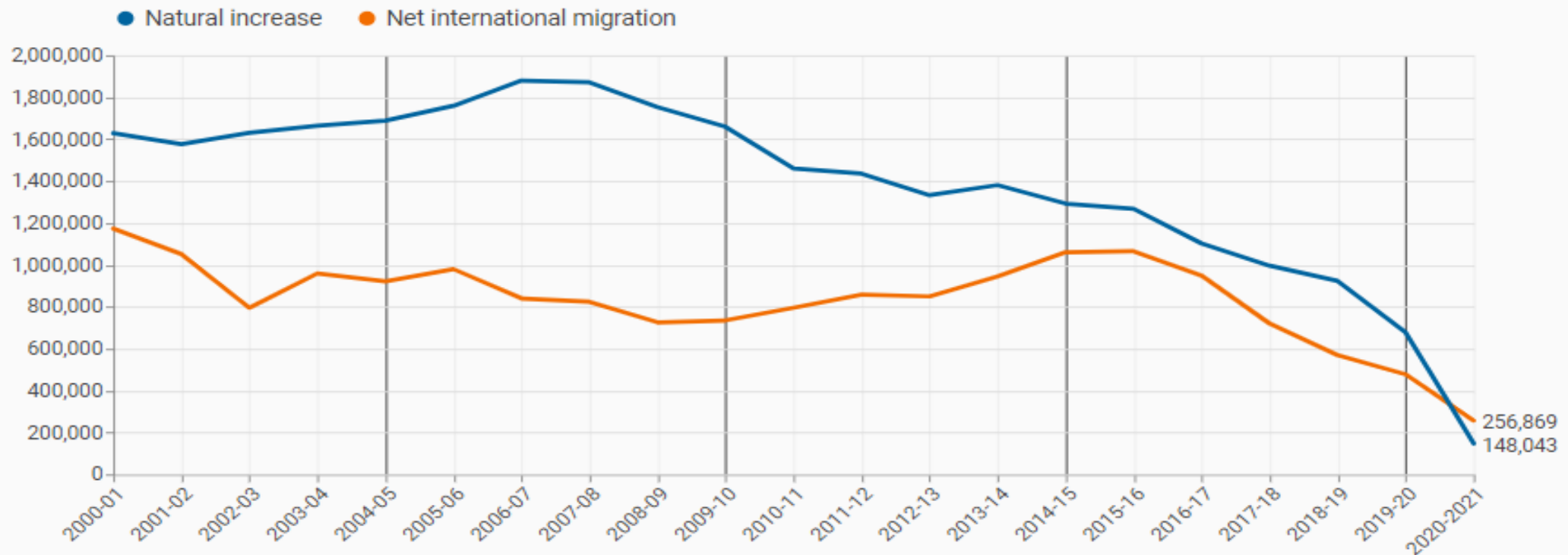
Note: Annual estimates pertain to July 1 to July 1 of successive years
Source: William H. Frey analysis of US Census Bureau estimates,

B | Brookings Metro

This screen grab from Brookings shows that, in addition to natural increase slowing in the nation, net international migration is also slowing down. This means that there is slowing in *both components* of the population growth equation, and as such population growth *overall* is slowing. These trends are reflected in our latest forecasts. **Key takeaway: The pool of potential in-migrants is growing shallower with the dramatic decrease in international migration.**
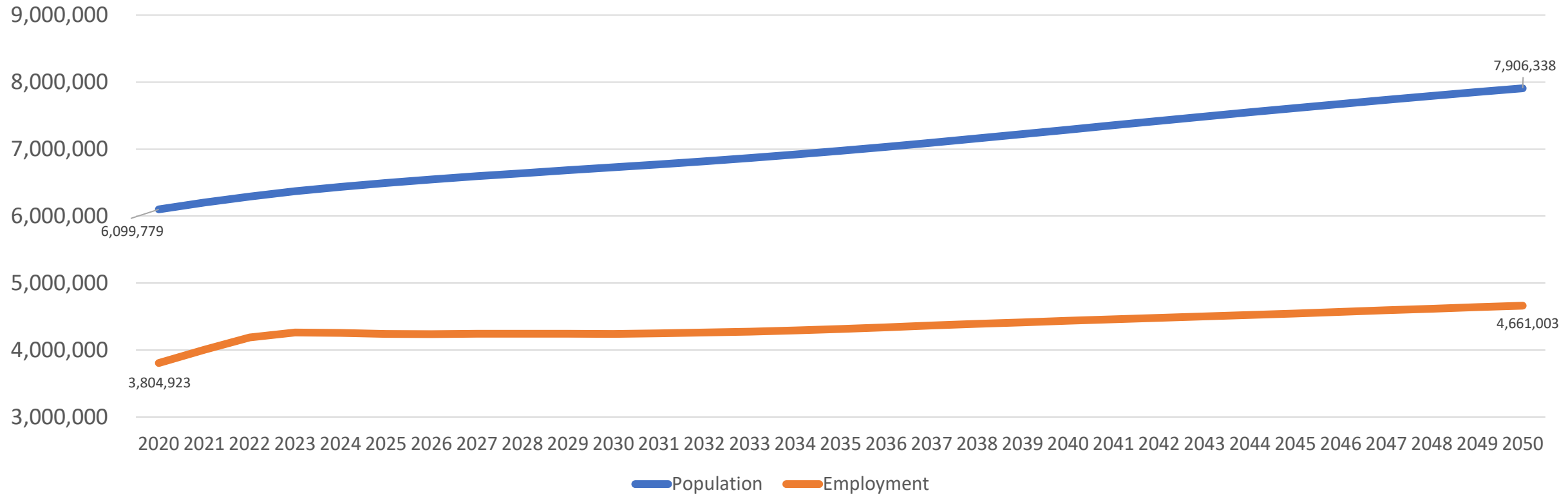
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ARC's Series 17 Forecasts:

