Alabama in 2000—How have we changed?

Results from the long-form census questionnaire (which sampled one in six households) provide a detailed look at social, economic, and housing characteristics of Alabama residents. These data, coupled with information on general demographic characteristics released last year, are available in four-page .pdf profiles for geographies down to the place level. The complete Summary File 3 data set, which also provides information at the census tract and block group levels of geography, will be released this fall. Access the profiles and other available 2000 Census data at our website, cber.cba.ua.edu.

Here we provide a brief overview of Alabama’s 2000 census results and take a quick look at how we’ve changed since 1990.

Social Characteristics

Educational Attainment

Alabamians are more educated. In 2000, 75.3 percent of our residents 25 and over had completed high school. This compares to 66.9 percent of Alabamians with at least a high school degree in 1990. And 19.0 percent of the state’s 25 and over population held a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2000—that’s 549,608 college graduates, 150,380 more than in the last census. Of these college graduates, 36 percent held a graduate or professional degree in 2000. Just 8.3 percent of Alabamians 25 and over had less than a 9th grade education in 2000, down significantly from 13.7 percent in 1990.

Marital Status

Many of us are married—1,952,261 to be exact, or 55.6 percent of our population 15 and over. However, this is one percent below the married share in 1990. A larger number of Alabamians were separated or divorced in 2000—447,206, or 12.7 percent, compared to 10.7 percent of residents 15 and over in 1990. With improved life expectancy, we see fewer widows and widowers, at 7.8 percent of residents 15 and over in 2000 versus 8.7 percent in 1990.

Grandparents as Caregivers

Alabama had over 56,000 grandparents living with one or more of their grandchildren under 18 and responsible for most of their basic needs. This was a new question in 2000.

Veteran Status

There were 447,397 civilian veterans residing in Alabama in 2000, up slightly (2.9 percent) from 434,787 in 1990.

Disability Status of the Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population

Changes in concepts and age groups make comparing responses in 1990 and 2000 impossible. In 2000 almost half of Alabamians 65 and over said they had some type of disability. Disability is defined to include blindness, deafness, and severe vision or hearing impairment; difficulty performing basic physical activities, such as walking; difficulty learning, remembering, or concentrating; difficulty dressing, bathing, or getting around inside the home; and, for the population 16 and over, difficulty going outside the home alone to shop or visit a doctor’s office. Of Alabama’s population aged 21 to 64, 23.2 percent had some type of disability.

Residence in 1995

We Alabamians are not very likely to leave the state. Just 9.1 percent of the population 5 and over moved out of state between 1995 and 2000. Over the five year period from 1995 to 2000, over half of Alabama residents did not move.
(57.4 percent). This share is about the same as ten years ago. Of those who moved, most moved to a different house in the same Alabama county (24.7 percent, down from 25.6 percent in 1990). More Alabamians changed counties within the state between 1995 and 2000 than between 1985 and 1990—almost 366,000, compared to just over 284,600 in 1990. However, fewer residents moved to another state during the five years leading up to the 2000 census than in 1990.

Nativity and Place of Birth
Most of the 4,447,100 people living in Alabama in 2000 were born here. Just 87,772 were foreign born—amounting to 2.0 percent of the total population and up from 1.1 percent in 1990. Almost three-fourths of Alabamians were born in the state, although the percentage dropped slightly from 75.9 in 1990 to 73.4 percent in 2000. The share of residents born in another state increased from 22.4 percent in 1990 to 24.0 percent in 2000.

Region of Birth of Foreign Born
The state’s small foreign-born population was from three primary regions—Latin America (40.5 percent), Asia (29.9 percent), and Europe (21 percent). The number of foreign-born from Latin America increased by over 30,000 between 1990 and 2000. In 1990 Alabama residents born in Latin America accounted for only 13.1 percent of the foreign-born population.

