North Dakota Census Office

Growing ND by the Numbers

***North Dakota
Counties Rank High
in Dependency Ratios***
*Two North Dakota
Counties had an age
dependency ratio of
100 or more. McIntosh
County's ratio was
100.4 and Towner
County's ratio was 100.
That means that for
every resident in the
county of workforce
age there was one
individual under age 18
or 65 or older. These
two North Dakota
counties were among
only 23 counties
nationally to have an
age dependency ratio
of 100 or more.*

*Source: Census Bureau ACS 5-Yr
2016, Table S0101*

Ratio of Children and Elderly to the Workforce Age Group

The age dependency ratio gives us an idea of how many potential workers are in any given area to support those considered too young or too old to work. The ratio is calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau using data collected in the American Community Survey. It uses the combined number of individuals under the age of 18 years and those 65 and over, divided by the number of individuals aged 18 to 64 and multiplied by 100.

Age dependency ratio is a combination of the child dependency ratio, the ratio of children to workforce age population, and old age dependency ratio, the ratio of older residents to workforce age population. An example: From 2011 to 2016, the age dependency ratio of the United States was 60.3, consisting of the child dependency ration (37) plus the old age dependency ratio (23.2).

For child dependency ratio, a lower rate ratio can be both good and bad as it implies relatively more workers are available in a given area to care for younger residents. However, it can also imply a

North Dakota's Age Dependency Ratio

North Dakota's age dependency ratio was 58.8, consisting of a 36.2 child dependency ratio plus a 22.6 old age dependency ratio for the years 2011 to 2016. The state's ratio is slightly more favorable than the national ratio of 60.3 and lower in both child and old age dependency ratios.

There were 13 states with a lower age dependency ratio, with Alaska (53.5), Massachusetts (55.5) and Colorado (56) having the lowest ratios of the 50 states. Alaska stands

out, as it has a low old age dependency ratio of 14.4, with its child dependency ratio making up the bulk of its total dependency ratio.

Conversely, Utah (68.7), Idaho (68.5) and Arizona (66.6) had the highest overall age dependency ratios. Utah's overall ratio is particularly unique in that it has by far the highest child dependency ratio and the second-lowest old age dependency ratio of any state.

Source: Census Bureau ACS 1-Yr 2009 - 2016, Table S0101

natural decline in population as fewer births may not match the number of deaths in a given area. As a result, the total population of a given area begins to decline over time.

For old age dependency ratio, a lower ratio implies more workers are available in a given area to care for older residents, while a higher dependency ratio implies an area will

have a more difficult time supporting its elderly population and the greater proportional need for healthcare, nursing homes and similar services. A higher ratio would indicate more financial stress between working people and dependents.

Source: Census Bureau ACS 5-Yr 2016, Tables GCT0105, GTC0106, GTC0107 and Census Glossary

Population Density and Dependency Ratios

While there are more older and younger residents in the more densely populated areas of the state, there is also a higher number of individuals of workforce age to support them. In other words, there is an inverse relationship between population density and dependency ratios in the state. The more densely populated the area, the lower the age dependency ratio.

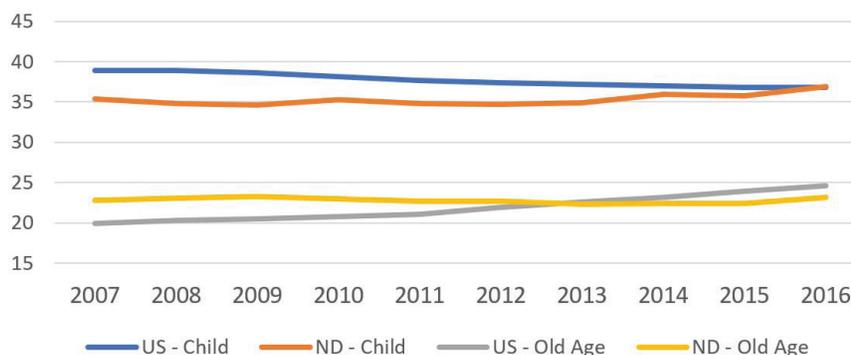In North Dakota, the 10 highest census tracts in population density (residents per square mile) have an average age dependency ratio of 40.2, consisting of 15.6 old age and 24.5 child dependency ratios. The most densely populated census tract in the state is Tract 5.02 of Cass County, the area to the north of downtown Fargo. This area has an estimated population density of 9,329, but a dependency ratio of only 12.5.

In the state's 10 least densely populated census tracts, the average age dependency ratio was 76.4, consisting of 37.8 old age dependency and 38.6 child dependency. The least densely populated census tract in the state is Tract 9650 in Slope County with .55 persons per square mile. It had a dependency ratio of 81.2, consisting of an old age dependency of 42.8 and a child dependency ratio of 38.4.

Source: Census Bureau ACS 5-Yr 2016, Table S0101 and 2017 Gazetteer, Census Tract File for North Dakota

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U.S. and North Dakota Child and Old Age Dependency Ratios 2007-2016

Legend: US - Child, ND - Child, US - Old Age, ND - Old Age

Since 2007, the child dependency ratio of the U.S. has gradually declined, while North Dakota's has remained the same or grown slightly. The U.S. old age dependency ratio has gradually risen, while North Dakota's has remained the same or grown slightly. The result of these changes is that relative to the U.S., the state of North Dakota has been able to maintain a slightly more favorable age dependency than the nation as a whole.

Source: Census Bureau ACS 1-Yr 2007 - 2016, Tables GCT0105, GTC0106 and GTC0107

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