**Fayette Demographic Profile**

Demographics, or statistics of a particular place, like Fayette, are incredibly valuable and greatly affect how and why decisions are made. Demographic data have the ability to affect and impact nearly every decision made on the municipal level. For example, how much taxes a town needs to generate is impacted by factors like senior citizen services provided, the size of the school system, waste management services provided to the residents, and how many recreational amenities are to be provided. The amount of services the town needs to provide for senior citizens can be assumed using demographic data, just as the total school system size will be affected by total family households in the area. With this in mind, it is time to examine Fayette’s demographic data.

**Historical Population Trends**

**Table 1: Population change: 1890 to 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Population |  | Year | Population |
| 1890 | 649 |  | 1960 | 328 |
| 1900 | 560 |  | 1970 | 447 |
| 1910 | 533 |  | 1980 | 812 |
| 1920 | 523 |  | 1990 | 855 |
| 1930 | 396 |  | 2000 | 1,040 |
| 1940 | 438 |  | 2010 | 1,140 |
| 1950 | 397 |  | 2017 | 1,044 |

**Figure 1: Population Change in Fayette**

The population data used to generate the above table and figure were provided by the US Census and the American Community Survey. The Census and the ACS measure more than simply population. Other elements of the census are used in subsequent sections on housing and the local economy. Table 2 reports a breakdown of population characteristics over the past three Census reports and 2017’s ACS data.

This table is more than just numbers. It has real planning implications for our community. For instance, it illustrates that both the average age of the residents and the total number of households are increasing. The number of single-person households is also increasing at a healthy rate. Other than in urban areas or college towns, single person households tend to be elderly households. That is the case in Fayette as approximately one-third of Fayette’s single person households are elderly households. Elderly households can have unique requirements and demand a whole different set of public services than younger residents. It also highlights the fact that while the 2017 population is roughly equivalent to 2000’s population, there are more households, demonstrating the shrinking average household size. Since 1990, Fayette went from 2.78 persons per household to 2.45 and the number of single-person households increased by nearly 50%. This is a national trend, reflecting social changes like smaller families, lower birth rates, and elderly and independent living. This decrease in household size has real implications in Fayette, because even as the population gains slow, more houses will still be needed to meet the needs of the smaller household size.

These figures gain importance when we project the population and housing demand for the future. If the average household size continues to decrease, Fayette will need to build more houses to accommodate the demand.

**Table 2: Population and Household Characteristics: 1980-2010**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **General Population Characteristics** | **1990** | **2000** | **2010** | **2017** |
| Total Population | 855 | 1,040 | 1,140 | 1,044 |
| Male Population | 444 | 523 | 560 | 534 |
| Female Population | 411 | 517 | 580 | 510 |
| Median Age | 36.6 | 40.5 | 48 | 51.1 |
| Total Households | 308 | 417 | 491 | 426 |
| Family Households | 240 | 297 | 330 | 345 |
| Married Couple Family Households | 212 | 258 | 281 | 302 |
| Nonfamily Households | 68 | 120 | 161 | 81 |
| Nonfamily Households Living Alone | 45 | 88 | 123 | 61 |
| Single-Person Household 65 years + | 21 | 26 | 44 | 23 |
| Average Household Size | 2.78 | 2.49 | 2.32 | 2.45 |

*Source: 1990, 2000, 2010 Census, 2017 ACS*

**Components of Population Change**

Between 2001 and 2017, the town’s population saw an increase through 2010 and then decreased back to its 2000 level for a flat overall population change. Population change in a community is a result of both natural change and migration. Natural change is the difference between deaths and births in the community over a period of time. Migration accounts for people moving in and moving out. Net migration is population change not explained by births and deaths.

Between 2000 and 2017 the natural change in Fayette accounted for a decrease in 10 persons, based on Maine’s Department of Health and Human Services reports of vital statistics. That means that net migration accounted for just a handful of persons. Negative natural population change is alarming by itself. However, when negative natural population change is combined with slow net migration, then population loss becomes a real problem.

As said, the natural change in Fayette from 2001 to 2017 was a decrease in 10 persons. However, when looking at Figure 2, it becomes clear that from 2010 and on, the death rate has begun to really outpace the birth rate. In fact, from 2010 to 2017, the natural population change in Fayette was a decrease in 35 persons.

