Making an Age Pyramid

Population growth is affected by
- age structure
- the number of people in different age groups
- the numbers of births and deaths

Age structure is usually illustrated by an age pyramid
- A graph in which horizontal bars represent the percentage of the population in each age groups.
- Males are shown on the left and females on the right.
- The ages (or in some cases the year of birth) for each bar is listed along the vertical axis of the graph, usually in five-year intervals.
- Each age group is called a **cohort**. The longer a bar is, the greater the proportion of people in that age group.

Procedure:

1.   Collect information to complete the family population form. Find out the birth date and sex of each member of your family, beginning with your grandparents. Include all of the brothers and sisters of your parents and all of the people in your generation, i.e. your brothers and sisters and cousins. For homework, do an age structure diagram of your extended family.

2.   Pool your family data with that of your classmates. Construct an age pyramid for the class data using graph paper with 5 squares to the inch. You will need to decide how many people are to be represented by one square.

Discussion:

1.   What is the percentage of people under 20? Over 60? Is the population a young, growing one; declining one or a stable one?

2.   Is there evidence in the diagram of the baby boom that followed World War II (1946-1964)? If so, is there evidence of the effect of this baby boom in more recent years?

3.   From the class data, describe any changes that have occurred in family size over generations.

4.   How does the pyramid for the class compare to that for the United States? If the United States is now at, or slightly below, the replacement level, why is the population of the country still growing?

Family Population Form

	Your family		Class average	
Date of Birth	# Females	# Males	# Females	# Males
2000-2004				
1995-1999				
1990-1994				
1985-1989				
1980-1984				
1975-1979				
1970-1974				
1965-1969				
1960-1964				
1955-1959				
1950-1954				
1945-1949				
1940-1944				
1935-1939				
1930-1934				
1925-1929				
1920-1924				
1915-1919				
1910-1914				
1905-1909				
1900-1904				