



Population & Demographics

The composition and growth trends of York's population are key considerations in planning the town's future. York's aging population, along with shifts in other demographic factors have implications for Town infrastructure and services, as well as demand for particular housing types and decisions regarding future land use policies.

This topic includes...

- Population characteristics
- Recent and future population trends
- What the community said
- Key takeaways

Current Population and Demographic Trends

York's population can be viewed as three groupings, each of which has different impacts on the town:

- **"Year-round" population** represents people who identify York as their primary place of residence and generally live in York in both the summer and winter. Year-round residents generally live in year-round housing units.
- **"Seasonal" population**, specifically **"total seasonal population,"** represents both year-round population and also people who live in York for some part of the year but don't identify York as their primary place of residence. The seasonal population generally lives in homes, apartments, and condominiums that are defined as housing units by the U.S. Census.
- **"Peak summer" population** includes year-round population, seasonal population, and also those who visit in the peak summer months for shorter visits. Peak summer population is generally staying in hotels or other places not defined by the U.S. Census as housing units, though some may stay in short-term rentals or other housing units.

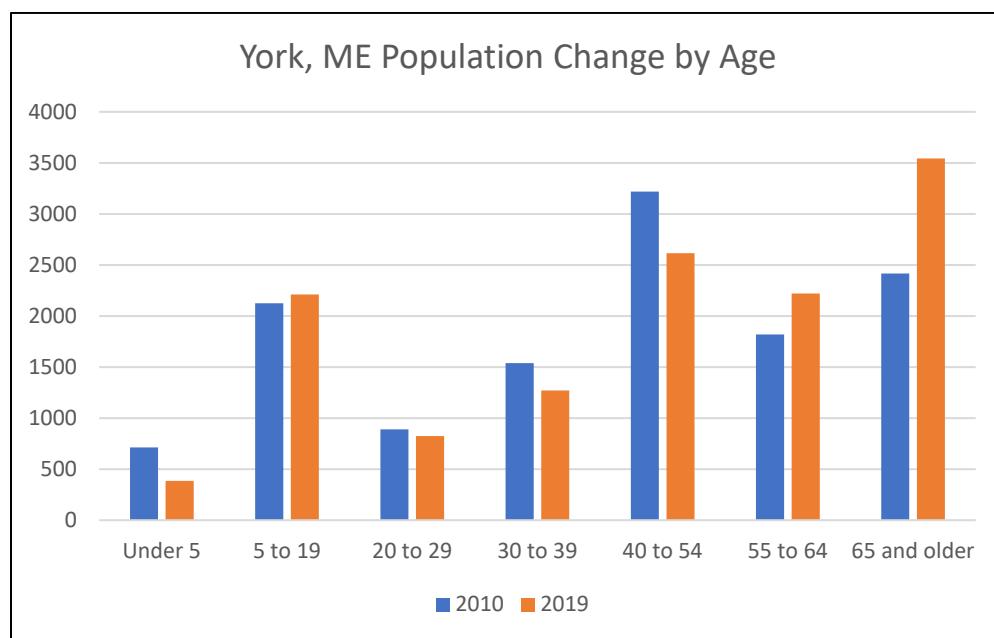


Year-Round Population Demographic Profile

York has experienced slow overall population growth over the past decade, growing from 12,720 residents in 2010 to 13,070 in 2019, a 2.8% increase,¹ according to the American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau. This was a slower growth rate than York County's 5.2% during this period, but faster than the State of Maine's 1.2%. While the Town of York's 2020-2021 Annual Report included a year-round population estimate of approximately 15,000 residents (up from 14,000 in the Town's 2019-2020 Annual Report), the figures utilized in the following analyses are from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 Five-Year American Community Survey² unless otherwise noted.

York's growth over the past decade can largely be attributed to an influx of older residents, likely retirees or empty nesters, rather than to new families and children. From 2010 to 2019, median age in York increased from 46.5 to 52.2 years old, much higher than the 2019 median ages for York County and Maine, which were 45.2 and 44.7, respectively (Fig. 1). Population growth has been most pronounced among those aged 65 and older, and declines have been sharpest among adults aged 30 to 54 and children under 5. This has led to a population distribution where 23% of residents are between ages 65 and 84, much higher than the county and state. Further, the proportion of residents between the ages of 20 and 34 is relatively much smaller than the county and state (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. York, ME Population Change by Age, 2010-2019



