

Vermont in Transition:

A Summary of Social Economic and Environmental Trends

A study by

Center for Social Science Research at Saint Michael's College

Vince Bolduc, Ph. D. and Herb Kessel, Ph. D.

for the

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Chapter I: POPULATION



Vermont Council on Rural Development

43 State Street., PO Box 1384 Montpelier, VT 05601-1384

(802) 223-6091 vcrd2@sover.net

<http://www.vtrural.org>

Chapter I: POPULATION

A simple description of Vermont's demographic characteristics is sufficient to make any reader appreciate the uniqueness of the state. It also becomes obvious that recent trends will likely preserve our distinctiveness well into the future. This chapter will identify these traits as well as note the trends that have shaped the state over the past several decades.

Vermont has been in an unspoken competition with Wyoming to be ranked as the smallest population of the 50 states, but at almost 624,000 (Census estimate for 2006) we have about 100,000 more citizens than that of our competitor in the sprawling west. Since we also have a relatively small land area (Vermont ranks 45th) our 68 persons per square mile gives us a density quite similar to that of the national average of 85, and well ahead of almost 20 more populous states (see Appendix, chart 1-1). Undeniably, Vermont has the lowest proportion of residents who live in urban areas of 2,500 or more (38.2%), thus justifying our claim to being the most "rural" of the 50 states

Trends in Vermont Population Over Time

Trend number 1: The state has a comparatively low rate of population growth with rates of "in-migration" and "out-migration" that are typical of New England; the best educated are the most mobile, as in every state, but Vermont still has a very highly educated adult population. There has been a steady decline in the proportion of Vermonters who are native born.

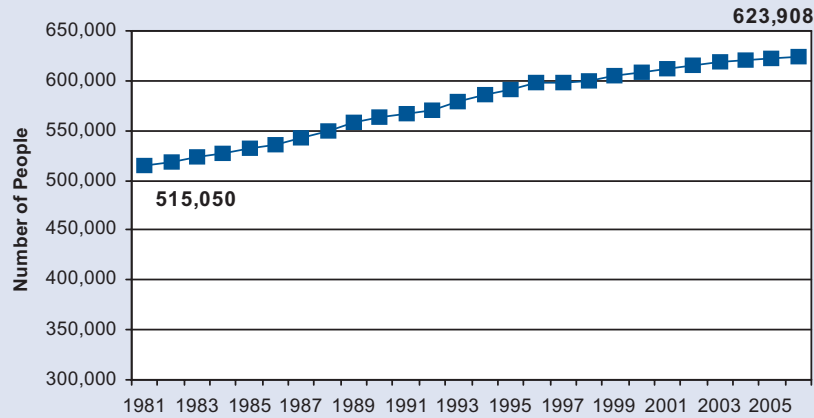
In spite of how it may appear in some of our more rapidly growing towns, our rate of population growth has been relatively low for most of the past

century, and this has not changed dramatically in recent decades. In 1900, our population was 342,815; by 1950 it had only grown to 377,000, a growth rate that the Census Bureau's Demographic Trends in the 20th Century tells us was the slowest growing of any state in the country. Even today's population of 624,000 does not quite represent a doubling of the population since 1900. Compared to most states (indeed, compared to most countries) this is a slow rate of growth (see Appendix, 1-2 and 1-3). It is worth noting that our 1900 population was larger than a long list of states, including Florida and most of the western states. To put this in perspective, had Vermont's growth rate kept pace with that of Florida over the past century, the population of Vermont would now stand at 11 million! But perhaps a more realistic comparison would be that of our eastern neighbor, New Hampshire. Had we kept pace with their growth rate for the past 106 years, our population would now stand at 1.1 million, about double our present population.

Vermont actually experienced two decades (1910 and 1930) in which the decade ended with a net loss of population, but the average rate of growth over the 106 years has been about one-half of one percent. The only decades in which Vermont outstripped the nation were from 1960 to 1990, but only in the 1970's was the difference significant, with Vermont adding 15% to its population compared to 11.5% for the nation as a whole. From 1980 to 1990, Vermont added about 10% to her population, while the decade of the 1990's saw a growth rate of 8.2%, and in the six years between 2000 and 2006, Vermont added another 2.5%. It's important to keep in mind that Vermont is part of a larger economic and demographic region and subject to dynamics well beyond its borders. In general, the Northeast has experienced lower growth rates than the rest of the nation. Census estimates for 2007 put the 2000 to 2007 growth rate for the U.S. at 7.2%, but only 2% for the entire Northeast, Vermont included.

Population can only grow in two ways: more babies are born than people die (called "natural increase") or more people move into an area than move out

Total Population Vermont 1980-2006



Source: Department of Public Health, Division of Health Surveillance, Michael Nyland-Funke: Public Health Analyst

(migration). In the case of natural increase, Vermont has historically had lower than average birth rates as well as lower than average death rates (see chapter 4 on Health for exact numbers). Working with data from the Vermont Department of Vital Statistics, the Census reports that between 2000 and 2007, 47,131 babies were born in Vermont, and 36,718 people died, leaving a “natural increase” of 10,413. To estimate the total population growth, demographers then add their best estimate of the number of people who move into the state (either from other states or other countries) and then subtract their estimate of the number of people who move out.

Percent Change in Population Various Eastern States 1980-2006

	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2006
United States	9.8%	13.1%	6.4%
Connecticut	5.8	3.6	2.9
Maine	9.2	3.8	3.7
Massachusetts	4.9	5.5	1.4
New Hampshire	20.5	11.4	6.4
New Jersey	5.2	8.6	3.7
New York	2.5	5.5	1.7
Pennsylvania	0.2	3.4	1.3
Rhode Island	5.9	4.5	1.8
Vermont	10.0	8.2	2.5

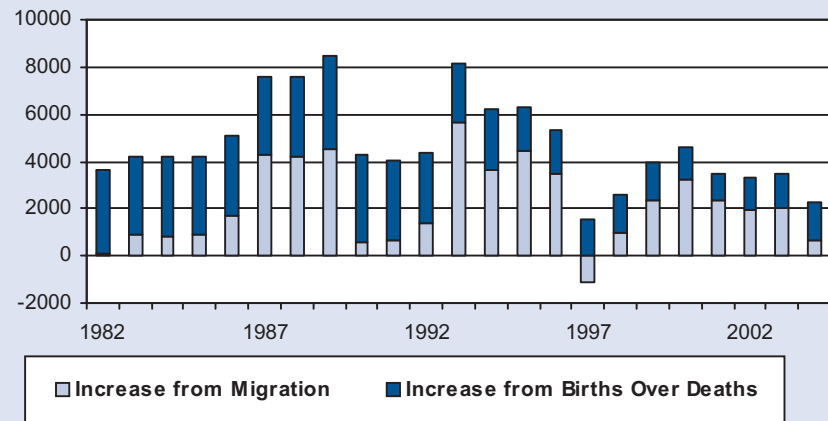
Source: Bureau of the Census. 2008 Statistical Abstracts of the United States.

However, unlike the mandatory registration of all birth and death data, people may migrate into and out of a state without any formal notification system, so the data for net migration is imprecise. The largest recent waves of in-migration took place in the 1970s (when only 43% of the population

increase came from births) but the balance quickly shifted in the 1980s when the bulk of growth was from more babies being born than people dying. Recent estimates by the Population Division of the Census suggest that about three-quarters of the growth in Vermont between 2000 and 2007 has been the result of more births than deaths rather than net migration. In other years the situation is reversed. Using population estimates from the Vital Statistics office of the Vermont Department of Health, it appears that for the 22 year period between 1982 and 2004, exactly 11 years saw more growth from migration, and 11 years saw more growth from natural increase.¹

In state-wide surveys done in Vermont in both 1998 and 2008, about three-quarters of the survey population reported that they believed that most of the population growth was due to people moving in from out-of-state rather than the excess of births over deaths, but the reverse is often true.²

Yearly Population Growth, Natural Increase and Migration Vermont 1982 to 2004



Source: Vermont Department of Health publication “Vital Statistics” for each year. Calculations were done by subtracting known natural increase (births minus deaths) from the revised population estimates for each year.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, various years; Vermont Department of Public Health *Vermont Vital Statistics*, various years; and unpublished estimates of the components of population change for states, U.S. Census Bureau.

