

# DEMOGRAPHICS

## Population

Biloxi has grown from a small fishing village into Mississippi's second largest city. Population growth has been strongly influenced by the area's natural environment and resources.

**Trends** - In the 1980 Census, Biloxi's population was estimated to be 49,311. Over the last three decades, Biloxi's population has increased by an average of about 400 persons per year. If this thirty-year trend continues, a population of nearly 60,000 can be expected by the year 2000. (This trend does not account for the impact of recent annexation.) Development trends indicate that most newcomers to the area will reside in the western or northern areas of the city, unless substantial redevelopment occurs elsewhere.

**Age** - The Biloxi population, like most of the nation, will be gradually growing older as a whole. Changes in age group composition over the last 15 years reflect the coming of age of the "post-war baby boom." In 1980, the median age in Biloxi was 26.4, reflecting the large impact of the baby-boomers between the ages of 20 to 40. (Biloxi's 1980 median age is somewhat lower than most parts of the nation due to its larger segment of military population at Keesler.) As the baby-boomers grow into middle age and older, they will place a much greater demand on Biloxi's educational, recreational and other public services.

**Income** - In 1979, Biloxi's 16,061 households had an average annual income of \$15,502. The average 1979 family income was \$17,772 per year. Per capita income was \$5,687. About 13% of Biloxi's 11,517 families were below the poverty level as determined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

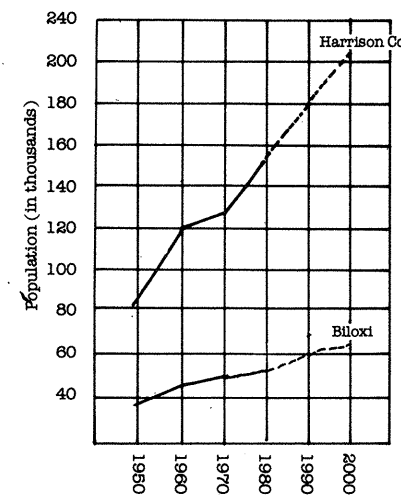
**Housing** - The last Census counted 17,913 housing units in Biloxi with roughly 10% of these units being vacant. About 45% of these units (7,273) were owner-occupied while the majority (8,823) units were occupied by renters. The typical occupied housing unit contained about 2.5 persons, with less than one person per room (average number of rooms: 4.5). In 1980, the typical value of the owner-occupied units was \$33,800, while renters paid a median rent of \$171 per month. The majority of the housing units were built before 1970, including 2,564 units built before 1939.

**Race** - In 1980, 78.6% (38,739) of Biloxi's total 49,311 persons were white. Of the remaining balance, 17.7% (8,727) were black, and 3.7% (1,845) were of Indian, Asian or other racial origin. A total of 1,419 persons were of Spanish descent (both white and black Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.). Other large ancestral groups represented in 1980 included: English, French, German, Greek, Slavic, Irish and Italian.

## General Profile

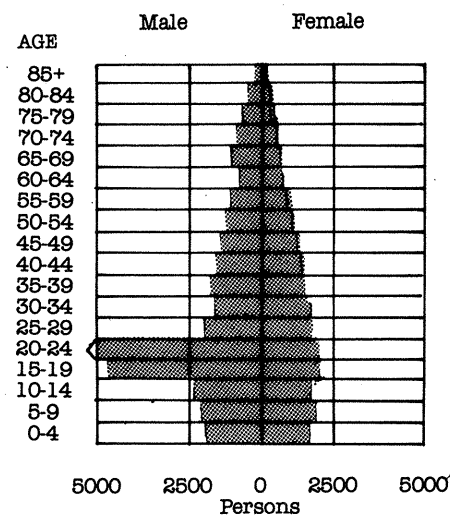
It's dangerous to generalize, but sometimes a statistical composite of "means, modes and medians" can provide a different frame of reference. If we had to generalize about the typical Biloxian in 1980, he was a white male, 25 to 34 years old, married with a family of 3 and renting his home; was born in another state and had completed high school; worked in a white-collar job in Harrison County 15 minutes from home; and made about \$15,000 a year.