Source: 2010 and 2019 U.S. Census Five-Year American Community Surveys

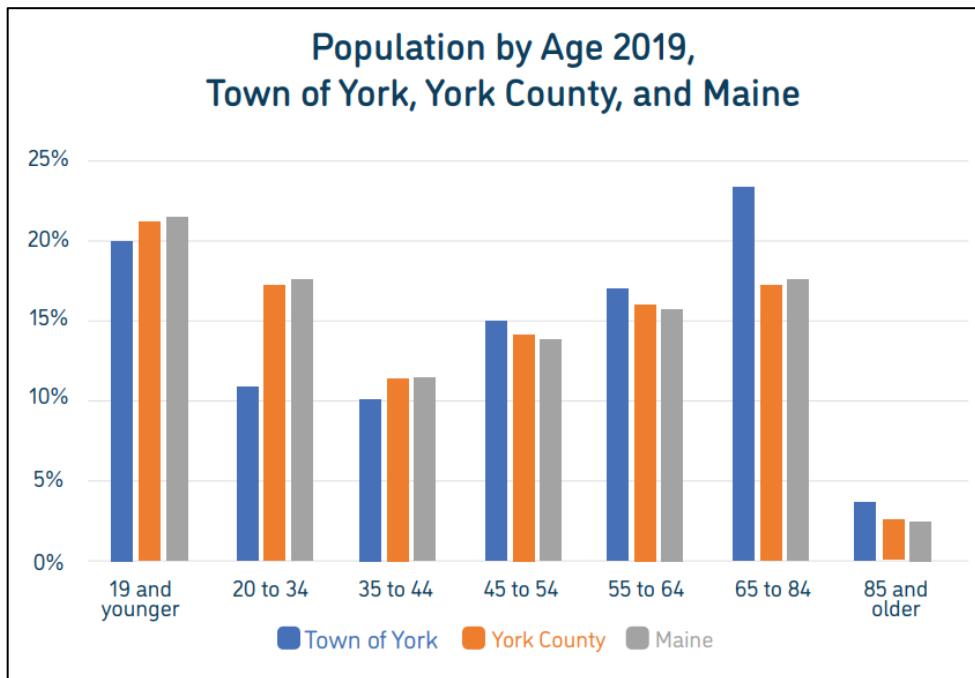
¹ 2010 and 2019 Five-Year American Community Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau.

² See here for more information on the U.S. Census Five-Year Surveys:

<https://www.census.gov/data/developers/data-sets/acs-5year.html>



Figure 2. Age Distribution for York, York County, and Maine, 2019



Source: 2019 U.S. Census Five-Year American Community Survey

This shift in York to an older population has coincided with a growth in median household income from about \$64,000 in 2010 to \$93,333 in 2019, a 46% increase in less than 10 years. The town's 2019 median household income was substantially higher than for the county (\$67,830) and state (\$57,918).

The rapid increase in median household income has likely been in part, at least, driven by the increasing lack of affordability of homeownership in York, where more than 80% of households are owner-occupied. The Maine Housing Finance Agency estimates that the median home price in York has increased from \$375,000 in 2007 to \$520,000 in 2020, and the rate of price increases has accelerated during that time. At the same time, the number of young children and adults under the age of 55 has declined noticeably. The decline in young families is likely due in part to rapidly increasing housing prices that have made living in York less affordable for these households. The households who have been able to afford the rising housing costs have needed higher incomes, contributing to a nearly 50% growth in median household income over the last decade. More details about housing trends can be found in Appendix A6: Housing Current Conditions.



The following table shows several population indicators for York in 2019, in comparison to the county and state (Table 1). York's population is relatively more educated and has lower rates of poverty, compared to the county and state. However, poverty rates were highest among adults aged 65 and older, which, constitutes a large and growing proportion of the population that will need access to affordable housing.

Table 1. Household and Resident Well-Being Indicators for Town of York, York County, and Maine, 2019

Indicator	York	York County	Maine
Median Age	52.2	45.2	44.7
Unemployment Rate	2.5%	2.6%	2.6%
Median Household Income	\$93,333	\$67,830	\$57,918
Poverty Rate-All Residents	4.1%	7.9%	10.9%
Under Age 18 Poverty Rate	4.6%	8.2%	15.1%
Age 65+ Poverty Rate	6.7%	6.7%	8.7%
Percent of Population 25+ with Bachelor's Degree or Higher	52.2%	32.5%	31.8%
Self-employment Rate	6.3%	8.0%	8.4%
Employed in Management, Business, Science, or Arts Occupations	49.4%	37.6%	40.1%

