

Population & Demographics

Overview

The future of Brunswick will be shaped by current and future residents. Understanding who those residents are, and why they are here, is essential to comprehensive planning. Population and demographic trends affect all facets of the community, including housing, the economy, transportation patterns, and the capacity of the Town to continue providing services at current or acceptable levels. A sustainable, demographically diverse population (particularly in age make-up) is essential to support a community's long-term wellbeing.

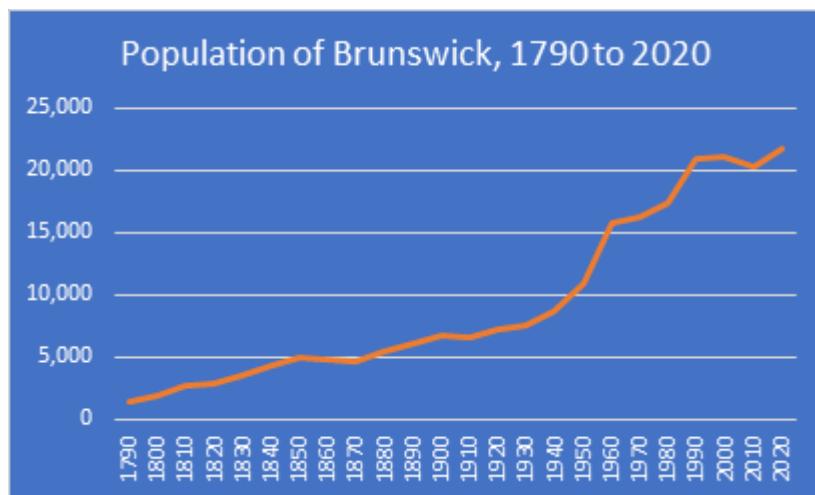
Maine is the oldest state in the nation. Over the period from 2009 to 2023, the population of Maine increased by 2.2%. However, the population of those in the "prime working age" (ages 25 to 54) decreased by an estimated 13.2% during this period, and the population of those 24 and under decreased by an estimated 17.1%. Impacts of these trends in Maine include a limited supply of labor and declining school enrollment, both of which are likely to have a significant effect on Maine's development over the next two decades.

The employment opportunities and school capacity available in the state will create pathways to success for some individuals and households. On the other hand, domestic in-migration continues to skew towards older households, meaning that much of the labor to support the aging population will necessarily come from international in-migration.

Historic Population Trends

The establishment of the Brunswick Naval Air Station sparked two decades of rapid population growth beginning in 1943. From 1940 to 1960, the population nearly doubled.

Population growth slowed down in the 1960s and 1970s but jumped again between 1980 and 1990 as "baby boomers" reached their peak-earning years.



Current Population & Demographics

In 2020, Brunswick's population reached 21,756 residents, an increase of 7.3% since 2010. Since that time, Brunswick's population has continued to grow; as of July 1, 2022, Brunswick's population was estimated at 21,831.

Population Growth 2010-2020 Census

	2010	2020	Percent Change
Town of Brunswick	20,278	21,756	7.3%
Cumberland County	281,674	303,069	7.6%
State of Maine	1,328,361	1,362,359	2.6%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Census; Maine State Economist			

Brunswick's growth exceeded the pace for the State of Maine but fell somewhat shy of the 7.6% growth rate for Cumberland County as a whole. It is notable that from 2010 to 2020, 62.9% of Maine's population growth occurred in Cumberland County. Growth in the entirety of Cumberland County, which includes Portland, will be a factor affecting the future development of Brunswick.¹

Brunswick Births and Deaths by Year 2011-2021			
Year	Births	Deaths	Net Change
2011	172	205	-33
2012	174	219	-45
2013	191	241	-50
2014	194	204	-10
2015	159	233	-74
2016	165	244	-79
2017	155	230	-75
2018	147	249	-102
2019	164	269	-105
2020	163	279	-116
2021	172	271	-99

Source: Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

Recent birth and death data shown on the table above indicate that the natural change in population is negative, implying that recent population growth is the result of domestic and international in-migration (since the death rate is outpacing the birth rate each year). Assuming recent trends continue, future population growth in Brunswick will also be driven by in-migration.

For the time being, it remains likely that a large portion of in-migrants will be older households without children. These trends are not unique to Brunswick. However, the combination of a somewhat higher cost of living than elsewhere in Maine and specific attributes that make Brunswick appealing to older in-migrants (proximity to Portland, quality healthcare providers, arts and cultural amenities connected to Bowdoin College) make it difficult for younger households to compete for a limited housing supply.

