

Chapter B: Population & Demographics

1. Purpose

Population is a foundational data set guiding all aspects of a comprehensive plan. The understanding of the town's past, current and future population trends support many other aspects of the plan, such as housing, land-use and transportation. This information will help the town prepare for future municipal expenditures and investments. This chapter:

- a) describes Gouldsboro's population trends since 2005;
- b) describes how these recent trends relate to and contrast with Hancock County and the State;
- c) presents alternative future population scenarios.

2. Key Findings & Issues

In 2021, Gouldsboro's median age stood at 58 years old, higher than Hancock County's median age. Gouldsboro's median income (\$53,935) was lower than that of the Hancock County average of \$60,354. The school age and workforce age population of Gouldsboro has decreased in proportion to the total population. Gouldsboro's population had been on the rise with a population of 2,084 in 1998, dipped down to 1,737 in 2010 and has since been steadily on the decline down to 1,703 in 2020 before a slight increase in 2021 to 1,743. School enrollment at the Peninsula Elementary School enrollment in 2013 was at 201 students and has seen a steady decline down to 142 students in 2021, which could be a result of home-schooled students during COVID. Sumner Memorial High School enrolled 235 students in 2013 and increased to 259 in 2021.

Construction of the new Charles M. Sumner Learning Campus, which encompasses middle school (6-8) and high school 9-12) is near completion and students were allowed to access the building several weeks into the 2022/2023 school year with enrollment at 180 for middle school students and 279 for high school students. This move expectedly dropped enrollment at the elementary school level, even with introduction of Pre-K classes at each of the four elementary schools.

Gouldsboro continues to be an aging community.

3. Key Findings & Issues from the 2005 Plan

The town had lost year-round population during the 1990's with household populations increasing by about 9%. The number of school aged children had decreased by about 29%, however there was a 58% increase in those aged 45 to 64. Gouldsboro's population is aging and has been attracting retirees and pre-retirees.

4. 2022 Public Opinion Survey Results

- Survey results are based on 14.15% of the community responding (241). Survey results showed that 81.33% of respondents were year-round residents with 18.67% being seasonal. Other results as follows:

Table B-1: Public Opinion Survey Results Age/Employment Status/Future Plans

Age Bracket	26-40	41-55	56-70	70+
	5.39%	10.37%	17.76%	44.81%
Employment Status	Self employed	Retired	Employed	Unemployed
	20.92%	59.41%	15.90%	1.26%
Future moves based over 1-5 years	Become a year round resident	Move out of town	Sell a vacant lot	Purchase land in Gouldsboro
	6.33%	2.95%	3.38%	2.95%

source: Gouldsboro 2022 Public Survey

Utilizing combined data from survey results, public input through interviews, open sessions and facebook questions, residents think maintaining the rural character of Gouldsboro is extremely important but also want to find ways to bring young families into the area as Gouldsboro continues to be an aging community. The working waterfront community is vital to the town. In addition, residents believe there is a need for maintaining current business while allowing growth of new businesses that align with the small-town character which may prove difficult due to the current housing shortage.

95.83 percent of residents believe maintaining the rural character of Gouldsboro is important.

5. Historical Trends:

Table B-2

Population Trends, 1960-2020						
	Gouldsboro	% change	Hancock County	% change	Maine	% change
1960	1,100		32,293		969,265	
1970	1,310	19.1	34,590	7.1	993,722	2.5
1980	1,574	20.2	41,781	20.8	1,125,043	13.2
1990	1,986	26.2	46,948	12.4	1,227,928	9.1
2000	1,941	-2.3	51,791	10.3	1,274,923	3.8
2010	1,737	-10.5	54,418	5.1	1,328,361	4.2
2020	1,703	-2.0	55,478	1.9	1,36,2359	2.6

Source: U.S. Census 2020

Age Characteristics:

As seen in Table B-3, the population of all age groups decreased except those in the 45-64 and 65 and over age categories between 1990 and 2010. There was a 42.3 percent increase in those aged 45 to 64. Overall, the median age in town increased from 34.7 in 1990 and 42.7 in 2000 to 52.0 according to 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. Gouldsboro’s median age is higher than Hancock County's median age, which has increased from 35.8 in 1990 and 40.7 in 2000 to 48.8 years of age, and higher than that of the State of Maine, 44.7 years old (2019 ACS estimate).

The data indicates that Gouldsboro’s population is becoming older; the only age groups that have experienced growth in recent decades are those over 45 years of age. Large changes have been seen in young adults (61.7% decrease) and the oldest (71.9% increase) age groups. It is likely that this trend (which is generally mirrored in both Hancock County and the State of Maine, although less dramatically) will continue into the near future, given the decline in the age groups representing children and young families.