Source: 2019 U.S. Census Five-year American Community Survey

Racially, the population of York is slightly more homogenous than the county and state, with an estimated 98% of residents in 2019 identifying as White, which is a higher percentage than both the country and state (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of Population by Race for York, York County, and Maine, 2019

Race	York	York County	Maine
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	0.2%	0.7%	0.7%
Asian alone	0.5%	1.1%	1.1%
Black or African American alone	0.3%	1.1%	1.6%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
White alone	98.2%	95.0%	94.0%
Two or more races	0.5%	1.6%	2.1%
Hispanic or Latino			
	York	York County	Maine
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	0.7%	1.8%	1.7%
Not Hispanic or Latino	99.3%	98.2%	98.3%

Source: 2019 Five-Year American Community Survey U.S Census Bureau



Education and Employed Labor Force

York's population is relatively more educated compared to the county and state, with 52.2% of its residents 25 years and older obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher (with the county and state at 32.5% and 31.8%, respectively). This correlates with York's working residents (residents 16 years or older who are working at a job in any location) tending to have higher levels of education and employment. In 2020, nearly 50% of York's employed residents worked in Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupations, much higher than the rates for all of York County and Maine.³

Over one-third (37%) of York's working residents work outside of Maine, approximately 37% work in York, and another 23% work in other parts of York County.

York has a lower overall poverty rate than that of the county and state. However, York residents with an educational attainment of at least high school graduate have a poverty rate of 7.9%, while those who are not high school graduates have a poverty rate of 43.7%, indicating a lack of local permanent job opportunities for residents with less formal education. More information about the relationship between education level and York's labor force can be found in the Appendix A5: Economy Current Conditions.

Household Characteristics

While the population of York only grew by 2.8% between 2010 and 2019, the number of households increased by 7.9% during that same period. While the number of households increased during this time, the size of the average household in York decreased from 2.37 to 2.27 (Table 3), due in particular to a decline in household sizes among renters. Among York's households, about 22.7% included persons 18 or younger, compared to 25.7% and 25.3% for York County and Maine, respectively. In 2019, an estimated 45.6% of York's households included a person over 65, which is much greater than York County (33.3%) and Maine (33.4%).

³ Maine Department of Labor Quarterly and Annual Industry Employment and Wages Dataset, <https://www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/qcew1.html>



Table 3. Household Composition: Town of York, York County, and Maine

	York	York County	Maine
Households, raw number (2019)	5,746	85,314	559,921
Households, raw number (2010)	5,326	80,299	551,125
Average persons per household (2019)	2.27	2.36	2.32
Average persons per household (2010)	2.37	2.43	2.34
Households with person 18 or younger, percent (2019)	22.7%	25.7%	25.3%
Households with person 65 or older, percent (2019)	45.6%	33.3%	33.4%
Person living alone, percent (2019)	17.1%	15.7%	16.8%

Source: 2019 U.S. Census Five-Year American Community Survey

Not only has there been a shift in household composition in York from 2010 to 2019, but there has also been substantial growth in median household income: from about \$64,000 in 2010 to \$93,333 in 2019. This represents a 46% increase in less than ten years. The town's 2019 median household income was substantially higher than that of the county (\$67,830) and state (\$57,918). York had a higher percentage of households with income of \$200,000 and over annually (12.6%) than the county (5.6%) and state (4.6%). Likewise, the percentage of York's households with an annual income under \$25,000 (11.6%) was lower than the county and state (15.2% and 20.8%, respectively) (Table 4).



Table 4. 2019 Household Income Distribution: Town of York, York County, and Maine

	York	York County	Maine
Household income under \$25,000, percent	11.6%	15.2%	20.8%
Household income \$25,000 to \$49,999, percent	15.1%	21%	22.8%
Household income \$50,000 to \$99,999, percent	29.1%	34%	32.4%
Household income \$100,000 to 199,999, percent	31.7%	24.1%	19.6%
Household income \$200,000 and over, percent	12.6%	5.6%	4.6%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2019 U.S. Census Five-Year American Community Survey

School Enrollment

The population of school-aged children (5 to 19 years) stayed relatively constant between 2010 and 2019 and the population of young children (0 to 5 years) declined by nearly half. The number of adults aged 20 to 39 also decreased by 13.7% from 2010 and 2019, suggesting a continuing trend of fewer young families. York school enrollment has been decreasing since the 2010-2011 school year (Table 5).

