

Changes in Regional Population & Household Characteristics: 1980-2000

Median age rising, household sizes falling in the WILMAPCO Region.....

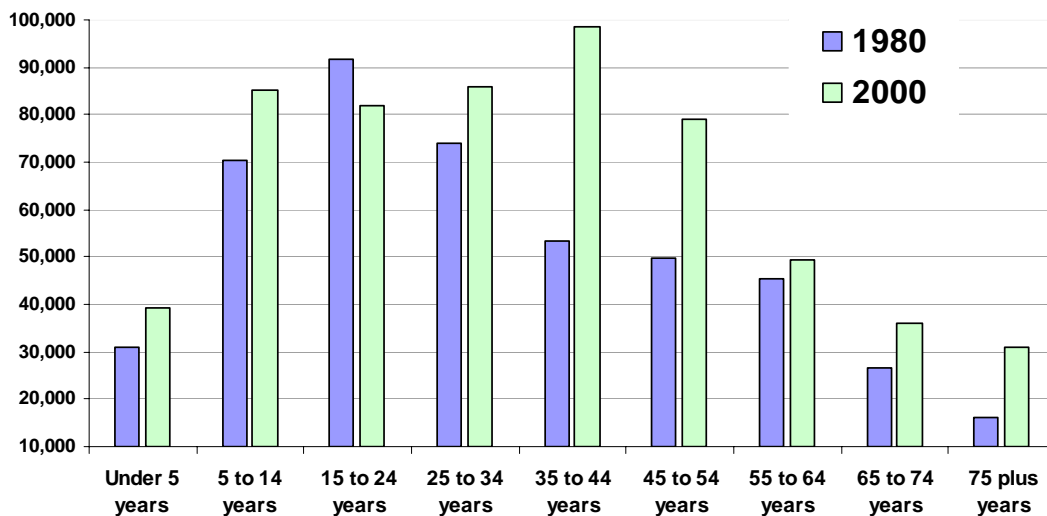
Over the past few decades we have seen a change in what one would consider the typical American household. Not immune to these national trends, WILMAPCO is experiencing changes in its housing and population characteristics. Macro-scale population events ranging from the Post-World War II “Baby Boom” (those born between 1946 and 1964) to the ‘Baby Bust” (those born between 1965 and 1976) drive what our local population looks like now and what will face us in the future.

In terms of housing size decreases, there has been considerable analysis on the causes of this drop off. Some of the causes of the falling household sizes include¹:

- Increase in single parent households
- Declining fertility rates (decreasing roughly 40% over past 50 years)
- Increased number of single-person households
- Increase in “empty nester” households as the population of our older suburbs ages

The question is what impact will it have on our region? This data report edition deals with the changes in household and population characteristics in the WILMAPCO region. Beginning with age distribution, Figure 1 illustrates the age distribution of the population for the entire WILMAPCO region.

Figure 1: Age Distribution for the WILMAPCO Region: 1980 & 2000



Source: U.S. Census

Some observations include:

- Although the total population has increased by 21% since 1980, the 15-24 age bracket has decreased while all others grew over the past 20 years.
- The age bracket with the largest percentage increase is persons over the age of 75, growing by 47.5% since 1980.
- The 35-44 and 45-54 age brackets have seen the largest absolute change since 1980. These two age brackets capture virtually all of the boom-age population, which were between the ages of 36 and 54 in 2000.

¹David Ames, *Projected Population Growth and the New Arithmetic of Development in Delaware 1990-2020, 1999*

County-wide Population Characteristics New Castle County

Changes in several Population and Household characteristic in New Castle County since 1980 are shown in Table 1. Overall, New Castle County has seen household growth outpacing population growth over the period. With the continued decrease in household size, housing demand will likely continue to rise at a greater rate than population growth.

Some other observations for New Castle County include:

- The younger population (aged 18 and under) has decreased in share, losing 2.5% since 1980.
- The share of population age 65 and over grew by 2.2% since 1980.
- Households occupied by a single person have increased by 64.3%, growing from 29,555 in 1980 to over 48,500 in 2000.
- Household size has steadily fallen from 2.79 persons per household to 2.56 persons per household. (Note: this includes only those persons living in households.)

Table 1: Population Characteristics—New Castle County: 1980-2000

New Castle	1980	1990	2000	Percentage Change	
				1980-2000 Change	1980-2000
Population	398,115	441,946	500,265	102,150	25.7%
Population In Households*	387,562	427,879	482,751	95,189	24.6%
Persons per Household	2.79	2.61	2.56	-0.23	-8.2%
Population Under age 18	109,350	106,079	124,750	15,400	14.1%
% Population Under age 18	27.5%	24.0%	24.9%		-2.5%
Population age 18 - 64	251,325	285,535	317,612	66,287	26.4%
% Population Age 18 - 64	63.1%	64.6%	63.5%		0.4%
Population age 65 and Over	37,440	50,332	57,903	20,463	54.7%
% Population age 65 and Over	9.4%	11.4%	11.6%		2.2%
Median Population Age	29.7	32.5	35.0	5.3	17.8%
Occupied Household	138,944	164,161	188,935	49,991	36.0%
Single Person Households	29,555	39,322	48,563	19,008	64.3%
% of Single Person Households	21.3%	24.0%	25.7%		4.4%

