

PART 1

Statewide Population Trends

Top-line findings

- **Iowa continues to be a slow-growing state, but its share of young children has grown and is now comparable to the U.S. average.** From 2000 to 2010, Iowa's total population grew 4.1 percent, compared with 9.7 percent nationally. In that period, the state's young-child population grew 6.7 percent, compared with 4.8 percent nationally. In fact, although Iowa is still older-than-average overall, its share of young children is now very similar to the U.S. (6.6 percent, compared with 6.5 percent). Relatively slow growth is projected through 2020.
- **Iowa is becoming more diverse, and Iowa's child population is leading the way.** All parts of the state are becoming more diverse, and population growth among children of color and/or of Hispanic descent is the sole driver of population growth in that age group in Iowa.
- **Both single parenting and parental work involvement have risen dramatically over the past decades.** The percent of births to single Iowa mothers rose from 7 percent to 34 percent between 1970 and 2010, and the state has one of the highest shares of young children with all parents in the work force—74 percent. These patterns have contributed to an increased need for child care and put new stresses on families.

Iowa has long been a slow-growing state. While the U.S. population more than doubled between 1950 and 2010, Iowa's population grew by 16 percent. From 2000 to 2010, Iowa's total population grew 4.1 percent, compared with 9.7 percent nationally. Among young children, Iowa's population grew 6.7 percent, actually beating the national average of 4.8 percent in the U.S. during that decade, although projections are for slower than average growth among young Iowa children through 2020.¹

Iowa's population is also older than the country as a whole, with a much higher proportion of people over 65, and about the same percentage of people under 17. This means that, compared to the nation, there are fewer Iowa residents of working age to provide economic support to those in retirement and to those in their years of education and growth.

While Iowa historically has been one of the most homogenous states with respect to race and ethnicity, the state is becoming notably more diverse. In this regard, children are leading the way. Children of a race other than white and/or who are Hispanic represent 21.1 percent of Iowa's 0-5 population and 17.2 percent of the 6-17 population, but only 2.9 percent of the 65-plus population (see sidebar on page 10 for discussion of the racial and ethnic categories used in this report). Over the last two decades, the Hispanic young-child population in Iowa has more than doubled, and, in fact, people of Hispanic descent are now the largest minority group in the state. All other minority groups, including people who identify two or more races, have grown significantly as well. Iowa's population is projected to continue becoming more diverse over the next decade, although at a slower rate than during the 2000s.

The growth of minority communities is a key component of overall population growth in the state. Without growth among children of color and/or of Hispanic descent, Iowa's young child population would have declined statewide and in 70 of 99 counties.

During the 2000s, a handful of primarily suburban counties around Des Moines experienced very high growth rates among the white, non-Hispanics, but the majority of counties experienced significant drops in this population.

When Iowa counties are broken down by population size and proximity to a major city, central city metropolitan and outlying metropolitan counties were the only ones to experience significant growth in the number of children of any race or ethnicity during the 2000s—10 percent and 19 percent, respectively. Rural counties saw an increase of less than 3 percent and regional centers and small urban counties saw losses in young child population.

These growth patterns make more extreme the already distinct population distribution in Iowa. Looking at the young-child population in 2010, children were concentrated in and around Iowa's major and medium-sized cities and a handful of counties along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. A swath of counties from north-central Iowa, through the west

Five county types

In order to summarize socio-economic patterns across Iowa, this report grouped the state's 99 counties by their population and proximity to large cities. The result was five groups:

Central City Metropolitan (9 counties): These counties are defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget as "metropolitan." They contain an urban core of at least 50,000.

This group of counties, encompassing Iowa's largest cities, is the most ethnically, educationally and socially diverse, with areas of greatest affluence and greatest need.

Outlying Metropolitan (11 counties): Defined by OMB as "metropolitan," these places are adjacent to, but do not contain, the urban core, but have a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting patterns.

As a group, these counties are Iowa's fast-growing, more homogeneous and prosperous places.

Regional Centers (17 counties): Defined by the OMB as "micropolitan," these counties contain a core urban of at least 10,000 (and fewer than 50,000) people or are adjacent to the urban core and have a high degree of social and economic integration with it.

As a group, these places are experiencing a combination of slow growth, relatively high levels of single parenting and unemployment and relatively low levels of income and educational attainment.

Small Urban (24 counties): These are non-metropolitan/-micropolitan counties whose largest town has 5,000 (and fewer than 10,000) or more residents.

Rural (38 counties): These are non-metropolitan/-micropolitan counties whose largest town has fewer than 5,000 residents.

On average, small urban and rural counties have fewer young children and services and are more homogeneous and stable in family structure. They have higher rates of high-school but lower rates of college completion than the state as a whole.

See map on page 26.

central and along the southern tier of counties had very low densities of children.

Counties with relatively large shares of young children relative to their total population were scattered around the state, with notable pockets in the northwest corner of the state and in central Iowa.

Two other major demographic trends affecting young Iowa children are changes in family composition and work patterns.

First, Iowa, like the U.S. as a whole, has seen a decline in the proportion of children living in households headed by two parents. While the state still has lower rates of single parenting relative to the nation, Iowa has experienced the same notable, long-term rise in the share of households headed by single parents—both those headed by a male and those headed by a female—and in the share of grandparents or other relatives

raising children.² The rate of growth in single parenting slowed slightly during the 2000s compared to the previous decade, but remains at an all-time high in Iowa and the country.

Second, many more married women with young children are in the workforce today than 50 years ago, although the sole parent in a single-parent family is still more likely to be working than both parents in a married-couple family. In fact, Iowa is among the top five states in the nation in households with young children where both parents or the only parent are in the workforce (74 percent compared with 63 percent nationally). The growth in workforce participation has placed increased demands on families to secure child care and has raised the need for that care not to just meet basic safety standards but also ones related to quality and developmental support.

How the Census asks about race and ethnicity

The data on race and ethnicity in this report comes from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau, like other federal agencies, treats race and ethnicity as separate and independent categories. When they fill out the census, people are first asked to indicate whether or not they are of Hispanic descent. Then they are asked to describe themselves in terms of six racial groupings:

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Some other race
- Two or more races (identified by the respondent)

This means that everyone is classified as both a member of one of the race groups and as either Hispanic or non-Hispanic. The largest group in Iowa is people who describe themselves as white and non-Hispanic. In this report, the group not falling under this designation is referred to as people or communities of color and/or Hispanic.

^x Throughout this report, unless otherwise indicated, the young-child population refers to people under age 6.

^x In fact, to reflect the changes in these demographics, in 1990 the U.S. Census changed its data collection to gather information about single parents by gender and in 2000 to gather information about grandparents or relatives as heads of household.