

## CHAPTER II: POPULATION

Population characteristics and trends play a pivotal role in the planning effort. Since people constitute a city, the general population creates a city's identity, distinguishing it from other communities. Changes in population influence land use decisions, economic spending patterns and employment, public services, and needs for public improvements. Furthermore, a clear understanding of existing population characteristics and trends gives guidance to city officials for making the most informed and effective decisions in meeting growth and development needs in a diverse and changing community.

The purpose of this chapter is to gain an understanding of population change and composition in the City of Sylacauga in order to explore decisions and develop public policies and plans, which will best serve its present and future residents. This chapter examines historic population trends, place of birth, and place of residence. Population composition includes elements such as age, race, and gender distributions, and marital status. Finally, an analytical summary of population findings concludes the chapter.

Population information gathered in this section of the plan was obtained, in large part, from the U.S. Census of Population decennial census for 2000 and 2010. Decennial census data is useful for examining changes to population for such characteristics as historical population trends, age distribution, race, and gender. This information is collected by the census every 10 years and serves as the most accurate and reliable base information for population patterns and trends due to its collection methodology, utilizing 100% count data of the total population. Total population for the years between decennial collection periods, such as 2017, was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program, which is a separate program from the decennial and uses current data on births, deaths, and migration to calculate population change since the most recent decennial census.

Although Decennial Census information gives a dependable snapshot of the nation's population in 2000 and 2010, for making comparisons over consistent 10 year periods, the Census Bureau, in 2005, in realizing the limitations and shortcomings in using 10 year information, particularly in the latter years of any given decade, established the American Community Survey. The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nation-wide survey which produces estimates every year instead of every ten years in order to provide more up-to-date information on such characteristics as age, race, income, commute time to work, home value and other important data at the local level. In collecting information and providing these estimates, about 3.5 million housing unit addresses are surveyed in the American Community Survey annually.

The ACS produces both single-year estimates and multi-year estimates. Single-year estimates are produced only for geographic areas with a population of 65,000 or more, while multi-year—3-year are produced for geographies with 20,000 or more and 5-year are produced for geographies with less than 20,000. For multi-year estimates data is collected within the timeframes given, yet reported on an annual basis. For the purpose of this plan, the 2013-2017 ACS (5-year estimates) applies since the City of Sylacauga holds a population of less than 20,000 people. The 2013-2017 ACS in this chapter on population was used, in addition to the decennial, to gather population information on characteristics such as place of birth, place of residence, age distribution, marital status, race, and gender in order to provide a more complete and up-to-date picture of the recent population data and change since 2010. The goal of using both decennial data and ACS in conjunction is to create and develop a more accurate picture of the community's population which may be analyzed and better understood.