* Excludes population living in group quarters, prisons and hospitals

Source: U.S. Census Summary File 1

Cecil County

Cecil County has closely followed New Castle County in terms of overall trends since 1980. Table 2 illustrates the county-wide changes in population and household characteristics since 1980 for Cecil County. One notable difference between the two counties is in the 19-64 age range, where Cecil County increased its share by 2.6 percent while New Castle was virtually stagnant in growth, growing by only 0.4 percent.

Some observations for Cecil County include:

- The 18 and under population has decreased in share since, losing 3.9% of its share.
- The population age 65 and over grew 62%, increasing from 5,553 in 1980 to 8,995 in 2000.
- Households occupied by a single person nearly doubled, growing from 3,135 in 1980 to 6,225 in 2000.
- Households size has fallen from 3.01 persons per household to 2.71 persons per household, a decrease of 10 percent.

Table 2: Population Characteristics—Cecil County: 1980-2000

Cecil County	1980	1990	2000	Percentage Change	
				1980-2000 Change	1980-2000
Population	60,430	71,347	85,951	25,521	42.2%
Population In Households*	58,382	69,483	84,770	26,388	45.2%
Persons per Household	3.01	2.81	2.71	-0.30	-10.0%
Population Under age 18	19,093	19,508	23,789	4,696	24.6%
% Population Under age 18	31.6%	27.3%	27.7%		-3.9%
Population age 18 - 64	35,784	44,474	53,167	17,383	48.6%
% Population Age 18 - 64	59.2%	62.3%	61.9%		2.6%
Population age 65 and Over	5,553	7,365	8,995	3,442	62.0%
% Population age 65 and Over	9.2%	10.3%	10.5%		1.3%
Median Population Age	29.6	32.6	35.5	5.9	19.9%
Occupied Household	19,364	24,725	31,223	11,859	61.2%
Single Person Households	3,135	4,423	6,225	3,090	98.6%
% of Single Person Households	16.2%	17.9%	19.9%		3.7%

* Excludes population living in group quarters, prisons and hospitals

Source: U.S. Census Summary File 1

Median Age Changes by Planning District

Looking more closely at changes in the age of our population, Table 3 and Figure 2 break down the changes in median age by planning district for New Castle County. The image to the left of Table 3 illustrates the Planning District boundaries. Planning districts are defined as statistically equivalent sub-county divisions that are delineated by the U.S. Census, State and Local governments.

New Castle Planning Districts

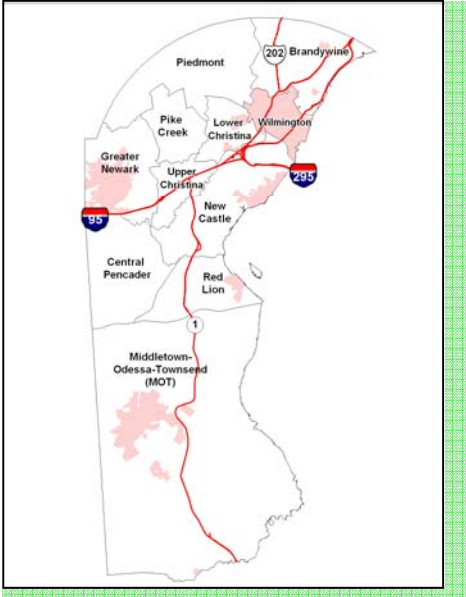


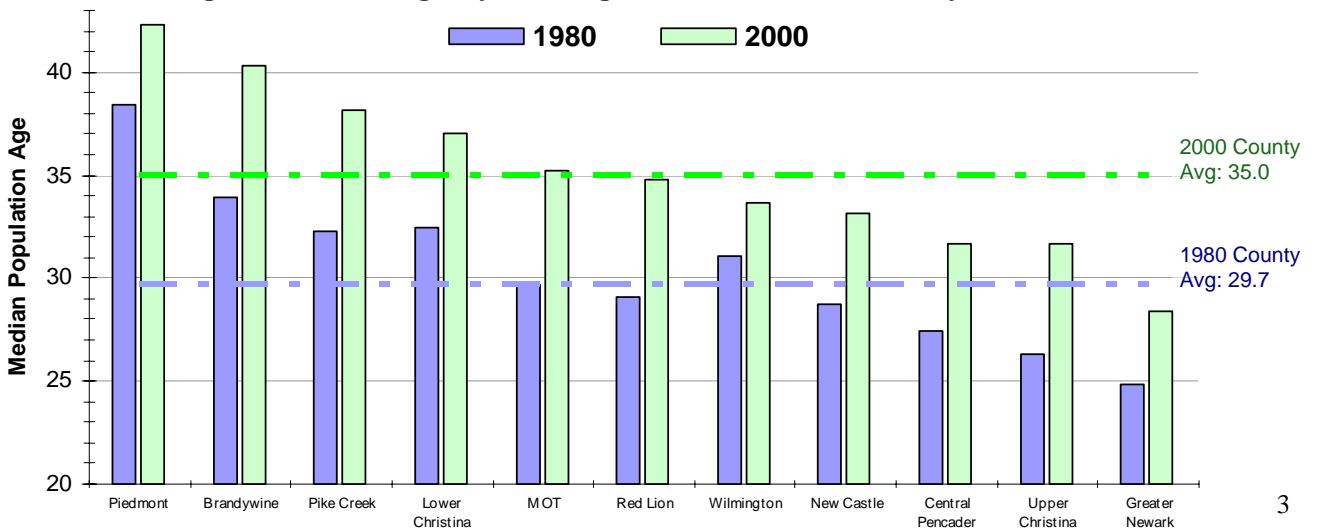
Table 3: Median Age by Planning District-New Castle 1980-2000

