



**CHAPTER 2: POPULATION ELEMENT**

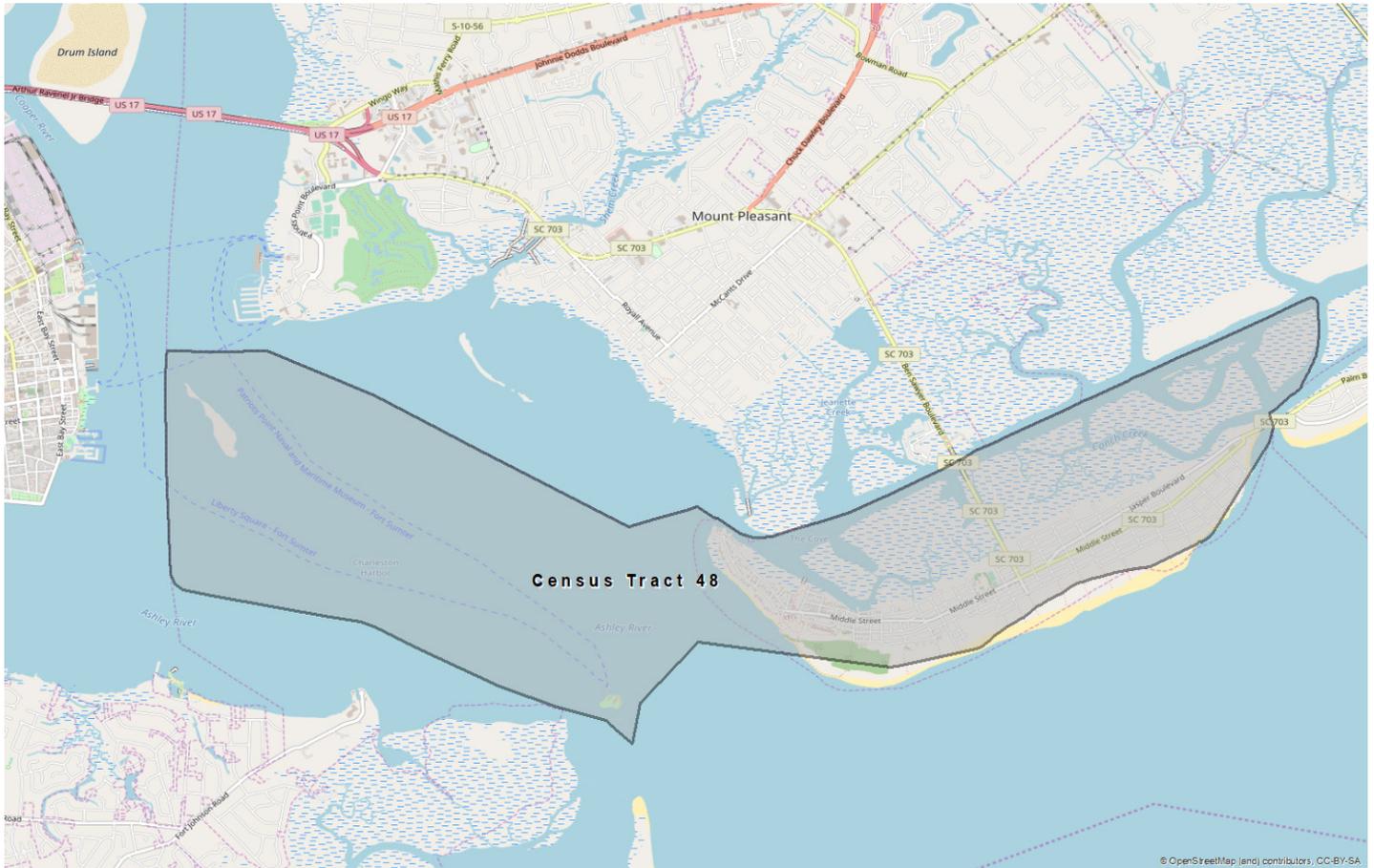
**HOW WE GROW**



The Population Element provides an important key that unlocks an understanding of historical and projected growth on Sullivan’s Island. Without understanding demographics, the Town of Sullivan’s Island would not be able to create initiatives or policies that are effective for the citizenry. Knowing who the constituents are will help the Town effectively provide services and efficiently analyze issues that need to be addressed for the community.

The information for the existing Population Element was obtained through the United States Census Bureau, the Town of Sullivan’s Island, and the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG). In 2017, the Town of Sullivan’s Island consists of Census Tract 48 (Figure 2.1).

