1940 – 2010 STATE BY STATE:
KEY COMPARIONS BETWEEN THE YEARS

Then & Now
The 1940 Census came at a momentous time in our nation's history-as we recovered from the Great Depression and not long before our entry into World War II. With the release of the 1940 Census records, we can now look back and see how states have changed over time.

1940
100.7 men for every 100 women

2010
96.7 men for every 100 women

Highest ratio of MEN to WOMEN

1940
Nevada
125.4 to 100

Wyoming
116.7 to 100

Montana
114.8 to 100

Idaho
111.4 to 100

2010
Alaska
108.5 to 100

Wyoming
104.1 to 100

North Dakota
102.1 to 100

Nevada
102.0 to 100

MEDIAN AGE
The median age increased by nearly a decade in the 70 years between 1940 and 2010.

1940
Median age: 29.0 years

Lowest median age

22.2 South Carolina

23.0 New Mexico

23.1 North Carolina

23.8 Mississippi

23.8 Alabama

Highest median age

33.0 California

32.4 Oregon

32.2 Washington

32.2 New York

31.8 Massachusetts

*D.C. had a median age of 31.9

2010

Median Age: 37.2 Years

Some of the lowest median ages

29.2 Utah

33.6 Texas

33.8 Alaska

34.7 Idaho
35.2 California

*D.C. had a median age of 33.9

Some of the highest median ages

42.7 Maine

41.5 Vermont

41.3 New Hampshire

41.2 West Virginia

40.7 Florida

EMPLOYMENT
The states with the highest employment rates shifted westward over time.

1940
52.2 percent of those 14 and older were in the labor force.

States with the highest percentage of people in the labor force.

Rhode Island, 56.6 percent
South Carolina, 56.1 percent
Connecticut, 56.0 percent
New Jersey, 55.4 percent
Nevada, 55.1 percent
*D.C. had a percentage of 62.2 percent
*In 1940, AK and HI were included as territories

2010
64.4 percent of those 16 and older were in the labor force.

States with some of the highest percentage of people in the labor force

Alaska, 71.6 percent
Nebraska, 70.8 percent
North Dakota, 70.5 percent
Minnesota, 70.4 percent
New Hampshire, 69.7 percent

HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION
A far higher percentage of people had high school educations in 2010 than in 1940

1940
24.5 percent of those 25 and older had earned at least a high school degree

States with highest rates of high school completion

37.3 percent, California

37.0 percent, Utah

35.6 percent, Nevada

33.6 percent, Washington

33.1 percent, Oregon

*D.C. had a percentage of 41.2 percent.

2010
85.6 percent of those 25 and older had earned at least a high school degree

States with some of the highest rates of high school completion

92.3 percent, Wyoming

91.8 percent, Minnesota

91.7 percent, Montana

91.5 percent, New Hampshire

91.0 percent, Vermont

COLLEGE EDUCATION
A bachelor's degree was much more common in 2010 than in 1940

1940
4.6 percent of those 25 and older reported having attended 4 or more years of college

States with highest rates of college graduates

6.8 percent, California

6.7 percent, Nevada

6.3 percent, Arizona

6.2 percent, Utah

6.0 percent, Colorado

*D.C. had the highest percentage at 11.1 percent

2010
28.2 percent of those 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher

States with some of the highest rates of college graduates

39.0 percent, Massachusetts

36.4 percent, Colorado

36.1 percent, Maryland

35.4 percent, New Jersey

34.2 percent, Virginia

*D.C. had the highest percentage at 50.1 percent

TOP 5 CITIES BY POPULATION
The change in America's most-populous cities shows how we've spread across the country.

1940
New York, 7.5 million
Chicago, 3.4 million
Philadelphia, 1.9 million
Detroit, 1.6 million
Los Angeles, 1.5 million
*In 1940, AK and HI were included as territories.

2010
New York, 8.2 million
Los Angeles, 3.8 million

Chicago, 2.7 million
Houston, 2.1 million
Philadelphia, 1.5 million

Sources: 2010 American Community Survey, 2010 Census, 1940 Census
The American Community Survey is a survey and its estimates are subject to sampling error.