

How letter carrier demographics have changed in last two decades

Because letter carriers deliver in every community in America, NALC looks like America, with faces of every race and ethnicity, age and gender. A quick glance around your station, your branch union meeting or the hall of the NALC national convention will likely illustrate NALC's broadly diverse membership. However, in the past, this was not necessarily the case.

Our current membership reflects the sweeping societal change that has occurred in the country over the past few decades. Looking at data compiled by the U.S. Postal Service shows how the makeup of the letter carrier workforce has evolved.

Our ranks have grown to include more women, more Blacks, Latinos and other demographic groups. Another dramatic shift in the letter carrier craft has been in the age of our members. NALC has seen generational shifts as carriers as a whole are younger now than they were in previous years.

Sex

Looking at the changes between 2007 and 2025—the largest span of data available and compiled by the Postal Service as part of the hiring process—there has been a sizable increase in the percentage of female letter carriers. In 2007, 73 percent of city letter carriers were male, and 27 percent were female. In 2025, 67 percent of letter carriers were male, and 33 percent were female. It's gone from a little more than one quarter of all letter carriers to approximately one-third.

Kenneth Lerch, the president of Rockville, MD Branch 3825, has been a letter carrier in the Washington, DC, area since 1978 and has noticed a lot of changes in his branch.

"I was doing the union orientation for years and years," he said, "so I see everybody that is coming in for the whole D.C. area. And it seems like more than half that are coming in—maybe 50 to 55 percent—are women.

"When I started, there was one woman in 1978," he said of his branch then and now. "It is totally different. And I think it's for the better."

When asked why he thinks there's been such an increase in women in the letter carrier ranks, he said that he believes it results from the union-negotiated contract. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2023, women earned just 83.6 percent of what men earn in the United States. But for letter carriers, "there's equality because of

the union," Lerch said. "And they make very good pay compared to other jobs and great benefits that the union's negotiated for us."

Race and ethnicity

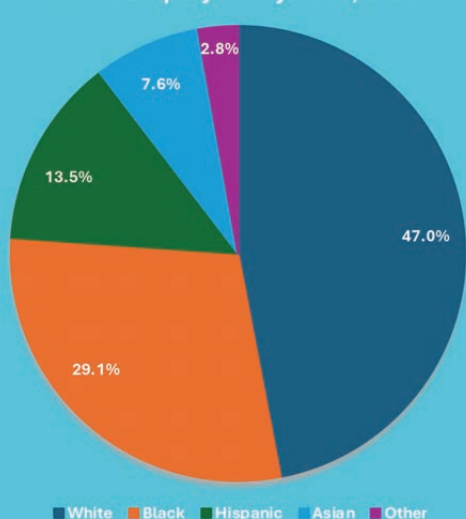
There have been sizable shifts in the racial makeup of the letter carrier craft as well. In 1987, 74 percent of letter carriers were white, while only 15 percent were Black, 7 percent were Hispanic, and 3 percent were Asian. In 2016—the last year the Postal Service had statistics available for the letter carrier craft—56 percent were white, 27 percent were Black, 15 percent were Hispanic, and 1 percent were Asian.

More recent data is available for the entire Postal Service workforce; in 2023, 47 percent of employees were white, 29.1 percent Black, 13.5 percent Hispanic, and 8 percent Asian.

The demographic compositions of communities, of course, can differ greatly, even among those not far from each other. For **Elizabeth Bays**, the president of North Oakland County, MI Branch 320, as a white woman starting in Detroit almost 30 years ago, she was in the minority. Shortly after that, she transferred to Northville, which is part of Southeast Michigan Branch 2184. "There were only three people of color, and now it's probably more than 50 percent," she said. "And definitely, being near Dearborn, we have a lot of different ethnicities in our surrounding areas." (In 2023, 55 percent of Dearborn's residents were of Middle Eastern or North African ancestry.)

Aside from the general benefits of greater diversity, we have seen some practical—and highly positive—consequences on the route. For example, in 2017, in the above-mentioned part

USPS Employees by Race, 2023



of Michigan, South Macomb Branch 4374 letter carrier **Naseem Elias**, who speaks six languages, including Arabic, understood—unlike other passersby—the pleas of a frantic Egyptian-born mother. And so, he responded—and helped save her baby. (The full story is in the November 2018 issue of *The Postal Record*.)

In the D.C. area, Lerch sees a lot of new letter carriers who don't look like him.

"It's so diverse," he said. "That's the strength I think we have."