**FIGURE 2.1**

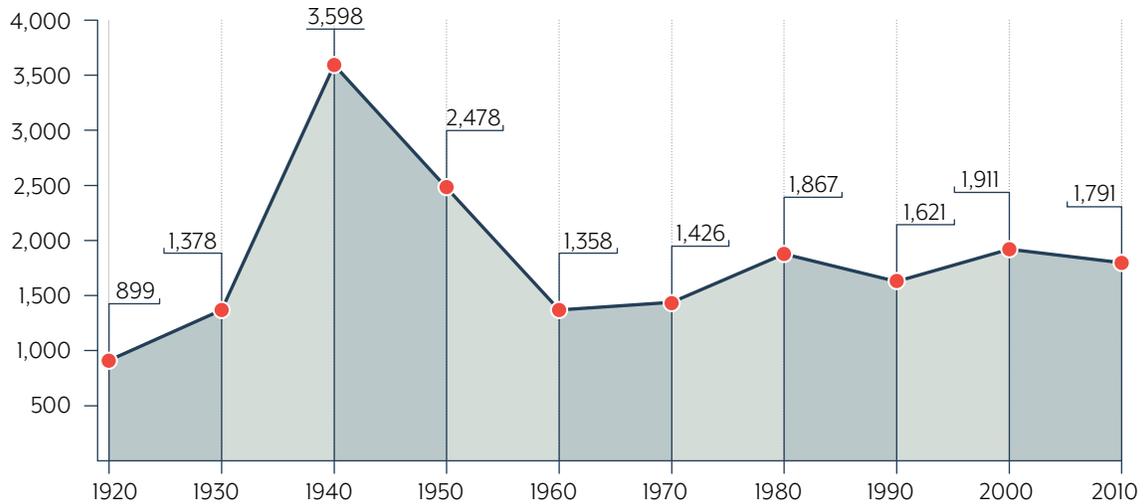


## HISTORY

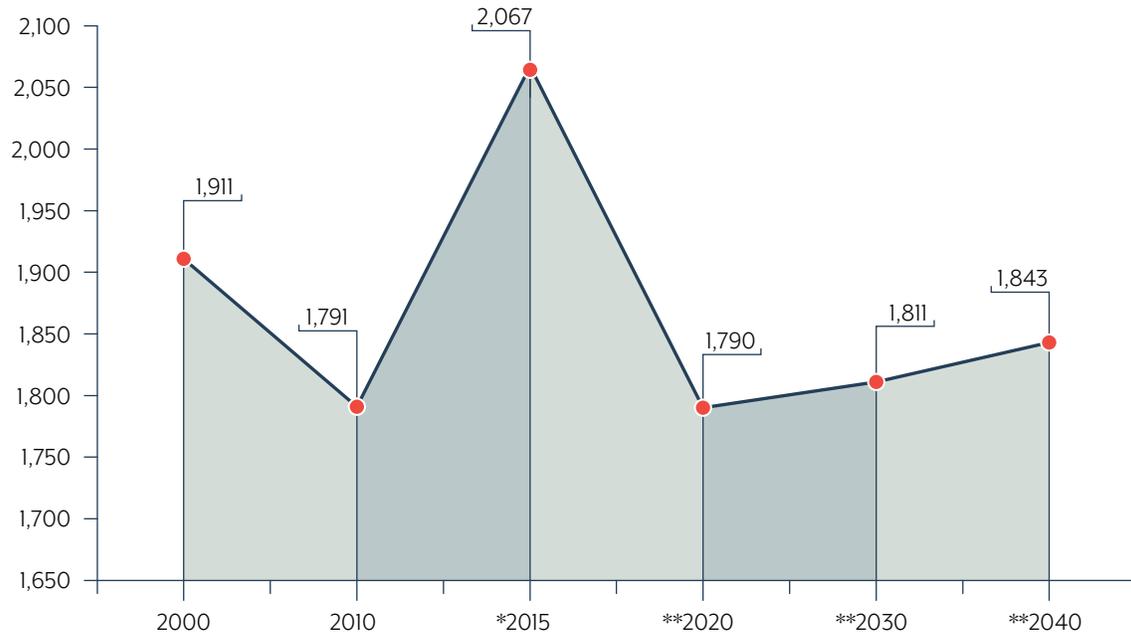
Sullivan’s Island has seen a steady population growth pattern since the 1920s barring a few generations that encompassed a war and a natural disaster (Figure 2.2). There was a population explosion in the 1940s due to the increased use of the military facilities located on Sullivan’s Island during World War II. During the 1950s, the population declined as Fort Moultrie was closed and the military population was rescinded after the war. The population finally levelled off to its pre-World War II levels in the 1970s. Then, the population on the Island grew steadily until 1989, when Hurricane Hugo hit the South Carolina coast and caused another sharp drop in population. After Hugo, the population returned to its previous pattern of gradual growth.



**FIGURE 2.2: HISTORICAL POPULATION TREND**



**FIGURE 2.3: POPULATION PROJECTION**



## PROJECTIONS

Figure 2.3 shows that during the 2010 Census, Sullivan’s Island’s population dropped to 1,791 from the previous decennial census. This estimate was a 6.3% decline from the 2000 Census, which estimated the population at 1,911. Since 2010, the Town has grown by 15.4% to 2,067 people, according to the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. The 2015 ACS data uses a different methodology than the decennial Census, so a more conservative estimate was used by BCDCOG to project 2020, 2030, and 2040 estimates. BCDCOG provided estimates for 2020, 2030, and 2040, which are created by the region’s travel demand model. The travel demand model is a forecasting



tool that bases vehicular trip generation on population projections. The most accurate information will come when the 2020 Census is released, but for now, these projections will suffice for future growth. Due to the relatively low availability of developable land, laws established to prevent subdivision, and the preference for single-family-oriented development, the population should stay relatively flat for the foreseeable future.