York School Department's projected total school enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year, as of December 1, 2021, was an estimated 1,580 students (an earlier District projection was 1,618 students). From 2011-2023, that would be a decrease in about 296 students, a projected change of approximately -15.8%.

Table 5. Total Actual School Enrollment in All York Public Schools (2011 – 2021)

School Year	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	Change 2011-2021	% Change 2011-2021
# Students	1876	1850	1846	1826	1788	1746	1746	1729	1684	1639	1627	-249	-13.27%

Source: York School Department



Seasonal Population

Due to York's coastal location, paired with its relative proximity to Boston and Portland, the town has a large population of seasonal residents who reside in York predominantly during the summer. The total seasonal population includes year-round residents and people who live in York for part of the year but don't declare York as their primary place of residence. This seasonal population tends to live in homes, apartments, and condominiums as defined by the U.S. Census.

York's large seasonal population has grown more rapidly than its year-round population over the last decade. Between 2010 and 2019, the seasonal population grew by 46% from 5,244 to 7,676,⁴ and the number of seasonal and occasional residences⁵ in the town increased from 2,310 to 3,187,⁶ representing a 38% rise. The net growth of 877 seasonal and occasional residences was more than twice as large as the net growth of year-round residences during this time.

York's 2021 year-round population was estimated at approximately 13,300 with an estimated seasonal population of 20,923 in 2021.⁷

Daytime Population

In addition to its seasonal residential population, York also has a daytime population increase in part from York Hospital being a major employer and regional health care service provider. The hospital has a patient base ranging from year-round town residents to those from the broader region, as well as day-time visitors. The hospital's relatively large number of employees also brings a consistent daytime population to York on a year-round basis.

The town is also a popular destination for day-trippers in search of beaches and outdoor recreation. Visitors and seasonal York employees who live outside of town make the daytime population significantly larger than the full-time resident population during the summer months.

Peak Summer Population

York experiences its largest population in the summer. The town's "peak summer" population includes the year-round population, seasonal population, and also those who visit in the peak summer months for shorter stays. This shorter-stay population generally takes lodging in

⁴ American Community Survey and Levine Planning Strategies.

⁵ Residences of the seasonal population who live in York part time and declare another place their primary residence.

⁶ 2010 and 2019 American Community Surveys, U.S. Census Bureau.

⁷ American Community Survey and Levine Planning Strategies.



hotels and other places that are not defined as housing units by the U.S. Census, though some may stay in short-term rentals or other housing units.

The summer peak population of the town was estimated at 30,914 in 2019⁸ with an overall peak summer population anticipated to continue increasing in the coming years.

While the visitors who come to York during the summer contribute to spikes in traffic congestion, parking problems, emergency response issues, and other general crowding concerns, this population generally does not utilize other Town services, programs, or infrastructure, including the schools.

Population Projections

The year-round population of York is estimated to increase from 13,247 in 2021 to 14,697 in 2031 (Fig. 3).⁹ This projection reflects the trends of the last decade that would indicate a continued growth in seasonal population; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has made this growth more difficult to project. It is possible that if remote and hybrid work becomes more commonplace in a post-pandemic economy, York's location between Boston and Portland may attract seasonal residents to reside more permanently, resulting in some conversion of seasonal homes to year-round residences.

The year-round population increase estimate is based on state projections adjusted to include an anticipated (but not definitive) assumption that there will be conversion of 25 seasonal units per year to year-round housing units starting from 2021. With these conversions, the total seasonal population (year-round plus seasonal) is expected to increase from an estimated 20,923 in 2021 to 24,018 by 2031¹⁰ – unless limitations on developable land reduce the rate of seasonal home production.¹¹ Peak summer population is also expected to increase according to the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC). If the assumption is that seasonal homes remain seasonal, the year-round population projection would be lower at 14,129 in 2031. The median age of the town is expected to increase (Table 6).

⁸ Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission.