Age

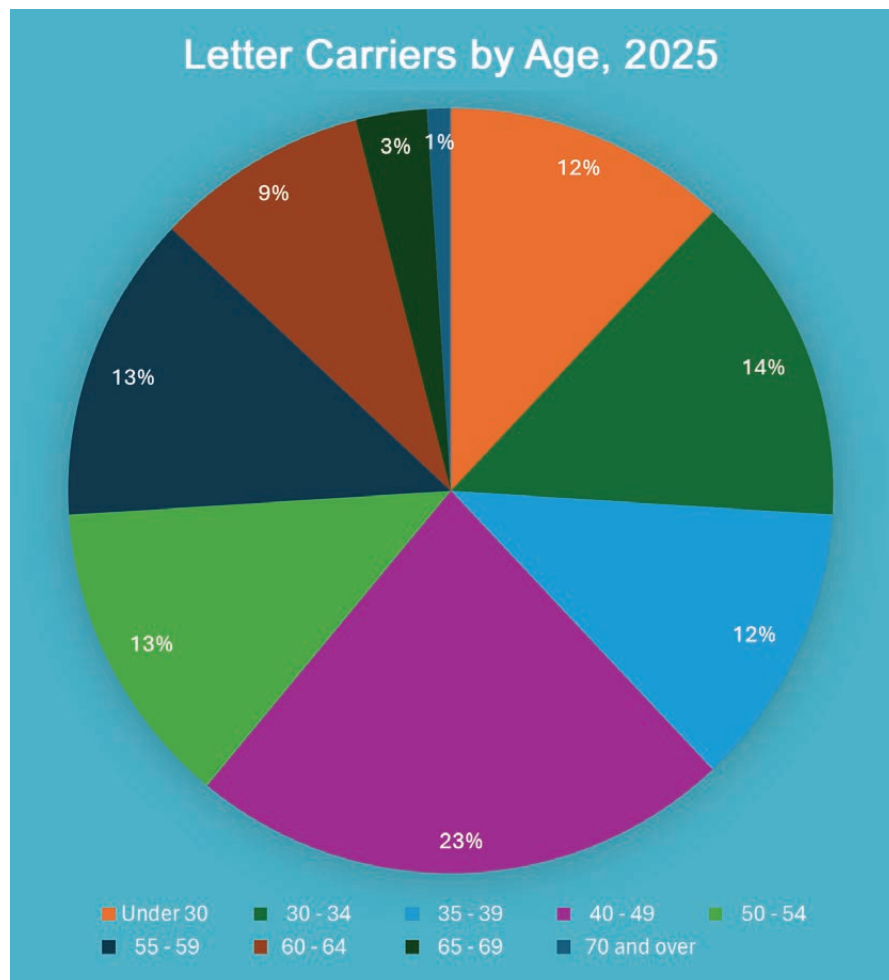
One of the largest shifts has been in age. In 2007, 5 percent of city letter carriers were under 30. In 2025, it is 12 percent. In 2007, 19 percent were between 30 and 39 years old. In 2025, it is 26 percent. In 2007, 36 percent were between 40 and 49 years old. In 2025, it is 23 percent. In 2007, 35 percent were between 50 and 59 years old. In 2025, it's 26 percent. In 2007, 6 percent were between 60 and 69. In 2025, it's 12 percent.

Strikingly, according to the data, 46 percent of letter carriers have been in the craft for five years or less. In 2007, that number was 16 percent.

"For the most part, it is a much younger workforce," Bays said.

She said that turnover might be part of the reason carriers are younger now. "I've never seen so many employees that have made it to career who then resigned. So, we're continuously hiring new people. As the older people are retiring, we're not keeping people in the Postal Service to grow old with us.

"When I was hired back in '96, I was going to [go to] college and I was like, 'Oh, I'll do this till I get to college,'" she said. "But then my friends were



graduating from college, and I was making more money than them. I was like, 'Well, why wouldn't I just stay here?' I'm glad I did."

When Bays talks to younger carriers, she tries to explain to them the value of the employment benefits, from health insurance to a pension, but they often don't know what a pension is.

With so many carriers being younger and not having been with the Postal Service very long, many branch leaders are finding it challenging to get new members to take on leadership roles. "We talk about it all the time internally," Lerch said. "How are we going to get new people more involved?"

"Part of being a good leader is when you leave, the branch can still function well," he added.

NALC will have to evolve with its craft, adapting to keep employees involved in the union, making it strong. But there is no denying that there is no "one size fits all" in terms of letter carriers.

"I had somebody say a while back, 'Oh, you don't look like a letter carrier,'" Bays said. "I thought to myself, 'What does a letter carrier look like?' As I was at the Labor Day parade, I was looking around at all the letter carriers, and I'm like, 'We've got this covered. There are all different shapes, sizes, colors. There is no cookie-cutter letter carrier.'" **PR**