Population

ARC Regional (21-County) Forecasts

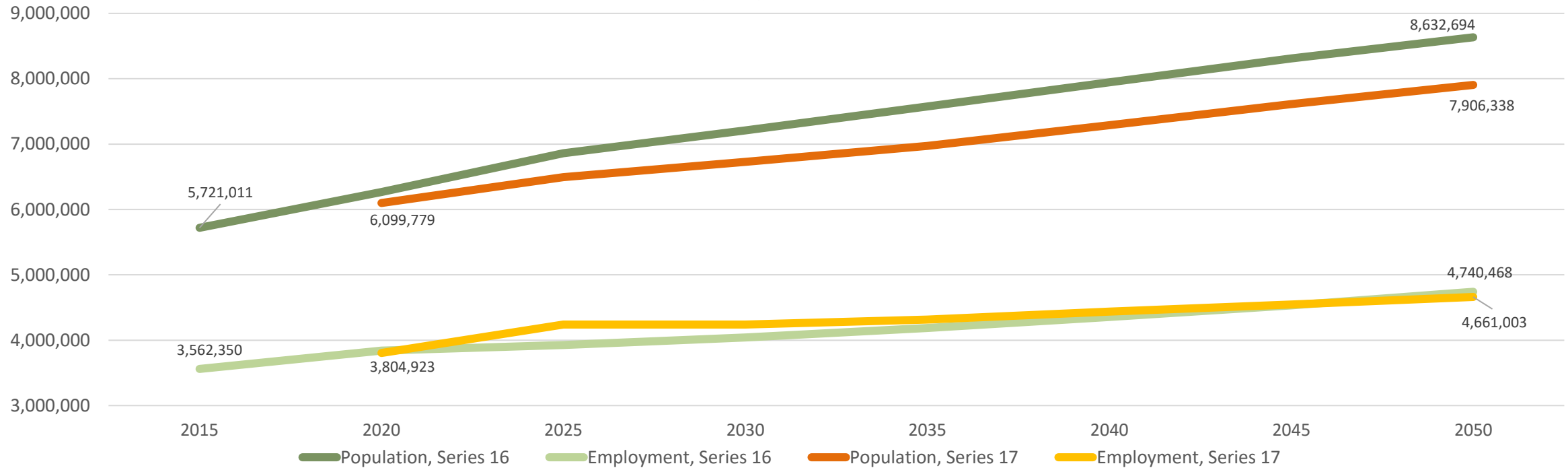ARC's Series 17 Population and Employment Forecasts

As this chart shows, our latest forecast is for the 21-county region to add roughly 1.8 million new residents and 860,000 new jobs by 2050. As the next slide shows, the forecast population growth represents a slowdown when compared to growth expectations in prior series.