CCD	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980-2000	Percentage Change 1980-2000
Piedmont	38.4	39.0	42.3	3.9	10.2%
Brandywine	33.9	36.5	40.3	6.4	18.8%
Pike Creek	32.3	34.2	38.2	5.9	18.2%
Lower Christina	32.5	33.5	37.0	4.5	13.9%
MOT	29.7	31.9	35.2	5.5	18.5%
Red Lion	29.1	33.7	34.8	5.7	19.7%
Wilmington	31.1	32.6	33.7	2.6	8.4%
New Castle	28.7	30.5	33.1	4.4	15.3%
Upper Christina	26.3	29.3	31.7	5.4	20.7%
Central Pencader	27.4	29.2	31.7	4.3	15.6%
Greater Newark	24.8	27.5	28.4	3.6	14.3%
TOTALS	29.7	32.5	35.0	5.3	17.8%

In general, the areas with the oldest median age are to the north and west of Wilmington. These areas represent the more established “first generation” suburbs from the earlier part of the 1900’s. Some other observations include:

- The Upper Christina, Red Lion, and Brandywine planning districts have seen the highest median age increases since 1980. The Brandywine planning district aged most with the median age increasing by 6.4 years from 33.9 in 1980 to 40.3 in 2000.
- Piedmont and Brandywine are the two oldest districts, both having a population with the median age over the age of 40 as of 2000.
- The City of Wilmington saw the smallest change in New Castle County. The median age in Wilmington increased by only 8.4% over the period.
- Greater Newark represents the youngest area in median age. This is most likely due to its large college-age population weighing on this average.

Figure 2: Median Age by Planning District-New Castle County 1980-2000



Median Age Changes by Planning District (cont.)

Cecil County has followed roughly the same pattern as New Castle County in terms of overall rate of change. Cecil Countians aged at a slightly faster rate than New Castle County's residents, beginning in 1980 with a lower median age but ending in 2000 with a higher median age. Table 4 and Figure 3 show the changes that have taken place in Cecil County between 1980 and 2000.