Geographical Mobility of Residents in the Past Year: Brunswick, Cumberland County, and Maine			
	Brunswick	Cumberland County	Maine
Same house 1 year ago:	84.03%	87.47%	87.45%
Moved within same county:	6.78%	6.70%	6.77%
Moved from different county within same state:	2.20%	2.14%	2.75%
Moved from different state:	6.20%	3.20%	2.75%
Moved from abroad:	0.79%	0.49%	0.28%

Source: U.S. Census ACS 5-yr data B07003

A notable difference between Brunswick and both Cumberland County and the State of Maine is that the population is more mobile. A lower percentage of Brunswick residents live in the same house than they did one year ago - 84.03% for Brunswick, compared to nearly 87.50% for both Cumberland County and Maine; conversely, a much higher percentage of Brunswick residents moved to Brunswick within the past year from another state - 6.20% of Brunswick residents, compared to 3.20% of Cumberland County residents and 2.75% of Maine residents.

Population by Sex, Race, and Ethnicity

Per the 2020 Census, the vast majority of Brunswick's (91.8%) population is white. Minority groups over all represent a small but slowly growing share of Brunswick's population: 3.2% are "Hispanic or Latino"; 2.0% are "Black alone"; and 1.7% are "Asian alone." **The population in** each of these groups has grown faster than the population of "white alone" over the past decade.

Brunswick is more diverse than the State of Maine, though it is less diverse than Cumberland County. The number of foreign-born individuals (individuals born in another country but living in Brunswick as of 2020) was 4.9%, which is greater than that of the state as a whole. The recent settling of a group of immigrants in Brunswick could be the start of a trend of more diverse and foreign-born residents in Brunswick.

As of 2020, females represent 51.4% of Brunswick's population. This is a significant shift since the peak of activity at the Brunswick Naval Air Station, when Brunswick's population was predominantly male.

Group Quarters Population

A group quarters facility houses multiple, unrelated people in a group living arrangement. Often, group quarters house an institutional or service-receiving population. Examples of group quarters include college or other dormitories, military barracks, nursing homes, mental hospitals, and prisons. One significance of the designation is that these individuals are excluded from certain calculations that focus on households - for example, household size or household income.

In Brunswick, characteristics of this population are important to understand due to both the former barracks at the Brunswick Naval Air Station as well as the prevalence of students living at Bowdoin College.

Brunswick's group quarters population has declined somewhat since 2010 due to the closure of the Naval Air Station. However, most of Bowdoin College's students continue to live in group quarters, while some additional group quarters residents live in retirement homes. The chart below shows the breakdown of where the Brunswick Census Designated Place (CDP) group quarters population lives.

Brunswick CDP Group Quarters Population	
Group Quarters Type	2020
Nursing facilities/skilled nurses	296
Other institutional facilities	48
College housing	1,667
Military quarters	48
Other noninstitutional	24

Source: 2020 U.S. Census; ESRI

Changes in the group-quarters population are difficult to predict because they depend largely on investment decisions made by private sector organizations. For example, Bowdoin has added new dormitories in Brunswick since 2010 and intends to retain more of its student population in on-campus dormitories. Further, given the demographics of Maine and the region described above, it is likely that the number of retirees living in group quarters will increase as the population ages.

Community Dependence on Seasonal Visitors

7.6% of Brunswick's population are students associated with Bowdoin College. The bulk of this student population is only in the community during the school year but tends to be replaced by visiting tourists, personnel visiting Bowdoin's international music festival or with the **Maine State Music Theatre, or seasonal residents during the summer months.**

Per data from the 2020 Census, there were 257 properties vacant for seasonal, recreational or occasional use in Brunswick. This is down somewhat from the 2010 Census, when the number was 295. Of these, 114 are entire home rentals listed on Airbnb or VRBO (per data obtained from AirDNA, a website providing data and analytics on short-term rentals in a community).²

Because of the nature of the large student population being replaced by seasonal visitors in the summer, Brunswick is not as dependent on the summer tourist season as other communities in **Maine.**

Households and Household Composition

According to the Families and Living Arrangements portion of the 2020 Census, the Town of Brunswick had 8,716 households, a decline of 184 households since the 2010 Census. Married couples represent 63.5% of Brunswick households; comparatively speaking, Brunswick households are more likely to be married couples than is true for Cumberland County (61.9%) or the State of Maine (60.9%).

Brunswick's average household size is slightly smaller than the State of Maine and Cumberland County. The average size of a Brunswick household is 2.29 persons per household (in 2020). Household size in Brunswick has declined over time. For example, the average size of a Brunswick household in 1960 was 3.30, and in 2000 the average household size was 2.34. Obviously, there was a steep decline in household size from 1960 to 2000, though the more recent trend is approximately stable.