Table B-3

Change in Age Breakdown, Year-Round Population Gouldsboro: 1990-2010

Age Group	1990 Number	1990 Percent	2000 Number	2000 Percent	2010 Number	2010 Percent	2018 Number	2018 Percent	Change '90-'18	Percent Change '90-'18
0-4	101	5%	88	5%	87	5%	69	4%	-32	-31.7%
5-19*	305	15%	218	11%	247	14%	258	16%	-47	-15.4%
20-44	947	48%	743	38%	391	23%	362	22%	-585	-61.7%
45-64	352	18%	556	29%	610	35%	472	29%	120	34.1%
65 & over	281	14%	336	17%	402	23%	483	29%	202	71.9%
Total	1986	100%	1941	100%	1737	100%	1644	100%	-342	-17.2%

* NOTE: Data for 1990 are for ages 5-17, data for 2000 are for ages 5-19

SOURCE: U.S. Census (1990, 2000, 2010); ACS Estimates (2018)

In 2019, the average number of persons per household in Gouldsboro was 2.27 compared to 2.25 in 2010 and 2.31 in 2000. During this same period, average household sizes in Hancock County ranged from 2.31 in 2000 and 2.20 in 2010 to 2.24 in 2019. The population data summarized in Table B-2, suggests that these enlarging households may not necessarily

represent growth of small families. Other plausible explanations could include adult children returning to the homes of aging parents, possibly as caregivers, or personal finances tied to the recession in the late 2000s. Time will tell whether this increase in household size reflected in the last ten years will continue. Overall, smaller household sizes are significant since it means that more homes will be needed to serve the same number of people.

Educational Attainment:

In 2000, 88.6 percent of Gouldsboro residents aged 25 and older had a high school education and 22.3 percent had a bachelor's degree. By 2019, 88.9 percent had a high school degree and 28.6 percent had a bachelor’s degree. While this represents an increase, especially in secondary education, Gouldsboro still lags behind Hancock County as a whole in educational attainment (94.1% high school graduates and 34.1% with bachelor’s degrees in 2019).

Projected Population:

There is no reliable way to project population for a small town such as Gouldsboro, as it does not seem to follow the larger regional trends projected for Hancock County. The State Economist’s Office has developed year-round population projections for all towns in the state through 2038 in 5-year intervals but may need to be revisited now for rural areas now that the 2020 Census is completed.

At the time of writing rural Maine’s population appears to be increasing dramatically due to the influx of residents either fleeing denser population areas due to the COVID-19 pandemic, civil unrest, and/or climate impacts in other regions of the United States such as severe drought, wildfires and seasonal storms. National projections forecast a continued migration towards rural places like Maine for the coming years. Gouldsboro’s population has a potential to increase beyond the latest projections as more people seek out areas of lower population density, provided they are able to work remotely or seek a retirement community.. Access to broadband/fiber internet could become an important determinant for many rural towns’ populations.

The year round population by age figures for Hancock County, Winter Harbor and Gouldsboro are shown on Table B-4. As seen, Gouldsboro and the region as a whole are expected to decline in population in the coming years. These estimates represent a 3 percent decrease in Gouldsboro’s population between 2020 and 2038 which is not inconsistent with the trend identified in census data from recent decades (refer to Table B-2).

Table B-4				
Projected Population through 2038 ¹				
	2023	2028	2033	2038
Winter Harbor	511	506	499	490

Table B-4Projected Population through 2038¹

Gouldsboro	1,738	1,718	1,689	1,651
Hancock County	54,852	54,613	54,081	53,255

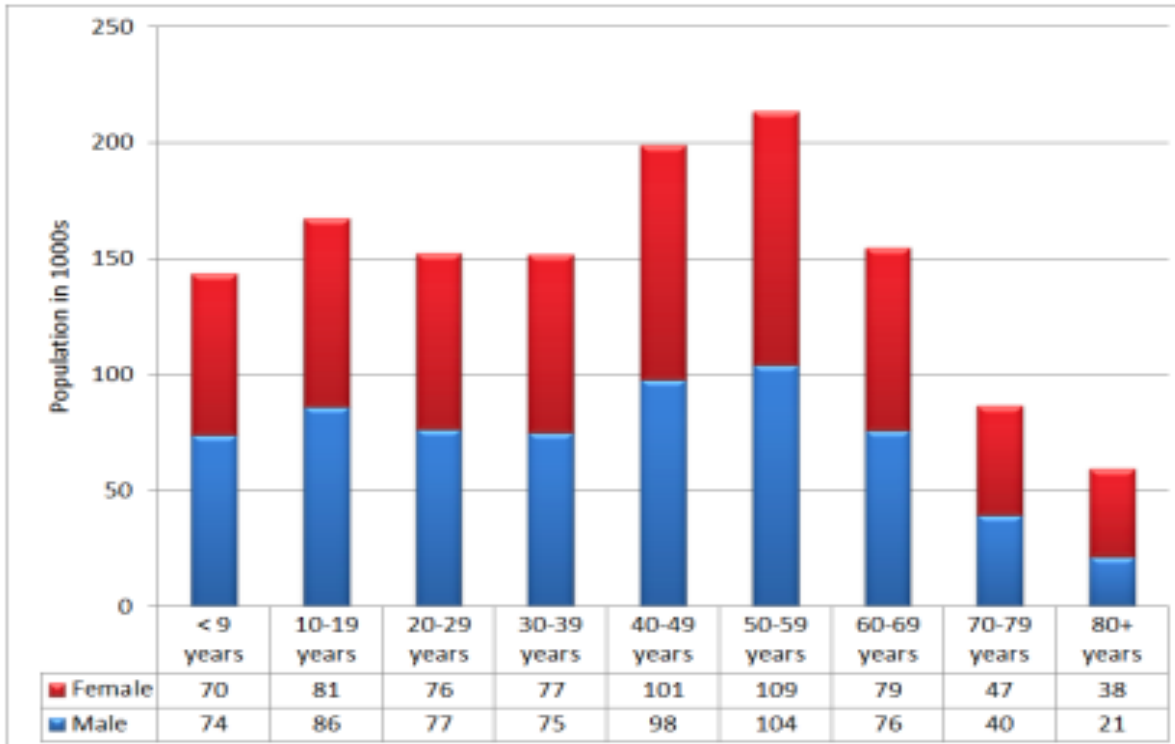
¹ NOTE: refer to text for discussion of limitations of data and alternate projections
SOURCE: U.S. Census