Cecil County Planning Districts

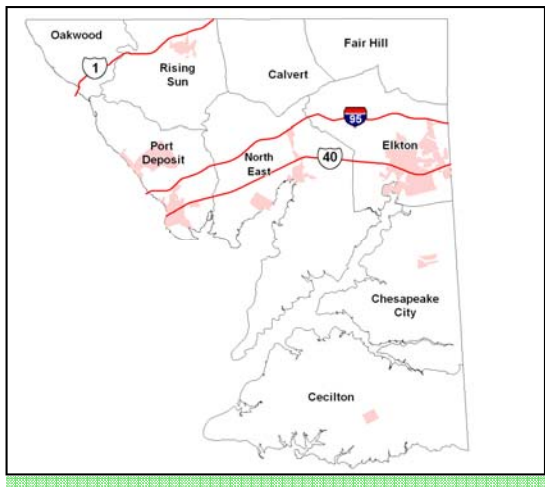


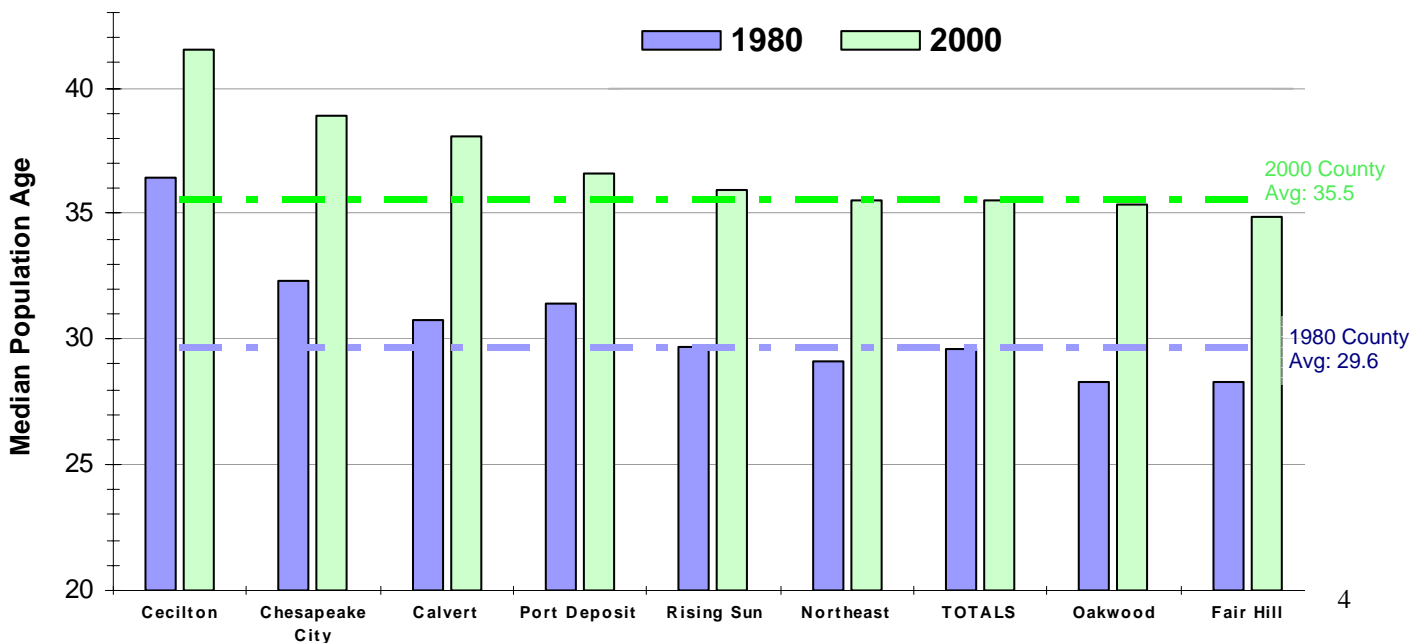
Table 4: Median Age by Planning District-Cecil County 1980-2000

CCD	1980	1990	2000	Change	Percentage
				1980-2000	Change
Cecilton	36.4	36.7	41.5	5.1	14.0%
Chesapeake City	32.3	35.2	38.9	6.6	20.4%
Calvert	30.8	32.9	38.1	7.3	23.7%
Port Deposit	31.4	32.9	36.6	5.2	16.6%
Rising Sun	29.7	32.2	35.9	6.2	20.9%
Northeast	29.1	31.5	35.5	6.4	22.0%
Oakwood	28.3	31.0	35.4	7.1	25.1%
Fair Hill	28.3	32.8	34.9	6.6	23.3%
Elktion	29.1	30.9	32.5	3.4	11.8%
TOTALS	29.6	32.6	35.5	5.9	19.9%

Some observations:

- The Oakwood District saw the highest change in terms of percentage with a 25% growth in median age while the Calvert district had the largest absolute change (7.3 years) in all of Cecil County.
- Cecilton grew to a median age of 41.5 years, which makes it the district with the highest median age as well as the only district with a median age over the age of 40 in Cecil County.
- The district of Elktion is the youngest district in Cecil County, having a median age of 32.5 years. It also had the smallest change since 1980, growing by only 3.4 years on average.

Figure 3: Median Age by Planning District-Cecil County 1980-2000



65 and Over Population

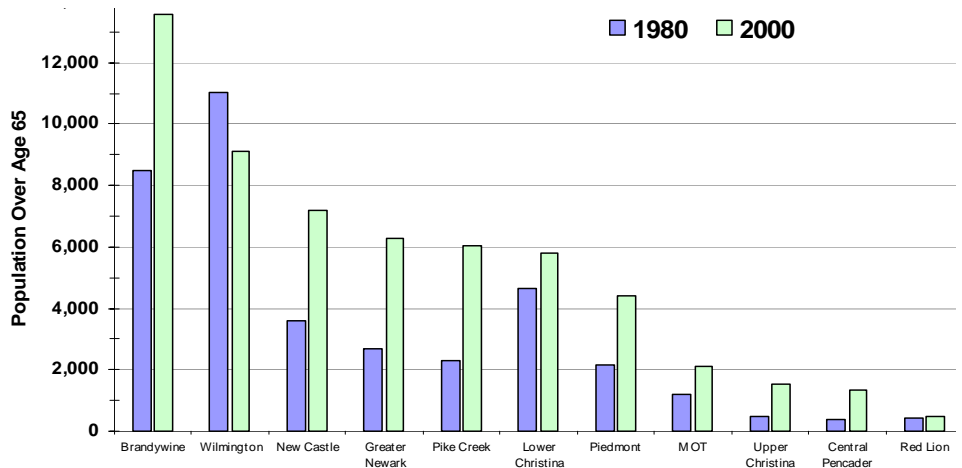
As a result of the previously discussed “baby boom” generation, planning for an increasing elderly population in the WILMAPCO Region will be crucial. While this generation will not yet begin to reach retirement age until 2011, we are seeing increases in the 65 and over population in 2000. Figures 4 and 5 show the breakdown by planning district of the changes in population over age 65 between 1980 and 2000. The region added 23,905 persons over age 65 since 1980. All but one of the planning districts in both counties has seen an increase in population since 1980.

