

Question 1

What are the sociodemographic characteristics of the general population in Louisiana?

This section provides information on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the state. Regional Implementation Plans, which are included as a separate chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, profile each region in more detail.

SUMMARY

Population: In the 2000 census, the total population reported for Louisiana was 4,468,976 persons. Louisiana comprises 64 county-equivalent subdivisions that are called parishes. Parish populations ranged from a low of 6,618 persons (Tensas Parish) to upwards of a half-million persons in Orleans Parish. The Greater New Orleans area (Orleans, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, and St. Tammany Parishes) represented 30% of Louisiana's population. The major cities in order of descending population are New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Lafayette, and Lake Charles, with populations ranging from 484,674 to 71,757. The state is considered rural; however, 75% of its population reside in urban areas. Overall, the state has 8 metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs).

Public Health Regional Structure: The Louisiana Office of Public Health is divided into 9 distinct geographic regions (see map on page 97). A public health region comprises 4 to 12 parishes surrounding one of the major urban centers in the state. Regional activities include clinical services for family planning, STD screening and treatment, maternal and child health, special health services for children, nutrition programs, and immunizations. Services also include sanitation, environmental monitoring, and epidemiologic investigations. Each region is home to a public hospital where residents may obtain primary care.

Demographic Composition: According to the 2000 census data, the racial and ethnic composition of the state was estimated to be 64% white, 32% black, 1% Asian, and 0.6% American Indian. Persons of Hispanic origin were estimated to make up 2.4% of the total population.

Age and Sex: In 2000, the median age of Louisiana residents was 34 years. More than 25% of the population were younger than 18 years of age; 11% of the population were 65 or older. The proportion of females in the overall population was slightly higher than the proportion of males (52% vs. 48%).

Poverty, Income, and Education: In 2000, the median household income in Louisiana was \$31,034. According to the 2000 census, nearly 900,000 residents (20% of the population) for whom poverty status was determined had incomes that fell below the federally defined

poverty level, compared with 13% nationally. Louisiana has one of the highest proportions of children living in poverty: 27% of all children 18 years or younger in 2000. Of the total number of families, 42% had a female head of household (no husband present), and 16% of all families had incomes below the poverty level. The unemployment rate in 2000 was 6% statewide. One of every 5 adults (19–64 years) in Louisiana is uninsured. In 2000, Louisiana ranked 45th among states for per capita income. In the 2000 census, more than 75% of Louisiana residents aged 25 years and older reported educational attainment of high school diploma or higher.

Health Indicators: It was recently reported in *Health Care State Rankings for 2002* that Louisiana ranks 49th in the nation in health indicators. According to this report, prenatal care needs to be improved in the state: Louisiana ranked 2nd in the percentage of low-birthweight babies (10.3% of live births), 4th in the rate of infant mortality (9.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births), and 15th in the proportion of women receiving late or no prenatal care. Additionally, Louisiana ranks 9th highest in the rate of births to teenagers (62.1 births to mothers aged 15–19 per 1,000 live births vs. 48.5 nationally) and 3rd in the nation for rates of syphilis and gonorrhea. In 2000, the transmission rates for these diseases were at least twice the national rate (5.0 syphilis cases per 100,000 persons vs. 2.5 nationally; 314 gonorrhea cases per 100,000 persons vs. 133.2 nationally). Lastly, the *2002 Louisiana Health Report Card* indicates that many persons in Louisiana seek care at hospital emergency departments in lieu of a primary care physician: Louisiana ranked 17th nationally in the number of visits to emergency departments in hospitals.

Public Aid: In 2000, 16.2% of Louisiana residents were covered by Medicaid, and 13.4% were covered by Medicare. Approximately 502,000 children 20 years of age or younger rely on Medicaid for their health needs.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In 2000, the population of the state of Louisiana was 4,468,976 persons (Table 1). The largest proportion of the population were 25–44 years of age (28.9% overall), and nearly 50% of the population were in the combined age groups 13–24 and 25–44 years. The age distribution among males and females was similar; however, a slightly higher proportion of women, compared with men, were elderly (65 years and older).

