

NEW POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR MISSISSIPPI: SOME HIGHLIGHTS

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New population projections for Mississippi and its 82 counties have recently been released. The new numbers suggest some likely changes in population size and composition by 2025. If current trends continue, Mississippi will have 3,218,871 residents in 2025, compared to 2,844,658 in Census 2000. (The projections are available on the Internet at www.mississippi.edu/urc/ by scrolling down to Publications and choosing *Mississippi Population Projections*.)

Growth trends As the state moves further into the 21st century, its population will grow fairly slowly from 2007 to 2025, with an annual growth rate of less than 0.6%. In contrast, the most recent national projections show that the nation is forecast to grow at a rate of about 1.0% per year over the same time period.

Relatively slow growth is consistent with Mississippi's recent history. The state's population grew very slowly during the decade from 1980 to 1990, averaging only 0.2% per year. In the 1990s, with the dramatic growth of the gaming industry and other positive economic developments, the growth rate rose to about 1.0% per year. The explanation for the change was a short-lived turnaround in the migration trend. For most of the 20th century, more people moved out of the state than moved in. That trend reversed itself for a few years during the 1990s, but since then has reverted back to net out-migration.



Age composition Age structure changes are certain to occur in the state. The most obvious change will be a reduction in the relative size of the child population (under 18) and a concomitant rise in the fraction of elderly (65+). Meanwhile, the population in the working ages (18-64) will decline from 60.7% in 2000 to 56.3% by 2025. By 2025, the proportion under 18 will fall to 23.7%, compared to 27.2% in 2000. At the same



time, the proportion of older people will grow to 20.0%, up from 12.1% in 2000, as the large baby boom generation enters old age. Anticipated changes in age composition at the national level suggest that the proportion of children in 2025 will equal Mississippi's 23.7%. But the fraction of elderly will be somewhat smaller (17.9%), while the proportion in the working ages (58.4%) will be somewhat higher than the state's 56.3%. Both the lower fraction of old people and the larger fraction aged 18-64 in the nation are due to the same cause – that international migrants are typically young adults and thus tend to simultaneously offset the aging trend and increase the size of the working-age group. In Mississippi, however, continued net out-migration will reduce the working-age population and hasten the aging trend.

In both the state and the nation, population will age even more quickly if medical advances raise life expectancy at the older ages more rapidly than is currently foreseen. (Historically, gains in life expectancy have been underestimated.)



Dependency burdens A lower fraction of people in the working ages is associated with a higher dependency burden, and vice versa. The youth dependency ratio is defined as the number of children under 18 for every 100 persons aged 18 to 64. The aged dependency ratio represents the number of people 65+ per 100 people 18 to 64. Other things being equal, when dependency ratios are higher, there are fewer resources per dependent or, alternatively, more is required from each wor-

ker (in the form of taxes, for example) to provide for dependents' needs. To illustrate, a high youth dependency ratio necessitates more tax expenditures on classrooms and teachers, whereas a high aged dependency ratio calls for more tax monies to be directed to medical and long-term care services. When a state must devote a greater share of resources to raising the young or supporting retirees, fewer resources are available for other uses, such as infrastructure improvements.



The new population projections suggest that Mississippi's youth dependency ratio will fall over the projection period, from 44.9 in 2000 to 42.1 by 2025. On the other hand, the aged dependency ratio is slated to rise substantially,

from 19.9 in 2000 to 35.4 in 2025, more than offsetting the small decline in youth dependency. Hence total dependency – the sum of youth and aged dependency – will also rise. In the nation, in contrast, youth dependency is projected to be 40.7 in 2025, aged dependency 30.6, and total dependency 71.3, all lower than the Mississippi statistics.

Conclusion Relatively slow population growth for the foreseeable future in Mississippi will be accompanied by the many challenges of a shrinking work force, an aging population, and rising aged and total dependency burdens. The state of the economy will make all the difference in how well families, businesses, and government will be able to cope.

MISSISSIPPI POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2015, 2020, AND 2025

	WHITE			NONWHITE			TOTAL		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
Year 2000 Total	1,762,426	866,075	896,351	1,085,998	509,628	576,370	2,848,424	1,375,703	1,472,721
Year 2015 Total	1,857,723	912,860	944,863	1,233,172	585,046	648,126	3,090,895	1,497,906	1,592,989
Year 2020 Total	1,873,422	918,876	954,546	1,287,428	612,084	675,344	3,160,850	1,530,960	1,629,890
Year 2025 Total	1,882,186	920,874	961,312	1,336,685	636,668	700,017	3,218,871	1,557,542	1,661,329

SOURCE: *Mississippi Population Projections* at www.mississippi.edu/urc/.