² Center for Social Science Research, Saint Michael’s College, “1998 Vermont Population Alliance Survey” by Vince Bolduc and Herb Kessel. The 2008 report for Vermonters for a Sustainable Population is in progress.

When people move into or out of Vermont, where are they going and where are they coming from? Loyalty to Vermont makes out-migration more of a cause of concern than in-migration, but of course highways are two-way streets. America is a famously mobile society, with about half the population living in a different home than they did five years before. Most of that mobility is within the same state, and according to the Census, only about 8% of Americans moved between states between 1995 and 2000. In the case of Vermont, 12% of our population (over age 5) lived in a different state in 1995. It is important to note that the 2000 Census documented significant migration losses from 1995 to 2000, with the Northeast losing 1.2 million people while the South gained 1.8 million. Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York had a combined out-migration of nearly a million people, while Vermont had a modest migration gain of 2,254. Only a tiny fraction of these numbers are immigrants from foreign countries. The most common states with which we exchange populations are those closest to us. Over the 1995 to 2000 half-decade, 9,052 Vermont residents moved to New York, but 11,026 New York residents moved to Vermont in return. Massachusetts and New Hampshire were next in line as exchange partners.³

There has been a great deal of discussion lately focusing on the out-migration of Vermont's college educated young adults. This often starts with students going to college in other states and ends with college graduates taking jobs outside of Vermont. According to surveys of Vermont high school students who are going to college, around 50% go to colleges outside of Vermont, and this number is up about 10 points from the late 1980s (see Appendix, 1-4). When asked why they chose an out-of-state institution, their responses were as follows: 1) "I want to experience a different environment" (55%); 2) "There are more job opportunities out-of-state" (53.8%); 3) "I can make more money out-of-state" (31%); and 4) "I don't like the weather" (15%).⁴ Obviously, many of these students are already thinking of taking jobs and living in other states, although the experts who study college student migration trends believe that most students who go to out-of-state colleges are thinking less about permanent resettlement than other issues.⁵

³ Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Special Reports: "Domestic Migration Across Regions, Divisions, and States: 1995 to 2000" and "Geographical Mobility: 1995 to 2000."

⁴ VSAC survey of the class of 2005.

⁵ Postsecondary Education Opportunity, "Interstate Migration of College Graduates: 1989 to 2007," August, 2008, Thomas Mortensen.

While trend data are not readily available, a Census report entitled "Migration of the Young, Single, and College Educated: 1995 to 2000" looked at the college educated age 25 to 39 group, and concluded these are the most likely movers in every state, with about 75% having moved homes between 1995 and 2000. As with other ages and educational levels, however, most of this group moved within the state, and only about 12% moved between states. Such high mobility for the educated young is not surprising as voluntary migrations throughout the world are selective of age and education.⁶

Such mobility works both ways, of course. Not only are the educated young more likely to move out of Vermont, but they are also the most likely to move into Vermont. It should be expected that there is a dynamic circulation of young, well educated people from state to state; some states enjoy a net gain of these workers, and others suffer a net loss. According to the national data, 18 states had significant net gains from this population trade-off between 1995 and 2000, while 32 states had net losses. Vermont suffered a modest net loss of 2,252 residents, a net migration per 1,000 population that ranked us 42 out of the 50 states.⁷

Four statewide opinion polls consistently have found significant educational differences between native born Vermonters and in-migrants. The latter had significantly higher educational levels and incomes. For example, 47% of the in-migrants had a Bachelor's degree compared to only 17% of native born Vermonters. In unpublished data from the Social Science Research Center of Saint Michael's College, the same pattern appears in virtually every state. The same surveys have found that three out of every four non-natives moved to Vermont without a specific job offer, and only 32% said that they were better off financially after their move. Of those who were financially better off after their move, 70% said that they still would have moved here "even if they had to take a cut in pay."⁸

Concerns about the migration of the well-educated young are hardly limited to Vermont, as the larger region mirrors the trend. New England

⁶ Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Special Reports "Migration of the Young, Single, and College Educated: 1995 to 2000," CENSR-12.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Vermont Business Roundtable, "Pulse of Vermont: Quality of Life Study, 2005" Center for Social Science Research, by Vince Bolduc and Herb Kessel.

Public Policy Center researcher Heather Broome, in affiliation with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, compared New England to the eight other national regions for the 25 year period since 1980 and concluded that “the story about young professionals turns out to be much more nuanced than headlines suggest...reports of a major ‘brain drain’ from the region are overstated.”

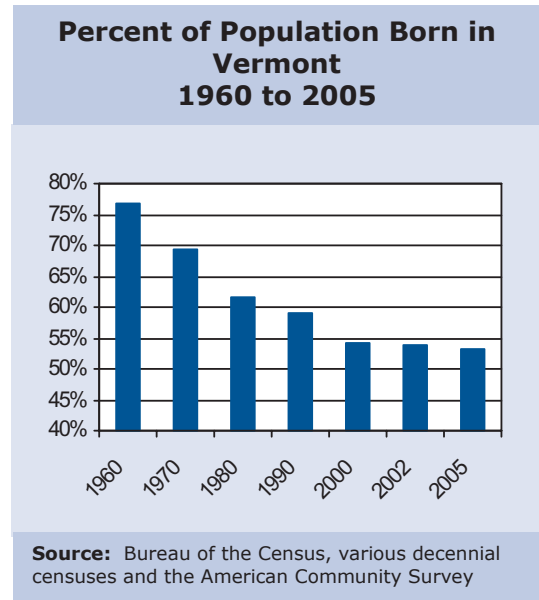
Two points in the Policy Report are worth highlighting. First, while New England is proportionately losing more college educated residents aged 25-39 to other regions of the country, our region still has the largest proportion of young professionals, and our actual number of people in this category is steady. Second, the outflow of these young workers is offset by new college graduates produced yearly, as well as from college educated workers arriving from other countries. Thus, Broome suggests that concerns should be addressed less to declining numbers and more to our slower gains relative to the more rapid gains being made in the expanding south Atlantic, Mountain, and Pacific regions. The author concludes that “...New England’s supply of young, educated workers is not shrinking. It is not growing as much as it has in the past nor as fast as the rest of the nation...however, the region still maintains a larger share of young professionals relative to the size of the population than any other region.”⁹

Another recent study by Thomas Mortenson, a well regarded higher education researcher, also focused on the issue of the interstate migration of college graduates and drew similarly nuanced conclusions.¹⁰ According to his Census based data for 1989, 91,314 Vermonters (over the age of 25) held Bachelor’s degrees. By 2007, the number had increased to an estimated 150,000, a gain of 58,686 more Vermonters with Bachelor’s degrees than 18 years earlier, and a jump in the proportion of the overall population as well. However, over the same time period, Vermont colleges and universities had been steadily producing a stream of about 4,600 new graduates each year for a total of 83,043 new graduates with Bachelor’s degrees (see chapter 11 on Education). Since Vermont’s stock of college

graduates had only risen by 58,686 in that same time period, the state is estimated to have suffered a net loss 24,357 more college graduates than we produced.¹¹ Obviously, if all Vermont graduates remained in the state, native and non-native alike, the proportion of Vermonters with at least a Bachelor’s degree would be far higher. Looked at as a rate, Mortenson concludes that only 20 states have net gains of college graduates, and Vermont is among the 30 with net losses. Massachusetts and Connecticut are the only two New England states that have a net gain, and barely so.

One logical (if ridiculous) way to move Vermont onto the list of net gainers would be to decrease the number of students graduating from the state’s colleges. Mortenson tells us that states that attract a high number of college students are unlikely to keep more than a fraction so that the net effect is that the state produces more graduates than it can ultimately absorb, inevitably resulting in a migration loss among college graduates that may be as much a sign of the successes of the state’s institutions of higher learning than a failure of the economy to provide jobs. Only nine states are net gainers of both college students and college graduates and five states have greater reason to worry—unlike Vermont, they suffer losses of both freshmen and college graduates.¹²

In spite of this net loss of college graduates, Vermont has one of the highest densities of college graduates in the country,



⁹ “Is New England Experiencing a ‘Brain Drain’? Facts about Demographic Change and Young Professionals,” Discussion Paper 07-3 of the New England Public Policy Center, November, 2007, by Heather Broome.

