

Section XIII

Population

History

Population trends in the Town of Sunapee have historically been linked to economic, social, and cultural events in the region and the nation. Certain periods, such as the depression of the 1930's, saw slow population growth rates on a national scale, but other periods, such as the Westward exodus of the 1840's and 50's, were mainly regional phenomena.

In the early years of Sunapee (known first as Saville and later Wendell), the population survived for the most part on farming. Sunapee lost much of its valuable farmland due to annexations to what is now known as Goshen and to New London in the late 1790's and early 1800's. What was a rapidly growing population in the early part of the nineteenth century turned to negative population growth in the middle part of the century. As the Midwest and West opened up to new settlers, many residents of the Northeast who relied on farming elected to follow the promise of the fertile Midwestern lands rather than trying to make a living in "The Granite State".

The industrial revolution brought new promise to Sunapee. The need for power to support new industries was more than met by the hydropower potential of the Sugar River. Small mills and other factories sprang up along the river. After the Civil War and through the early part of the 1900s, the population stabilized and began increasing again with the promise of manufacturing jobs.

During this time period another industry began to blossom in Sunapee - recreation and tourism. The railroads and steamboats brought in many visitors from the metropolitan areas of Boston and New York. The influx of these seasonal residents had a major impact on the development in the Town, but little impact on the overall population.

With the exception of the economic boom of the 1920s, the period from 1910 to 1960 was marked by either very slow or even negative population growth in Sunapee. Permanent job opportunities were limited during this period and the two World Wars had a draining influence on Sunapee's population.

The boom in both transportation and communication over the last forty years has once again increased the rate of population growth. The unprecedented 67% growth during the 1970s was largely tied to the completion of the interstate highway system in the northeast and northern New England's improved access to the populated areas to the south. The continued growth in recent years can be attributed to the increasing number of baby boomers choosing to retire to Sunapee and the many workers who are able to tele-commute with the rise of the internet and cellular phone service.

Age Distribution

The graph below shows the distribution of Sunapee's population by age group. The table readily shows the impact of the "baby boom" in the 45-65 year old age group with that group being by far the largest, using roughly 20-year increments. The median age of 41.7 years is an increase over the last 30 years and is exactly ten years greater than the 1970 figure of 31.7 years.

**Graph XIII-1
Population Distribution by Age Group (2000)**

>insert Phil Porter Graph<

Source: 2000 U.S. Census

Population Trends

The table below shows the changes in population in Sunapee from the first official census in 1790 to the most recent available census in 2000. One can see the rather stagnant growth from the middle of the 19th century until the latter part of the 20th century. The rates of growth in the last 40 years have been unmatched since the early 1800s.

**Table XIII-1
Population of Sunapee (1790 – 2000)**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>%change</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>%change</u>
1790	267	----	1900	946	5.1
1800	355	36.9	1910	1,071	13.2
1810	447	25.9	1920	898	- 16.2
1820	603	34.9	1930	1,040	15.8
1830	637	5.6	1940	1,071	3.0
1840	795	24.8	1950	1,108	3.5
1850	787	- 1.0	1960	1,164	5.0
1860	788	0.1	1970	1,384	18.9
1870	808	3.9	1980	2,312	67.1
1880	895	10.8	1990	2,559	9.7
1890	900	0.6	2000	3,055	19.4

Source: 2000 US Census

Natural Increase and Migration

Natural increase in population is defined as the excess of resident births over deaths. Migration is the influx of people moving in and out of town.

As Table XIII-2 shows there was a natural increase of 36 persons in Sunapee in the last 15 years. This compares with an in-migration of approximately 614 persons. This in-migration accounted for 94% of Sunapee's growth during the selected period, which is consistent with past trends.

The impact of transient population must also be treated seriously in future land use planning. Although certain needs, such as schools, may rely on the full-time population figure (i.e. approximately 3,300 persons), other needs, such as emergency services, highways, utilities, recreation, etc., should look at a maximum population figure of nearly 6,000 residents during the height of the summer season.

**Table XIII-2
Natural Increase vs. Migration (1990 – 2008)**

Year	Births	Deaths	Increase	Population
1993	23	19	+4	2650 (est.)
1994	20	18	+2	
1995	21	17	+4	
1996	26	18	+8	
1997	18	17	+1	
1998	23	18	+5	
1999	25	25	0	
2000	15	18	-3	
2001	25	25	0	
2002	18	20	-2	3055 (actual)
2003	22	15	+7	
2004	35	25	+10	
2005	19	15	+4	
2006	15	14	+1	3300 (est.)
2007	21	27	-6	
2008	21	20	+1	
Total Population Growth 1993 – 2008:				+ 650
Total Natural Increase				+ 36
Total In-migration				+ 614
In-Migration as % of Growth				94%

Commentary on School & Overall Population Growth

The population trend graphs XIII-2 and XIII-3 on the following pages show the projected populations of Sunapee's school and full-time population, respectively.

The upward trend in full-time population growth is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, reaching the milestone of 4,000 full-time persons by 2020, an average annual population growth of roughly 1.5% over the last 50 years. The seasonal population will also continue to grow and may, by some estimates, be at 10,000 by the year 2035.

The school population has seen upward and downward trends in the last 20 years. A brief “baby echo” in the 1990s sent school population rapidly upward. This has been followed by an equally rapid downward spiral, with over 20% of the population lost in the last 8 years. When enrollments are reviewed, it is likely that the trend line will continue downward for at least the next several years.

Recommendations

1. Update Population Section after release of 2010 census data.

This section should be updated shortly after the 2010 census is released to provide updated data for any future planning initiatives.