New Castle County

Some other observations for New Castle County include:

- Brandywine contains the greatest number of residents over the age of 65, with 13,586 in 2000. This represents 17.3% of the total district population, which is also the largest percentage in the county.
- Wilmington has the second highest population of residents over the age of 65 as of 2000. It also experienced the only decrease in population of residents over the age of 65 of any district.
- The districts of Brandywine, Wilmington and New Castle comprise nearly 52 percent of the elderly population in the county in 2000. This is actually down from 1980 when they had about 62 percent of the population.

Figure 4 : Population over Age 65 by Planning District- New Castle County 1980-2000

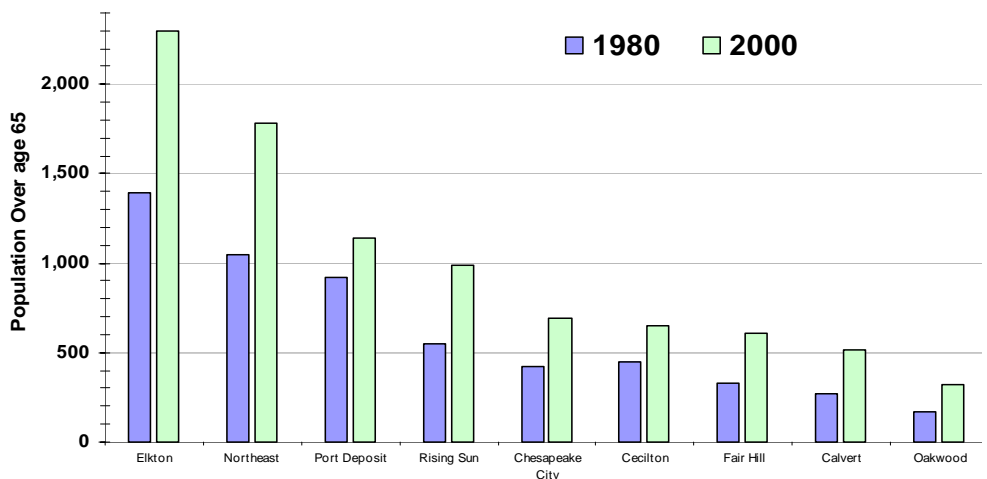


Cecil County

Some other observations for Cecil County include:

- The Elkton district, although having the lowest median population age in 2000, has the largest elderly population of any region in the county.
- The Elkton, Northeast and Port Deposit districts comprise about 58% of the elderly population in 2000, down slightly from 60 % in 1980.
- The Calvert and Oakwood districts grew the largest percentage-wise, with both nearly doubling since 1980. However, they represent a fairly small portion (9.3%) of the countywide totals in 2000.

Figure 5: Population over Age 65 by Planning District- Cecil County 1980-2000



Household Size Changes by Planning District

Household size, which is the average number of persons per household, takes the entire population living in households divided by the total occupied housing units. Excluded from this total is the population that reside in “non-household” group quarters, such as prisons, dormitories and hospitals. Table 5 and Figure 6 show the household size changes by planning district for New Castle County since 1980. In general, the average change has been about a 1/4 of a person loss per household since 1980. Similar to median age, the larger decreases have taken place in the northern area of the county and south into New Castle.