# Population Trends

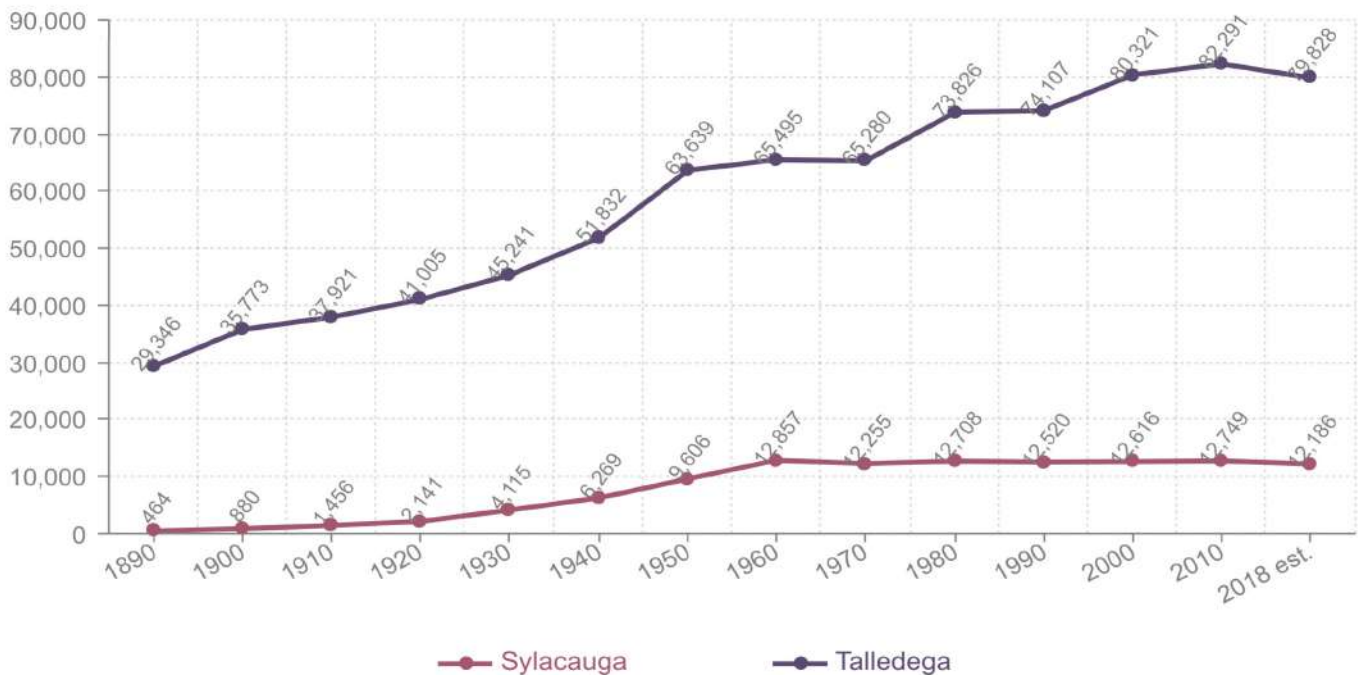
## Historic Population Trends

All community populations change to some degree over a given span of time. Historic population trends are useful in showing when and to what degree population has increased, decreased, or stabilized over a given time period. Major trends usually identify and reflect the goals and values of our nation as a whole and how communities respond to changing times and historical events. Although unfit for predicting the future, this information is useful for planning by understanding how and why social and cultural history shaped the city, making it what it is today.

In regards to historic population trends, Sylacauga has shown, for the most part, continuous and steady increases in population, with only slight dips in 1970 and 1990. Estimates for 2017 report a minor -0.4% decline from the 2010 population. From its founding in 1887, the Census recorded 464 persons in the city in 1890 and in 2018, the city held an estimated population of 12,186. Sylacauga’s most significant growth occurred between 1920 and 1930, with a 92% climb. The city also grew in population substantially from 1930 to 1950, increasing in population by 52% from 1930 to 1940 and 53% from 1940 to 1950. Such growth could be attributed to success and growth in textile manufacturing at the Avondale Mills facility during this time, drawing employment in the area. The marble industry, from 1920 to 1960 also fared well. Then in 1967 Alabama Marble shut down its marble slab mining, which could have triggered some population loss as shown from 1960 to 1970. In comparison to Sylacauga, population trends in Talladega County showed similar patterns. The county increased most substantially in population from 1920 to 1950 and then declined slightly from 1960 to 1970, which could also have resulted from marble mining shut downs. However, Talladega County’s growth and decline was most likely due to the opening of the U.S. Army Ammunition Plant in 1941, located just outside Childersburg, which employed thousands of workers for the production of deadly chemical weapons

**P-1: Historic Population Sylacauga, AL**

Talledega County



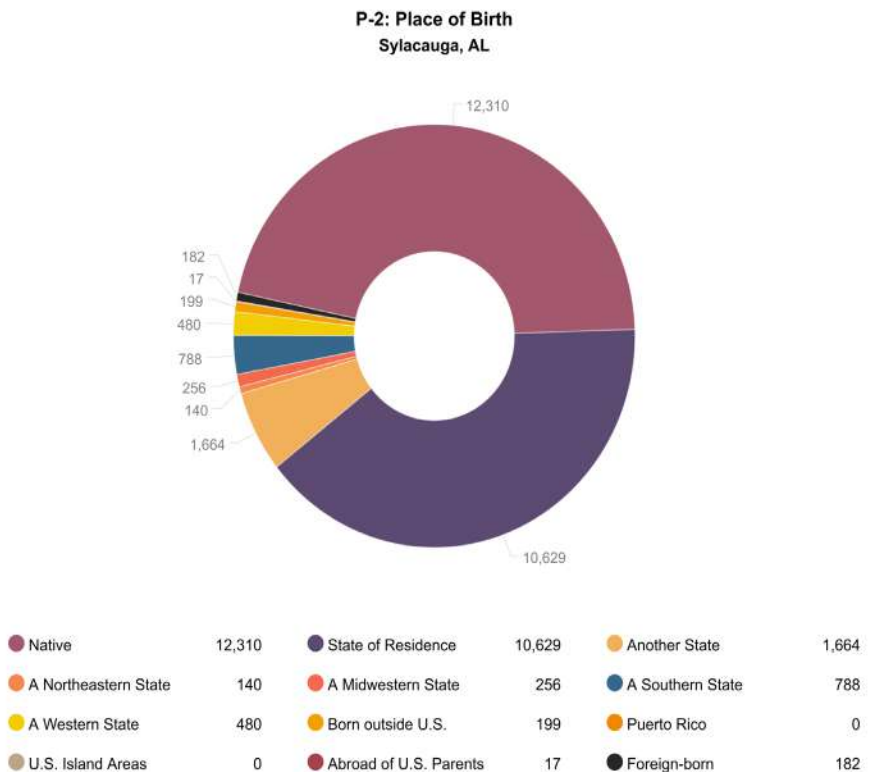
such as TNT and smokeless powder for the U.S. involvement in WWII war. The plant was closed in 1945, but many workers found homes in Talladega County and continued to contribute to the county’s growth. In comparison to Sylacauga, population trends in Talladega County showed similar patterns. The county increased most substantially in population from 1920 to 1950 and then declined slightly from 1960 to 1970, which could also have resulted from marble mining shut downs. However, Talladega County’s growth and decline was most likely due to the opening of the U.S. Army Ammunition Plant in 1941, located just outside Childersburg, which employed thousands of workers for the production of deadly chemical weapons such as TNT and smokeless powder for the U.S. involvement in WWII war. The plant was closed in 1945, but many workers found homes in Talladega County and continued to contribute to the county’s growth. Both Alabama and the US, historically, have shown steady and continual increase in population, with the most substantial growth occurring around 1900 to 1920, most likely due to the progressive movement of the 20s and America’s involvement in WWI, which spurred economic development and job growth for the nation. However, following the 20s, the great depression in 1929 lead to a decline in growth as shown from 1930 to 1940. Then from 1940 to 1950 the nation resumed substantial growth with its involvement in WWII.