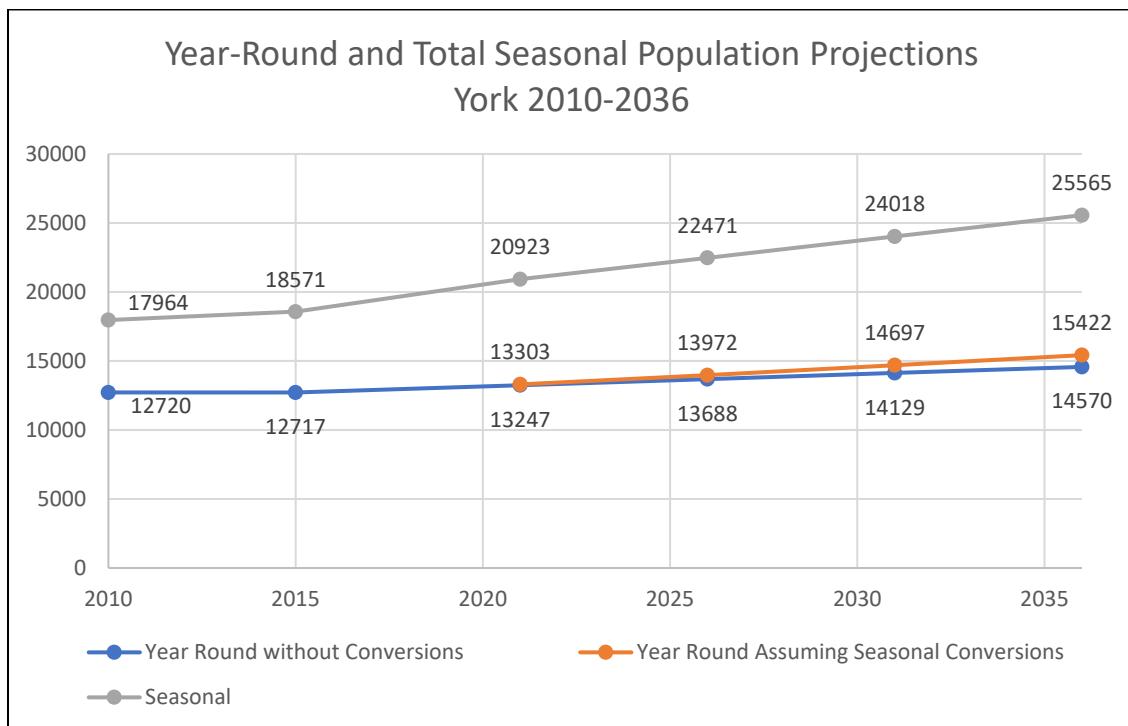
⁹ Levine Planning Strategies.

¹⁰ American Community Survey and Levine Planning Strategies.

¹¹ This is based on the assumption that the number of seasonal units will continue to increase at the same rate as the 2010-2019 time period and the overall total seasonal population increases accordingly (Levine Planning Strategies).



Figure 3. Year-Round and Total Seasonal Population Trends and Projections for York



Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey and Levine Planning Strategies

Table 6. Current and Projected Year-Round Town of York Population by Age Cohort

	2015	2019	2031 (estimated)
5 to 14 years	1,361	1,391	1,514
15 to 17 years	382	634	1,558
15 to 44 years	3,561	3,577	3,762
16 years and over	10,886	11,069	12,052
18 years and over	10,593	10,660	11,243
60 years and over	4,095	4,646	6,672
65 years and over	2,760	3,543	6,364
75 years and over	1,183	1,375	2,072
TOTAL POPULATION	12,717	13,070	14,697
Median age (years)	50.3	52.2	56.0

Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey and Levine Planning Strategies

The summer peak population of the town, which includes the year-round residents, seasonal population, as well as those who stay in hotels, was estimated at 30,914 in 2019 with an estimated increase to 31,180 by 2029. The largest percentage increases will likely be in those age 60 and over. Peak summer population overall is also slated to continue increasing.¹²

¹² Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission.



There is much uncertainty regarding how future climate change will impact seasonal and year-round population projections for York. The town's relatively mild summer climate compared to most places in the country will make it an increasingly attractive place to live and travel to as temperatures become more extreme in warmer parts of the country.

What the Community Said

The summary of community feedback below represents the common themes heard during public meetings and events, as well as through other forms of outreach. If information is provided from the Fall 2021 Comprehensive Plan Community Survey results, this is specifically noted with the percentage of respondents who replied in this way.

- There is a need in York for more housing that is of varied types and affordable to a variety of income levels and households, such as young adults and families, seasonal workers, and older adults who want to age in community.
- There is a need for more support for residents aging in community, including housing, transportation options, and other community services and programs for older adults.
- There aren't enough spaces in town for teens and providing spaces for children and families will be important to retain young families and grow that portion of the population.
- Many Town departments and services are already facing capacity challenges, which could be exacerbated by projected population growth and an aging population.
- Tension exists between those who want York to stay the same in terms of population and demographics and those who desire to live in a more diverse and multicultural community.
- There should be more communication with long-term seasonal residents on town issues and discussions.

