

DEMOGRAPHICS

Introduction

James City County is first and foremost defined by its people. Without its population, James City County would simply be just another location on a map - no more than a mere geographic reference point.

Information about the people of the community is expressed collectively and is largely statistical. Population (a count of the people in a given region) and other subsets of demographics, such as age, race, and gender, are typically expressed in some type of numerical format. It is important to remember that these numbers are not just data. They represent real lives. Thus, it is essential to know what the numbers represent, and attempt to understand what they mean. Through the study of demographics, the statistical data that documents our historic past helps us to understand our people, and to plan for them a sustainable future.

Demographic Characteristics

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

Population and Growth

Over the past three-plus decades, James City County has experienced significant population growth. Since 1970, the County has seen an increase of more than 200% in its population, which translates to a population growth of over 1,100 persons per year. In January 2008, James City County was ranked as the eighth fastest growing locality in Virginia by the Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service. *Table DEM-1* documents the growth of James City County compared to the region and the state.

Table DEM-1: Summary of Population Changes: 1970-2006

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006	1980 to 2006 % Change
James City County	17,853	22,763	34,970	48,102	59,741	162.45%
Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News MSA	N/A*	1,171,400	1,396,107	1,551,351	1,621,216	38.40%
Virginia	4,648,494	5,346,818	6,187,358	7,078,515	7,642,884	42.94%

Source: US Census, Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service

(*Due to changes in the MSA)

Age, Race, Income, and Education

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% increase (7% growth rate) in the County’s over-65 population. By contrast, the state median age was 35.7 years and the Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Newport News Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) median age was 33.5 years. Between 1990 and 2006, citizens 65 years and older have increased from 12% to 19% of the County’s population while 25- to 44-year-olds have decreased from 33% to 23% of the population. Statistics from the 2000 Census 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. VEC projections suggest continued increases in the senior population over the next three decades, reaching 30% by 2030.

James City County has become less racially diverse over time. Whereas minorities accounted for 35% of the population in 1970, they constituted only 16% in 2006. Among the minority populations present in the County, African Americans, at roughly 13.8%, have the largest representation. Additionally, Hispanics are a growing minority group, totaling 2.4% of the population in 2006.

The County’s citizens have become more prosperous, especially over the last decade. Median household income increased from \$39,785 in 1990 to \$55,594 in 2000, surpassing both state and national median incomes levels. The median household income climbed a staggering 18.1% in five years to reach \$65,681 in 2005.

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 in part to the proximity of the College of William & Mary and the large number of professionals who choose to retire in James City County, and directly coincides with the median income and other indicators of wealth accumulation within the County.

Population Estimates and Projections

Population estimates and projections are derived from a range of sources including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Weldon-Cooper Center for Public Service, and the VEC. At the local level, the James City County Planning Division performs its own quarterly population estimates based on the change in the number of dwelling units.

Planning Division population projections utilize two simple mathematical curve-fitting models, both of which are based on historical quarterly population estimates. The first model is a straight-line **Linear Growth Model**, which projects population levels for future years using a linear trend line. The model holds the *number of new residents* added to the County each year constant in future years, which results in *lower* growth projections than those produced by the VEC. The second model is an **Exponential Growth Model**. This model works the same as the Linear Model, except that the *growth rate percentage* remains constant over time. This model produces a steep growth curve in later years and results in *higher* growth projections than those produced by the VEC.

Past growth spurts have, at times, pulled the County’s rate of growth to higher levels than those suggested by the Linear Model, yet the County has rarely demonstrated the kind of growth associated with the Exponential Model for more than one or two years at a time. To reconcile the differences between the two models, figures from both projections are averaged. This average represents the official projection of the County Planning Division, and translates to an average growth rate of 3% to 4% per year. VEC projections anticipate a slower rate of growth over the same period. VEC findings appear in *Table DEM-2* below.

Table DEM-2: James City County Population Projections

Population Projection Source	2000 Census	2010	2020	2030
Virginia Employment Commission:	48,102	65,890	82,781	100,294
Staff Linear Growth Model:	48,102	64,738	76,458	88,178
Average of Staff Growth Models:	48,102	65,717	84,772	109,048
Staff Exponential Growth Model:	48,102	66,696	93,086	129,918

Source: U.S. Census, Virginia Employment Commission, James City County Planning Division

Citizen Commentary

The County received a great deal of citizen input during the Comprehensive Plan revision effort. In the Virginia Tech Citizen Survey and Community Conversations, many citizens voiced concerns about the rate of population growth and the special challenges presented by James City County’s changing demographics. A number of citizens supported policies to curb the growth rate in the County. Other citizens felt that population increases are straining the infrastructure and the environment of James City County, as well as endangering its rural character. Some commentary focused especially on the needs of the youngest and oldest segments of the community. This feedback is explored in greater detail in Population Needs.

Population Trend Summary and Implications

Over the past 30 years, James City County has experienced significant population growth in every demographic group. Proportionally, the over-65 group has experienced the greatest increases (17%), and at a higher growth rate than other Peninsula localities (12%). Citizens of James City County are becoming less racially diverse, becoming wealthier, and are attaining a higher level of education than other Hampton Roads localities. Finally, staff projects that if growth rates stay between 3% and 4%, James City County’s population will grow to between 64,738 and 66,696 people by 2010.

James City County recognizes that many citizens are concerned with the challenges represented by the current growth patterns and changing demographic appearance of the County. Many of these challenges are addressed in later sections of the Comprehensive Plan. The County will continue to track, maintain accurate data about, and report to its citizens the demographic trends of James City County.