In more recent years, from 1990 to 2015, both Sylacauga and Talladega County reported minimal population growth, particularly the city, which increased by a minor 1%. The county grew by 9% during this time while the state showed a 20% growth and the nation 29%. Such small growth for Sylacauga, over 25 years, could be attributed to jobs loss in textile manufacturing, which has historically been the city’s major industry, along with marble production.

### Place of Birth

Place of birth data is useful in determining population trends through migration patterns in the city’s population. Examination of this data will show if the community is drawing population from other states and other countries or if the population is predominantly Alabama-born.

Place of birth patterns show that the substantial majority (85%) of Sylacauga residents were born in Alabama or born in another Southern state (14%) indicating minor in-migration from other places around the country or from another country. Interestingly, Sylacauga also showed a fairly high portion of residents born in a Southern state at 47%, compared to other regions of the country. This could be due to the city’s major industry in marble production, as workers hired for mining operations might have previously lived and worked in other states out west, where mining is more prevalent compared to other parts of the nation. The city showed little



representation of residents born in other states outside southern and western with a minor 16% migrating in from a Midwestern state and 8% from a Northeastern state. Residents born outside the US such as in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Island Areas, and abroad accounted for 1.6% of the population and foreign born 1.5%. Figure P-2 illustrates place of birth for the City of Sylacauga in 2017.