This essentially mirrors broader trends in Cumberland County, the State of Maine, and the whole of the country. People today have fewer children than people in 1960, and it has become much more prevalent to live alone. In Maine, the smaller household size is likely made up of retirees (married couples or singles living alone).

Household size varies throughout Brunswick. Generally, households are larger in more rural areas of town and smaller in downtown sections of town (except for the area around Bowdoin College). Outside of the Bowdoin College area, the census blocks with the largest household size are the areas of Pennellville and Mere Point Road, neighborhoods in East Brunswick off of Old Bath Road, and areas in West Brunswick off of Durham Road.

Household Income

In 2022, the median household in Brunswick earned \$67,488. The median household income in Brunswick is consistently above the statewide median household income and below the countywide median household income.

Median Household Income	
Geography	Income
Town of Brunswick	\$67,488
Cumberland County	\$80,679
State of Maine	\$63,182
Source: U.S. Census 5-year ACS 2022	

Between 2010 and 2020, Brunswick's median household income increased at a nominal rate that was faster than the state but slower than Cumberland County.

Brunswick has more high-income families than Maine, but fewer than Cumberland County. More than 20% of households in the Brunswick CDP have household incomes of \$150,000 or more. Brunswick generally has fewer very low and middle-income families than other relevant geographies.

Household income levels vary across Brunswick with a high of \$94,000 in the census block directly south of Bowdoin College, which is primarily dominated by the Meadowbrook development. Downtown Brunswick has the lowest median household income - around \$35,000. Generally, the household incomes vary heterogeneously across the geography of the town.

Brunswick CDP, Distribution of 2023 Household Incomes	
Income Range	% of CDP Households
<\$15,000	8.5%

\$15,000 - \$24,999	4.8%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	7.1%
\$35,00 - \$49,999	13.6%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	19.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	13.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	13.4%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	9.2%
\$200,000 +	10.9%
Source: ESRI, US Census Bureau	

Educational Attainment

Among Brunswick residents ages 25 and older, 94.5% have at least a high school diploma and 50.9% have at least a bachelor's degree. Brunswick has more professional, doctorate, and master's degree holders than Cumberland County and the State of Maine. The greater proportion of highly educated individuals is likely due to the presence of Bowdoin College and many medical centers.

Service Center Implications

Brunswick is considered a primary service center to surrounding communities due to the level of retail sales, the jobs to workers ratio, the amount of federally assisted housing and the volume of service sector jobs in the community.³ Its designation as a service center allows Brunswick to be eligible for priority consideration in certain State capital investments under Maine's Growth Management Law ([30-A MRSA, Section 4349-A](#)).

However, the same data points that led to this designation also mean that the Town serves a daytime population that is far larger than its resident population. Thus, it would be prudent to also consider the needs of Brunswick's daytime population when developing zoning and other land-use related policies - e.g., policies that support or undermine the availability of long-term parking, child-care, and other needs associated with Brunswick's non-resident employment base.

Age Distribution

As often noted, Maine is the oldest state in the nation. Brunswick's population is only slightly younger than the state median age, and Brunswick's population has been aging consistently over the past fifty years. In 1970, the median age of the town was 24.3, increasing to 27.5 in 1980, 31.0 in 1990, 35.5 in 2000, and 44.3 in 2020. Brunswick's population is older than neighboring Bath (median age of 42.2) but is younger than Freeport (median age of 47.7) and Topsham (median age of 47.9). The median age of Brunswick residents is likely to continue to increase as "baby boomers" age, lifespans increase, and fertility rates decline.

Population by Age: Brunswick, Cumberland County, and Maine			
Age Range	Brunswick	Cumberland County	Maine
Under 5 years	5.8%	4.7%	4.4%
5 to 9 years	4.7%	4.7%	5.0%
10 to 14 years	4.0%	5.6%	5.3%
15 to 19 years	7.5%	5.4%	5.6%
20 to 24 years	9.7%	6.0%	5.7%
25 to 29 years	4.9%	6.3%	5.8%
30 to 34 years	4.7%	6.9%	6.3%
35 to 39 years	6.4%	8.1%	6.4%
40 to 44 years	4.3%	5.8%	5.8%
45 to 49 years	7.3%	5.8%	5.8%
50 to 54 years	5.8%	6.8%	6.7%
55 to 59 years	7.0%	7.0%	7.5%
60 to 64 years	7.1%	7.4%	8.1%
65 to 69 years	6.2%	6.6%	7.1%
70 to 74 years	5.2%	5.4%	6.3%
75 to 79 years	2.9%	3.7%	3.8%
80 to 84 years	3.7%	2.1%	2.3%
85 years+	2.9%	1.8%	2.1%