Language Spoken at Home
The share of Alabama residents speaking a language other than English at home rose from 2.9 percent in 1990 to 3.9 percent in 2000. Over 60 percent of those speaking another language at home also speak English very well.

Economic Characteristics

Employment Status
In 2000, 59.7 percent of Alabama’s population 16 and over was in the labor force. This percentage was down from 61.1 percent in 1990—which could be due to more young people finishing high school or pursuing higher education before entering the labor force. Among females 16 and over, labor force participation was lower than that of the total population at 52.8 percent in 2000. For families with children under age 6 in 2000, 58.4 percent reported both par-ents in the labor force, just below the percentage of 58.7 in 1990.

Commuting to Work
We’re spending more time in the daily commute. Mean travel time to work increased from 21.2 minutes in 1990 to 24.8 minutes in 2000. And we generally drive it alone. In 2000, 83 percent of Alabama’s workers drove solo to work. This share was up from 79.2 percent in 1990, as residents decreased the use of carpools from a 15.4 percent share in 1990 to just 12.3 percent in 2000. The number who used public transportation (including taxis) to get to work fell from 13,279 in 1990 to 9,496 in 2000. About 39,300 Alabamians (2.1 percent of all workers) worked at home in 2000, up from about 31,100 in 1990.

Occupation
Most Alabamians worked in white-collar occupations in 2000, with 29.5 percent in management, professional, and related areas and 25.9 percent in sales and office jobs. Another 13.5 percent were employed in service occupations. Nineteen percent of Alabama workers held jobs in production, transportation, and material moving occupations, while about 11 percent worked in construction and maintenance jobs. Data on occupational categories are not comparable to 1990 due to changes in the classification system.

Industry
Data on employment by industry are also not fully comparable between 1990 and 2000 due to changes in classification. Services dominated industry employment in 2000, with 37.8 percent of workers—a
big increase over the approximately 29.4 percent share in 1990. Manufacturing lost employment share, with the percentage of workers dropping from 22.9 percent in 1990 to 18.4 percent in 2000. Employment in the construction and FIRE sectors also increased strongly during the ten years. While the number and share of workers in retail trade seemed to fall between censuses, this decrease is largely due to classification changes. Some retail occupations in 1990 were reclassified into other categories in 2000.

**Class of Worker**
The share of Alabama workers in the private sector rose from 75.6 percent in 1990 to 77.9 percent in 2000. The percentage of government workers fell correspondingly, from 17.4 percent in 1990 to 15.5 percent in 2000, while the percentage self-employed in their own business stayed fairly steady at 6.6 percent. There were 298,434 Alabamians employed by local, state, and federal governments in 2000.

**Income in 1999**
Median income of Alabama’s approximately 1.74 million households amounted to $34,135 in 1999. In constant 1999 dollars, this household income was up 11.5 percent during the ten years since 1989. The households that are families fared better than all households, with median income of $41,657 in 1999, up 11.9 percent, after adjusting for inflation, from 1989. Per capita income in Alabama (as calculated by the Census Bureau) rose from $11,486 in 1989 ($14,907 in 1999 dollars) to $18,189 in 1999, for a real increase of 22 percent.

**Poverty in 1999**
The overall well-being of Alabama’s residents as measured by the percentage below the poverty level improved moderately between 1989 and 1999. In 1999, 12.5 percent of the state’s families had incomes below the poverty threshold, compared to 14.3 percent in 1989. Although the poverty status of families headed by a female also improved, the poverty level for female-headed families remained much higher than for all families. In 1999, 44.6 percent of single-mom families with children younger than 18 lived below poverty, down from 50.1 percent in 1989. Children under 5 in families with only a mother present remained likely to be living in poverty, with 56.6 percent of these families in poverty in 1999. Poverty percentages were particularly improved for individuals 65 and over—the share of elderly living in poverty fell from 24.0 percent in 1989 to 15.5 percent in 1999.