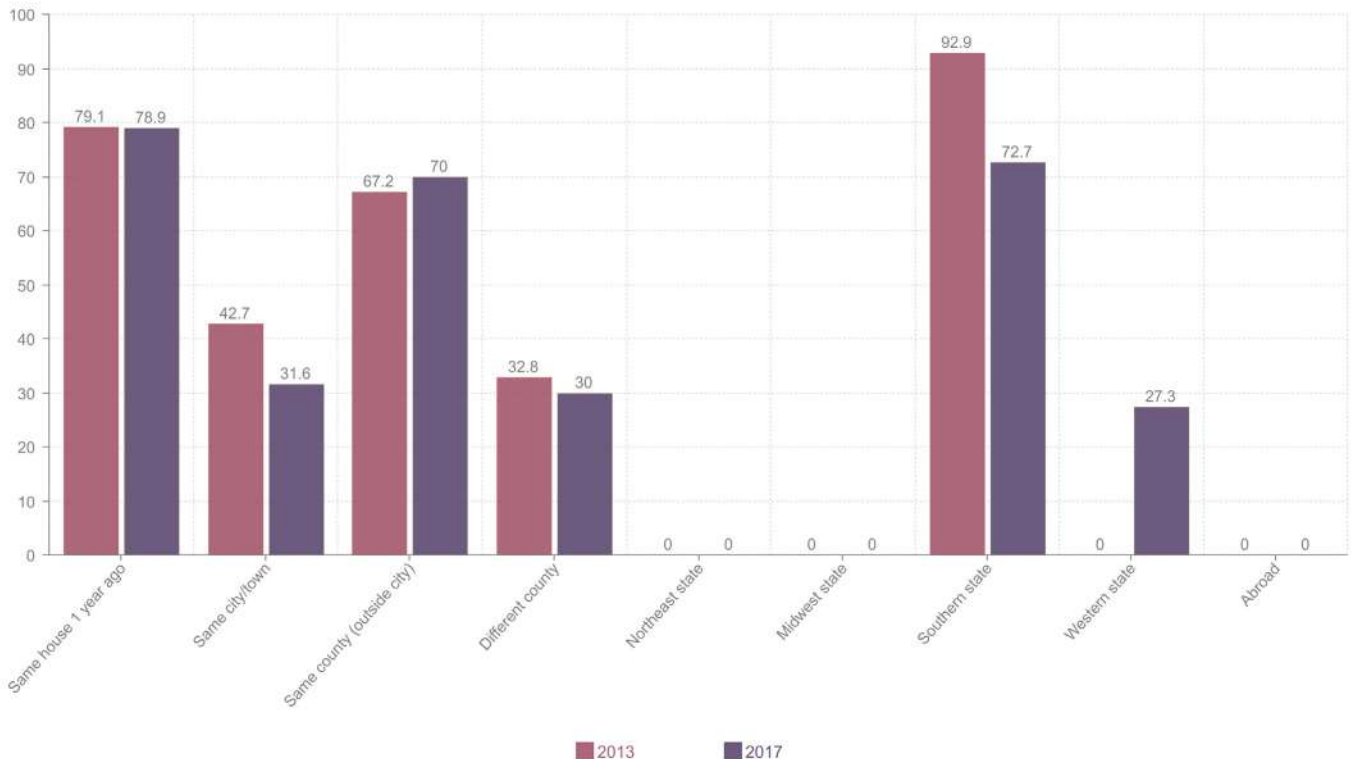
### Place of Residence

Place of residence is defined as: The area of residence 1 year prior to the reference date (2009 and 2010) of those who reported moving to a different housing unit (U.S. Census Glossary). This data is useful to determine city migration patterns. Examination of this data will verify if the city has been gaining or losing in population previously living in other states and countries, and if the city’s residents have been fairly stationary or mobile.

According to Census data, Sylacauga residents have been reasonably stationary. Place of residence information shows that in 2013 the considerable majority of residents (81%) remained in their same home 1 year prior, however, in 2017 that figure dropped slightly to 79%, indicating some minor migration to another home. Most likely, the majority of these residents moved to another home in the same county as indicated by the rise in county migration from 100% in 2013 to 100% in 2017.

Overall, migratory patterns show slight mobility of residents transitioning to another home in the time-frame from 2013 to 2017. This information coincides also with population trends from the decennial census and population estimates for 2017 which report a minor -4.4% population decline for the city from 2010 to 2017, as previously discussed. Figure P-3 illustrates place of residence for the City of Sylacauga from 2009 to 2015. From the chart notice the slight decline in the portion of residents living in the same home from 2013 to 2017