## Population Estimates and Projections... 1950-2000

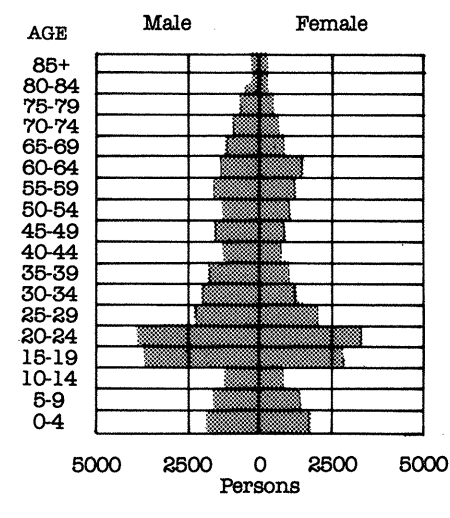


Source: U.S. Bureau of Census; SMPDD Projections

## 1970 Age-Sex Pyramid



## 1980 Age-Sex Pyramid



Source: U.S. Bureau of Census

## Economy

Biloxi's economic opportunities also largely reflect its natural resources. The Biloxi waterfront has provided the backdrop for most of the city's economic growth. The area's natural beauty has made it a favored resort. Abundant marine resources fostered an important seafood industry. And, a strategic coastal location has attracted a host of military and governmental

facilities to the Gulf Coast. Thus, tourism, fisheries and government serve as the major basic industries comprising the local economy.

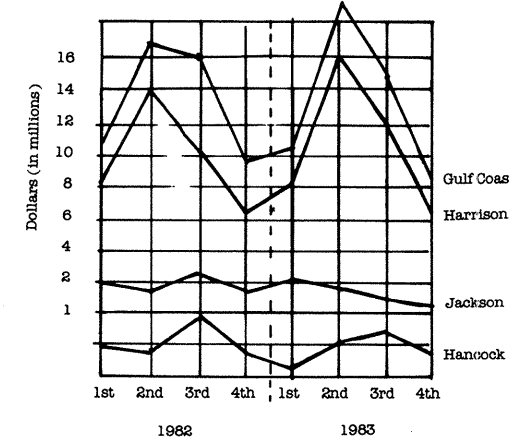
**Tourism** - Responsible for Biloxi's initial growth, tourism continues to develop as the area's leading growth industry. Approximately one million people visit Biloxi and the Mississippi Gulf Coast each year. The area's 3,500 hotel rooms stay mostly full during the warmer months (April through September) and the average visitor spends up to \$300 per day. During the winter, some "snowbirds" from the northern climates visit the Coast to enjoy special packages promoted by local innkeepers.

Most of the major tourist attractions in the area (Eight Flags, Gulf Island National Seashore, Marine Life, etc.) enjoy an annual visitation in the range of 400,000 to 600,000. The J. L. Scott Marine Education Center on Point Cadet has drawn about 550 visitors per day since its May, 1984 opening. (Once it is fully operational and promoted, projected visitation is about 250,000 per year.)

Conventions have attracted 90,000 visitors annually over the last several years. In 1983, 283 conventions drew 100,805 delegates to the Biloxi area who collectively spent over \$31 million.

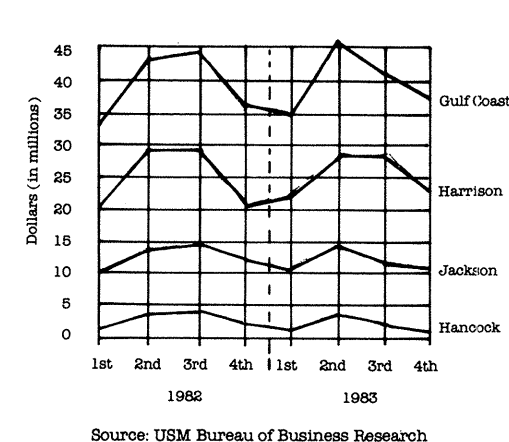
About one out of every four Biloxians derives at least part of his or her income from tourism-related businesses. Hotel-motel and restaurant sales on the Mississippi Coast now account for over \$200 million in annual sales.