New Castle Planning Districts

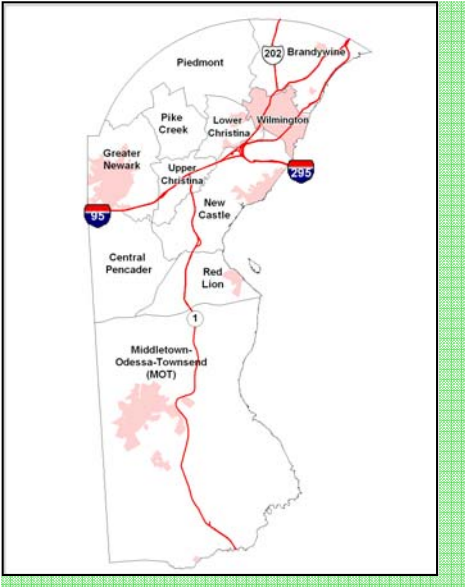


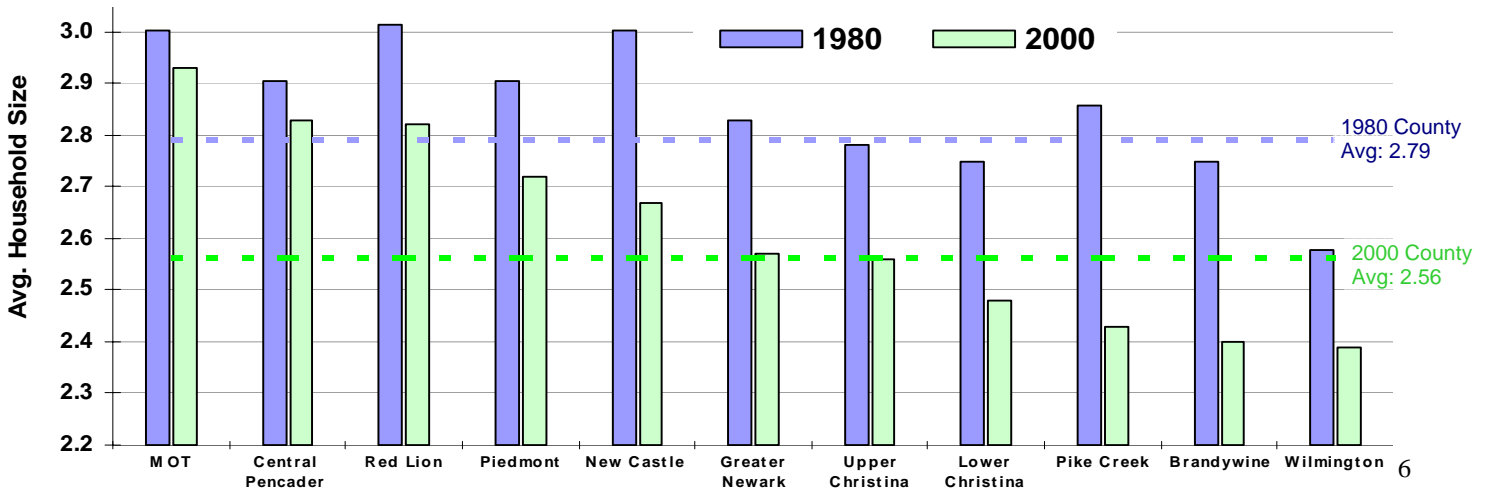
Table 5: Household Sizes by Planning District-New Castle 1980-2000

CCD	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980-2000	Percentage Change 1980-2000
Pike Creek	2.86	2.53	2.43	-0.43	-15.0%
Brandywine	2.75	2.52	2.40	-0.35	-12.7%
New Castle	3.00	2.74	2.67	-0.33	-11.0%
Lower Christina	2.75	2.52	2.48	-0.27	-9.7%
Greater Newark	2.83	2.64	2.57	-0.26	-9.2%
Upper Christina	2.78	2.67	2.56	-0.22	-7.9%
Red Lion	3.01	2.83	2.82	-0.19	-6.4%
Wilmington	2.58	2.44	2.39	-0.19	-7.3%
Piedmont	2.91	2.84	2.72	-0.19	-6.4%
Central Pencader	2.91	2.87	2.83	-0.08	-2.6%
MOT	3.00	2.87	2.93	-0.07	-2.5%
TOTALS	2.79	2.61	2.56	-0.23	-8.2%

Some observations for New Castle County include:

- The Pike Creek and Brandywine planning districts experienced the largest drop in household size. As noted earlier, these two areas also had very high median ages as well as having a high percentage of single person households. This may suggest some areas that are experiencing “empty nesting” as grown children leave the household.
- MOT, while having an overall decrease since 1980, has actually increased in household size since 1990. It is also home to the highest average household size, containing an average of 2.93 persons per household.
- Wilmington remains as the district with the lowest household size throughout the 20 year period. It had a household size of 2.39 persons per household in 2000, down from 2.58 in 1980. Wilmington did however have one of the smallest decreases in household sizes since 1980.

Figure 6: Household Size Changes by Planning District-New Castle 1980-2000



Household Size Changes by Planning District (cont.)

Table 6 and Figure 7 below show the household size changes by planning district for Cecil County since 1980. In general, Cecil County has a slightly higher household size than New Castle County. However, it experienced a slightly larger decrease than New Castle County over the time period, falling by 10 percent in Cecil County versus 8.2 percent in New Castle County.

