

AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION IN 2005

Birthdays take on different meanings as people grow older. To a young person, a birthday might mean an opportunity to get a driver's license or to vote for the first time. To an older person, it might mean a retirement party. Many health issues, from childhood diseases to geriatric conditions, are associated with age. These and many other life experiences are somewhat different for the male population than for the female population. The U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program produces age and sex data for the United States, states, and counties.

Men and Women

Within the total resident population in 2005, women and girls outnumbered men and boys by 4.4 million—150.4 million compared with 146.0 million. This difference was not spread evenly throughout the age groups, as illustrated in the age pyramid shown in Figure 1. Among those under 18, boys outnumbered girls in 2005. From about age 40 on, women were the

Words That Count

An **age pyramid** is a horizontal bar graph, usually showing the size of the male population on the left and the female population on the right, with age groupings beginning with the youngest populations on the bottom and ending with the oldest ones at the top (Figure 1).

Median age is the age at which half the population is older and half is younger.

A **birth cohort** is a group of people born during the same time period.

The **Baby Boom Generation** is the large cohort of people born from 1946 to 1964.

majority. Among people in their nineties, the ratio of men to women was 38 to 100, reflecting the greater life expectancy of women than men.¹ The pyramid bulges in the middle, indicating the large cohort known as the Baby Boom Generation, who were aged 41 to 59 in 2005. Other irregularities in the pyramid frequently reflect years with relatively high or low birth rates.

Age Groups

Between Census Day (April 1, 2000) and July 1, 2005, the population of most 5-year age groups grew. Five age groups experienced declines, as illustrated in Figure 2.

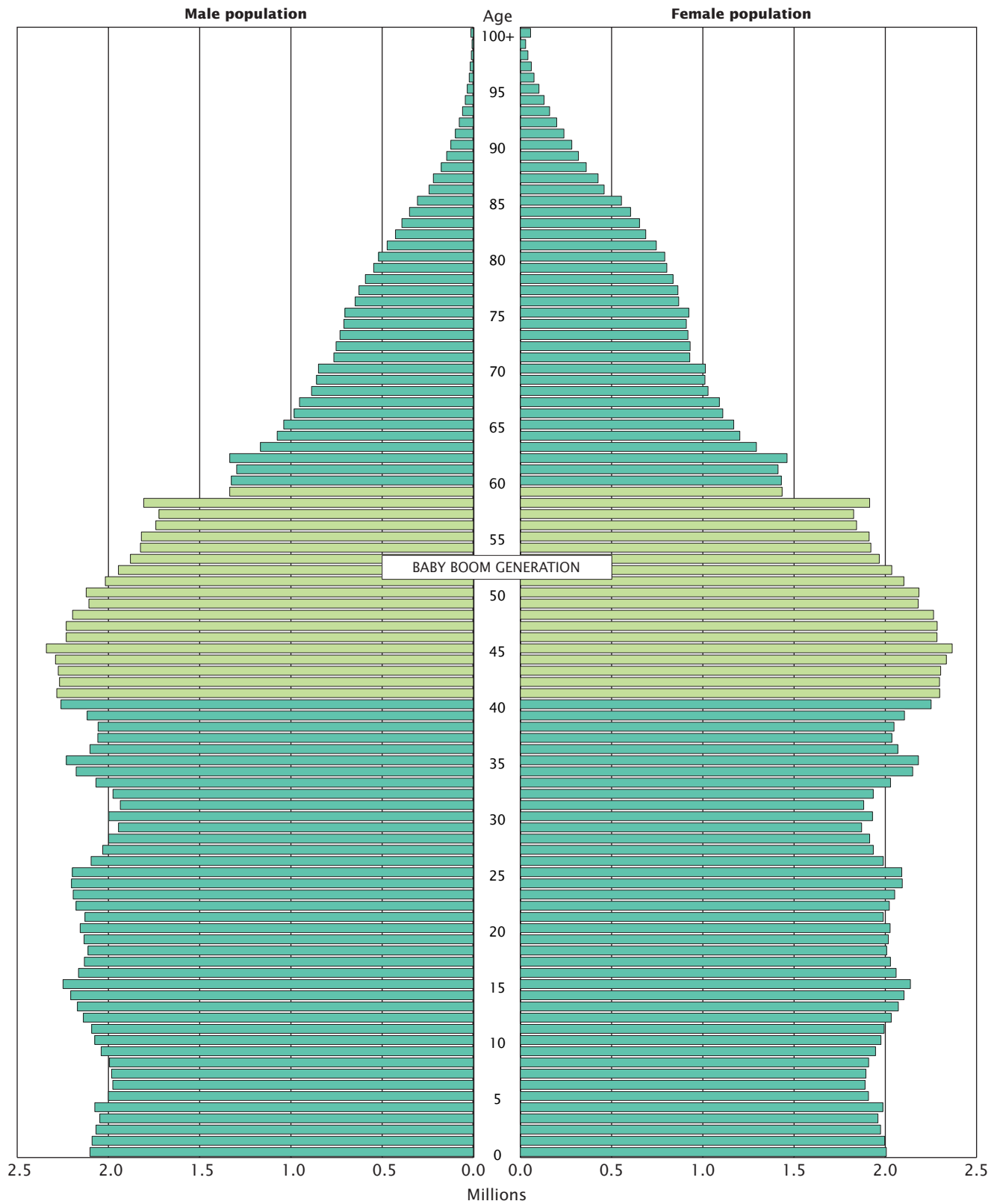
The largest decline (7.5 percent) was among the population aged 35 to 39, the age group that the Baby Boom Generation has left. The fastest-growing population was the population aged 55 to 59. This age group grew about 29 percent as the oldest Baby Boomers replaced the smaller cohort of people who were born before them.