## Hotel-Motel Sales



Source: USM Bureau of Business Research

## Restaurant Sales



Source: USM Bureau of Business Research

**Government** - By far the largest single employer on the Mississippi Coast is government. It accounts for over 40% of the income generated in Harrison County and includes a multitude of local, state and federal agencies and military installations.

In Biloxi, the large installations of the Air Force and the Veterans Administration generate a significant portion of local income. Since 1940, Keesler Air Force Base has been a stabilizing factor to the city's economy. Keesler supports over 30,000 persons at an annual payroll of about \$270 million. The base's overall economic impact to the Mississippi Coast has been estimated at \$425 million per year. Keesler has been the single most important contributor to Biloxi's economic and physical growth during the last forty years.

Overall, government accounts for nearly one-fifth of the available jobs in Biloxi.

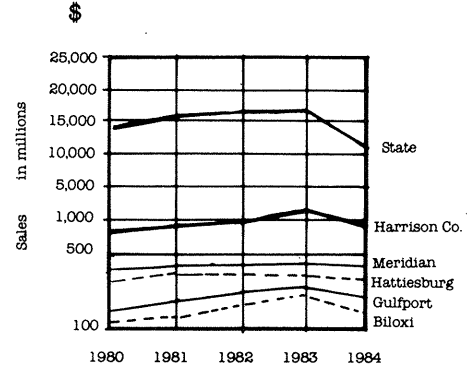
**Seafood** - Biloxi's \$175 million a year seafood industry originated on Back Bay and Point Cadet. Starting with several canneries in the 1880's, Biloxi soon became known as the "Seafood Capital of the World." At the beginning of the 20th century, Biloxi was the nation's leading producer of oysters, and among the leading processors of shrimp and crabs.

Although Biloxi's fisheries now play a much smaller role economically and geographically, the seafood industry accounts for about 500 manufacturing (processing) jobs and at least 2000 jobs in related services (fishing, boatbuilding, marine supply and retail outlets).

Canneries play a minimal role in the industry today. Only one shrimp cannery still exists. However, catfood canning is the major activity of one of the largest seafood processors in Biloxi.

Biloxi's seafood businesses now focus on processing shrimp for cold storage, wholesale and retail opportunities. Vast improvements in refrigeration and highway and marine transport have substantially reduced the importance of the dockside factory. Most factories have been converted into warehouses for frozen storage and distribution or into fuel docks and staging areas for the provision of support services for fishermen and their boats.

## Retail Sales



Source: Mississippi State Tax Commission

**Retail Sales** - When taken together as a whole, Biloxi's retail establishments also serve as a significant source of income for the local labor force. Approximately 4,000 persons are employed by trade-related busi-

nesses. Biloxi's largest concentration of retail activity exists in or near the Edgewater Mall, the Mississippi Coast's leading regional shopping center.

Although Gulfport leads the county in municipal retail sales, Biloxi holds its own in sales, when considering that it is not the county seat. Unlike most comparable metropolitan areas, Biloxi and Gulfport share leadership roles in Harrison County's various types of commercial activity.

## National Forecasts

When Biloxi was a small seaport/resort it wasn't affected much by national trends. But with advances in industry and transportation, Biloxi, like most towns, became more dependent on technological changes and less provincial attitudes. Today all Americans are "tapped in" to a more homogenized society that influences what they wear, eat and where they live; what they do for a living; and how and where they travel.

Demographic changes and the recent communications explosion, or "Third Wave" as described by author Alvin Toffler, could greatly affect the future lifestyle of Biloxians.

If the future could be predicted, there would be no need for this plan. Instead demographers and planners must use "trend analysis." By reviewing the past, planners can anticipate the future. There is some danger in this "rear view mirror" approach, but it can be of some usefulness in forecasting how lifestyles may change. So what do current trends forecast?