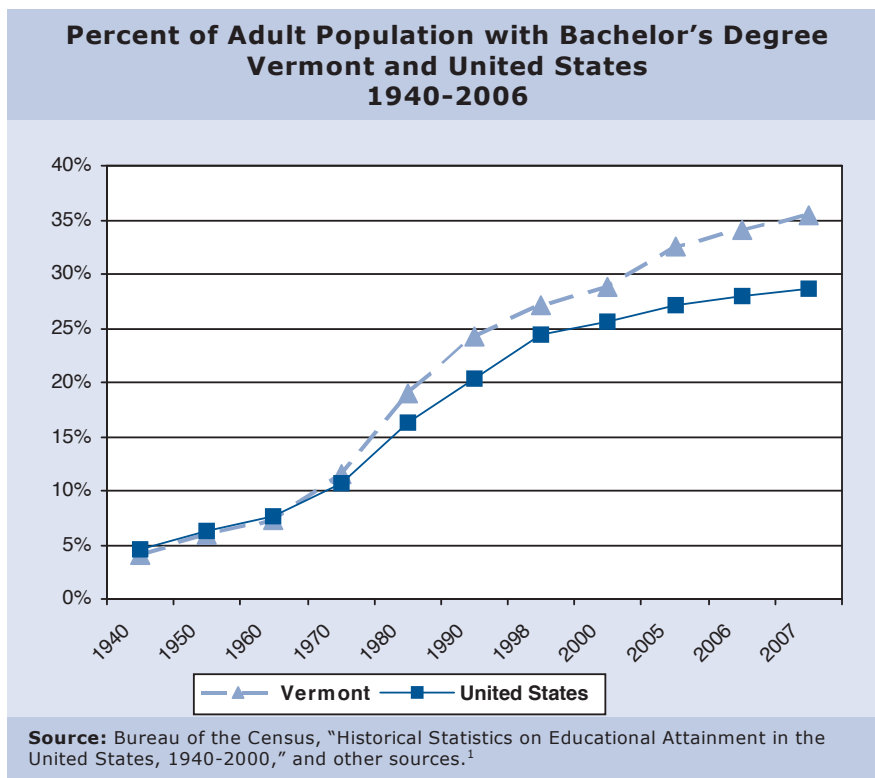
¹⁰ Postsecondary Education Opportunity, “Interstate Migration of College Graduates: 1989 to 2007,” August, 2008, Thomas Mortensen.

¹¹ These statistics are only aggregates. How many of the actual 83,000 newly minted college graduates ultimately settled in Vermont is methodologically unknowable using present techniques.

¹² Postsecondary Education Opportunity, “Interstate Migration of College Graduates: 1989 to 2007,” August, 2008, Thomas Mortensen.

and both the numbers and proportions have been climbing steadily for almost 70 years. Vermont's 2007 rate was much higher than the national average—35.5% compared to 28.7% (see chart below) and placed Vermont 6th highest among the 50 states.

Another way to measure Vermonter's mobility is to look at the percent of the overall population that was born within the state. The trend is clear; there has been a gradual decline in the percent of Vermonters who were "native born," from over 75% in 1960 to 53% in 2005. Looking at similar patterns for other states, we learn that Vermont has a more mobile population than most of the states in the Northeast, and has had more people move in than any of the other New England states except New Hampshire.¹³



¹³ Bureau of the Census, Census 2000 Special Reports "Domestic Migration Across Regions, Divisions, and States: 1995 to 2000", and "Geographical Mobility: 1995 to 2000." See also "Where They Come from; Where They Go," by Jack Hoffman of the Public Assets Institute, December, 2007.)

Trend number 2: Vermont's highly distinctive ethnic/racial homogeneity has changed very little relative to the rest of the nation. This fact continues to influence the state's social fabric and frequently contributes in our position towards the top or bottom of many national lists of state ranking.

The fact of Vermont's "Whiteness" is of greater significance than a mere statistical curiosity or limited intercultural opportunities (see chart on next page). Since "race identity" has a persistent effect on many areas of our social and economic lives, Vermont is often statistically distinctive from other states simply because of the correlation between race and a number of other outcomes. Compared to Whites, for example, Blacks have a notably low suicide rate, but a high overall mortality rate. So when comparing Vermont rates to those of other states, Vermont has a slightly higher suicide rate, but a lower overall mortality rate. Yet if we were to compare the rates for "Whites alone" in Vermont to "Whites alone" in other states, the rates would be quite similar. For yet another example of Vermont's homogeneity, one reason that Vermont has one of the oldest populations is that Whites virtually everywhere in America tend to have older population averages. Similar points can be made with regard to economic and labor issues, marriage and childbearing, health, education and many others. This is why some data analyses only compare data for "Vermont Whites" to data for "United States Whites." Since we are not making such precise comparisons, inter-state comparisons need to be done with this important caveat in mind.

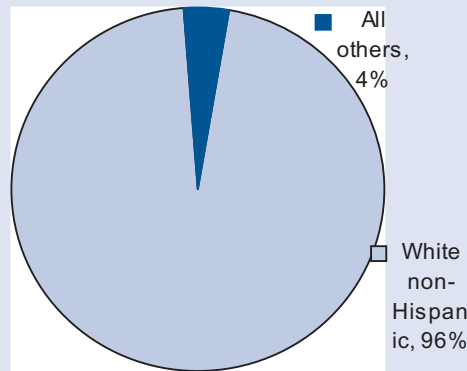
Immigrants from abroad also add to Vermont's population, but are not as important a factor in population growth as they are in many of the southern and western states. A profile of our foreign born population is similar to other small and homogeneous states such as Wyoming and the Dakotas. In the 1960s and 1970s, Vermont's population mirrored the national proportion of foreign born residents, both at a relatively low level of about 6%, down from the high point of 1910 when almost 15% of the national population was foreign born (see Appendix, 1-5). Since then, the trend for Vermont has moved downward to its present level of 4%, while the nation as a whole has varied over the decades and now stands at about 12%. Over half of the foreign born population now live in just three states: California, New York,

and Texas. Unlike the early 1900's, over half of today's foreign born population is from Mexico and Latin America.

Vermont's proportion of foreign born residents has changed little since 1990 with the number of new immigrants arriving in Vermont yearly remains fairly steady, in the range of 500 to 1,000 (see chart), yielding a total of about 24,000 foreign born residents in 2006. Unlike the Southwest, over half of Vermont's foreign born population is from Canada or Europe. Only Maine has a higher percent of its foreign born population from Canada, and only Hawaii has a lower percent of its foreign born population from Mexico or Latin America. According to the 2006 American Community Survey of the Census Bureau, 5% of Vermonters speak a language other than English at home, contrasting sharply with the 20% national average.

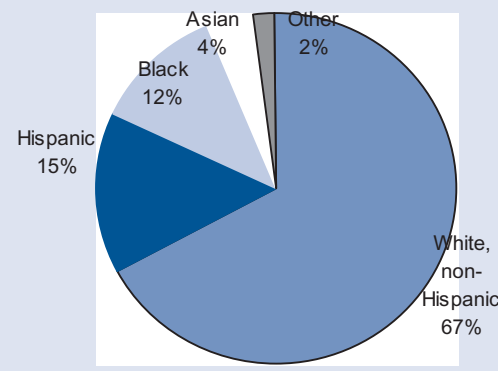
In addition to the immigration numbers depicted in the chart, refugees add another 200 or so people to the Vermont population yearly, as well as bringing considerable ethnic diversity to the Vermont culture (See Appendix, 1-6). Since the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program works closely with its parent organization, the U. S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, and with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the countries of origin for

Ethnic Self-Identification Vermont 2006



Source: Bureau of the Census, "2006 American Community Survey, Vermont."