**P-3: Place of Residence, Sylacauga, AL**  
Percentage of Total



# Population Composition

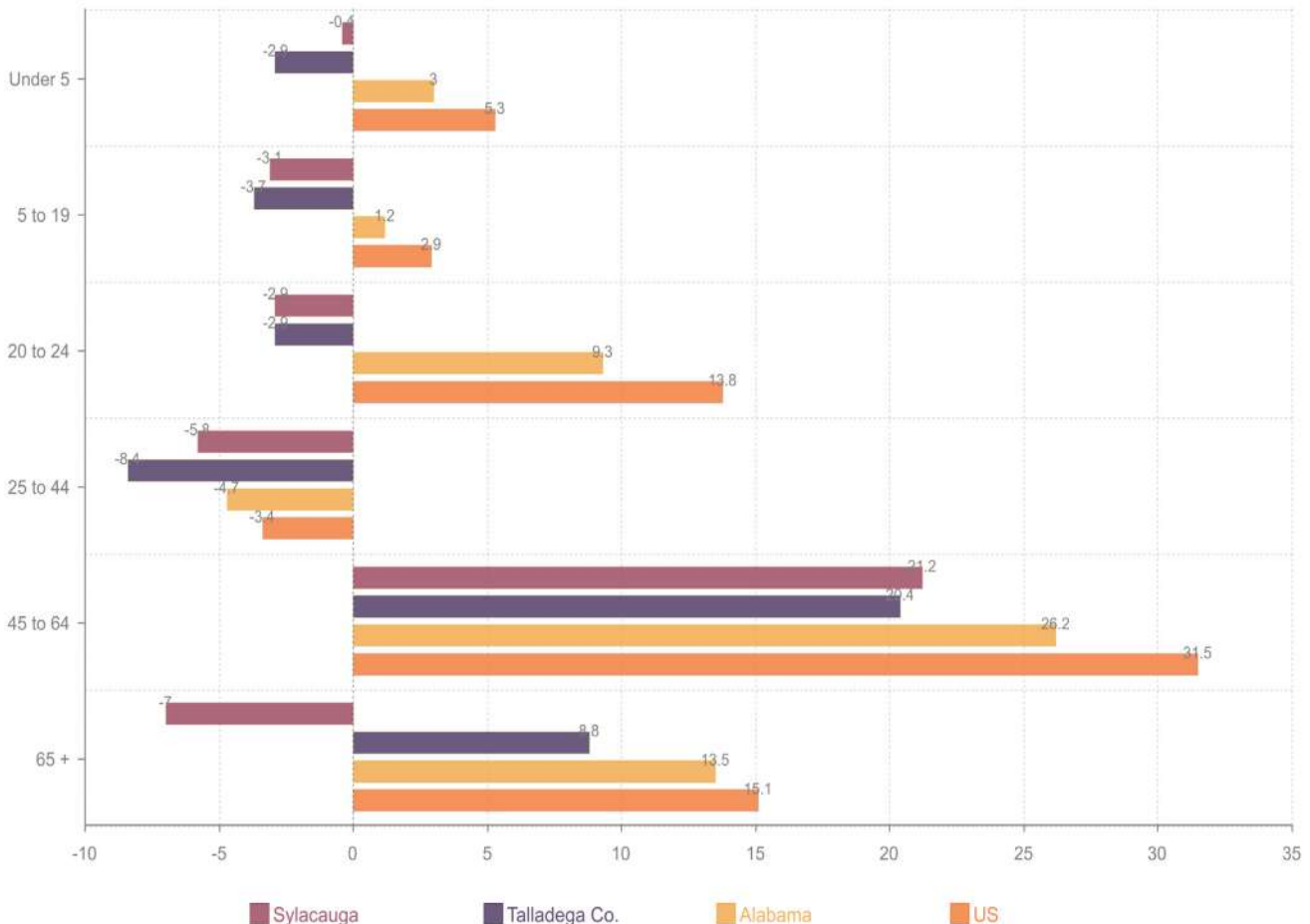
## Age Distribution

Age distribution is a critical element in any population study. A community must structure their budget and resources to meet a wide variety of residents' needs. Needs tend to differ significantly from one age group to another, therefore a proper understanding of age distribution in the community is necessary. For the purposes of this study, age distributions are classified as followed: Toddler/Preschool (Less than 5 years in age), Youth/K-12 (5 to 19), Young Adult/College Age (20 to 24), Young Adult/ Beginning Worker (25 to 44) Middle Age/Working Adult (44 to 64), and Senior/Retired (65+).

## Change in Age Distribution

Sylacauga showed somewhat similar trends in age distribution compared to Talladega County, but differed considerably when compared to Alabama and the US. In terms of change in age distribution between 2000 and 2010, the city's only increase was in middle age/working adults (45 to 64), a population which grew by a significant 21%. All other age groups declined in population somewhat, with the single largest loss in seniors (-7%), followed closely by young adult/beginning workers at -5.8%. For comparison, Talladega County showed similar change, with the exception of senior populations, which grew by 8.8%. The county also lost slightly more young adult/beginning workers at -8.4% than the city did at this time. Similar to Sylacauga and Talladega County, both Alabama and the US showed