It has been noted that the "baby-boomers" are now coming of age and will be changing American ways of life simply by their sheer numbers. By the year 2000, its predicted that half of the adults in the U.S. will be over the age of 44. If other demographic forecasts hold true, families will be smaller and fewer, there will be fewer children, homes will be smaller and in mostly multi-family complexes (apartments/condos), and that while the suburbs and rural areas will continue to grow, more older couples will return to cities for convenience purposes.

As more women enter the workforce, local labor forces will continue to expand. Job opportunities will be available in such areas as professional and personal services, convenience and specialty retail, and communications and information technology as the economy continues its shift from a manufacturing base to one of services.

Increased leisure time will place a larger demand on public facilities and services, especially recreational, travel and cultural activities. Coastal locations will see a continuing upsurge in the demand for waterfront facilities like marinas, parks, beaches and historical attractions.

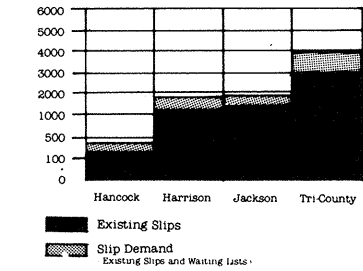
Perhaps of most importance, one must consider what may well be the next major global crisis. Like the international "energy crisis" experienced in the 1970's, a worldwide food shortage may occur during the next decade or two. Biloxi is located on what many experts consider to be the world's most fertile fishing waters. If prepared properly through more efficient utilization of marine resources and fisheries research and development, the communities of the Gulf Coast can have a direct role in alleviating a major global problem.

## National Trends

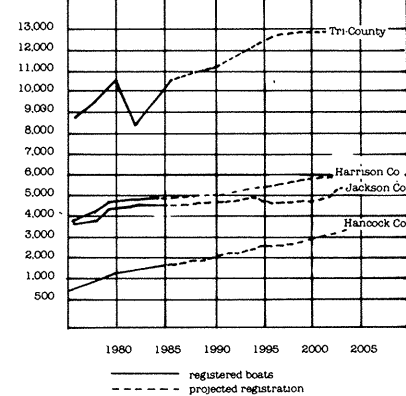
We are already well into the "Information Age", the shift to a service society from that of an industrial base. The following technological trends bear watching:

- 1) Like the automobile and television, the personal computer will drastically change our lifestyles, especially as it evolves from a high speed data manipulator into a source of artificial intelligence.
- 2) Similarly, robots will greatly reduce our labor needs in what little basic manufacturing remains.
- 3) Microprocessors and sophisticated electronics will greatly transform our homes, workplaces, transportation, and tools providing more free time.
- 4) Information sources will shift almost entirely from the print media to the electronic media.
- 5) Government, typically the least innovative sector of our economy, will be hard-pressed to meet public service demands. A greater reliance on the private sector will continue to grow.

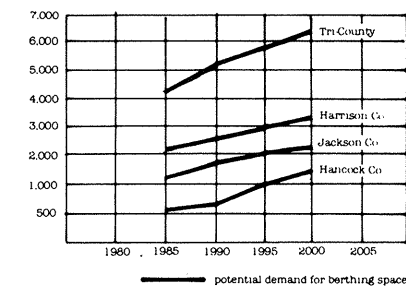
## Mississippi Gulf Coast Wet Slips and Potential Demand - 1984



## Boat Ownership Registered Boats 16' and Over Mississippi Gulf Coast



## Projected Slip Demand Miss. Gulf Coast



Note: Projections are accurate for planning purposes only.  
Source: Prepared for Mississippi Bureau of Marine Resources by USM Department of Geography, 1984.

## Boat Ownership

As leisure time increases, people throughout the country are purchasing pleasure craft in greater numbers. Between 1972 and 1982, U.S. boat ownership grew by nearly 40% and retail boating expenditures increased more than twofold. In Mississippi boat registration grew by 22% between 1978 and 1982. According to the latest available data (1980-1981), Mississippi ranks fourth in its annual percentage