Table 1. Percentage distribution of the general population, by age group and sex, Louisiana, 2000

Age group (yrs.)	Males, % (N = 2,162,903)	Females, % (N = 2,306,073)	Total population, % (N = 4,468,976)
< 2	3.0	2.7	2.9
2–12	17.3	15.5	16.4
13–24	19.3	18.0	18.6
25–44	29.2	28.7	28.9
45–64	21.5	21.7	21.6
≥ 65	9.6	13.4	11.6

Source. Census 2000, US Bureau of the Census, and Louisiana Census Data Center Profile.

Note. Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding.

The collection of race and ethnicity information was expanded in the 2000 census to allow persons the opportunity to report belonging to more than 1 race, as well as to report Hispanic ethnicity. Despite this expansion, more than 60% of men and women in Louisiana reported themselves as non-Hispanic whites (Table 2). Non-Hispanic blacks constituted 32.6% of the population, Hispanics constituted 2.4%, and Asians and American Indians totaled 1.3% and 0.5%, respectively.

Table 2. Percentage distribution of the general population, by race/ethnicity and sex, Louisiana, 2000

Race/ethnicity	Males, % (N = 2,162,903)	Females, % (N = 2,306,073)	Total population (N = 4,468,976)
White, not Hispanic	63.9	62.5	63.2
Black, not Hispanic	31.7	33.5	32.6
Hispanic	2.5	2.3	2.4
American Indian	0.6	0.5	0.5
Asian	1.3	1.2	1.3

Source. Census 2000, US Bureau of the Census, 2001, and Louisiana Census Data Center Profile.

Note. For an explanation of how racial/ethnic groups were combined in this profile, see p. 11.

Louisiana is divided into 9 public health regions for the purpose of public health planning. The regions comprise 4 to 12 parishes surrounding one of the major urban centers in the state: New Orleans (Region I), Baton Rouge (Region II), Houma (Region III), Lafayette (Region IV), Lake Charles (Region V), Alexandria (Region VI), Shreveport (Region VII), Monroe (Region VIII), and Hammond/Slidell (Region IX). Region I has the largest population in the state, and Region V has the smallest. The proportion of persons reporting themselves as non-Hispanic white ranges from a low of 49% in Region I to a high of 81% in Region IX (Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage distribution of the general population, by race/ethnicity and public health region, Louisiana, 2000

Public health region	Race/ethnicity ^a						Total population
	White, not Hispanic %	Black, not Hispanic %	Hispanic %	American Indian %	Asian %		
I New Orleans	49	43	5	<1	3	1,034,126	
II Baton Rouge	58	39	2	<1	2	603,634	
III Houma	70	25	2	2	<1	383,697	
IV Lafayette	70	27	1	<1	<1	548,154	
V Lake Charles	76	21	2	<1	<1	283,429	
VI Alexandria	70	27	2	<1	<1	301,390	
VII Shreveport	59	38	2	<1	<1	522,560	
VIII Monroe	62	36	1	<1	<1	353,865	
IX Hammond/Slidell	81	16	2	<1	<1	438,121	

Source. Census 2000, US Bureau of the Census, and Louisiana Census Data Center Profile.

Note. Percentages may not add to 100% because of rounding.

^aFor an explanation of how racial/ethnic groups were combined in this profile, see p. 11.

Regions I and II have the highest proportions of non-Hispanic blacks (43% and 39%, respectively). In Region I, 5% of persons consider themselves Hispanic and 3% consider themselves Asian; therefore, this area has the highest concentration of both Hispanic and Asian persons in the state. Region III is home to the highest concentration of persons reporting themselves as American Indian.

According to the 2000 census, the distribution of race/ethnicity differed in Louisiana parishes with populations of more than 250,000 (Table 4). In Orleans Parish, the most populous parish, 67.3% of the population indicated their race/ethnicity as non-Hispanic black, compared with 40.1% in East Baton Rouge and only 22.9% in Jefferson. Jefferson Parish reported the highest proportion of Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites. Less than 1% of the population in each of these parishes reported themselves as American Indian. The proportions of persons in the 3 parishes that identified themselves as Asian ranged from 2% to 3%; approximately 1% in each of the areas reported that they were non-Hispanic and belonged to 2 or more races.

Table 4. Percentage distribution of the general population, by race/ethnicity for parishes of >250,000 population compared with population of Louisiana, 2000

Race/ethnicity ^a	Population, %			
	East Baton Rouge (N = 412,852)	Jefferson (N = 455,466)	Orleans (N = 484,674)	State (N = 4,468,976)
White, not Hispanic	56.2	69.8	28.1	63.2
Black, not Hispanic	40.1	22.9	67.3	32.6
Hispanic	1.8	7.1	3.0	2.4
American Indian	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.5
Asian	2.1	3.1	2.3	1.3

Source. Census 2000, US Bureau of the Census, and Louisiana Census Data Center Profile.