Key Takeaways

Housing

As York's population increases, the demand for housing is likely to increase as well. This is exacerbated by the growth being driven by older, smaller households rather than increasing family sizes within the same household. While York's population increased by 350 residents, a 2.8% growth, between 2010 and 2019, its number of households increased by 420, a 7.9% growth, during the same time. If this demographic trend continues, it suggests that even if York's population grows slowly the increase in households, and thus demand for housing, will grow more rapidly. This is made more challenging by low vacancy rates among the existing owner-occupied housing stock; at the time of 2019 U.S. Census Five-Year American Community Survey only 15 homes were for sale in all of York. The number of rental vacancies were higher at 347, which represented about a quarter of rental stock. Because of this, there



may be some opportunity to absorb housing demand with existing rental units, depending on their condition and characteristics.

With York's older and aging population, there may be a shift in the desired type of housing, to options more geared towards older adults who are likely to seek smaller and lower-maintenance homes, senior housing, one- and two-bedroom units, and rental units. Currently, the town has 152 units of below-market senior housing (aged 62 and older) spread across six properties owned and managed by the non-profit York Housing. There are waitlists to get into these units, and some of these lists have had to be closed at times due to excessive wait.¹³ The perceived growing need for different types of housing in York could be addressed through land use policies that encourage a range of housing types and sizes as well as walkable communities which enable stronger social connections. These housing types can be compatible with York's core historic areas that boast denser, smaller homes in mixed-use and walkable settings.

In addition to the changing demographics and higher incomes of year-round residents, the large increase in second homes in York has likely put upward pressure on the housing market and contributed significantly to rising home prices. The rising housing market is making it increasingly more difficult for current residents, young professionals, new families, and seasonal workers to find housing in or near town (see Appendix A6: Housing Current Conditions for more information).

Transportation

Major impacts to consider for the peak summer and daytime populations include a sharp increase in traffic congestion and parking demand, particularly in beach and village areas and at access points to recreation and natural amenities. Additional efforts such as additional sidewalk connections, regular public transportation, and/or shuttle services between amenities could be investigated as a way to reduce congestion. Further, a study of the financial impacts that daytime visitors have on municipal infrastructure and services could be used to set appropriate short-term parking rates. The unaffordability and unavailability of local housing for seasonal employees worsens congestion and parking issues since these employees are then driving and commuting longer distances.

Infrastructure and Services

Any population increase will put more pressure on the capacity of municipal emergency services, such as fire and police, and Town infrastructure, including utilities (sewer, water, electricity, broadband, etc.) and roads. Certain services, particularly emergency response, have been experiencing additional demand for their services, particularly during the summer peak but also throughout the year as the year-round population has increased. Any sharp increases

¹³ York Housing, <https://www.yorkhousing.info> accessed August 13, 2021.



in seasonal, summer peak, and daytime populations should be monitored in the event they rise to the point of straining York's services and infrastructure.

The growing older population will create an additional need for programs and services, such as transportation options like shuttles or other pick-up/drop-off services, and improved accessibility in public spaces around town. More activities and social services, in addition to those currently provided through the Center for Active Living, will be needed. There is an opportunity to plan for additional multigenerational programming and facilities that have flexibility in design and use. Programming that appeals to multiple age groups can help the Town's attractiveness to young families. More information about these capacity issues can be found in the Appendix A9: Town, Public Facilities & Services Current Conditions.

Economy and Tourism

The popularity of York as a summer destination, both for seasonal residents and day-trippers, has created a robust tourism economy that many local businesses rely upon. Employment in the town is typically 40% higher during the summer than the winter. However, York's tourism businesses are facing some major challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the service and retail industries, especially in the tourism sectors. There has been an overall shortage of available seasonal workers for businesses trying to return to pre-pandemic service levels, which has been a notable issue throughout New England since before the pandemic. This is discussed in more detail in Appendix A5: Economy Current Conditions.

Schools

Based on current population trends, demand for school services should not dramatically change. School enrollment has been declining over the past ten years with a projected enrollment of approximately 1,580 students for the 2022-23 school year (2021-22 enrollment is approximately 1,627 students). The York School Department actively reviews and reallocates resources to right-size staffing, programs, and more efficiently utilize its facilities on an annual basis. The School Department just completed a full facilities assessment in September 2021. In the future, facilities and programs may be evaluated, created, or modified based on flexibility and multi-generational use, allowing for an efficient allocation of resources that can serve the changing needs of York residents.