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You're Not Supposed To Compare Forecasts Series... (keep reading below)

Comparing Forecast Series

Chart data points:
- Population, Series 16: 5,721,011 (2015) → 8,632,694 (2050)
- Population, Series 17: 6,099,779 (2020) → 7,906,338 (2050)
- Employment, Series 16: 3,562,350 (2015) → 4,740,468 (2050)
- Employment, Series 17: 3,804,923 (2020) → 4,661,003 (2050)

Legend: Population, Series 16 | Employment, Series 16 | Population, Series 17 | Employment, Series 17

...but we are doing it here to illustrate a point. Because of the factors mentioned previously, and because these trends were accelerated during the pandemic (*our Series 16 forecasts were done and adopted before onset of the pandemic*), that latest forecast series shows roughly nine percent fewer people in 2050.
Note: The base year for this set of forecasts is 2020-- that's why those series begin later than previous series.
 Key takeaway: We are still expecting to add 1.8 million new residents by 2050, which is roughly the population of today's Virginia Beach

Components of Growth:
# Natural Increase vs. In-Migration

Ratio of In-Migration to Natural Increase in Series 17 Forecasts

Legend: Natural increase (green), Migration (orange)
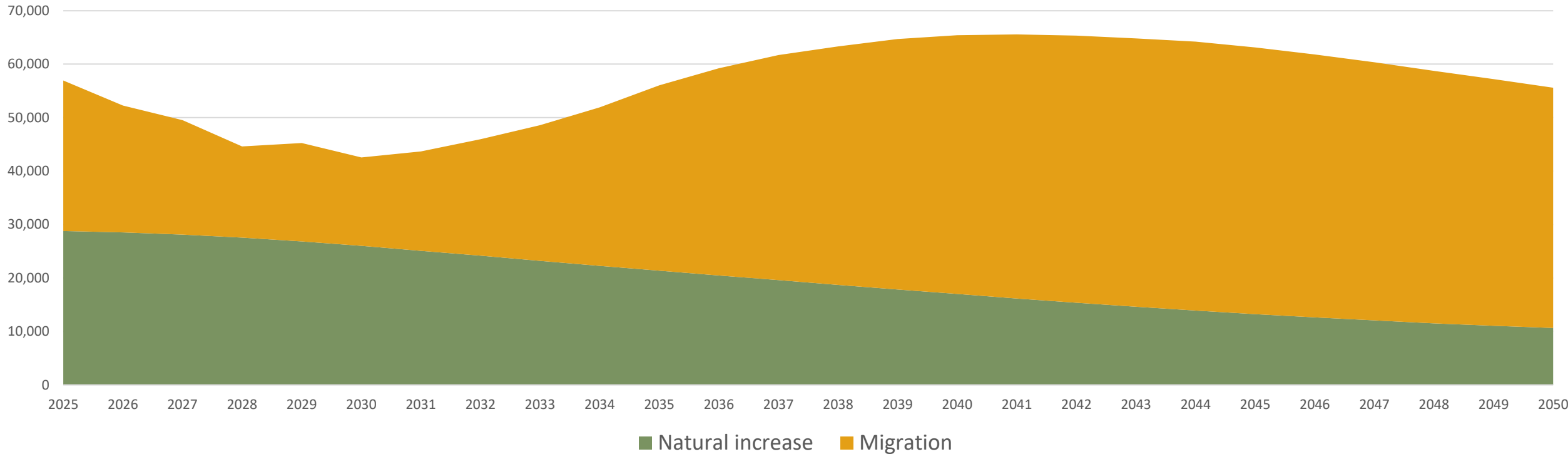
As this chart shows, in-migration will become an increasingly larger component of overall population growth throughout the forecast horizon. In 2025, the ratio between in-migration and natural increase is essentially 50/50. By 2050, that ratio will be 80/20, i.e. 80 percent of our growth will come from in-migration. Note: Because our forecasting model, REMI, seeks equilibrium, it produces some dramatic shifts in the first couple of years to account for the pandemic recovery. Thus, for this chart, we start the time series in 2025. *Key takeaway: With overall population growth slowing, we will need to rely concurrently on growing talent natively, retaining that local talent, and recruiting the right talent from a dwindling pool of potential in-migrants.*

