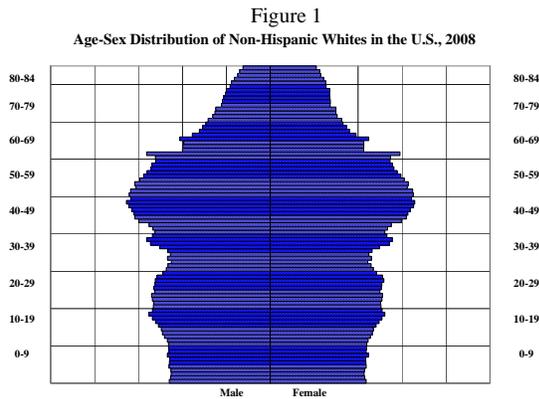


# Population Patterns in Michigan and the U.S. by Age and Race

**U.S. Age Distribution.** The age distribution of non-Hispanic whites in the U.S. is displayed as a “population pyramid” in Figure 1. Population pyramids are bar charts that show the youngest people on the bottom, the oldest at the top, males on the left, and females on the right.

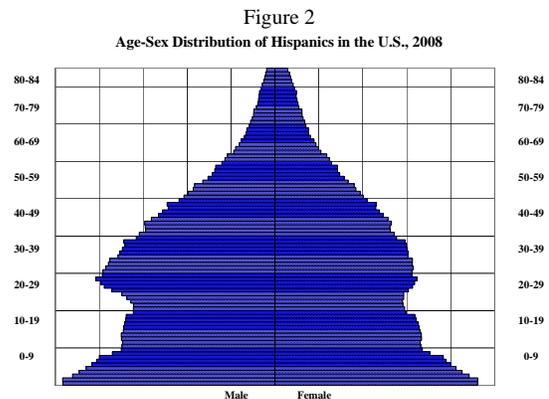


Age pyramids reflect the combined effects of births, deaths, and migration. Newborns enter each year at the bottom of the pyramid while the bars representing each older age move upward. Mortality causes each bar to get smaller as it moves up the pyramid over time, and bars can also grow or shrink from one year to the next through migration. Bulges in the pyramid represent large generations and constrictions represent smaller generations.

An age pyramid reflects the social and economic events of the preceding century. For example, the Great Depression and World War II continue to exert an important influence on the age distribution of non-Hispanic whites in the U.S. Births fell to low levels during those periods but then rose during the post-war Baby Boom. Those birth patterns and their subsequent echoes are reflected by constrictions and bulges in the population pyramid. The small generation

that was born during the Great Depression and World War II—people who were age 63 to 79 in 2008—was echoed by correspondingly small generations of children in the 1970’s and grandchildren during much of the 1990’s and 2000’s. The large generation born in the Baby Boom was echoed from the 1980’s through the early 1990’s. Another echo of the Baby Boom may begin in the 2010’s unless it is offset by new social and economic events.

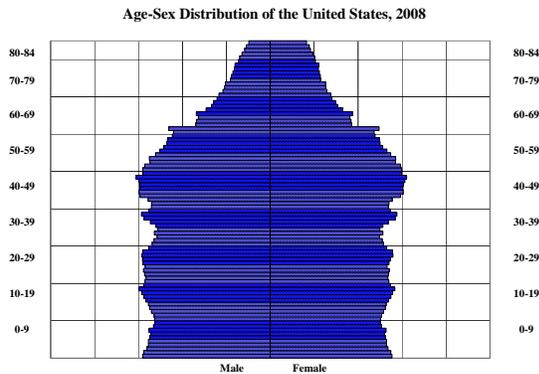
The age distribution of Hispanics in the U.S. is very different. Generally speaking, the age pyramid for Hispanics is relatively small at ages where the first pyramid has bulges and it has bulges at ages where the first pyramid has constrictions. (See Figure 2.)



