

BOSTON STILL A MAGNET FOR 20 TO 34 YEAR-OLDS

BOSTON CONTINUES TO BE A CITY THAT ATTRACTS – AND RETAINS – MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF YOUNG ADULTS.

SUMMARY

Boston has long been known as a city attractive to young adults. The presence of so many colleges and universities and the job opportunities generated by the city's leading industries are the main factors in this attraction, as are the social, cultural, and recreational assets in and around Boston that make the city a place where young adults want to live, learn, and work.

When the most recent federal census showed a decrease in the number of 20 to 34 year-olds in Boston between 1990 and 2000, it was suggested that Boston might somehow be "losing" its attraction for young people – or that other cities were "luring" them away.

A closer look at the census data, however, shows that the decline of this age group is a national phenomenon, one that has nothing to do with any decrease in Boston's magnetism, but to the reduced number – nationwide – of the members of the so-called "Baby Bust" generation born 20 to 34 years before.

POPULATION

Boston has long been known as a city attractive to young adults. For the last thirty years, the 20 to 34 year-old age group has made up the largest share of the city's population – including the most recent federal census which showed that 33% of the city's population was made up of members of this age group.

According to the census, Boston's total population was 589,141 in 2000, a 2.6% increase from the 1990 figure of 574,282, which was itself a 2% increase from the 1980 figure of 562,994.

Although Boston's total population increased slightly in each of the last two decades, not all age groups followed suit.

Table 1 shows that the number of Boston residents 19 and under decreased between 1980 and 1990, then increased between 1990 and 2000. The number of those 35 to 64 increased in both decades, while the number of those 65 and over decreased.

At A Glance

- 20 to 34 year-olds make up 33% of Boston's population, the highest of any age group.
- Boston ranks 2nd among major U.S. cities in the percentage of its population made up by 20 to 34 year-olds.
- Between 1990 and 2000, 50,000+ more young adults moved into Boston than moved out.

The group that received the most attention, however, was the 20 to 34 year-old population. Table 1 shows that after increasing from 188,496 in 1980 to 208,582 in 1990, this group decreased to 194,846 in 2000 – a loss of 13,736.

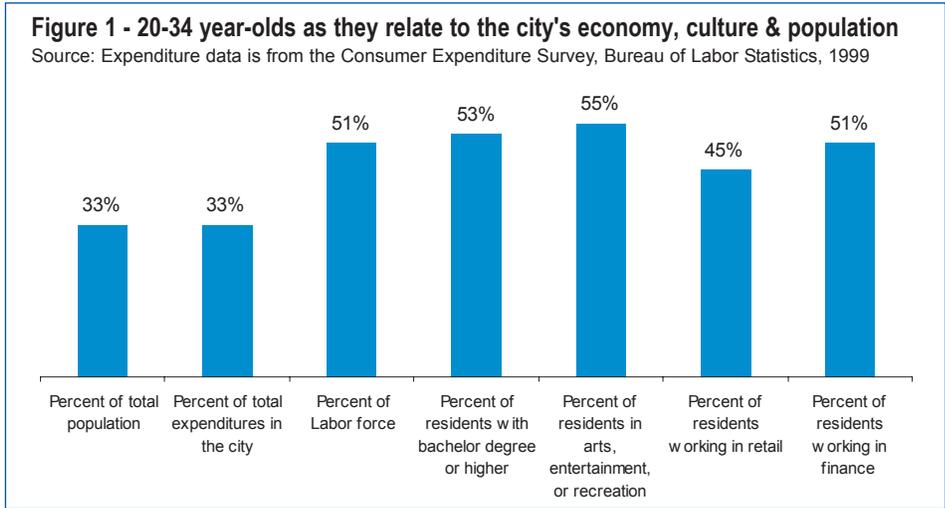
Table 1 - Boston's Population by Age Group

Age	1980	1990	2000
0-19	151,238	134,087	141,951
20-34	188,496	208,582	194,846
35-64	151,961	165,707	191,008
65+	71,299	65,906	61,336
Total	562,994	574,282	589,141

THE 20 TO 34 YEAR-OLD AGE GROUP

The 20 to 34 year old age group is an important segment of the city's population. Its members are particularly suited to the knowledge-based and technology-oriented jobs of today's economy. They are also valued as consumers since they possess significant discretionary incomes.