Composition of Future Growth Changing Too

Share of Total Population By Race and Ethnicity
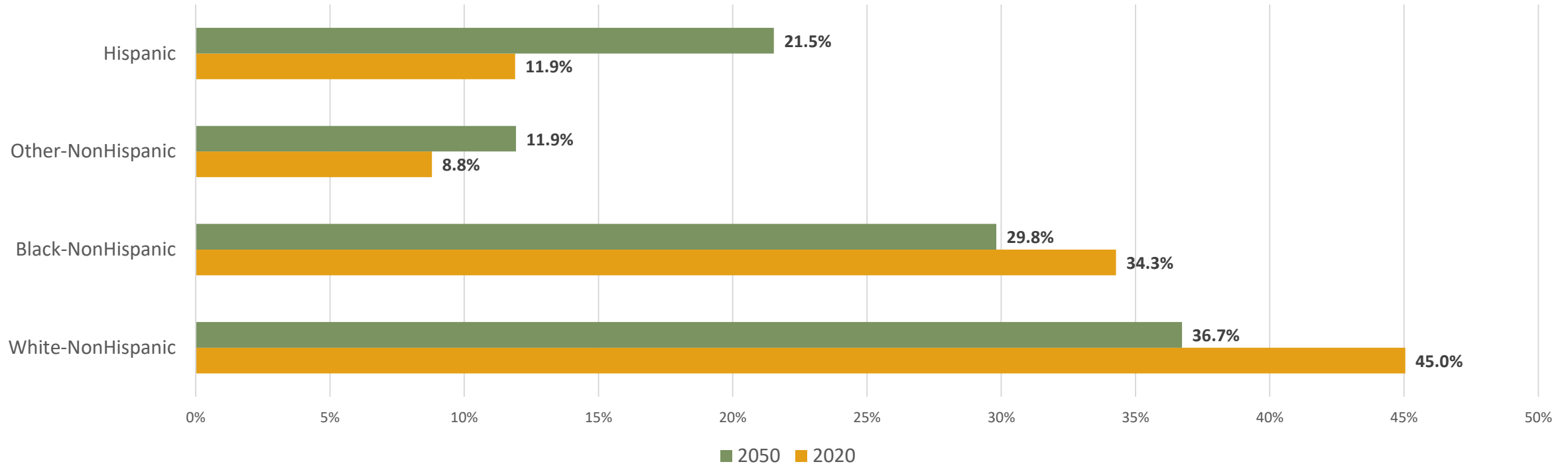
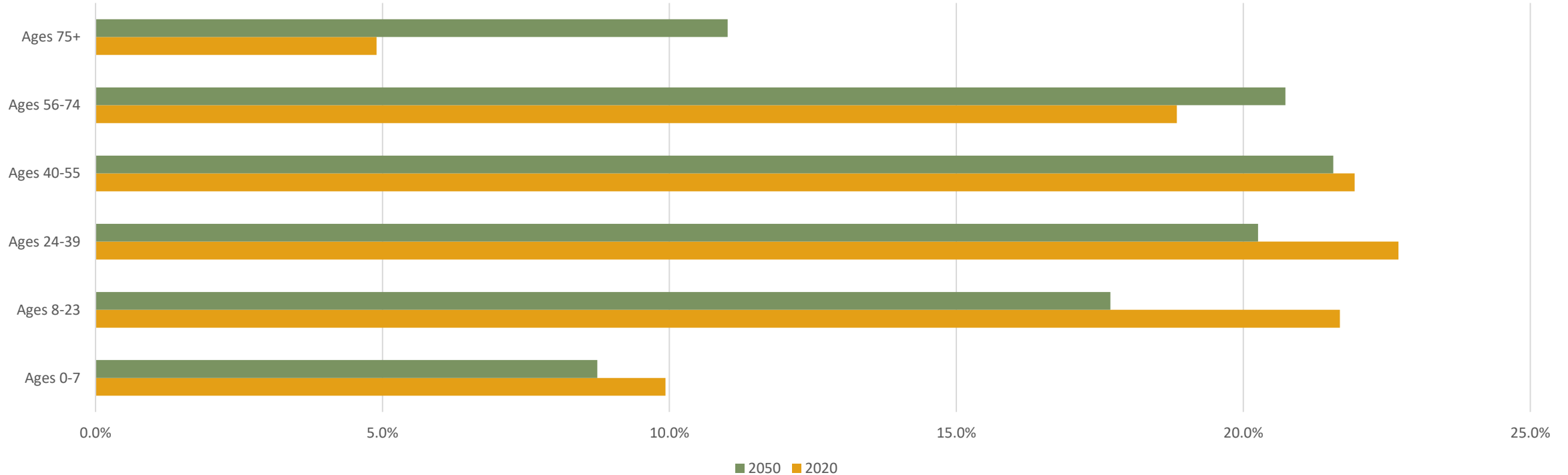We are forecasting that the shares of White and Black populations will decline by 2050 with a concomitant share increase in Hispanic and "other " races. Note: Our forecasting model, REMI, does not segment Asian populations separately, thus they are included above in the "Other Non-Hispanic" category.

Key takeaway: The Atlanta region's future population growth will be driven almost entirely by populations of color.

Oh, And We're Getting Older

Age Bands

(Bar chart comparing 2050 and 2020 age band shares)

Age Band	(legend)
Ages 75+	
Ages 56-74	
Ages 40-55	
Ages 24-39	
Ages 8-23	
Ages 0-7	

X-axis: 0.0% — 5.0% — 10.0% — 15.0% — 20.0% — 25.0%

■ 2050   ■ 2020

In looking at age, here we see that the only age bands that will grow *in share* over the forecast horizon are the 75+ age cohort (dramatic increase) and the 56 to 74 age cohort (slight increase). The declining fertility rates are a significant driver for this trend.

