

Demographics

Arkansas Population Figures: a slow climb

From the earliest period of European colonization and development, the population of Arkansas has stubbornly resisted living up to promoters' predictions. In 1810 the human population of today's Arkansas was estimated to be 1062, not counting native populations. By 1850, the figure had grown to 209,867 including African-Americans both free and enslaved. During the twentieth century, the state's population grew from 1,311,564 in 1900 to 1,909,511 in 1950 and ultimately 2,673,400 in 2000; the impressive overall growth masks Arkansas' decline in population during the late 1940s and 1950s, the product of wartime and post-war outmigration in search of work.

Where are we?

During the twentieth century, Arkansas' population, like that of the rest of the nation, became increasingly urban. This reflected both the "push" of rural poverty and frustrations with shifting agricultural markets as well as the "pull" of manufacturing, commercial and service jobs in the cities and large towns. Arkansas' shift from rural to urban majority did not occur until after 1970, some five decades after the nation's population had turned this corner. At the beginning of the twentieth century, only 8.5 percent of Arkansans (as opposed to over 39 percent of all Americans) lived in urban or semi-urban areas. By 1950, when 64 percent of Americans lived in "town," urban Arkansans made up just 32.3 percent of the population. In 2000, 79 percent of Americans (but only 53.5 percent of Arkansans) live in urban zones.

Who we are: Population by Gender , Ethnicity and marital status

In 2000, Arkansas' population reached 2,673,400. Of these, 1,304,693 were male and 1,368,707 were female, reflecting a national trend of a growing distaff majority. Slightly less than half of the population was under the age of 35. Arkansas' ethnic profile in the 2000 Census reflects a heavy European majority existing alongside significant minority populations. Also significant is the disparity in median age between "European" and other ethnic groups.

Ethnic group	Population	Median Age	% of pop.
White ("european")	2,138,598	38	80
Black	418,950	28	<16
Native American	17,808	31	<1
Asian	20,220	30	<1
Hawai'ian	1,668	23	<1
Latino/a (any race)	86,866	24	>3
"Some other"	40,412	23	1.5
Two or more	35,744	25	1.3

County with largest reported population of

African-Americans	Pulaski	115,197
Latino/as	Benton	13,469
Asians	Pulaski	4,510
Native Americans	Benton	2,531

Marital choices: changes with time

Arkansans have, in common with the rest of the nation, exhibited significant shifts in marital preferences during the last half of the 20th century. Particularly interesting is the change in ratio of married to divorced Arkansans reflecting both shifting social mores and liberalization of divorce laws. The following figures categorize Arkansans of marriage age, over 14 to 1970, 15 or older beginning in 1980.

year	single	married	widowed	divorced	total
1950	270,185	919,580	12,745	25,470	1,327,930
1990*	379,361	1,129,995	164,342	161,212	1,834,910

* Latest year available