Thus, America’s Hispanic population helps to correct some of the imbalances that would otherwise exist in America’s age distribution. For example, the Baby Boom generation in Figure 1 is considerably larger than any subsequent generation. When Hispanics and other minorities are added, however, the U.S. age distribution is much more uniform. (See Figure 3.) That should greatly reduce the difficulty of financing the retirement of the Baby Boom generation.

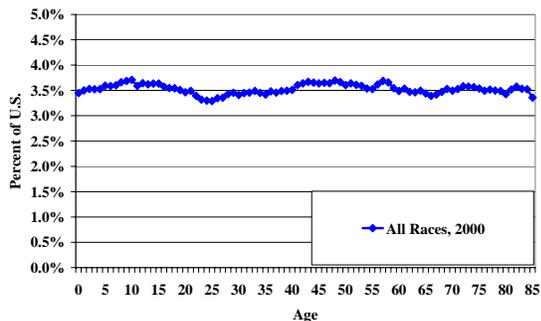
The age distribution of the total U.S. population is quite similar to the age distribution that a nation would have after a long period of zero-population-growth.

Figure 3



**Michigan Age Distribution.** Michigan had 3.5 percent of the nation’s population in the 2000 Census. Although Michigan’s share of population was fairly uniform across age groups at that time (see Figure 4), that uniformity is not indicative of stable demographic patterns across age groups or across the relevant decades. Rather, it reflects the combined effects of several ongoing demographic patterns and the severe recession that Michigan experienced during the 1980’s.

Figure 4  
Michigan Population as Percent of U.S. by Age:  
Total for All Races, 2000



Three ongoing demographic patterns tend to reduce Michigan’s share of the nation’s population in particular age groups:

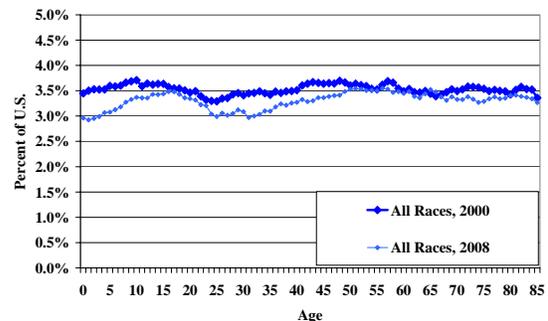
- Michigan tends to lose residents over age 55 through migration of retirees to the Sunbelt.

- Even during a prosperous period such as the late 1990’s and the beginning of the 2000’s, Michigan’s share of young adults tends to be held down by a tendency for many Michigan natives to live temporarily in other states for military service or education.
- Michigan’s share of young adults and young children has tended to be low in recent decades due to the concentration of new Hispanic immigrants in other states.

Nonetheless, Michigan’s share of population for those age groups was not much lower in 2000 than its share for the remaining age groups: young Baby Boomers and their children. Michigan’s population share for those two age groups is low because of large population losses that Michigan experienced during the recession of the early 1980’s while young Baby Boomers were entering the labor force.

As shown in Figure 5, Michigan’s population share continued to drop after 2000 for young children, young adults, and people over age 65. This reflects Michigan’s high unemployment rates relative to the rest of the nation during most of this period as well as the three ongoing demographic factors discussed above.

Figure 5  
Michigan Population as Percent of U.S. by Age:  
Total for All Races, 2000 and 2008



Michigan’s share of non-Hispanic whites is higher than its share of the nation’s total population for every age group, as shown in Figure 6. The state’s declining share of

young non-Hispanic white children reflects its high rates of unemployment since 2001 that may have contributed to low birth rates as well as outmigration of young adults who could potentially have children.

