

Southern Population Changes, 2000-2003

The South's population grew by 4.3 percent between 2000 and 2003. While all 14 Southern states gained population, the gains were not evenly distributed. Southeastern states and Texas posted the highest growth rates. These states also experienced significant growth in the oldest and youngest segments of the population. Meanwhile, Border and Deep South states grew at much slower rates and tended to gain population only in the oldest population groups.

These findings come from a [recent U.S. Census Bureau report](#). The study compared the population figures from 1 April 2000 – the date of the 2000 Census — to those from 1 July 2003 – the date of the 2003 Current Population Survey. The following table summarizes the changes for each Southern state.

Population Changes in Southern States, 2000-2003								
State	Total Population				Select Age Groups			
	Total Population (2003)	Total Population (2000)	# Change Total Population (2000-2003)	% Change Total Population (2000-2003)	% Change Ages 5-13 (2000-2003)	2003 Population Share Ages 5-13 (%)	% Change Ages 65+ (2000-2003)	2003 Population Share Ages 65+ (%)
Alabama	4,500,752	4,447,100	53,652	1.21	-2.62	12.37	2.14	13.16
Arkansas	2,725,714	2,673,398	52,316	1.96	-0.30	12.48	0.98	13.86
Florida	17,019,068	15,982,820	1,036,248	6.48	4.67	11.57	3.20	17.02
Georgia	8,684,715	8,186,517	498,198	6.09	3.06	13.11	5.25	9.52
Kentucky	4,117,827	4,042,209	75,618	1.87	-0.73	12.12	1.50	12.44
Louisiana	4,496,334	4,468,958	27,376	0.61	-5.26	12.92	1.44	11.66
Mississippi	2,881,281	2,844,656	36,625	1.29	-3.25	13.15	1.71	12.13
North Carolina	8,407,248	8,046,451	360,797	4.48	3.55	12.41	4.87	12.09
Oklahoma	3,511,532	3,450,654	60,878	1.76	-2.54	12.35	1.14	13.13
South Carolina	4,147,152	4,011,848	135,304	3.37	-1.29	12.35	5.45	12.34
Tennessee	5,841,748	5,689,262	152,486	2.68	-2.12	11.94	3.32	12.44
Texas	22,118,509	20,851,790	1,266,719	6.07	4.21	13.95	4.96	9.83
Virginia	7,386,330	7,078,483	307,847	4.35	0.85	12.20	5.19	11.28
West Virginia	1,810,354	1,808,350	2,004	0.11	-3.43	10.85	0.12	15.31
<i>South</i>	<i>97,648,564</i>	<i>93,582,496</i>	<i>4,066,068</i>	<i>4.34</i>	<i>1.52</i>	<i>12.63</i>	<i>3.55</i>	<i>12.37</i>
<i>United States</i>	<i>290,809,777</i>	<i>281,423,231</i>	<i>9,386,546</i>	<i>3.34</i>	<i>-0.74</i>	<i>12.64</i>	<i>2.65</i>	<i>12.35</i>

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/releases/archives/population/001703.html)

Several insights emerge from the data:

Total Population

- Florida's overall growth rate of 6.5 percent was the highest in the South, followed by Texas and Georgia.
- West Virginia and Louisiana posted the lowest growth rates. Both states grew by less than 1 percent.
- Five Southern states – Florida, Texas, Georgia, North Carolina and Virginia – grew at rates above the South's overall 4.3 percent rate. Also, the rate of population growth in those five states and South Carolina exceeded the national rate of 3.3.
- All other Southern states grew at rates lower than the Southern and national ones.

Elementary and Middle School-Age Population (Ages 5-13)

- While the nation population of elementary and middle school-age children declined by 0.7 percent, the South's population of 5 to 13 year-old children grew by 1.5 percent.
- This growth was driven by five states – Florida, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia. The school-age population in these states grew between 0.9 percent in Virginia and 4.7 percent in Florida.
- The nine remaining Southern states underwent declines in their elementary school-age populations. Louisiana's 5.3 percent drop was the region's steepest.
- The population share of elementary school-age children in the South ranged between 10.9 percent in West Virginia and 14 percent in Texas.

Older Population (Ages 65+)

- Every Southern state experienced growth in the segment of the population age 65 and above. South Carolina's 5.5 percent gain led the region, while West Virginia's 0.1 percent increase was the region's lowest.
- Overall, the population age 65 and above grew at a higher rate in the South than in the nation as a whole. Eight Southern states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia – posted increases higher than the national average.
- The population share of adults age 65 or above exceeded the national share of 12.4 percent in seven Southern states — Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee and West Virginia.
- Florida has the largest share of people age 65 and older, while Georgia has the lowest.

Together, the segments of the population age 65 and over and between ages 5 and 13 accounted for between 22.6 and 28.6 percent of each Southern state's total population. Older Americans and elementary and middle school-age children are not in their prime working years. Therefore, the age structure of Southern states likely will exacerbate the financial pressures on governments. The segments of the population over age 65 and between ages 5 and 13 tend to consume more public resources than other population groups, especially in costly areas like education and medical care.

Articles of Interest

Jacob Levenson. "Divining Dixie." *The Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 2004.

(<http://cjr.org/issues/2004/2/levenson-dixie.asp>)

* A journalistic reflection on Southern culture and politics.

Lucy Morgan. "Money World: Admission Prices Are Through the Roof." *The St. Petersburg Times*. 7 March 2004.

(http://www.sptimes.com/2004/03/07/State/Admission_prices_are_.shtml)

* A special report on lobbying in the Florida statehouse.

John Wagner. "Edwards Showed Appeal But Didn't Broaden Reach." *The (Raleigh) News & Observer*. 7 March 2004.

(<http://www.newsobserver.com/politics/edwards/story/3398859p-3021665c.html>)

* An analysis of Sen. John Edwards' presidential campaign.

"Y'all Come." (Editorial). *The (Raleigh) News & Observer*. 12 March 2004.

(<http://newsobserver.com/editorials/story/3411836p-3032651c.html>)

* An editorial regarding the impact of population growth on North Carolina.

News from the Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life

The February 2004 issue of *SouthNow* has been published. This issue profiles the journalistic resources devoted to state politics in each Southern state. To view the issue, go to <http://www.southnow.org/publications/southnow/SouthNow6.pdf>