Cecil County Planning Districts

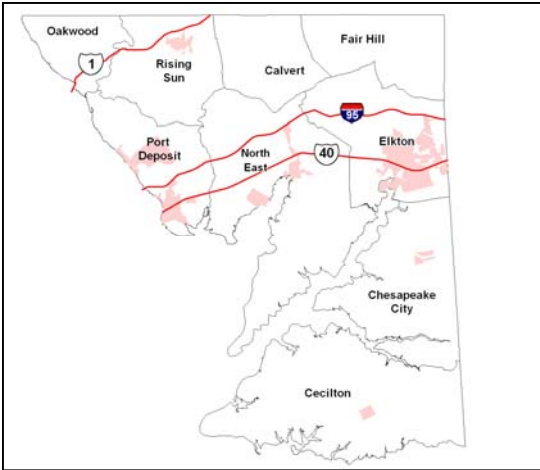


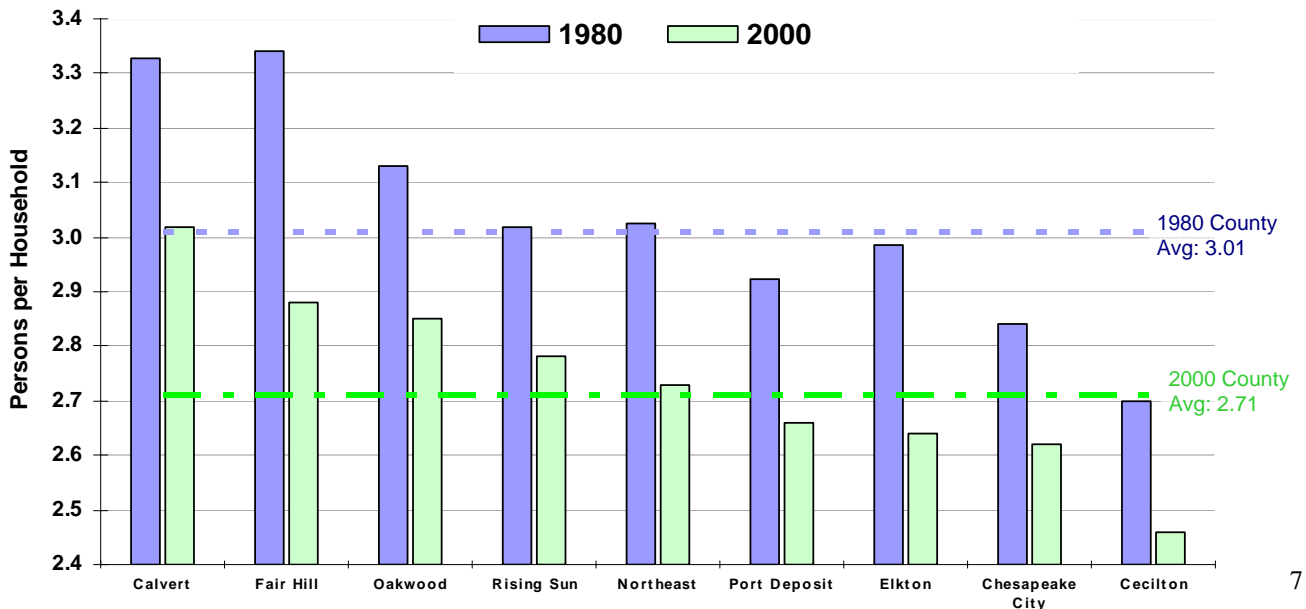
Table 6: Household Size by Planning District-Cecil County 1980-

CCD	1980	1990	2000	Change 1980-2000	Percentage Change 1980-2000
Fair Hill	3.34	3.09	2.88	-0.46	-13.8%
Elkton	2.99	2.76	2.64	-0.35	-11.6%
Calvert	3.33	3.12	3.02	-0.31	-9.2%
Northeast	3.03	2.81	2.73	-0.30	-9.8%
Oakwood	3.13	3.00	2.85	-0.28	-8.9%
Port Deposit	2.92	2.74	2.66	-0.26	-9.0%
Cecilton	2.70	2.52	2.46	-0.24	-8.9%
Rising Sun	3.02	2.80	2.78	-0.24	-7.9%
Chesapeake City	2.84	2.69	2.62	-0.22	-7.8%
TOTALS	3.01	2.81	2.71	-0.30	-10.0%

Some observations for Cecil County include:

- Elkton and Fair Hill witnessed the largest reduction in household size since 1980. In contrast to New Castle County, these two areas represent two of the youngest areas in terms of age as opposed to New Castle County, where the largest age drop occurred within the older districts.
- The Calvert district remains the only district in the entire WILMAPCO region with an average household size over more than 3 persons. In 2000 it averaged 3.02 persons per household. In 1980, Cecil County had 5 of its 9 districts with households averaging more than 3 persons per household.
- Cecilton continued as the district with the lowest household size, averaging 2.46 persons per household. It has been the lowest out of all districts since 1980.