Ethnic self-identification U.S. 2006

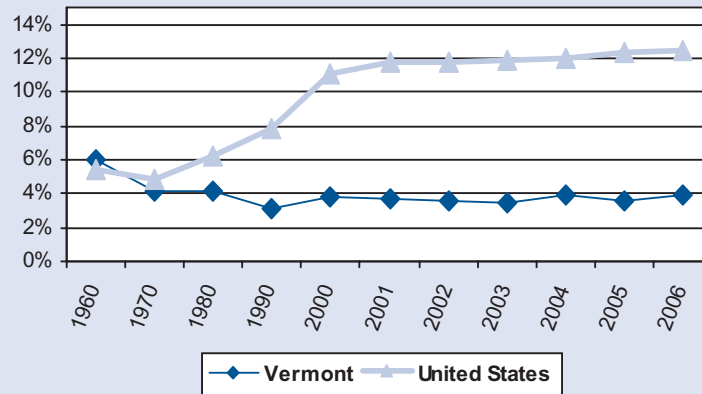


Source: Bureau of the Census, "2006 American Community Survey, United States."

the greatest numbers in Vermont in 2008 were originally from Iraq, Bhutan, and Burma (Myanmar)(see Appendix, 1-7).

refugees tend to be determined by complex and ongoing geopolitical events. For example, the early 1990s saw the largest influx from Vietnam. Bosnians then dominated the late 1990s, and since 2000 most of the refugees have come from Africa, primarily Somalia, Sudan, and both Congo/Kinshasa and Congo/Brazzaville. Refugees who are being resettled in

Percent Foreign Born Vermont and United States 1960 to 2006



Source: Bureau of the Census, various decennial censuses and the American Community Survey.

* The 2006 Vermont figure represents about 24,000 people, with almost equal thirds coming from Canada and Europe. Other states with fewer recent immigrants are Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota. More than half of all foreign born persons in the United States live in California, New York and Texas. Note that the high point of the percent foreign born was 1910, with 14.7%.

These small numbers of immigrants and refugees have hardly been enough to transform Vermont's reputation as an ethnically homogeneous state. Indeed, the statistics support the reputation and there is no obvious trend that suggests a change is in the offing. Between 1990 and 2006, the numeric change in the number of foreign born was less than all but two states, and the increase in the proportion of the population that self-identified as something other than White was minor. In 1900, 99.7% of the population thought of itself as White, and by 2006, that proportion had only changed to 96.3% (see Appendix, 1-8). In fact, depending on the exact year and the effects of statistical rounding, Vermont and Maine alternate for the rank of "Whitest" state in the nation.

Trend number 3: Vermont follows the national trend of an aging population, but as with other Eastern states, Vermont tends to have a somewhat older profile, intensified by our low fertility and ethnic homogeneity.

Like much of the rest of the nation, Vermont's population is rapidly aging. The primary reason for this trend is the baby boom, a cohort born between 1946 and 1964, and depicted in the highlighted age ranges of population pyramids. The pyramids following display the cohort of baby boomers as they age, represented by the 'bulge' in the charts, steadily moving up and gradually shrinking as it is diminished by mortality. Note too, the diminished proportions of young people, a consequence of lower recent fertility.

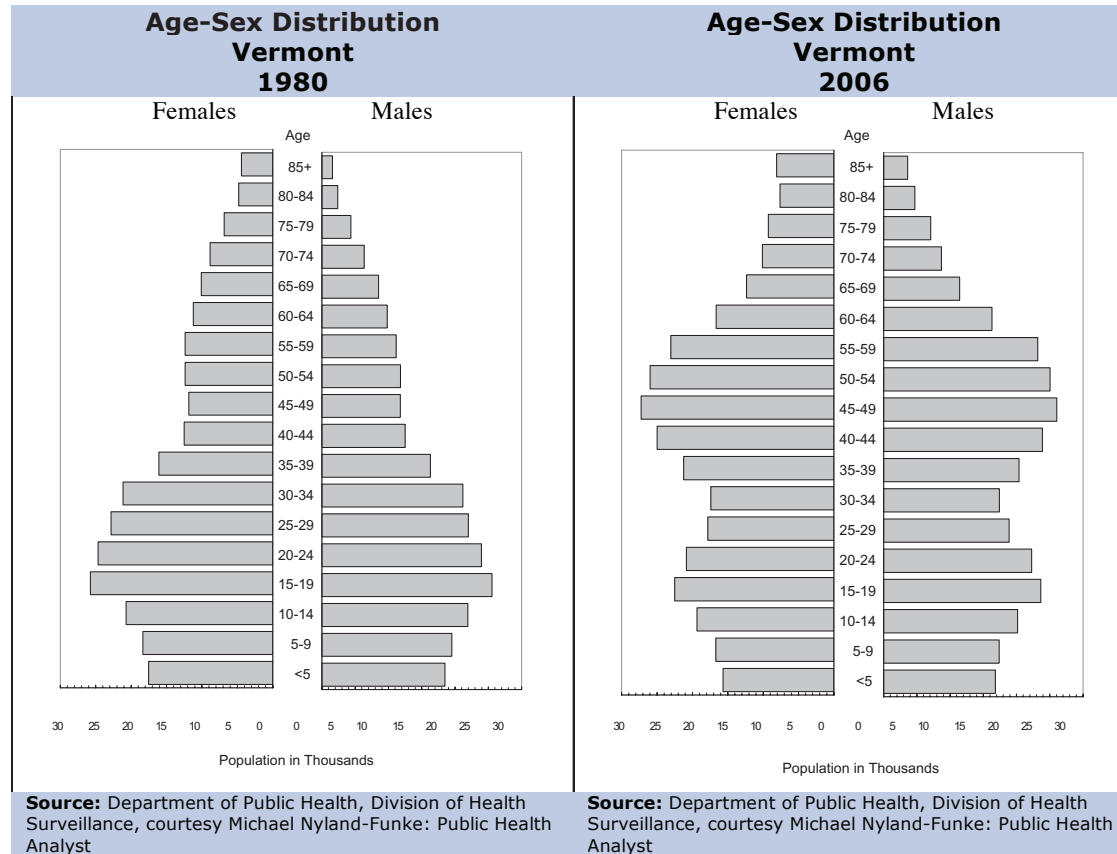
There are several statistical indicators of increasing age, but the two most common are median age (the number above and below which exactly half the population falls) and the percentage of the population falling into the "over 65 age category." By both of these criteria, comparative national statistics rank Vermont among the "older states." Vermont's percentage of the population over 65 was not particularly notable at the time of the 2000 Census, ranking Vermont in

the middle range of all the states, with 12.7% compared to the national average of 12.4%. At the same time, Florida was highest with 17.6%, followed by Pennsylvania and West Virginia, both about 15.5%. Alaska and Utah were the youngest with just 5.7% and 8.5% respectively.¹⁴

But since the 2000 Census, Vermont's over 65 ratio has continued to increase to about 13.6% in 2007 while other states are aging somewhat more slowly. This percentage places us in a tied position with several other states for the 12th oldest. Many of the other states with older populations are also on the

east coast, a region aging more quickly than states in the west.¹⁵

The major fault with this statistic for the over age 65 population is that it fails to capture the impact of the massive baby boom generation, the oldest members of which will not reach age 65 until 2010. For this reason, the median age may be a better overall measure. In 2007, Vermont's median age was 40.8, compared to the US median of 36.6, which ranked Vermont 2nd oldest (behind Maine at 41.6). It is important to note that this aging phenomenon is taking place throughout the U.S., but is especially notable in the east (see Appendix, 1-9, 1-10). Besides Maine, other



¹⁴ Bureau of the Census, Special Report: "65+ in the United States," 2005.

¹⁵ Bureau of the Census, "2007 Population Estimates of the United States."

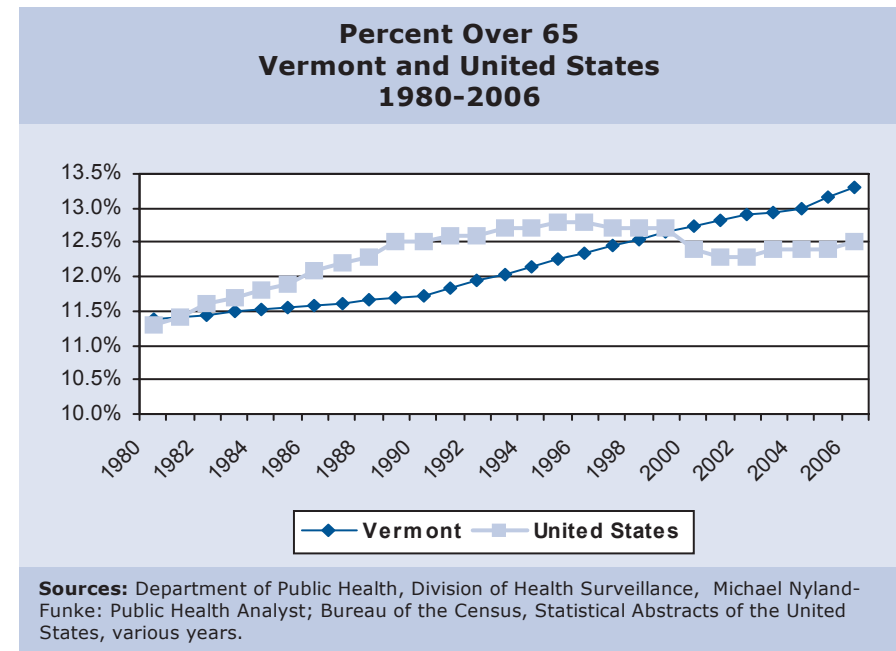
states joining us in the top 11 include New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey; neighboring New York is ranked 18th oldest.¹⁶ The Census publication Demographic Trends in the 20th Century also reminds us that older populations have been common in northern New England: “Three northeastern states, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont have been ranked among the ten states with the highest elderly percentage for much of the century.”¹⁷

