People

People are Detroit’s most precious asset, those residents who have stayed through the tough times, as well as those who have only recently moved to the city. The residents of Detroit represent a dynamic group of individuals. This section outlines the diverse characteristics of the city’s people with data that provide a snapshot of who lives here and how they identify themselves.
African Americans comprise the majority of Detroit’s population, at 80%. White residents account for 9%, Hispanic residents make up 8%, and Asian residents make up 1%. This contrasts starkly against the Metro Detroit region, where African Americans represent 22% of the population and the white population makes up 67%.

Although the population has seen a decline in recent years, the number of Hispanic residents in the city has increased since 2000. The white population, which had long been on the decline, has grown by 13% since 2010.

*Because of rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%. Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.*
Detroit is home to several vibrant immigrant communities, with slightly more than 37,000 city residents born outside of the United States. Although Detroit is home to people from across the globe, the three largest groups who have settled in Detroit are from Mexico, who primarily live in Southwest Detroit; from the Middle East, residing primarily on the city’s west side and adjacent to Hamtramck; and from Bangladesh, who mostly live just northwest of Hamtramck.

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.
The city has experienced significant growth in its population among 25- to 34-year-olds in recent years. Since 2011, that age group has grown in the city by almost 10,000. However, the city is also aging, with residents older than 55 making up 25% of the population.

Detroit has experienced growth among the 25 to 34-year-old population. The average size of Detroit households has been declining over the past decade, with the current average being 2.6 people per household, which is similar to the county as a whole. One cause of the drop in household size is the loss of families with children. Since 2000, Detroit has seen the number of families with children decline by 43%. These households make up 26% of the city’s households, down from 34% in 2000.

Household Type

- Families with children: 26%
- Families without children: 31%
- Non-family households: 44%

*Because of rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%.

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.
On average, Detroiters have lower levels of formal education than the rest of the region. Currently, 20% of the population 25 years and older has an associate’s degree or higher, and 26% have attended some college but did not graduate. Twenty-two percent of residents 25 years and older have not completed high school. Lower levels of educational attainment are often associated with poor labor force outcomes. The unemployment rate among Detroiters without a high school diploma is nearly twice the rate of those with some college or an associate’s degree.

The Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) is the largest single educational entity in the city, with more than 45,000 students in the 2015-16 school year. DPSCD has seen an ongoing decline in student population as the city’s population has fallen. Furthermore, an increase in charter schools operating within the city has brought new competition.

Since the 2010-2011 school year, the district has lost 41% of its enrollment — more than 30,000 students — while charter school enrollment has increased by 14%.

However, DPSCD’s high school graduation rate has shown steady improvement. In 2007, 58% of students graduated in four years, but by the 2015-16 school year, that number had improved to 78%. Of those who graduated, 41% attended college.

*Because of rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%.
Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.

Source: MI School Data
Over the past 15 years, the median income of Detroit residents has declined. In 2015, the median income in the city was less than half that of the region, with nearly a third of households making less than $15,000 per year and only 6% of households making more than $100,000.

In 2000, the median household income for the city’s African American residents was higher than that of its non-Hispanic white residents. Although the median incomes of both groups have fallen since 2010, the decline has been greater for African American Detroiters (-17%) than white residents since 2010 (-8%).

*Because of rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%.

Poverty

Detroit is a city with an extremely high poverty rate. More than 40% of Detroit residents, and 57% of its children under the age of 18, live below the federal poverty line of $24,339 for a family of four. The poverty rate among Detroit’s seniors is considerably lower, with 20% living below the poverty line.

Today, 53% of Detroit residents live in “areas of concentrated poverty,” typically defined as census tracts with a poverty rate of 40% or more. Research indicates that the negative effects of poverty on neighborhoods is limited below a poverty rate of 10% and increase dramatically between 20% and 40%, after which there is little increase in the negative effects of concentrated poverty.

Source: American Community Survey 2011-2015 5 Year.
Detroit residents face many health challenges, suffering from higher rates of disease and other chronic illnesses when compared to the state and the nation as a whole. These include cancer, asthma, infant mortality, HIV, and diabetes. Disparities are particularly acute for conditions such as infant mortality and HIV infection, where Detroit’s rates are more than twice the national average.

Detroiters face issues of health care affordability, with 24% of adults reporting they were unable to access health care because of cost. There have been improvements in health coverage, with the number of Detroiters without health insurance falling by 54% between 2010 and 2015.

Detroiters also face challenges accessing primary care.