Figure 6

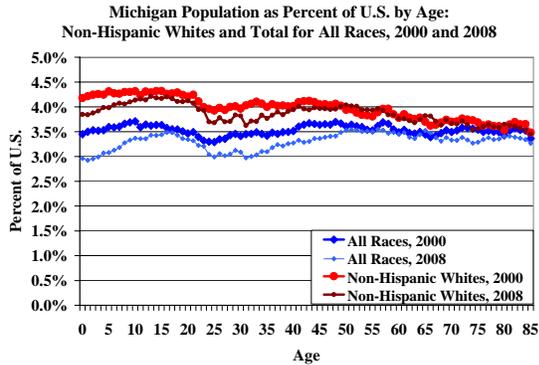
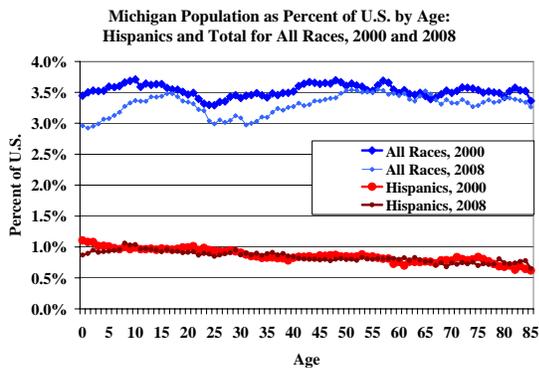


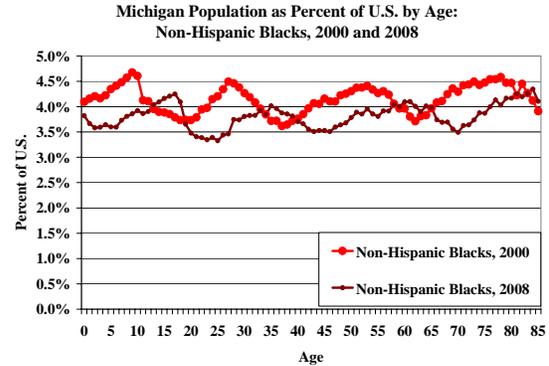
Figure 7 illustrates that Michigan's share of the nation's Hispanic population is much lower than its share of the overall population. However, with the possible exception of the very youngest children, Michigan's share of Hispanics is progressively higher for younger ages.

Figure 7



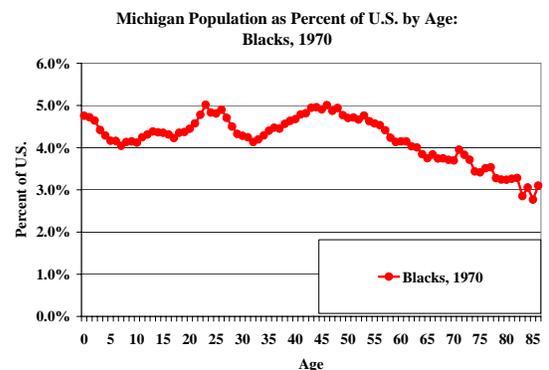
Michigan's share of the nation's black population is somewhat higher than its share of the total population. It also follows a highly cyclical pattern with peaks 18 to 25 years apart. (See Figure 8.) According to the Census Bureau's estimates, births among blacks in Michigan started cycling back upwards in 2007. It remains to be seen whether this will be confirmed by data from actual birth certificates.

Figure 8



This cyclical pattern began when large numbers of blacks began moving to Michigan during World War II for work in factories supporting the war effort. (See Figure 9, which is based on the 1970 Census.) The earliest peak was centered around people who were age 18 in 1942 (i.e. age 46 in 1970 and age 76 in 2000). Subsequent peaks in the number of births occurred early in the postwar Baby Boom and in approximately 1972 and 1990. The peaks in Figure 8 can be interpreted as showing the original generation on the right along with their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and their first great-great grandchildren.

Figure 9



The cyclical pattern in Michigan's black population can also be illustrated with population pyramids. The population pyramid for non-Hispanic blacks in 2008 has a significant bulge from the ages of 17 to 20. (See top panel of Figure 10.) This bulge appears to be echoed by an increasing number of very young children at the bottom

of the pyramid. This pyramid is quite similar to the one for 1990 (see bottom panel of Figure 10), in which bulges between the ages of 15 to 19 and 28 to 34 were echoed by a large number of very young children.

