Population Growth by Age: Residents of Massachusetts and U.S., 2000 - 2010

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The population of Massachusetts is growing larger and older. According to the U.S. Census, between 2000 and 2010 the population of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts grew by 3% (representing an increase of 200,000 individuals). The number of older residents grew at a faster pace, with a 5% increase in those age 65 and older, and a 24% increase among the oldest age groups.

As Baby Boomers in Massachusetts age, the state’s population will become increasingly older.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of population change by age category. In Massachusetts, the 55 to 64 age group saw the largest overall growth, increasing by 47%. The total number of Massachusetts residents 54 or younger decreased by about 2%. Although the number of older residents (aged 65 and older) grew by 5% (compared to about 15% nationally), the number of persons aged 75 to 84 decreased by 5%. Among all older residents in Massachusetts, the greatest percentage increase (24%) occurred among individuals who were 85 years or older.
Massachusetts—Changing Age Composition, 2000 to 2010

The aging of the “Baby Boomers”—an exceptionally large birth cohort born between 1946 and 1964—will result in unprecedented changes in the age composition of the state’s population. Beginning in 2011, the oldest Baby Boomers began turning 65, making them eligible for an array of services offered by state and federal sources. Over the next 20 years, the proportion of the population that is over the age of 65 will continue to grow.

Figure 2 shows change in proportion of each age group relative to the population at large. The greatest change occurred among individuals age 54 and younger. In 2000, this group made up approximately 78% of the total population; in 2010, this group made up just 74% of the population—a net decrease of about 4%.

The group of individuals between ages 55 and 64 saw the largest increase in proportion. In 2000, persons in this group made up only about 9%; by 2010, this proportion had grown to about 12%. Overall, the proportion of persons over age 65 grew by just 0.1%; however, as Baby Boomers age, including those currently in the 55 to 64 age range, the proportion of older Massachusetts residents is expected to increase dramatically.

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