Figure 1 shows some of the contributions that the 20 to 34 year old age group make to Boston's economic, educational, social and cultural life.



This report attempts to show a more accurate and complete picture of Boston's 20 to 34 year-old age group and to explain the age demographic dynamics in Boston and across the United States.

IS BOSTON LOSING ITS POWER TO ATTRACT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS?

News of the decrease in the number of 20 to 34 year-olds in Boston between 1990 and 2000 prompted concern in some circles. The Boston Foundation and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, for example, released a report Preventing a Brain Drain: Talent Retention in Greater Boston which suggested that Boston might somehow be "losing" its attractiveness for 20 to 34 year-olds, or that other cities ("competitors") were luring them away.

CLOSER LOOK AT THE CENSUS DATA

A closer look at the census data shows that this is not the case and that the decrease in the number of 20 to 34 year-olds in the city between 1990 and 2000 was caused by the decline of Boston's birth rate 20 to 34 years ago. Furthermore, a closer look shows that the city is increasing - not decreasing - its ability to attract 20 to 34 year-olds from elsewhere.

Table 2 shows the same census totals as Table 1, redistributed into smaller age group categories. To more closely examine the data, the shaded portions of Table 2 will be "lifted out" into separate, smaller tables and sub-totals computed in order to explain Boston's age demographic dynamics.

THE "BABY BUST" GENERATION

The first conclusion drawn from this closer examination of the census data is that the decrease in the number of 20 to 34 year-olds in Boston in 2000 should have been expected - since the number of Boston residents 10 to 24 years-old had decreased so dramatically ten years before.

Table 3 shows that in 1980 there were 173,095 10 to 24 year-olds in Boston, while in 1990 there were 143,596 - a

drop of nearly 30,000. With 30,000 fewer residents who could be expected to "age into" 20 to 34 year-olds ten years later, it is understandable why this age group decreased in Boston in the year 2000.

Table 3 - Boston's Population by Age Group

Age	1980	1990
10-14	35,965	26,626
15-19	55,545	40,757
20-24	81,185	76,213
Total	173,095	143,596

Figure 2, on the facing page, reveals the real cause for the decline of 20 to 34 year-olds in 2000 and 10 to 14 year-olds in 1990 - the dramatic drop in the fertility rate between 1966 and 1980 - not just in Boston but across the country.

Table 2 - Boston's Population by Age Group

Age	1980	1990	2000
0-4	30,118	36,601	32,046
5-9	29,610	30,084	33,721
10-14	35,965	26,626	32,553
15-19	55,545	40,757	43,361
20-24	81,185	76,213	70,084
25-29	62,972	73,477	68,098
30-34	44,339	58,887	56,664
35-64	151,961	165,707	191,008
65+	71,299	65,906	61,336
Total	562,994	574,282	589,141