**Figure 2: Natural Population Change in Fayette**

*Source: Maine DHHS*

Will the ratio of natural change and net migration continue? Considering the aging of the population, a trend toward smaller families and increasing housing values, it seems that deaths will continue to outpace births, resulting in a continuing decline in natural change.

Availability of land, ease of access to Augusta, access to water and other outdoor recreation, and other factors will continue to make Fayette an attractive place to live. In other words, Fayette could attract population growth. We cannot impact the rate of natural change with town policy; we can, however, affect the rate of migration – managing land use, economic development, and public service policies.

The table below shows age trends – which age groups are gaining, which are losing. Since the overall population increased by 22.1 percent, any age group gaining more than 22.1 percent is increasing; those gaining less are shrinking.

**Table 3: Age Trends 1990 to 2017**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1990** | **2000** | **2010** | **2017** | **% Change 1990-2017** |
| Population | 855 | 1,040 | 1,140 | 1,044 | 22.1% |
| Median Age | 36.6 | 40.5 | 48 | 51.1 | 39.6% |
| Under 5 years old | 41 | 58 | 47 | 32 | -22.0% |
| 5 - 17 years old | 174 | 196 | 161 | 129 | -25.9% |
| 18 years and older | 640 | 786 | 932 | 883 | 38.0% |
| 18 - 24 years old | 64 | 51 | 55 | 72 | 12.5% |
| 25 - 44 years old | 293 | 310 | 241 | 169 | -42.3% |
| 45 - 54 years old | 117 | 193 | 253 | 225 | 92.3% |
| 55 - 59 years old | 37 | 67 | 112 | 125 | 237.8% |
| 60 - 64 years old | 41 | 50 | 98 | 93 | 126.8% |
| 65 years and older | 88 | 115 | 173 | 199 | 126.1% |

*Source:1990, 2000, 2010 Census, 2017 ACS*

Some important population changes and trends:

* The median age increase is dramatic. This aging trend is statewide and Maine is the oldest state in the nation. It will take a statewide effort to slow this trend.
* The number of children (under 18 years old) has decreased by roughly a quarter. This has already led to lower school enrollments.
* The “family-age adults” age bracket (18 to 44) age category is decreasing. Without those adults of child-bearing age, the population of children will continue to decline.
* The “mature adult” age bracket (45 to 64) has more than doubled since 1990. This is a clear indication that the baby boom are no longer babies. The post-war glut of children are now entering their 60’s. As this group was the one that put enormous strain on the school system in the 60’s and 70’s, and on the housing market in the 80’s and 90’s, they are about to put the same strain on senior housing and health care services.
* The 65 and older age has also more than doubled since 1990. The real impact will begin in this coming decade as more and more seniors compete for services that suit their needs like housing and medical services. This will have serious short-term implications for housing, health care, transportation, recreation, and other services.

**Seasonal Population:**

Due to its location in the central Maine lakes region, seasonal residences have always been a makeup of the town.

According to the 2000 Census, of the 690 total housing units in town, 254 were for season, recreational, or occasional use. In other words, 36.8% of all housing units in Fayette were vacation homes or camps.

In 2010, 284 housing units were listed as seasonal, recreational, or occasional use homes. Total homes in Fayette also saw an increase as there were 813 total housing units according to the 2010 Census. Of all housing units, vacation homes made up 34.9% in 2010, fairly similar to 2000’s 36.8%.

The 2017 ACS estimates that of the 781 total housing units, 282 are used for vacation purposes, or 36.1%. This is right in line with the share for both 2000 and 2010.

Assumptions can be made using these numbers to accommodate for seasonal population fluctuations. If we were to assume during the height of the summer that 75% of all vacation homes were occupied with an average family size of 3 persons, then Fayette would experience a seasonal population bump of 634 persons, a greater than 50% town population increase. Say, however, we assume that peak vacation season draws 90% occupancy of the town’s camps and that the average size of the vacationing families is still three. Fayette would experience a population bump of 761 people.

Additionally, Echo Lake’s private summer camps, Winnebago and Vega, attract hundreds of campers and staff each summer to Fayette.

All told, Fayette potentially experiences a doubling of its population in the height of the summer. This seasonal bump, while expected and easily planned for, still has a drastic effect on the makeup of town.