Population by Age: Brunswick, Cumberland County, and Maine			
Age Range	Brunswick	Cumberland County	Maine
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 5-yr ACS			

As the table above illustrates, the age distribution in Brunswick differs both from Cumberland County and from the State of Maine. Among the differences, Brunswick has a larger population under the age of 5, much larger population cohorts ages 15 to 24 and age 80 and above; at the same time, residents between the ages of 25 and 44 make up a smaller portion of Brunswick's population than is the case in either Cumberland County or Maine.

The percentage of the population under 18 years old is 17.9%. Since 2000, the population of individuals under the age of 18 has decreased by about 1,500 people. The percentage of the population under the age of 18 has declined from 23% in 2000 to 19.4% in 2010 to 17.9% in 2020. The shrinking population under 18 is reflected in lower enrollments in Brunswick Public Schools.

According to the Maine Department of Education, enrollment in Brunswick's public schools has declined somewhat, from 2,399 in 2014 to 2,363 in 2023. Notable is that enrollment at Brunswick High School is down significantly - 14.9% over the period from 2014 to 2023 - while enrollment at other grade levels is modestly positive. To some degree this may be a product of higher private school enrollment at the high school grade levels. According to 5-year American Community Survey data released in 2020, private school enrollment in grades 9 to 12 in the preceding 5-year period was 145, compared to only 51 in grades 5 to 8 for the same geography. It is also the case that students from neighboring Durham no longer attend Brunswick High School.

Future Population and Demographic Trends

Broadly speaking, the local trends described in the table above are part of a much larger demographic problem in Cumberland County and the State of Maine - a working age population that is too small to support the growing population of older residents. For Cumberland County, from 2009 to 2023 the "prime working age population" (ages 25-54) declined by 6.1%, while the population ages 65 and older increased by 80.7%. Those trends are expected to continue - the Maine State Economist projects that the prime working age population in Cumberland County will decline by an additional 3.7% from 2023 to 2038, while the population 65+ will increase by an additional 33.9% over the next 15 years. Put differently, the region's demographic and economic future will be characterized by fewer workers to support the area's consumers.

Factors potentially influencing this projection include the number of new housing units built (and a general lack of affordable or moderately priced housing that would attract young families), the average number of people in each housing unit, the size of the group quarters population (described further above), and Brunswick's relatively high cost of living compared to surrounding communities. That said, domestic migration patterns have changed since 2018, largely due to the pandemic and significant increases in the prevalence of remote work and perceptions of declining quality of life in larger urban areas - these considerations may favor more stability in Brunswick's population than is reflected in the projections.

Projected Percentage Change from Previous Period, Population	
Period	Percentage
2023 to 2028	-2.4%
2028 to 2033	-2.8%
2033 to 2038	-3.4%
Source: Maine State Economist	

The projection that Brunswick's population will decline highlights a stark difference between the Town of Brunswick and the rest of Cumberland County and the State, which has experienced population growth since 2010 and is expected to continue growing. Of course, it may be that Brunswick will continue to experience development pressures and growth, as has been the case over the last few years, due to factors beyond Brunswick's control (including the housing and growth policies of nearby jurisdictions).

From 2010 to 2020, Maine's population increased by 2.6%, while Cumberland County's population increased by 7.6%. The Brunswick NECTA experienced a 6% decline in population over the period.⁴ Other neighboring towns to experience declines in population include Bath (-5%) and Topsham (-1.5%). Harpswell's population remained stable. Meanwhile, neighboring Durham (+4%) and Freeport (+7.5%) experienced growth.

The population of Brunswick has also shifted since 2010, with a general trend towards a loss of population downtown and growth near Bowdoin College and on Brunswick Landing and in more rural sections of town. Unsurprisingly, the rural/outlying areas have seen modest increases in population. Specific growth areas include Brunswick Landing, the Mere Point and Pennellville neighborhoods, Thornton Oaks Retirement Community, and the Arrowhead Road neighborhood.

Impact on Housing

One of the most noticeable impacts of shifting demographics is the scarcity of workers across many industries, including the service sector and healthcare.

Shifting demographics are also changing the kind of housing that is needed in the community. A declining household size and a growing senior population will require smaller housing units closer to municipal and social services. At the same time though, there is a need to attract younger workers to the community who will be able to fill out the workforce as the aging population retires. The unique housing needs of each of these demographics is explored further in the Housing section of this Plan.