![Poverty Rates for Alabama](image)

**Housing Characteristics**

**Type of Structure**
Almost two-thirds of housing in Alabama was detached, single-family homes in 2000, with the number up over 166,300, although the share was down 1.7 percent from 1990. The difference was due in part to a sharp increase in the number of mobile homes. There were 319,212 mobile homes in 2000, or 16.3 percent of all dwellings—over 101,400 more than in 1990. The number of structures with 20 or more units climbed almost 22,700, or 46.5 percent, during the decade.

**Year Structure Built**
About 443,000 of the 1,963,711 housing units count-
ed in the state in 2000, or 26.5 percent, were built since January 1, 1990. This was up from 391,775 units built in the previous decade. Almost 481,000 housing units were at least 40 years old in 2000. The share of units that were 40 years old or more rose from 17.9 percent in 1990 to 24.5 percent in 2000.

**Number of Rooms**
Houses were slightly larger on average in 2000. The median number of rooms was 5.5 in 2000 compared to 5.3 in 1990. The percentage of units with seven or more rooms rose from 23.4 percent in 1990 to 27.3 percent in 2000.

**Vehicles Available**
Fewer Alabama residents were without a vehicle in 2000. There were about 143,600 occupied housing units with no vehicle available in 2000. This 8.3 percent of the total compares to 10.3 percent in 1990. In 2000 most residences had one or two vehicles, while about 21 percent had three or more—the same as ten years ago.

**Home Heating Fuel**
The decade of the 1990s brought a sizeable jump in Alabamians heating with electricity. Electricity was the primary source of heat for 46 percent of units in 2000, up from 34.6 percent in 1990. This represented an increase of 277,220 units. Electricity passed utility gas, which held the dominant share in 1990. The number of units heated by utility gas rose almost 16,000, while the sector’s share fell from 42.8 percent in 1990 to 38.1 percent in 2000. While homes heated by bottled, tank, or LP gas also increased slightly, the share in this category fell from 15.6 percent in 1990 to 14.0 percent in 2000.

**Selected Characteristics**
Only about 11,000 occupied housing units were without complete plumbing in 2000, down from almost 21,000 in 1990. The share without complete kitchen facilities dropped by a third during the decade to less than 10,000. No telephone service was available in 4.2 percent of units in 2000, a sharp drop from 8.7 percent without a telephone in 1990.

**Housing Value**
The median value of owner-occupied, one-family housing units, measured in constant 2000 dollars, rose from $67,842 in 1990 to $85,100 in 2000. This represents a strong real increase of $17,258, or 25.4 percent, in housing value during the decade. In 2000, 61.9 percent of owner-occupied single-family units were valued at less than $100,000, 28.8 percent were valued at $100,000 up to $200,000, 5.7 percent at $200,000 to $300,000, and 3.5 percent at $300,000 or above.

**Mortgage Status and Selected Monthly Owner Costs**
More Alabamians held mortgages on their residences in 2000. The 64 percent of mortgaged properties compares to 59.9 percent in 1990. The median monthly owner cost (including mortgage, taxes, insurance, and utilities) for homes with a mortgage was $816 in 2000, up 15.7 percent in constant 2000 dollars from $705 in 1990. For the 36 percent of homes that were not mortgaged, the median monthly owner cost was just $228. The majority of Alabama homeowners (60.5 percent) spent less than 20 percent of 1999 household income on mortgage, tax, insurance, and utilities payments. This was slightly below the 63.1 percent spending less than 20 percent in 1989. However, the 13.9 percent spending 35 percent or more of income on housing in 1999 compares to 11.9 percent in 1989.

**Gross Rent**
Renters in Alabama paid a median gross rent of $447 in 2000, up an inflation-adjusted $32 from 1990, or 7.7 percent. Gross rent includes contract rent, and an estimated average monthly cost for utilities and fuel. Renters tended to be more burdened with housing costs than homeowners—27.4 percent of renters spent 35 percent or more of their 1999 income on housing compared to 13.9 percent of homeowners.

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