The historical aging of the United States is better captured in the increases in median age, from an almost unimaginably youthful country in 1850 when the median age was a mere 18.9, to 22.9 in 1900, to a fairly stable 30.0 from 1950 to 1980, and now upward to our present 36.6. In 1900, only 4% of Americans lived long enough to have made it into the over age 65 category. An aging population is often regarded as a sign of good health in that mortality is low and fertility is under control. On the other hand, an aging population fosters fears of a large fraction of the population that is “dependent” on the working age population, and this has many countries concerned. In Europe, 16% of the population is over the age of 65 and in Japan, the figure is 21%. In contrast, the percent over 65 population is estimated to be about 5% in the less developed countries—places of high mortality and high fertility.

What are the causes of a rapidly aging population? The top three are: low fertility (which brings the age averages up); low mortality (which allows more people to reach old age); and migration (which is always selective of age). In the case of Vermont, some combination of all three are at work. In addition, Vermont’s ethnic homogeneity may also play a role: nationally, the overall median age is 36.6, but almost a year and a half older (37.8) for Whites, 31.0 for Blacks, and 27.4 for Hispanics. One of the consequences of the “Whiteness” of Vermont’s population is that the state has relatively low fertility and low mortality, resulting in a population with an older age profile. This does not mean that Vermont is not aging as described, but its ranking would appear less extreme were we to compare Vermont to the national norms for the White population.

Much has been written about the social and economic consequences of an aging population, and most of it is well thought out and deserving of

attention as we plan for the state’s future. One statistic that captures this concern is the “old age dependency ratio,” a ratio of the over 65 population to the population between the ages of 18-64. The assumption of the calculation is that large fractions of the over 65 population are dependent on the working age population for an almost infinite variety of tasks met by American workers including growing food, fixing cars, providing health care, and of course, paying taxes. At present, the state’s dependency ratio is hardly an economic burden, but projections of future rates raise issues that deserve to be taken seriously. While the human value of a mature population is beyond question, the structural problem becomes more challenging when the growing population of elderly is mismatched with a shrinking proportion of children and young adults, a consequence of changed fertility patterns.¹⁸



¹⁸ For excellent discussions of this growing problem, see “Off the Rails: Changing demographics, Changing Economics Accumulating Obligations” by Richard W. Heaps and Arthur Woolf, an Ethan Allen Institute Report, December, 2006, as well as other material by these Economists, including “The Vermont Economy Newsletter” Vol. 15, No. 5, May, 2005. See also “Growing Vermont’s Next Generation Workforce” by the Vermont Department of Economic Development.”

¹⁶ Bureau of the Census “2007 Population Estimates of the United States.”

¹⁷ Bureau of the Census “2007 Population Estimates of the United States.”

Trend number 4: Vermont households have become more diverse in keeping with widespread changes in social norms for gender relations and living arrangements. Fewer people are married, there are fewer “traditional” families, and many more people are living in a variety of household types.

One of the most important social changes of the past decades has been in the domestic realm of gender, families, and households. In 1900, the average household size in America was 4.6, but by 2006 had declined to 2.6, and only 2.4 for Vermont. From the end of World War II to the early 1960s, expectations for men and women were clear and nearly universal: women and men married early and had children shortly thereafter; men went to work outside the home while women worked at ever expanding family responsibilities, including bearing and raising the largest cohort of children ever born in America. Fertility was high, and “teen pregnancy” almost always occurred to a young bride, with women of all ages contributing to the baby boom of 1946 to 1964. Divorce was rare, and “living together” a singular violation of social mores. Currently, households can consist of single people, unmarried couples, single mothers, and many other combinations, but an important trend is the increased diversity of combinations (see Appendix 1-11, 1-12). For example, the proportion of households (in both Vermont and the nation) made up of married couples declined from about 75% of all households in 1950 to a bare majority in 2000. The marriage rate has been falling for decades, although it remains slightly higher in Vermont, partly because White couples are more likely to marry than are some minorities. Likewise, the percent of Vermont households that are traditional families declined from about 80% in 1970 to about 65% in 2006 (see Appendix, 1-13). Vermonters shared in these national trends as well as any state.¹⁹

In the last decades we have seen dramatic domestic changes, many of which are captured in the trend lines in the Appendix to this chapter. While most of the domestic changes are affected by national or

regional social changes, this list below highlights how these trends have played out in Vermont:

- A drop in the marriage rate (see Appendix, 1-14);
- A steep increase in the divorce rate by the 1970s, followed by modest decreases;
- Later age at first marriage (25 for women, 27 for men);
- Dramatically lower fertility;
- Smaller families and fewer extended families;
- Higher fertility to women who are not married;
- Greater diversity in the range of relationships within households and their proportions:
 - fewer families (people related by blood, marriage or adoption);
 - fewer married couples;
 - fewer families with children;
 - more individuals living alone, especially older women;
 - more female headed families with no male present;
 - more male headed families with no female present;
 - more opposite sex, unmarried couples;
 - more couples that are of mixed racial/ethnic identities;
 - more same sex couples.

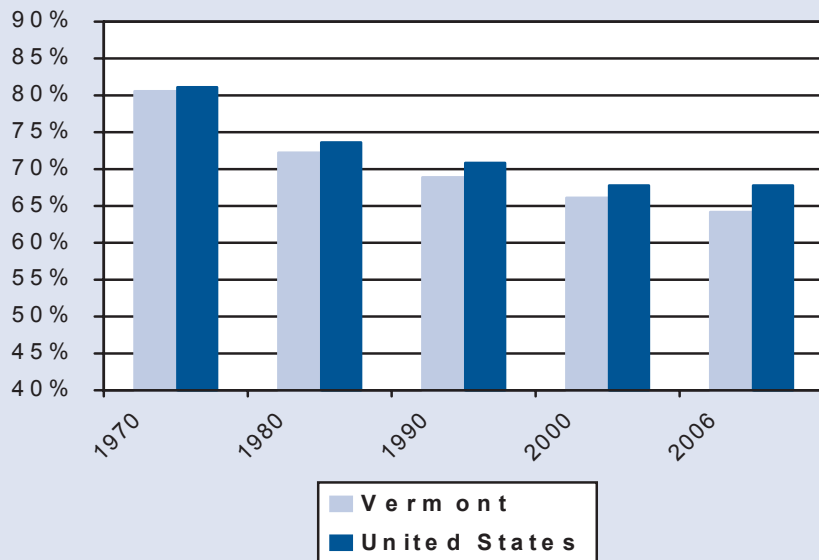
While all of these trends are important and significant, some have taken on exaggerated importance in public perception. It is helpful to keep in mind that while the proportions have realigned, the basic institution of the family has changed little. Using national data, it is clear that almost all adults eventually marry (of those over age 75, only 4% have never married) and have children. The divorce rate is not at the misleading 50% level of urban legend, but also because most people who divorce re-marry; indeed, for every 100 people who are currently married, there are only 19 who are divorced.²⁰

Unmarried opposite sex and same sex couples constitute a small minority of all Vermont households, about 6% (see trends in Civil Unions,

¹⁹ Bureau of the Census, “America’s Families and Living Arrangements,” Population Characteristics, 2000, P20-537; and “Households and Families: 2000” Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR/01-8

²⁰ “America’s Families and Living Arrangements,” Population Characteristics, 2000, P20-537; Bureau of the Census; “Households and Families: 2000” Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR/01-8; and “Married Couple and Unmarried Partner Households: 2000” Census Special Reports, CENSR-5.