These projections, however, show a decline for Gouldsboro and Winter Harbor. If the towns undertake a comprehensive economic diversification program, they could grow at a much faster rate but lack of housing and an aging population may most likely be the cause of the projected declining population.

While there is always some guesswork in population projections, there are a number of likely trends that Gouldsboro will face over the next ten years:

- a. its population will continue to age, which will make sustaining the local schools more difficult due to declining enrollment and higher per pupil costs;
- b. decreasing household sizes will mean that new homes will be built at a faster rate of increase than that of the year-round population;
- c. the pending retirement of the "baby boom" generation could result in more retirees seeking homes in places such as Gouldsboro even if the local economy offers few jobs; and
- d. the Town will remain popular as a place for second homes as well as seasonal homes and Airbnb's
- e. population may continue to decrease as there is no economic reason for young adults to

Table B-5: Age Distribution for the State of Maine



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

Table B-6: Educational Attainment: Gouldsboro, Region, County & State (>25 years old)

Degree Type	Gouldsboro	Winter Harbor	Ellsworth	Maine
High School Diploma	48.2%	36.8%	28.3%	33.6%
Some College or Associate Degree	18.7%	25.1%	32.3%	29.2%
Bachelor Degree or higher	26.1%	27.5%	34.7%	34%

Source: Towncharts/Maine.edu

Other Information:

Other Data -Gouldsboro	
Population / 2020	1,703

Other Data -Gouldsboro			
Employment Rate	47.3%		
Total Households	765		
Older Population by age	65-74 =22.9%	75-84=6.5%	85 and over -8.7%
Median Household Income	\$53,935		
Total Housing Units	1,426		
Median Gross Rent	\$725		

Source: 2020 Decennial Census

According to 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Gouldsboro’s median income of \$53,935 is lower than that of Hancock County at \$60,354 while the poverty rate for Gouldsboro is at 16.0% which is much higher than Hancock County’s 10.3%. The population density for Gouldsboro is 38 people per square mile, which has increased from 37.6 according to the 2010 census. Gouldsboro is the 186th most populated town in the state of Maine out of 524.

Seasonal Population:

There has been an observed increase over the last several years in the Town’s seasonal population due to the growth of local Airbnb’s, campgrounds and private rentals. As there are currently no regulations of these properties it is difficult to obtain further data and identify specific trends. There has been some concern from residents regarding this growing trend and Gouldsboro may want to have discussions on this in the future.

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6. Goals & Objectives

Goal: Gouldsboro will strive to maintain its rural character in the course of population

and growth that is both gradual and includes increased diversity among peoples and ages.

Objective	Strategy	Responsible Party(ies)	Timeframe
Ensure residents can remain in town for as long as possible, well into their senior years.	Support age-in-place policies and investments that provide for facilities and services to support this need.	Select Board and/or designee(s)	Ongoing
Promote Gouldsboro as a place to live and actively seek out new residents and young families.	Work with local tourism and development agencies to reach a broad audience.	Select Board and/or designee(s)	Ongoing
Maintain an annual understanding of population changes in Gouldsboro.	Regularly review ACS and Census data, along with local sources of data to monitor population fluctuations	Select Board, Planning Board, HCPC	Ongoing
Support Broadband/Fiber Internet Access throughout Gouldsboro to retain residents and attract new/younger residents.	Work cooperatively with state agencies and other towns in the region to secure better internet	Peninsula Broadband Committee, Select Board	Immediate – Ongoing
Promote childcare and early childcare education opportunities.	Work with BES, local businesses, nonprofits and community partners to explore childcare opportunities for residents with young children.	Select Board and/or designee(s), School Representatives	Immediate – Ongoing