While the total population increased 5 percent between 2000 and 2005, people in their seventies declined by 2.2 percent. A "birth dearth" during the late 1920s and early 1930s was largely responsible for this decline. Other older groups saw increases. The population aged 85 and older grew by 20 percent.

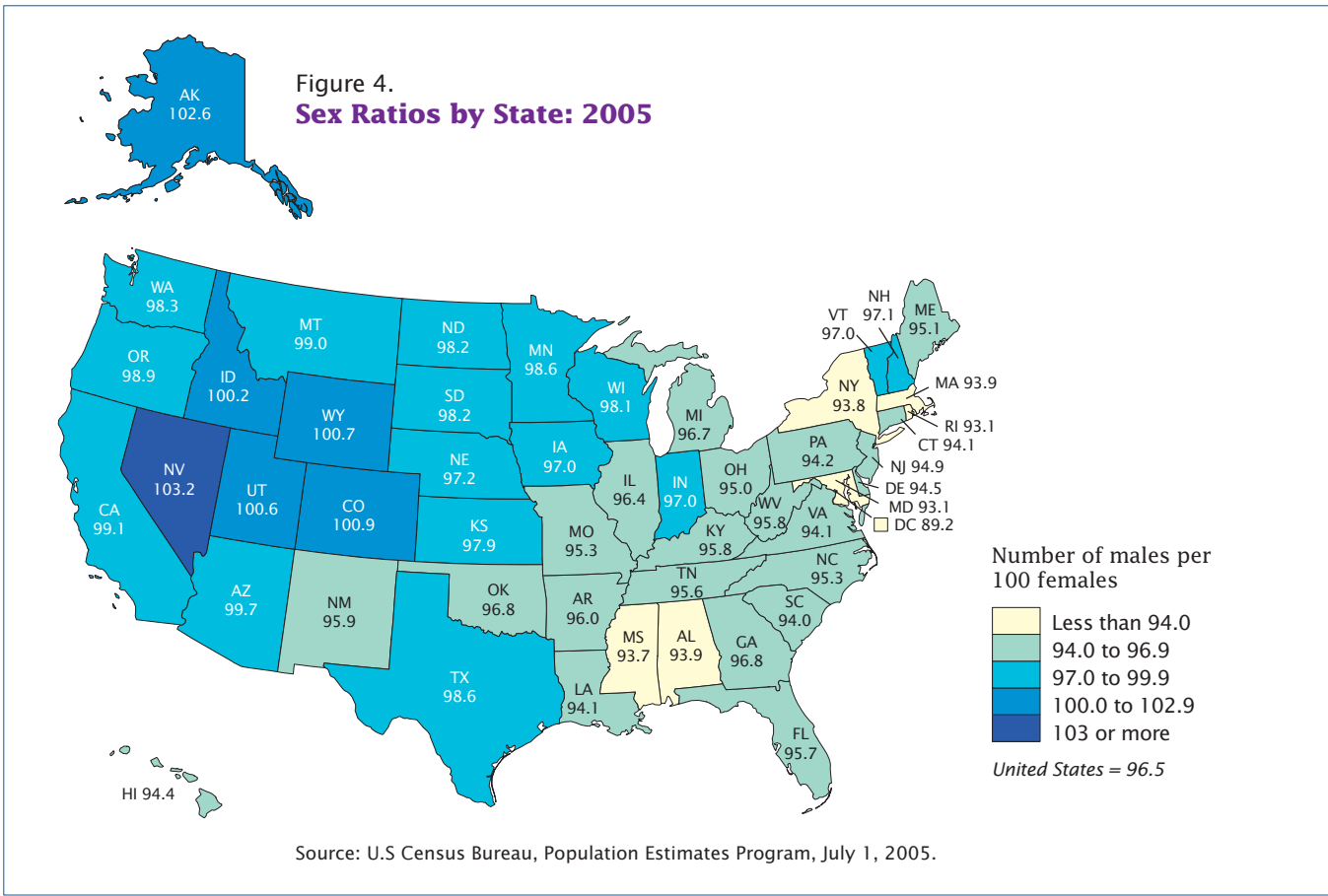
On July 1, 2005, the median age of the population was 36.2 years—older than the highest median age ever recorded in a census (35.3 in Census 2000).

¹ The number of males per 100 females is called the sex ratio. To find out more about sex ratios, see the chapters on men and women and on the older population.

Figure 1.
Population by Single Year of Age and Sex: 2005



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program, July 1, 2005.



State Differences

The geographic distribution of the population aged 65 and older illustrates age differences by state. While 12 percent of U.S. residents were aged 65 and older in 2005, the proportions in individual states differed. Florida had the highest proportion in this age range, 17 percent (Figure 3). West Virginia and Pennsylvania followed, with about 15 percent each. Alaska anchored the other end of the scale, with 6 percent of its population in this age range. The proportion of the population that was 65 and older was also below 10 percent in Utah, Georgia, Colorado, and Texas.

State differences can also be seen when looking at sex ratios—the number of males per 100 females. Because there are more women and girls than men and boys nationwide, the U.S. sex ratio is 96. The states with the lowest sex ratios were Maryland and Rhode Island, where there were 93 males for every 100 females. The District of Columbia’s sex ratio was even lower (89). In

2005, six states had more men and boys than women and girls and therefore had sex ratios over 100. They were Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Alaska, and Nevada. Alaska and Nevada had particularly high sex ratios. In each of these states, there were about 103 males for every 100 females.

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

See the Population Estimates Program’s Web site <www.census.gov/popest/estimates.php>.

Look for information on related topics on the Census Bureau’s Web site <www.census.gov>.

Contact the Census Bureau’s Demographic Call Center (toll-free) at 1-866-758-1060.

E-mail <ask.census.gov>.