Figure 7: Household Size Changes by Planning District-New Castle 1980-2000



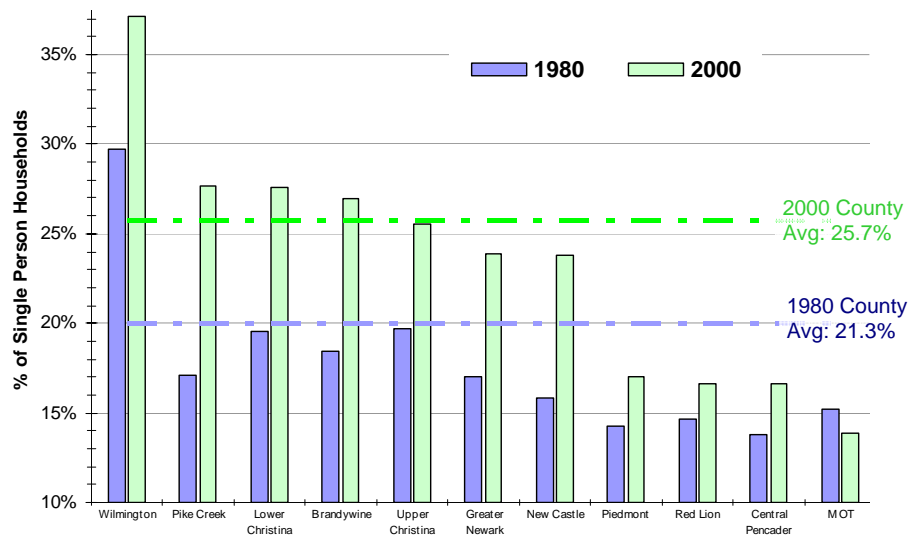
Single Person Households

Changes in single person households can signal several possible trends within a region. From young graduates living on their own for the first time to a single elderly person outliving their spouse, the rise in single person households is noteworthy from a planner's perspective. Regionally, single-person households have grown from 32,690 households (20.8%) to 54,688 (24.8%) in the WILMAPCO region between 1980 and 2000. Figures 8 and 9 show the changes in single person households in New Castle and Cecil Counties since 1980.

New Castle County

- 37.1% of all households in Wilmington are 1-person households.
- MOT was the only district to see a decrease in its share of 1-person households, falling from 15.2% to under 13.9% of total households.
- Wilmington, Pike Creek, Lower Christina and Brandywine all have at least one quarter of their housing comprised of 1-person households. In 1980, only Wilmington was above this threshold.
- In terms of absolute totals, the Wilmington, New Castle and Brandywine districts hold 54.6% of the 1-person households in the county.

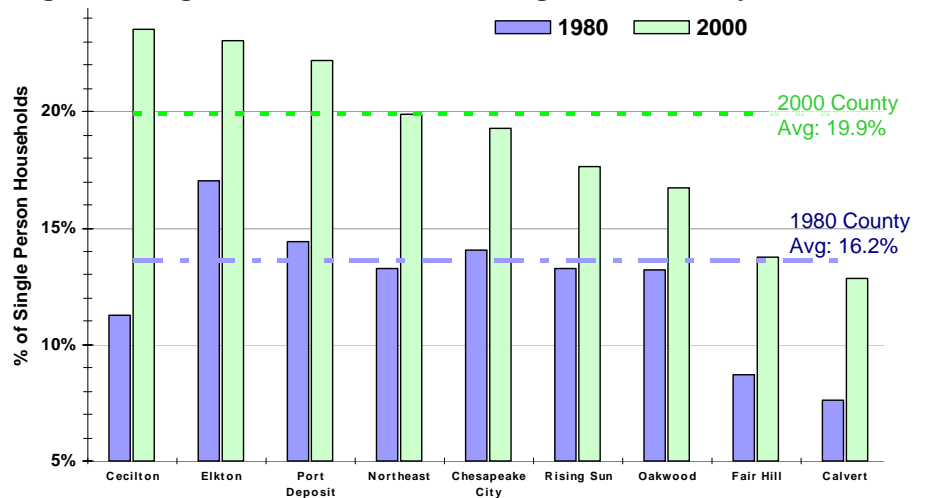
Figure 8: Single Person Household Changes- New Castle County 1980-2000



Cecil County

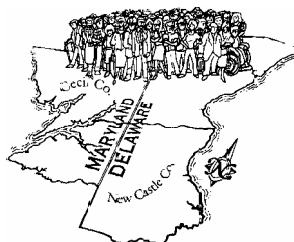
- Cecilton, Elkton and Port Deposit have the 3 highest percentages of 1-person households. Each contain more than 20% 1-person households.
- The districts of Elkton, Northeast and Port Deposit contain a total of 4,111 1-person households. This represents 66% of the entire county and is up from 65% in 1980.

Figure 9: Single Person Household Changes-Cecil County 1980-2000



The Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO) is a Metropolitan Planning Organization serving New Castle County, DE and Cecil County, MD. Our mission is to serve the citizens and stakeholders of the region by carrying out a comprehensive, continuing and cooperative regional transportation planning process consistent with federal transportation legislation. This series of data reports is designed to summarize various data and information about our region to allow decision makers and members of the public to better understand the changes within our region. This document was created by the WILMAPCO Demographics and Data Subcommittee. For more information on this and other data reports, please visit our website at <http://www.wilmapco.org/data/index.htm>

Other WILMAPCO Data Reports:
 Report #1: Regional Population Changes:
 1980-2000, September 2004



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