^aFor an explanation of how racial/ethnic groups were combined in this profile, see p. 11.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

In 2000, the highest proportion of persons living below the poverty level during the last 12 months—statewide and in the most populous parishes—were less than 25 years of age (Table 5). Nearly 60% of the males and approximately 47% of the females who were living below the poverty level were less than 25 years of age. In each of the 3 parishes and statewide, a greater proportion of women living below the poverty level, compared with men, were older than 25 years. For example, statewide, 25.4% of women aged 26–44 were living below the poverty level, compared with 17.1% of the men in that age group.

Table 5. Percentage distribution of persons living below the poverty level during the past 12 months, by sex and age group for parishes of >250,000 population, Louisiana, 2000

Age group (yrs.)	Below poverty level, %							
	East Baton Rouge		Jefferson		Orleans		Statewide	
	Males (N = 34,201)	Males (N = 34,201)	Males (N = 23,456)	Females (N = 31,162)	Males (N = 57,140)	Females (N = 75,500)	Males (N = 370,499)	Females (N = 505,738)
≤ 25	74.3	74.3	59.4	40.9	56.3	47.6	59.9	46.8
26–44	11.3	11.3	13.2	27.3	22.7	28.2	17.1	25.4
45–64	7.4	7.4	18.8	18.7	18.0	17.1	15.4	16.3
≥ 65	7.0	7.0	8.5	13.1	3.1	7.1	7.6	11.5

Source. Census 2000, US Bureau of the Census, and Louisiana Census Data Center Profile.

The most common level of educational attainment among persons 25 years and older, regardless of location or sex, was a high school diploma or its equivalent (Table 6). Statewide, 32.8% of men and 35.9% of women had earned a high school diploma or its equivalent. Similar percentages were observed in Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. In East Baton Rouge, higher proportions of men reported attending some college or receiving an associate's or a bachelor's degree or a graduate degree compared with statewide estimates or those in Jefferson or Orleans Parishes. Fewer than 10% of men or women received less than a 9th grade education in the most populous parishes or statewide.

Table 6. Percentage distribution of the population 25 years or older, by educational attainment and sex, for parishes of >250,000 population, Louisiana, 2000

Education	East Baton Rouge		Jefferson		Orleans		Total	
	Males, % (N = 112,063)	Females, % (N = 127,597)	Males, % (N = 138,586)	Females, % (N = 156,417)	Males, % (N = 132,414)	Females, % (N = 159,864)	Males, % (N = 1,254,831)	Females, % (N = 1,436,647)
< 9th Grade	5.7	4.3	7.9	7.4	7.5	9.7	9.7	8.7
High school, no diploma	8.4	10.9	11.2	13.8	11.9	12.1	14.3	13.8
High school, diploma	25.0	31.3	30.7	32.7	30.8	32.9	32.8	35.9
Some college	25.6	20.2	20.3	21.8	18.2	19.0	19.9	19.5
Associate or bachelor's degree	20.8	22.6	21.8	18.3	18.8	18.0	15.8	15.9
Graduate or professional degree	14.4	10.7	8.0	5.9	12.8	8.3	7.5	6.1

Source. Census 2000, US Bureau of the Census, and Louisiana Census Data Center Profile.

In a population survey conducted in Louisiana in 1999–2000, 24% of the men and the women aged 19–64 years reported that they did not have health insurance coverage (Table 7). Approximately two thirds (65%) of the men received health insurance coverage through their employer; a slightly lower proportion of women obtained their health insurance coverage through an employer (61%). Few persons reported coverage through individual plans, and 5% of men and 8% of women received health coverage from Louisiana’s Medicaid Program.

Table 7. Percentage distribution of adults (19–64 years), by health insurance coverage and sex, Louisiana, 1999–2000

Source of insurance	Men, % (N = 1,205,800)	Women, % (N = 1,399,380)
Employer	65	61
Individual plan	6	6
Medicaid	5	8
None/uninsured	24	24

Source. 2001 Current Population Survey, Kaiser Family Foundation.