 Key takeaway: We're going to have almost 900,000 people aged 75 and older in 2050. We have never had that kind of age profile in our history. Think of the ramifications-- for how we travel, how our communities are designed and how we will consume health care, among others.
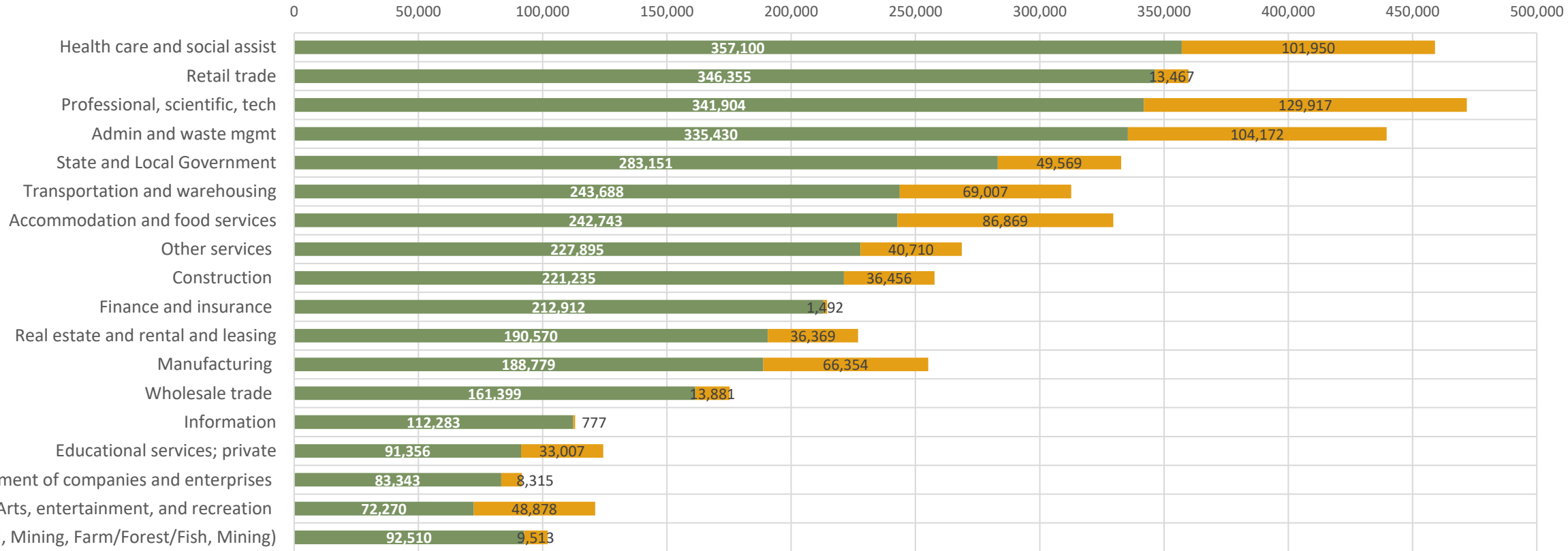
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ARC's Series 17 Forecasts:

Employment

Professional, Scientific, Tech Jobs To Be Largest Industry

Regional Snapshot

Forecast Job Growth by Industry, 2020-2050

Legend: ■ 2020   ■ Change, 2020-2050

Industry	2020	Change, 2020-2050
Health care and social assist	357,100	101,950
Retail trade	346,355	13,467
Professional, scientific, tech	341,904	129,917
Admin and waste mgmt	335,430	104,172
State and Local Government	283,151	49,569
Transportation and warehousing	243,688	69,007
Accommodation and food services	242,743	86,869
Other services	227,895	40,710
Construction	221,235	36,456
Finance and insurance	212,912	1,492
Real estate and rental and leasing	190,570	36,369
Manufacturing	188,779	66,354
Wholesale trade	161,399	13,881
Information	112,283	777
Educational services; private	91,356	33,007
Management of companies and enterprises	83,343	8,315
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	72,270	48,878
Other (Federal, Util, Mining, Farm/Forest/Fish, Mining)	92,510	9,513

This chart shows that while today the largest employment sector is Health Care/Social Assistance, by 2050 the Professional/Scientific/Technical industry will be the largest. ***Key takeaway: In our previous forecast, Health Care was the largest sector by 2050. Now, at least initially, most data show that the technical occupations were the "winners" of the pandemic as we came to rely more on technology than ever to power our lives. Our employment forecast supports this early read.***

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