

# Population



## Introduction

Population defines both the size and character of a community. Traced over time, population statistics such as growth and density indicate both the previous composition of an area and its future composition. In turn, these factors touch every aspect of the community, from schools and public facilities to roads and infrastructure. Planning considerations, therefore, must accurately gauge our present population level as well as anticipate future trends. As James City County continues to attract new residents, local government will base its planning decisions on sound population data and careful analysis.

## Population Characteristics

Population data is gathered from a range of Federal, State, and local agencies. While the Federal census is the best-known survey method, both the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia are significant resources. Locally, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and the Williamsburg-James City County School Board monitor population changes, as do the James City County Departments of Financial and Management Services and Development Management.

Over the last three decades, James City County has more than doubled in size. **Table POP-1** below documents the growth of James City County compared to the region and the State.

During the 1970s, the population of James City County grew approximately 28 percent. In the 1980s that figure nearly doubled, reaching 54 percent. This growth increase translates to a population growth of over 1,200 persons per year. Although the growth rate during the 1990s moderated somewhat, James City County was still ranked as the 8<sup>th</sup> fastest growing jurisdiction in Virginia. Growing 38 percent, James City County gained 13,132 people during the 1990s, averaging 1,313 people annually.

According to the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, net migration (the difference between those who move into the County and those who leave the County) accounted for 85 percent of the population growth experienced during the 1980s and 90s. Another study, conducted in 2001 by the Center for Survey Research at Virginia Tech, found that 52 percent of persons who moved to James City County in the last five years came from elsewhere in Virginia. An additional 18 percent moved from the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. These findings indicate that the character and opportunities of James City County make it attractive to many citizens.

Overall, the population of James City County is one of the “oldest” in the Hampton Roads Area. In 1990, the median age for James City County residents was 33.7 years. By 2000 it had risen to 41 due to a 49.7 percent increase (7 percent growth rate) in the County’s over-65 population. By contrast, the State median age was 35.7 years in 2000 and 33.5 years for the

	1970	1980	1990	2000	1980 to 2000 % Change
<b>James City County</b>	17,853	22,763	34,970	48,102	111%
<b>Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)</b>	N/A due to changes in MSA	1,171,400	1,396,107	1,551,351	32%
<b>Virginia</b>	4,648,494	5,346,818	6,187,358	7,078,515	32%

Table POP-1. Source: U.S. Census



Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Federal census statistics from the same year indicate that the older population segment of the County has settled in areas surrounding Williamsburg and adjacent to Newport News, while the younger population has settled in the more rural areas.

Population data suggests several other demographic trends. First, James City County has become less racially diverse over the last thirty years. Whereas minorities accounted for 35 percent of the population in 1970, they constituted only 17 percent in 2000. Among the minority populations present in the County, African Americans have the largest representation, 14.9 percent and Hispanics are now a burgeoning minority population, 1.7 percent. Second, James City County citizens have become more prosperous, especially over the last decade. Median household income, \$39,785 in 1990, reached \$55,594 in 2000, surpassing both state and local median incomes levels. Third, statistics from the 1990 and 2000 Census indicate that James City County residents age 25 and over tend to have completed higher levels of education than residents in Hampton, Newport News, and to a lesser degree York County. This trend can be attributed to the proximity to the College of William & Mary and the wealth accumulation within the County.

## Population Estimates & Projections

Population estimates and projections are derived from a range of sources. In addition to conducting the decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau also provides detailed estimates of a variety of groups every ten years and in some instances every five years. The Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service and the VEC also publish annual population-related studies. On the local level the James City County Planning Division performs its own quarterly population estimates, studying the change in the number of dwelling units,

dwelling vacancy ranges, household size, and resident population of Eastern State Hospital.

The James City County Planning Division devised a pair of survey methods to confirm official state population projections. These first incorporated a simple straight-line approach. The formula for this projection multiplied the expected number of housing units for each year by the estimated household population size. In this model County population is projected to rise from 48,102 in 2000 to 64,171 by 2010 or a growth rate of 3.3 percent.

The second forecasting method employs a more complex polynomial curve derived from past growth data. Projections from this model place County population levels at more than 70,000 residents by 2010, 5,000 more people than straight-line estimates. To reconcile the differences between the two models, figures from both projections have been averaged together to yield a projection range of 62,533 to 67,343. This range translates to an averaged growth rate of 3 percent to 4 percent per year.

VEC projections anticipate a slower rate of growth for the next decade. VEC findings appear in *Table POP-2* below.

	2000 Census	2005	2010
<b>VEC</b>		n/a	60,001
<b>3% Growth</b>	48,102	55,317	62,533
<b>Staff Average</b>	48,102	57,699	67,120
<b>4% Growth</b>	48,102	57,722	67,343

*Table POP-2. Source: Virginia Employment Commission; Planning Division*

## Citizen Commentary

In the November Community Conversations many citizens voiced concerns about the rate of population growth and the special challenges presented by James City County's changing demographics. These citizens supported slowing the growth rate or, in several instances, stopping it. Some citizens felt population increases strain the infrastructure and the environment of James City County as well as endanger its rural character.

Participants were also asked to evaluate the County's support services for the growing elderly population. Response was split; while 47 percent agreed that enough was being done, 40 percent advocated more service. Suggestions included helping the elderly by way of transportation improvements, income supplements, more affordable housing opportunities, and a dedicated senior citizen center.



## Population Trend Summary & Implications

Over the past thirty years, James City County has experienced significant population growth in every demographic group. Proportionally, the over-65 group has experienced the greatest increases. The proportion of the population in the County over age 65 increased from 12 percent in 1990 to 17 percent in 2000. This trend, based on figures from the 2000 Census, compared unfavorably with the statewide trend (11 percent) as well as with other jurisdictions on the Peninsula (12 percent). This data does not yet take into account the fact that three large planned communities in the County are not yet fully constructed and feature restrictive covenants limiting residents to the age of 55 and above. James City County needs to recognize the special needs of the growing retiree population. Three additional trends have also emerged within James City County, especially in comparison to other jurisdictions in Hampton Roads; James City County citizens are becoming less racially diverse, wealthier and have a higher educational attainment. These growth trends are expected to continue in the future. Staff projects that, if growth rates hold at between 3 percent and 4 percent, James City County's population will grow to between 62,533 and 67,343 people by 2010.

James City County realizes how concerned citizens are about the current fast pace of population growth and the challenges presented by the changing demographics. These challenges are addressed in other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. The County will continue to track, maintain accurate data, and report to its citizens the changing demographic trends of James City County.