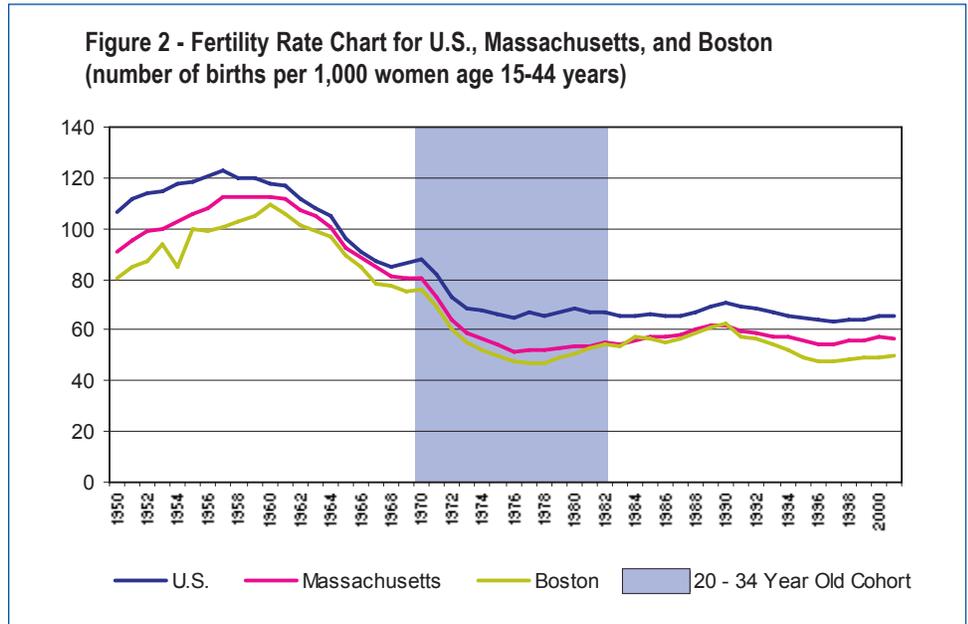
The shaded area in *Figure 2* highlights the birth years of those who would eventually be 20 to 34 years old when the 2000 Census was taken. It shows that, during the so-called "Baby Bust" generation, the fertility rate declined in Boston by 57%, in Massachusetts by 54%, and nationally by 45%.

BOSTON: STILL A MAGNET FOR YOUNG ADULTS

It is not surprising that a city which experienced a drop in the number of 10 to 24 year-olds at the beginning of one decade should contain fewer 20 to 34 year-olds ten years later. What is surprising is that a decrease of 30,000 10 to 24 year-olds between 1980 and 1990 led to a decrease of only 13,000 20 to 34 year-olds ten years later. The reason the decrease was not larger is that even while Boston was experiencing a sharp decrease in the number of its homegrown young people, it attracted an increasing number of young adults from outside Boston.

Table 4 shows that in 1980 there were 173,095 10 to 24 year-olds in Boston, and in 1990 there were 208,577 20 to 34 year-olds. While the census cannot identify how many of the 10 to 24 year-olds counted in 1980 remained in the city to be counted as 20 to 34 year-olds ten years later, Boston can be said to have "attracted" 35,482 more 20 to 34 year-olds in 1990 than could have been expected based on the 1980 census.

Table 4 also shows the afore-mentioned 143,596 10 to 24 year-olds in Boston in 1990, and the 194,846 20 to 34 year-olds in 2000. This means that Boston



attracted 51,250 more 20 to 34 year-olds in 2000 than it could have expected based on the 1990 census - an increase of 15,368 over the net number the city had attracted in 1990. Rather than decreasing its ability to attract to 20 to 34 year-olds between 1990 and 2000, Boston had increased its ability to attract and retain that age group - by 43%.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER CITIES

Clearly, Boston continues to be one of the most young-adult centered cities in the country.

Figure 3 shows that, in the year 2000, 20 to 34 year olds continued to make up the highest percentage of the city's population at 33% - more than 1½ times higher than the national average of 21%.

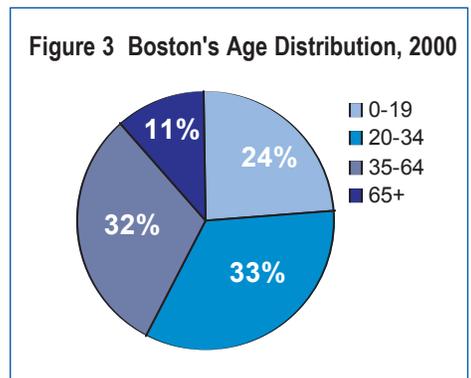


Table 5, on next page, compares Boston with the other top twenty-five major cities in the United States in terms of their 20 to 34 year-old populations. It shows that Boston contains the 2nd highest percentage of 20 to 34 year-olds of any major city in the country - just 1% behind Austin, Texas, home of one of the largest state universities in the country. *Table 5* also shows that Boston is one of only five major cities where the 20 to 34 year-old age group makes up more than 30% of the population. Finally, *Table 5* shows that all but three of the major U.S. cities registered decreases in the percentage of their 20 to 34 year-old population between 1990 and 2000 due to the "Baby Bust" generation. The only exceptions were Denver (which went up 1%) and Seattle and San Francisco (which experienced no change).