**P-4: Percent Change of Age Distribution**  
Sylacauga, AL (2000-2010)



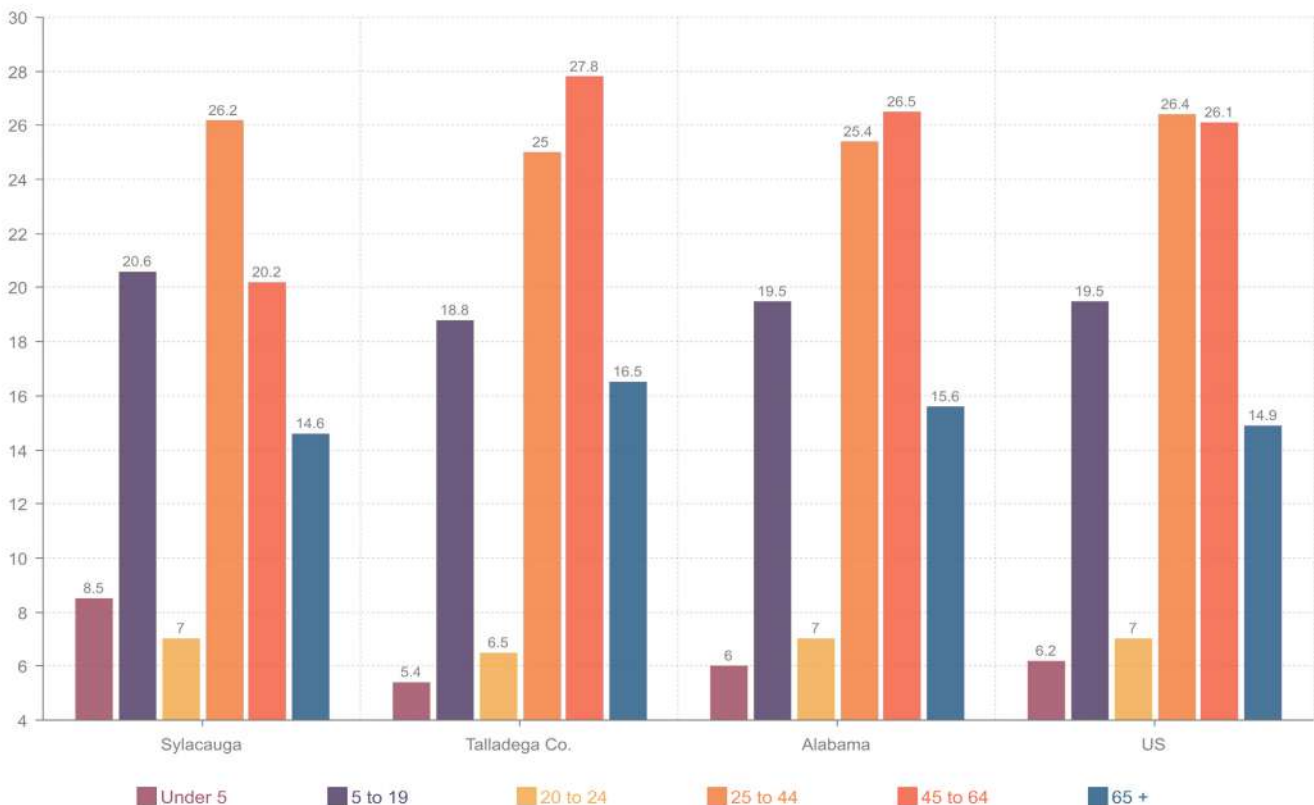


the single largest gains in middle age/working adults with increases of 26% and 31%, respectively. The county at 8%, state (13%), and nation (15%) also grew in senior population while the city lost seniors at -7%. Additionally, the state at 9% and nation at 13% grew in young adult/college age individuals, as the county and city dropped in this age group by -2.9%. However, the state and nation also lost slightly in young adult/beginning workers, suggesting this age group leaving the state and nation to find employment in other places and in other countries. Information indicates that the city and county have been losing younger populations while the state and nation have been gaining population in these age groups. This could be attributed to young people and their families leaving the community to find employment in other places due to business closings and job losses influenced by foreign competition in business markets. Figure P-4 exhibits percent change in age distribution for Sylacauga, Talladega County, Alabama, and the US from 2000 to 2010. From the figure, notice the substantial growth for the city, county, state, and nation in middle age/working adults and the decline in young adult/beginning workers for each geography.

### Age Distribution

Age distribution for Sylacauga in 2017 was also examined in the population composition. In 2017, age distribution showed fairly similar representation of age groups compared to Talladega County, Alabama, and the US. Middle age/working adults ranked the single largest age group in the city at 20.2%, however, young adult/beginning worker showed only slightly lower representation at 26.2%. Together, these age groups composed almost half of Sylacauga’s population at 46.4%, showing the city to have a good mix of young working adults and older working adults available to the local workforce. The city’s youth age group reported a slightly larger portion of the population compared to the county at 19% and the state and nation, both at 20%, suggesting proportionately more people in the school system and preparing for college and workforce training. Senior population for the city and county

**P-5: Age Distribution**  
Sylacauga, AL (2013-2017)



also represented a slightly higher portion of the population at 15% and 17% respectively, compared to the state and nation, both at 15%, indicating that the city needs to account for senior needs as well as needs for younger people. Figure P-5 illustrates age distribution for Sylacauga, Talladega County, Alabama, and the US in 2017.