**Percent of All Households that are Families
Vermont and United States
1960-2006**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, various decennial Census and the 2006 American Community Survey.

Appendix, 1-15). Nationally, the 2000 Census identified 594,000 same sex unmarried partner households, or about 1% of all “coupled households.” Vermont is estimated to have the third highest rate of same sex unmarried partner households—762 male couples and 1,171 female couples. Only the District of Columbia and California had higher rates, 5.1% and 1.4% respectively.²¹

Many of the household and family statistics include significant differences by race and region. For example, the Northeast has the lowest proportion of the population married, the highest proportion who have never married, and the highest proportion of female headed households. Large metropolises often offer a patchwork of different household types. But the absence of such diversity in Vermont significantly affects many of the trends displayed in the following chapters.

In sum, the most notable trends in Vermont’s demographic changes appear to be:

1. The state has a comparatively low rate of population growth with rates of “in- migration” and “out- migration” that are typical of New England; the best educated are the most mobile, as in every state, but Vermont still has an unusually well educated adult population. There has been a steady decline in the proportion of Vermonters who are native born.
2. Vermont’s highly distinctive ethnic/racial homogeneity has changed very little relative to the rest of the nation. This fact continues to influence the state’s social fabric and frequently contributes in our position towards the “top” or “bottom” of many national lists of state ranking.
3. Vermont follows the national trend of an aging population, but as with other Eastern states, Vermont tends to have a somewhat older profile, intensified by our low fertility and ethnic homogeneity.
4. Vermont households have become more diverse in keeping with widespread changes in social norms for gender relations and living arrangements. Fewer people are married, there are fewer “traditional” families, and many more people are living in a variety of household types.

²¹ Bureau of the Census, “Married Couple and Unmarried Partner Households: 2000,” a Census Special Reports, CENSR-5.

For the appendices, and for pdf versions of this report, please visit the Council on the Future of Vermont's website; www.futureofvermont.org. Or visit Vermont Council on Rural Development at www.vtrural.org.

The Appendix for this chapter contains the following charts:

1. Population Density Per Square Mile, Vermont and United States, 1960-2006
2. Rate of Population Growth, by Decades, Vermont and United States, 1900-2002
3. Rate of Population Growth, by Year, Vermont and United States, 1981-2006
4. Percent of High School Graduates Who Plan to Attend College Out-of-State, Vermont, 1988-2007
5. Percent of the Population that Self Identifies as White, Vermont and United States, 1900-2006
6. Immigrants Admitted to Vermont with Legal and Resident Status, 1988-2006
7. Number of Refugees Resettled in Vermont, 1989-2008
8. Country of Origin of Refugees, 1989-2008
9. Median Age, Vermont and United States, 1980-2007
10. Stacked Bar Charts by Percent of Age Categories, Vermont, 1980-2007
11. Percent of All Families that Have Children, Vermont and United States, 1960-2006
12. Types of Households, Vermont, 2000
13. Percent of Households with Individuals Living Alone, Vermont and United States, 1940-2000
14. Marriages and Divorces Per 1,000 Population, Vermont and United States, 1980-2006
15. Number of Civil Unions and Percent In-State, Vermont, 2000-2006

Vermont in Transition:

A Summary of Social Economic and Environmental Trends

A study by

Center for Social Science Research at Saint Michael's College

Vince Bolduc, Ph. D. and Herb Kessel, Ph. D.

for the

Council on the Future of Vermont

December 2008

Chapter I: POPULATION ~ APPENDIX

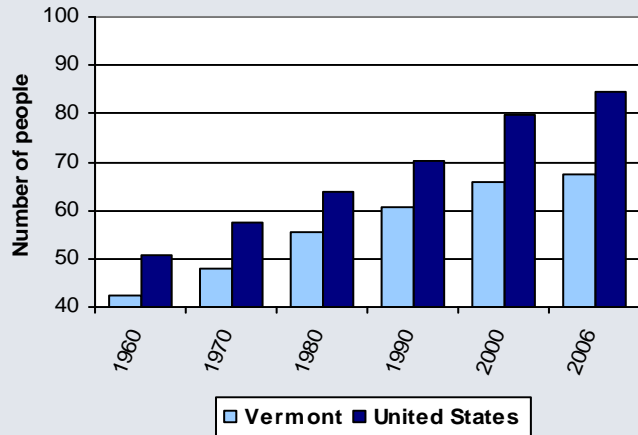
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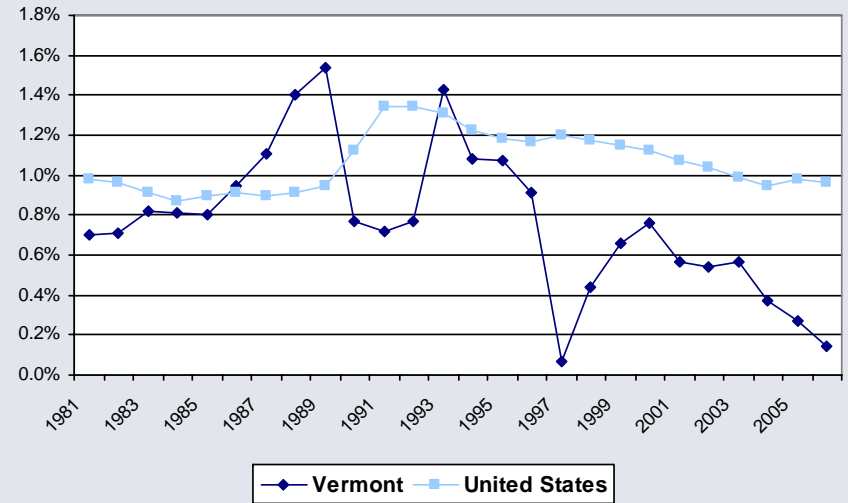
**Vermont Council on
Rural Development**
43 State Street., PO Box 1384
Montpelier, VT 05601-1384
(802) 223-6091
vcrd2@sover.net;
<http://www.vtrural.org>

Chart 1-1
Population Density Per Square Mile
Vermont and United States
1960 to 2006



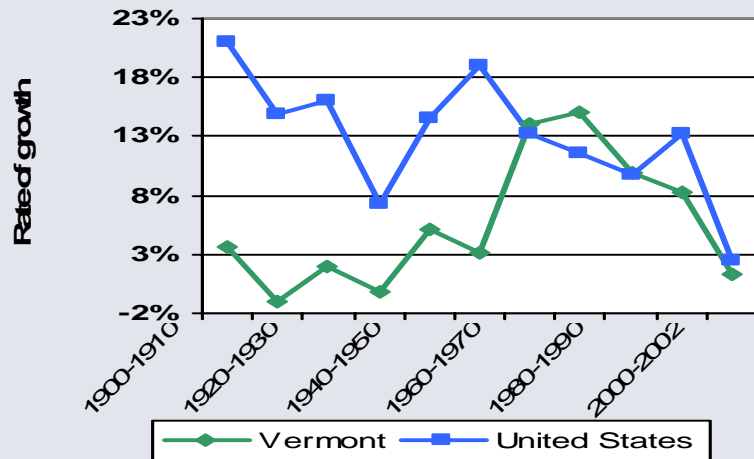
Source: Bureau of the Census, Population Estimates, vari-

Chart 1-3
Rate of Population Growth, by Year
Vermont and United States 1981-2006



Source: Department of Public Health, Division of Health Surveillance, Michael

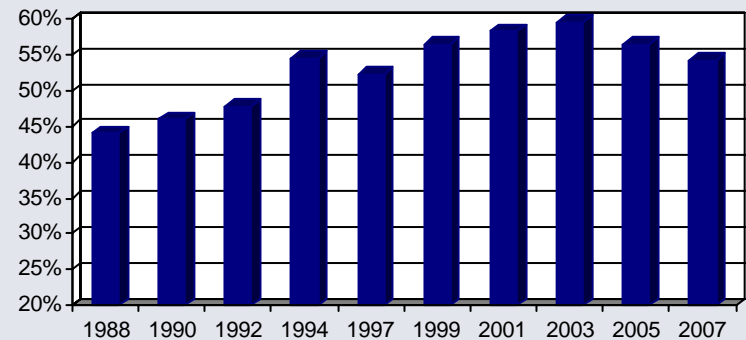
Chart 1-2
Rate of Population Growth, by Decades
Vermont and United States 1900-2002



*Note: The last interval is only two years.