Figure 4 - Boston's Population by Age Group

Age	1980	1990	1990	2000
10-14	35,965		26,626	
15-19	55,545		40,757	
20-24	81,185	76,213	76,213	70,084
25-29		73,477		68,098
30-34		58,887		56,664
Totals	173,095	208,577	143,596	194,846

Table 5 - Boston's Rank Among Top Twenty-five Major U.S. Cities

City	% Population 20-34	
	1990	2000
Austin	36	34
Boston	36	33
Seattle	31	31
San Francisco	30	30
Columbus, Ohio	34	30
Dallas	31	29
Denver	28	29
Washington, D.C.	30	27
San Diego	32	27
Chicago	28	27
Houston	30	26
Nashville	29	26
Los Angeles	31	26
San Jose, Calif.	30	25
Phoenix	27	25
Milwaukee	28	25
New York	27	24
Indianapolis	28	24
Memphis	26	24
San Antonio	26	23
Philadelphia	26	23
Jacksonville	28	22
Detroit	24	22
Baltimore	27	22
El Paso	25	21

even greater - there were 8,531 more 10-19 year-olds in Boston in 2000 than in 1990.

There are other reasons to expect that the city will attract increasing numbers of 20 to 34 year-olds in the future.

One is the continued strength of the city's colleges and universities. While undergraduate enrollment in Boston's institutions of higher education is not expected to grow dramatically in the next five years, graduate enrollment is. In addition, these institutions are accommodating more and more students - under-graduate and graduate - in new dormitories. Boston's high housing costs are generally cited as one factor discouraging young adults from staying or moving here, but the addition of more and more dormitory beds not only accommodates young people who are students, but frees up more housing units for non-students who are beginning their careers and starting families.

A final reason that the number of 20 to 34 year olds in Boston might be expected to increase is, ironically, due to the expected retirement of older members of the city's workforce, which will create more employment opportunities for the younger generation who replace them.

CONCLUSION

Despite the temporary downturn in the total number of 20 to 34 year-olds in Boston between 1990 and 2000 due to the decline in the birth rate of homegrown members of the "Baby Bust Generation," Boston continues to attract increasing numbers of young adults born elsewhere.

Nevertheless, because the 20 to 34 year-old population is important to the city's social and economic health, the city will continue to maintain its attractiveness to this age group.

Mayor Menino's 20 to 34 year-old initiative, ONEin3 Boston, is aimed at connecting Boston's young adults with resources related to home buying, business development, professional networking, and civic engagement. ONEin3 Boston works in coordination with other city agencies and departments to ensure that Boston is an attractive place for 20 to 34 year-olds to live, work, and raise a family. In 2004, Mayor Menino established a Young Bostonian Advisory Council made up of 16 young adults to act as ambassadors to the larger 20 to 34 year-old population as well as to advise the Mayor on key areas of concern for this constituency. For more information on ONEin3 Boston please visit www.ONEin3Boston.org.

Boston Redevelopment Authority

City of Boston
 Thomas M. Menino, Mayor
 Boston Redevelopment Authority
 Mark Maloney, Director
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OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE

There is reason to believe that the next census in 2010 will show an increase in the number of 20 to 34 year-olds in Boston.

Figure 4 shows the number of births each year indexed to the annual average of the 1950s. It shows that the number of children born in the U.S. between 1976 and 1990 (the so-called "Baby Boom Echo" generation) increased by 31% largely as a result of Baby Boomers entering their parenting years.

Table 6 below, shows that the number of Boston residents aged 10 to 24 increased by 2,672 between 1990 and 2000. The increase in the younger portion of this age group was

Table 6 - Boston's Population by Age

Age	1990	2000
10-14	26,626	32,553
15-19	40,757	43,361
20-24	76,213	70,084
Totals	143,596	146,268

Figure 4 - Birth Count Index for U.S., Massachusetts, and Boston