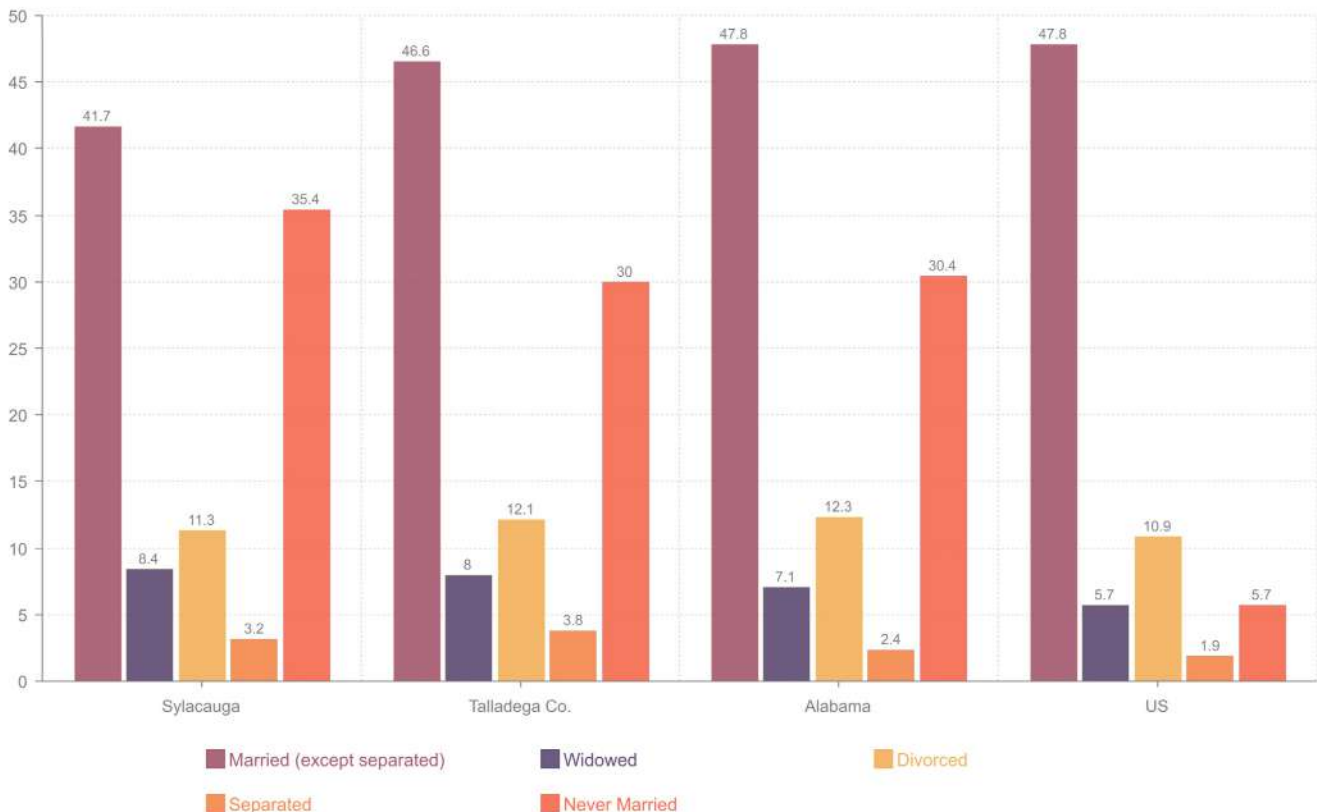
### Median Age

Between 2000 and 2010 median age for Sylacauga rose slightly from 38.8 to 39.6 as did median age for Talladega County, climbing from 36.6 to 39.3. Alabama median age, however, declined slightly from 37.9 to 35.8 and the US increased from 35.3 to 37.2 during this time. This information aligns fairly closely with the 2013-2017 ACS data as both Sylacauga and Talladega County reported a slightly higher portion of seniors than Alabama and the US. The county also showed a slightly higher portion of middle age/working adult (aged 45-64) than the city, state, and nation, which could have contributed to the county’s higher median age in 2010. Since both the city and county hold slightly higher older populations than the state and nation, as well as growing population in the middle age/working adult age group, which are transitioning into the senior population, the city needs to consider plans and policies to meet the needs of seniors and retired persons in addition to the younger, workforce ready, age groups.

### Marital Status

Marital status also plays an important role in demographic studies. A thorough understanding of marital status allows a community to determine family needs and develop programs and policy toward building stronger families. For purposes of this study, marital status reports for all persons age 15 and older

**P-6: Marital Status**  
Sylacauga, AL (2017)



and is organized into 5 categories: 1) never married, 2) separated, 3) divorced, 4) widowed, 5) married (except separated). Separated was pulled from “married” status and placed in a separate category.