**Regional Perspective**

Fayette has, historically, developed in much the same pattern as the rest of rural Kennebec County. Most of the towns of the region were agriculturally dependent in the 1800’s and experienced a decline as westward expansion and urbanization took hold during the late-19th-early 20th centuries. Just as the region experienced its greatest growth during the 70’s and 80’s, Fayette saw its greatest population boom from the 60’s through the 80’s as seen in Figure 1.

Between 1960 and 1980, Fayette’s population grew from 328 to 812 persons, or 147.6%. Similarly, Vienna, to the north of Fayette, saw a 183.8% population growth during the same time period as their population exploded from 160 to 454. Neighboring Mount Vernon, Chesterville, and Readfield also saw significant growth during this same period. Mount Vernon’s 71.3% increase from 596 to 1,021 and Chesterville’s 72.1% growth from 505 to 869 was just eclipsed by Readfield’s 88.8% growth from 1,029 to 1,943. No regional town saw population loss during this twenty year period. Both Augusta (0.6% growth) and Livermore Falls (6.9% growth) had the weakest growth, regionally speaking.

Conversely, the period following the 1960 to 1980 boom saw slowing growth in Fayette. From 1990 to 2010, Fayette grew 33.3% from 812 to 1,140. It was eclipsed, again, by Vienna which saw 36.7% growth from 417 to 570. It was also outpaced by Chesterville, which experienced 33.6% growth, from 1,012 persons in 1990 to 1,352 persons in 2010. Regionally speaking, most towns saw growth rates during this period in the 20 to 30 percent range. However both Augusta and Livermore falls saw significant population loss. Livermore Falls’ population shrunk from 3,455 persons in 1990 to 3,187 persons in 2010, or -7.8%. Augusta, meanwhile, suffered double-digit population loss of -10.3% as it dropped from 21,325 persons in 1990 to 19,136 persons in 2010.

Contrary to historical population trends in the region, there has been a movement, nationally speaking, of urban renewal as younger Americans move and settle in cities. It can be assumed that Fayette’s population growth of the past 50 years has come to an end.

**Population Projections and Impacts**

How much, if at all, can Fayette be expected to grow in the future? Population projections provide the short and easy answer. These are mathematical extrapolations of past population growth and factors such as age distribution and household size.

Maine’s Office of the State Economist frequently publishes population projections. The Office projects that Fayette’s population will be 1,148 in the year 2036. This is approximately 1% growth from the Office’s observed population of 1,137 persons in 2011. While 1% growth may seem low, Fayette is actually in a better situation than its neighbors. Only Mount Vernon is expected to outpace Fayette’s growth during the next twenty years. Most of the region is expected to see significant population loss through 2036.

The Kennebec Valley Council of Governments also computes population projections. KVCOG estimates that Fayette’s population in 2030 will be between 1,320 and 1,286 persons, with a best projection of 1,300 persons. KVCOG uses past trends to make population projections.

It is worth noting that one projection, KVCOG’s, indicates substantial growth, while the State believes that growth will be fairly flat. It is impossible to predict the future and both projections rely on past trends and other factors. It is impossible to dictate exactly how Fayette is to grow in the future, but as a town, we have the ability to attempt to manage growth. Changes to allowable land use, new housing developments, the attraction of local businesses can all have an impact in the future of Fayette.

For example, housing development is an important tool to predict the future. It can also be used to shape the future. Local policies can affect the rate of housing growth through their influence on the cost of development or land use restrictions. Fayette could encourage large-scale housing developments with large, family-sized homes. The construction of these developments, in theory, would attract large families that value comfortable space with easy commutes to Augusta.

It is worth considering that both population growth and new housing developments increase the demand and use of public services. Furthermore, unless specifically designed for senior citizens, each new household must have one or more regional jobs to support it. Younger, larger households will generate school children, creating demand on the school system. Nearly all households require added waste management and road maintenance costs. All of these factors must be taken into account when projecting population growth.

While some towns can use municipal policies to impact population change, it requires a need and consensus to take strong action, which Fayette may or may not have. It is important, however, that the community pay attention to annual changes in housing development and other local and regional indicators to assess and plan for their future. The town should continue to monitor the rate of new construction and the type of homes that are being built, and should continue to discuss the implications and address them through policy changes.