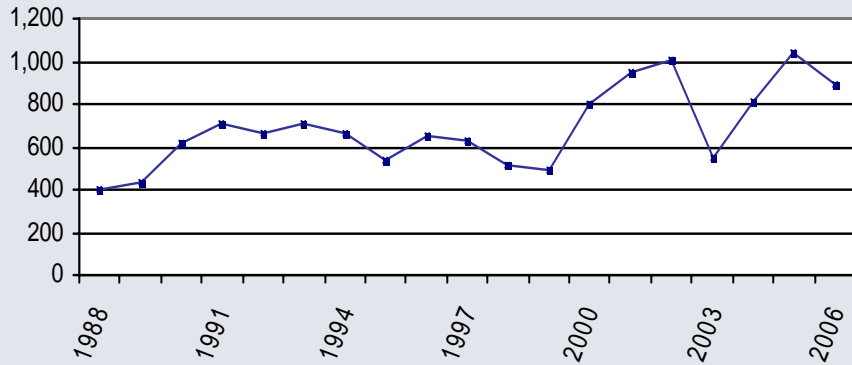
Source: Bureau of the Census, Special Publication, Demographic Trends in the 20th Century.

Chart 1-4
Percent of VT High School Graduates Who Plan to Attend College Out-of-State



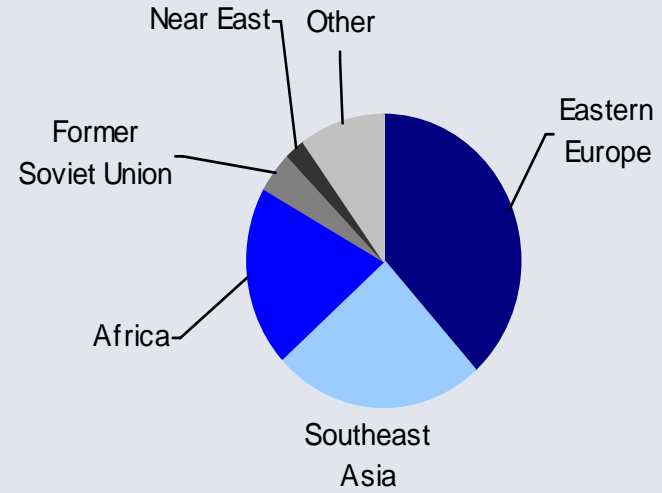
Source: Senior Surveys of high school seniors, various years, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation.

Chart 1-5
Immigrants Admitted to Vermont With Legal Status
1988-2006



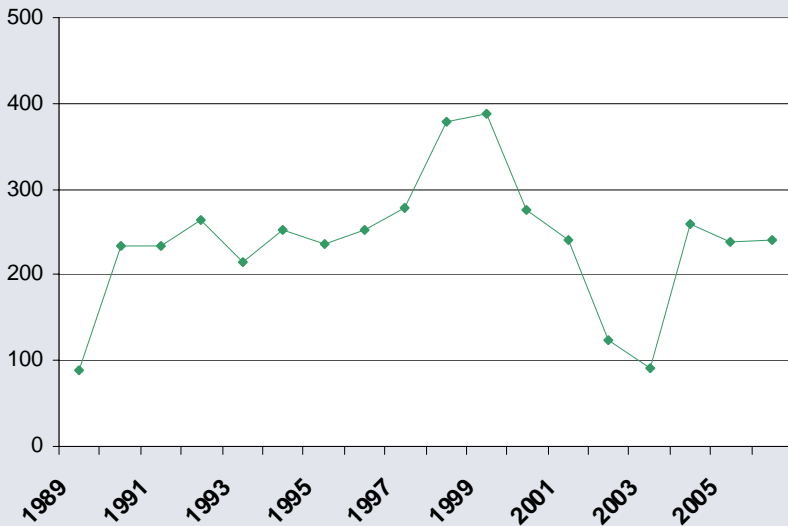
Source: Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, "Yearbook of Immigration Statistics."

Chart 1-7
Country of Origin of Refugees



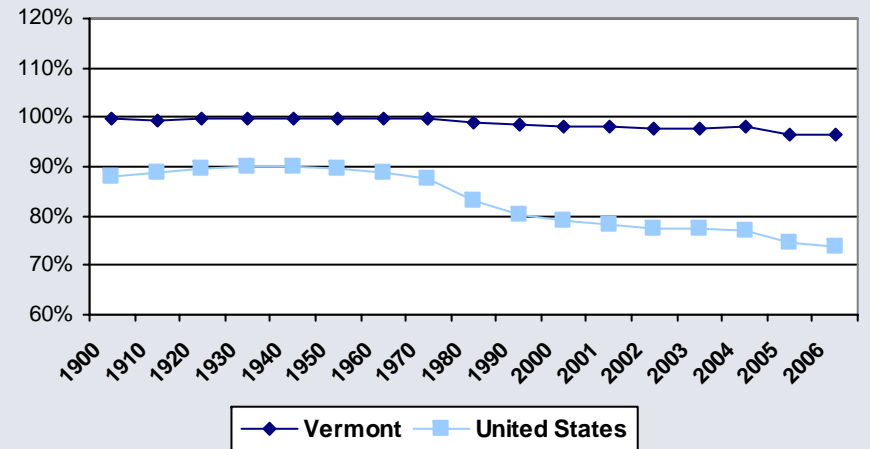
Source: Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, 2008.

Chart 1-6
Number of Refugees Resettled in Vermont
1989-2008



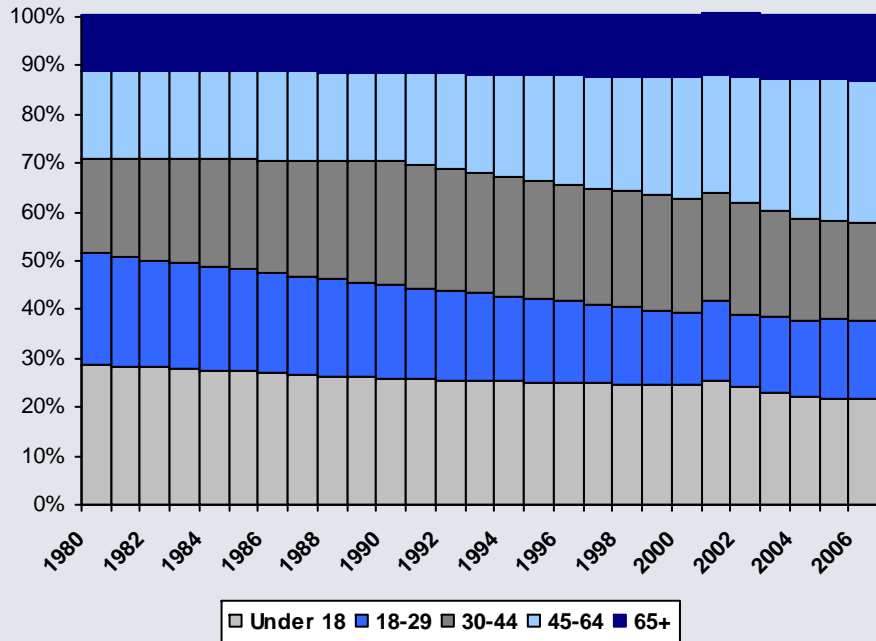
Source: Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, 2008.

Chart 1-8
Percent of Population that Self Identifies as White
Vermont and United States
1900-2006



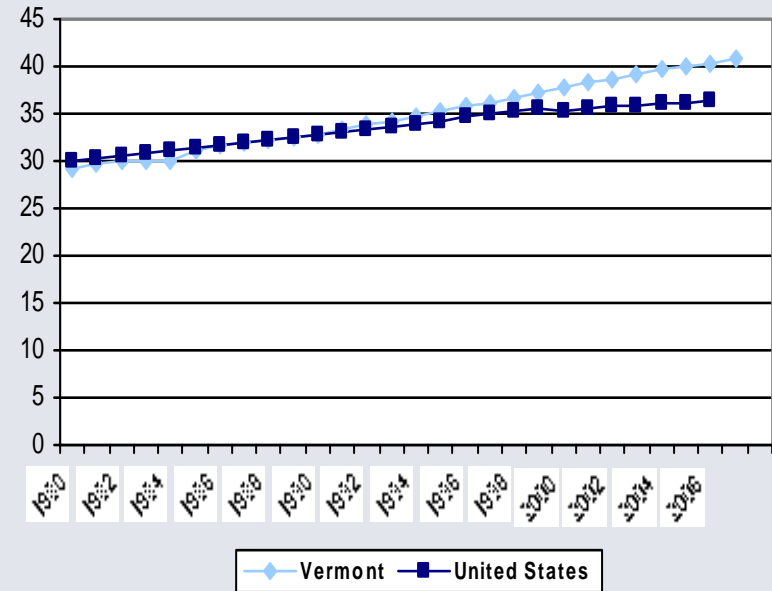
Source: Bureau of the Census, Special Publication, Demographic Trends in the 20th Century.

