Summary of U.S. Census Bureau’s 2016 County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts Counties

Prepared by:
UMass Donahue Institute
Economic and Public Policy Research
Population Estimates Program

For Release June 22, 2017

On June 22, 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau released its 2016 State and County Characteristics Estimates for Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and the United States. These estimates break down the estimated 2016 county populations, released in March 2017, by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin.

The official U.S. Census Release can be found at:

and detailed tables can be found at:
http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml

Race and Origin

Estimates for Massachusetts follow the national trend, showing a population that is growing older and more racially and ethnically diverse. Even though Massachusetts is less diverse than the U.S. average—with a minority population of just 27.0% compared to 38.7% in the U.S.—the minority population in Massachusetts has been increasing at a faster rate than the U.S. average.¹ From 2010 to 2016, the minority population in the state increased by 3.9 percentage points—from 23.1% to 27.0%—compared to a 2.6 percentage point increase in the U.S. overall. All Massachusetts counties have experienced increasing diversity since 2010 by varying degrees around the state.

¹ “Minority population” is defined for the purposes of this report as the Hispanic and non-White/non-Hispanic population.
The Massachusetts counties with the greatest percentage of minority populations in 2016 were Suffolk (54.2%), Hampden (36.5%), and Essex (28.4%). The counties with the lowest percentage of minority populations were Franklin (8.8%), Barnstable (9.4%), and Berkshire (11.0%).

The largest increases of minority populations as a percentage of the total population since 2010 (by percentage point gain) were seen in Nantucket, Essex, and Norfolk County. Franklin, Berkshire, and Barnstable County showed the least amount of increase and also represent the only three Massachusetts counties that have lost population since the April 2010 Census count. (See Appendix B for details for all Massachusetts counties.)

The counties with the highest estimated percentage of Hispanic residents in Massachusetts in 2016 were Hampden (24.6%), Suffolk (22.5%), and Essex (20.0%); those with the smallest were Barnstable (2.9%), Dukes (3.7%), Franklin (3.8%), and Plymouth (3.8%). The overall Hispanic population in Massachusetts in 2016 was 11.5% compared to 17.8% in the U.S. overall.

Age

Massachusetts is older than the U.S. as a whole, with an estimated median age of 39.4 years in 2016, compared to a median age of 37.9 in the U.S. overall. As of 2016, 10 out of 14 Massachusetts counties—over two-thirds—have a median age 40 or over. Counties with the highest median age are Barnstable (52.9 years), Dukes (47.4 years), and Berkshire (46.9 years), while the counties with the youngest median ages are Suffolk (32.7 years), Hampshire (36.0 years), and Middlesex (38.3 years). See Appendix C to this report for additional detail.
It is not surprising that Barnstable, Dukes, and Berkshire County, given their high median ages, also have the highest percentages of population aged 65 and older in the state at 29.2%, 22.2%, and 22.2% respectively. Counties with the lowest percentages of persons 65 and older include Suffolk (11.3%), Middlesex (14.6%), and Nantucket (14.6%). Overall, Massachusetts has a higher percentage of population aged 65 and older (15.8%) than the U.S. as a whole (15.2%).

At the other end of the age-spectrum, counties with the highest percentage of children under 18 years of age include Hampden (22.0%), Plymouth (21.9%), and Essex (21.6%). Hampshire County is somewhat of an exception, with the second lowest median age in the state (36.0) but also the smallest percentage of children under 18 in the state (15.1%). In this case a large percentage of college-aged students is pulling the median age down. Overall, Massachusetts has a smaller percentage of children under 18 (20.2%) compared to the U.S. as a whole (22.8%).
**Trends in Aging**

The aging population in Massachusetts, as with the U.S. as a whole, is reflected in the long-term population trends among age cohorts. Since 2000, the percentage of persons over 65 in each county has increased while the percentage of children under 5 has decreased, on average. The trend lines below show how the percentages of these age groups have changed since 2000, by county and for Massachusetts and the U.S. The highest points in the time series are represented by green dots and the lowest by red.

When comparing the percentage of the Hispanic population by county against the median age by county, we see that Massachusetts follows the national trend where a higher percentage of Hispanic population generally relates to a lower median age. Estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau for the nation show that the median age of the Hispanic population (29.0 years) is much lower than non-Hispanic populations (40.4 years). Likewise, in Massachusetts the median age of the Hispanic population is 27.9 compared to 41.5 for the Non-Hispanic population.

At the county level, we see that Barnstable and Dukes County are the two oldest in Massachusetts in terms of median age and are also the two counties with the lowest percentage of Hispanic population. On the other hand, the “youngest” county, Suffolk, has the second highest percentage of Hispanic population in Massachusetts.

The new Census Bureau data (see Table PEPASR6H) also show that half (50.4%) of the nation’s children younger than five belonged to a minority population in 2016, with 25.8% identifying as Hispanic. In Massachusetts that same year, 41.0% of children younger than five belonged to a minority population and 20.4% were Hispanic. To get a sense of how race and ethnicity relate to age in Massachusetts compare the *Estimated Percent Minority Population by County* and the *Estimated Percent of County Population under 5* maps accompanying this report.

For more details on selected Massachusetts characteristics data and trends, please refer to the appendices to this document. You may also view the complete datasets by visiting the U.S. Census Bureau's Estimates page at: [http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml](http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml)
Attachments to this report include:


Appendix A2: Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Race and Hispanic Origin as a Percentage of the County Population in Massachusetts Counties, April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2016


Appendix C: Comparison of Selected Age Groups in Massachusetts Counties: Estimated Population and Percent of Population, 2016


Appendix D2: Trends in Selected Age Groups as a Percentage of Population for Massachusetts Counties, Massachusetts, and the U.S., 2010-2016

Map 1: Estimated Percent of Minority Population by Massachusetts County, 2016
Map 2: Estimated Percentage Point Change in Minority Population by Massachusetts County, 2010-2016
Map 3: Estimated Median Age by Massachusetts County, 2016
Map 4: Estimated Percent of County Population Under 5, 2016
Map 5: Estimated Percent of County Population over 65, 2016
Map 6: Estimated Percent of County Population 18-64, 2016
Map 7: Estimated Percent of County Population under 18, 2016

Summary Prepared by:
Susan Strate
Pauline Zaldonis
Matthew Schlaikjer
Meghan Flanagan

June 22, 2017