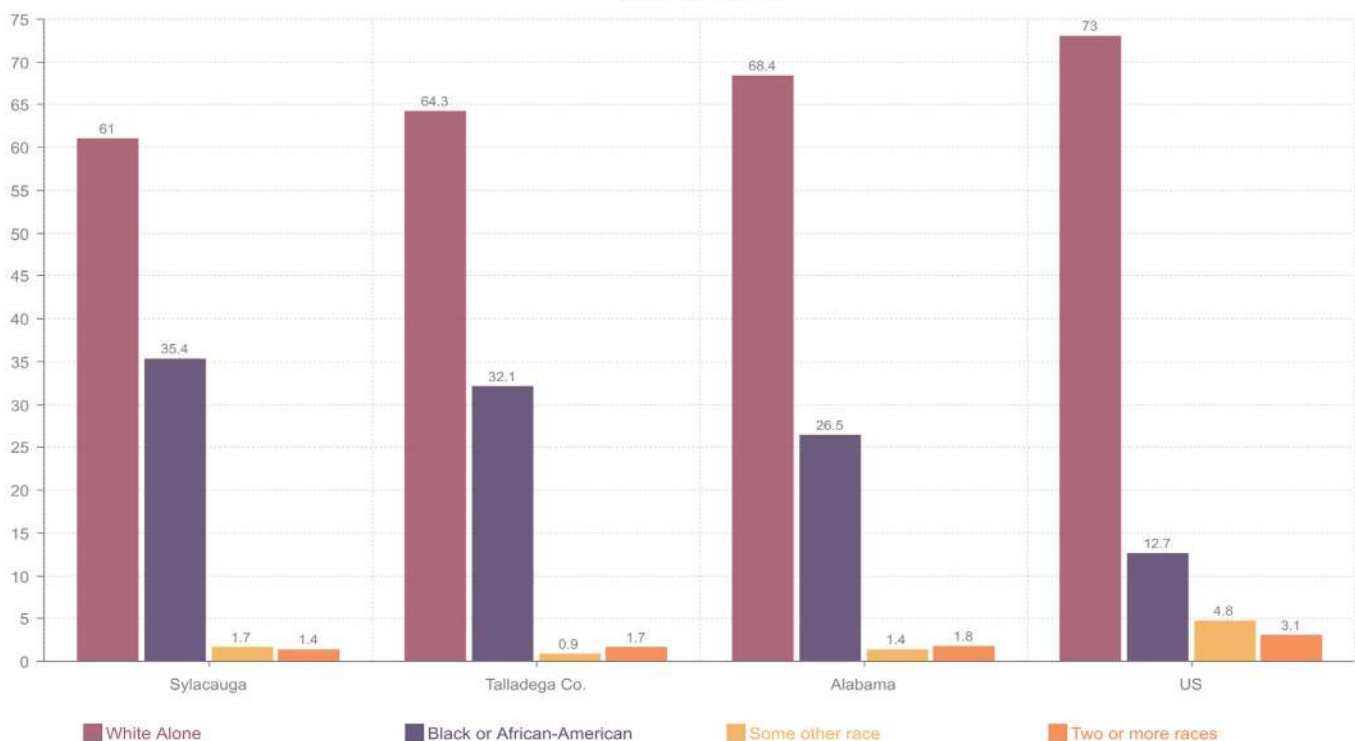
In 2017, Sylacauga reported somewhat different portions in marital status compared to Talladega County, Alabama, and the US. Approximately 42% of city residents, during this time, were married, while the county at 47%, state and nation, both at 48% reported a substantially higher portion of married residents. The city also showed somewhat larger representation in widowed residents at 8% compared to the county and state, both at 8% and the nation at 6%. This could be attributed to a higher portion of seniors in the city, as previously discussed. The city also showed higher representation in residents who had never married at 35% in comparison to the county (30%), state (30.4%), and nation at 33%, which could be due to the city holding a higher portion of youth population, as discussed in the previous section as well. Figure P-6 shows marital status for Sylacauga, Talladega County, Alabama, and the US in 2017. Notice the city’s higher portion of persons who had never married and lower portion of married compared to the county, state, and nation.

### Race Distribution

A general understanding of racial diversity is necessary for a community to better serve its residents. Communities with varying races tend to have differing cultural and ethnic needs, however, these factors can spur greater opportunities for growth within the community.

Data from race distribution for Sylacauga, in 2017, shows the substantial majority (61%) of residents being white, while 35% were black. Only 2% were of some other race and 1.4% two or more races. Talladega County reported similar findings with 64% white and 32% black. Both Alabama and the US showed somewhat different race distribution from Sylacauga and Talladega County with a substantially larger portion of the population being white and smaller black representation. The state reported 68%

P-7: Race Distribution  
Sylacauga, AL (2017)





of the population being white and the US showed 73%, while black population recorded 26% and 12%, respectively. The nation, in turn, showed a somewhat considerably higher portion of other races compared to the city, county, and state, thus indicating more diversity. This information indicates slightly higher race diversity in the city and county, in terms of white and black populations, compared to the state and nation, both of which held higher white population and lower black population. The nation showed significantly more diversity in other races than did the city, county, and state at this time. Figure P-7 illustrates race distribution for Sylacauga, Talladega County, Alabama, and the US in 2017.

### Gender Distribution

In typical American communities females tend to slightly outnumber males, due primarily to higher male mortality rates and longer female life expectancy. Sylacauga closely followed this pattern, as well as Talladega County and Alabama communities, in general. Sylacauga’s population, in 2000, comprised 44.8% male and 55.2% female and showed very little change in 2010 with 45.4% male and 54.6% female. Talladega County and Alabama reported similar minor change as the county reported 48.9% male and 51.1% female in 2000 and 48.7% male and 51.3% female in 2010 while Alabama recorded 48% male and 51% female in both years. The US showed a slightly smaller gap with 49% male and 50% female in 2010. For more information consult Table P-8 Gender Distribution for Sylacauga, Talladega County, and Alabama between 2000 and 2010 and the US in 2010 for comparative purposes.

**Table P-8. Gender Distribution: Sylacauga, AL**

Gender	Sylacauga			Talladega County			Alabama			US
	2000	2010	%Change	2000	2010	%Change	2000	2010	%Change	2010
Male	5,657	5,787	2.3%	39,285	40,077	2.0%	2,144,463	2,320,188	8.2%	151,781,326
% of Total	44.8%	45.4%		48.9%	48.7%		48.2%	48.5%		49.2%
Female	6,959	6,962	0.04%	41,036	42,214	2.9%	2,302,637	2,459,548	6.8%	156,964,212
% of Total	55.2%	54.6%		51.1%	51.3%		51.8%	51.5%		50.8%
Total	12,616	12,749	1.1%	80,321	82,291	2.5%	4,447,100	4,779,736	7.5%	308,745,538