Chart 1-9
Stacked Bar Charts by Percent of Age Categories
Vermont 1980-2007



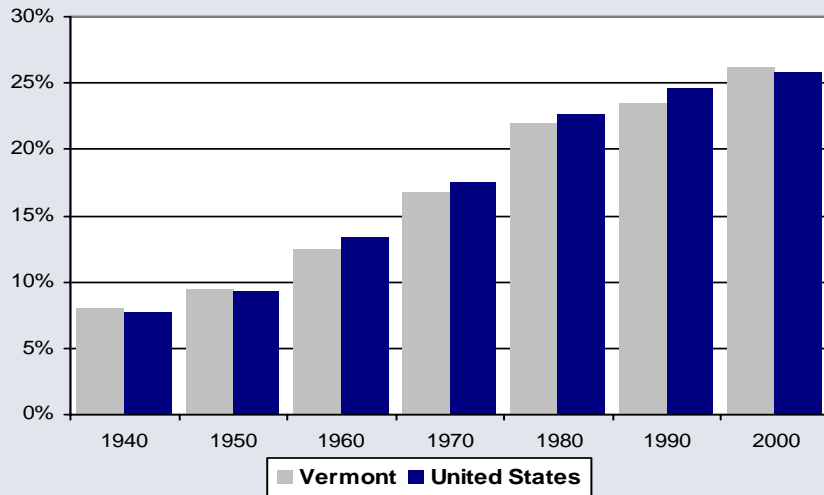
Source: Department of Public Health, Division of Health Surveillance, Michael Nyland-Funke: Public Health Analyst

Chart 1-10
Median Age
Vermont and United States
1980-2007



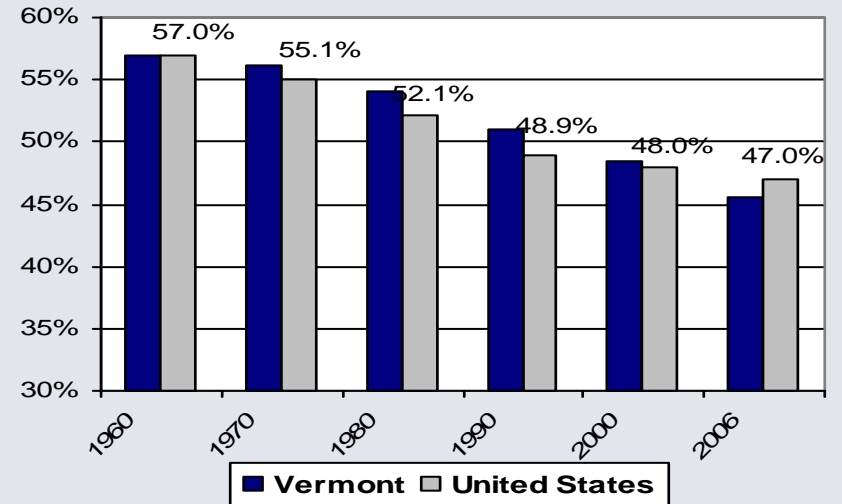
Source: Department of Public Health, Division of Health Surveillance, Michael Nyland-Funke: Public Health Analyst; and Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States* and "American Community Survey," various years. Calculations of Vermont medians done by the Center for Social Science Research, Saint Michael's College, based on yearly population estimates by the Department of Public Health.

Chart 1-11
Percent of Households with Individuals Living Alone
Vermont and United States 1940-2000



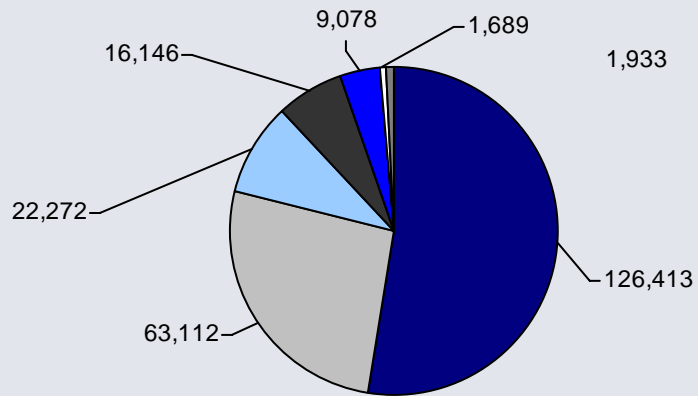
Source: Bureau of the Census Bureau, Census of Housing, "Historical Census

Chart 1-13
Percent of All Families with Children
Vermont and United States 1960-2006



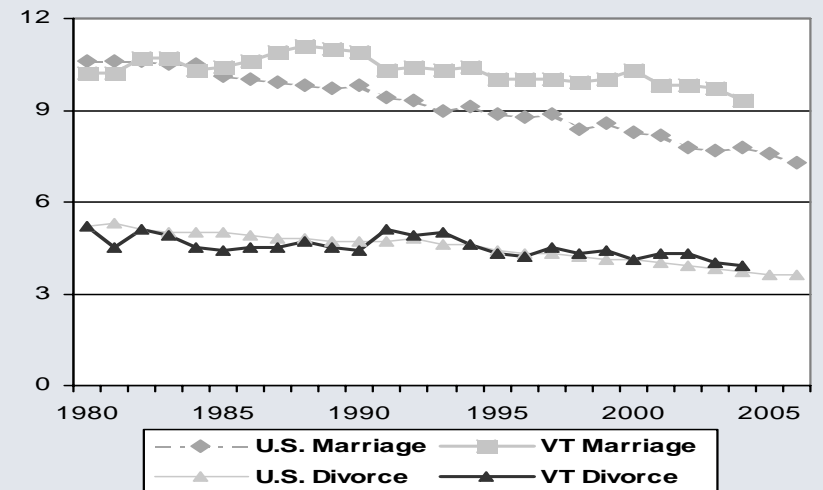
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, various decennial censuses and the 2006 Ameri-

Chart 1-12
Types of Households
Vermont 2000



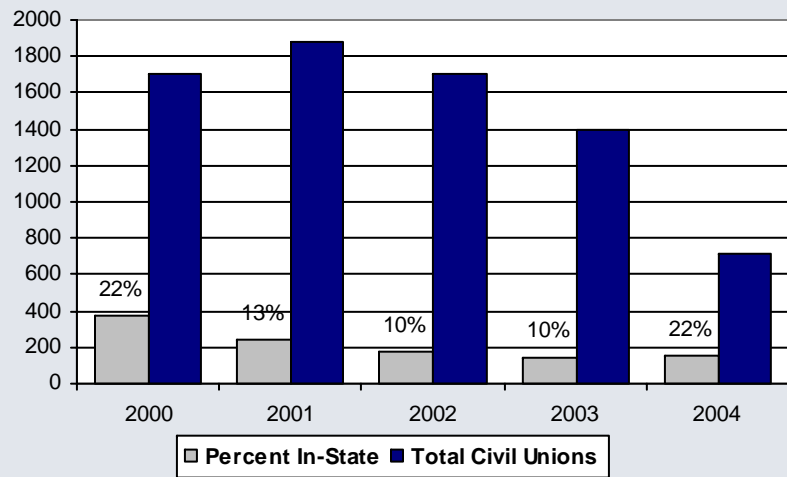
Source: Bureau of the Census; "Married Couple and Unmarried Partner

Chart 1-14
Marriages and Divorces Per 1,000 Population



Source: Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2008; and Vermont Department of Public Health, Vital Statistics Reports.

Chart 1-15
Number of Civil Unions and Percent In-State
Vermont 2000-2004



Source: Vermont Department of Public Health, Vital Statistics Reports.