Table 2.1 shows the historical population trend for Sullivan’s Island with both the 2015 ACS and BCDCOG projections for the years 2020, 2030, and 2040 in tabular format. This information illustrates the Net Population Change by whole number and percent change. Cumulatively, between 1990 and 2040, the projected growth of the population is positive by an addition of 222 citizens. This growth rate represents about a 12% increase over a 50-year period if all estimates remain on-track. This growth rate should be extremely manageable for the Town of Sullivan’s Island as it represents only an annual increase of about 4 people per year, spanning to 2040. Again, these are projected estimates but the growth rate is nowhere near that of the BCDCOG region which is growing much more rapidly. Logically, this makes sense as there is only a finite amount of land on the island and there are restrictions that prevent subdivision.

**TABLE 2.1: POPULATION TREND/PROJECTION FOR THE TOWN OF SULLIVAN'S ISLAND (1920-2040)**

YEAR	POP.	NET POPULATION CHANGE	
		NUMBER	%
1920	899	-	-
1930	1378	479	53.28%
1940	3598	2220	161.10%
1950	2478	-1120	-31.13%
1960	1,358	-1,120	-45.20%
1970	1,426	68	5.01%
1980	1,867	441	30.93%
1990	1,621	-246	-13.18%
2000	1,911	290	17.89%
2010	1,791	-120	-6.28%
*2015	2,067	276	15.41%
**2020	1,790	-277	-13.40%
**2030	1,811	21	1.17%
**2040	1,843	32	1.77%

\*Estimated Population by American Community Survey  
 \*\*Population Projection by BCDCOG

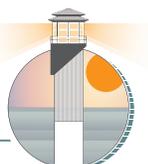
Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, BCDCOG

## DEMOGRAPHICS

It is important for the Town to understand who resides on the island so that policies and programs can effectively be set for the benefit the citizens. The median age on Sullivan’s Island has remained relatively the same from 2010 to 2015, only increasing about 1.9% from 47.1 in 2010 to 48 in 2015 (Table 2.2). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, households may include families or they may include individuals who live by themselves. Families are counted as those who are related and live with each other. From 2010 to 2015, the total households grew by 5.6%, while families grew at roughly double that pace at 11.8%. The average household size is now 2.56 people per household, which confirms the higher growth rate for families, and can be confirmed again by examining Table 2.3 (see page 13), where children under 5 years of age have increased by approximately 81% between 2010 and 2015.

**TABLE 2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFO 2000, 2010, & 2015**

	2000	2010	*2015	2000-2010 % CHANGE	2010-2015 % CHANGE
Population	1,911	1,791	2,067	-6.3%	15.4%
Median Age	40.9	47.1	48	15.2%	1.9%
Total Households	797	765	808	-4.0%	5.6%
Family Households	484	482	539	-0.4%	11.8%
Average Household Size	2.4	2.34	2.56	-2.5%	9.4%



## RACE

The ACS 2015 5 year estimate shows that the majority of the Town residents are white, which totals approximately 98% of the population. The second largest group is African-Americans, which comprise .5% of the Town's residents. The remainder of the population was a smaller fractional combination of other races. This composition is not drastically different from previously recorded decades.

## AGE

The largest age group on Sullivan's Island for both females and males is the bracket containing those who are "45 to 54" years old (Table 2.3 / Figure 2.4).

There was no change from either the 2000 or 2010 Censuses as they both showed this particular age group as the largest population as well (Table 2.3). Generally, this type of shaped pyramid is considered a "stationary" population.<sup>1</sup> This means that the population is not growing, but does have a very high quality of life. However, the "Under 5 Years" age group has experienced a considerable spike in 2015 compared to 2000 and 2010. This data potentially illustrates that the number of families are regenerating and that there is room for the population to continue to grow. The increase in the "under 5 years" age group is also thought to be attributed to the recently constructed Sullivan's Island Elementary School located at the heart of the Island. The "45 to 54" year-old population should be monitored over the next few decades to ensure the pyramid does not change into a "constrictive" pyramid. In fact, many people on the island expressed concerns for a lack of opportunity for seniors during public comment periods. The National Aging in Place Council (NAIPC) is an excellent resource for learning about building communities that are amiable to an aging population.<sup>2</sup> With that said, "Aging In Place" is an important concept that needs to be evaluated as people 45 years and older represent 56% of the population. If most of the population is closer to 55 than 45, then a potential shift towards the constrictive pyramid may occur. If that happens, it will be important for Sullivan's Island and its residents to be prepared for the shift.

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1. Population Education (2016). "What are the different types of population pyramids?" <https://www.populationeducation.org/content/what-are-different-types-population-pyramids>
  2. Age In Place (N.D.). <http://www.ageinplace.org/>

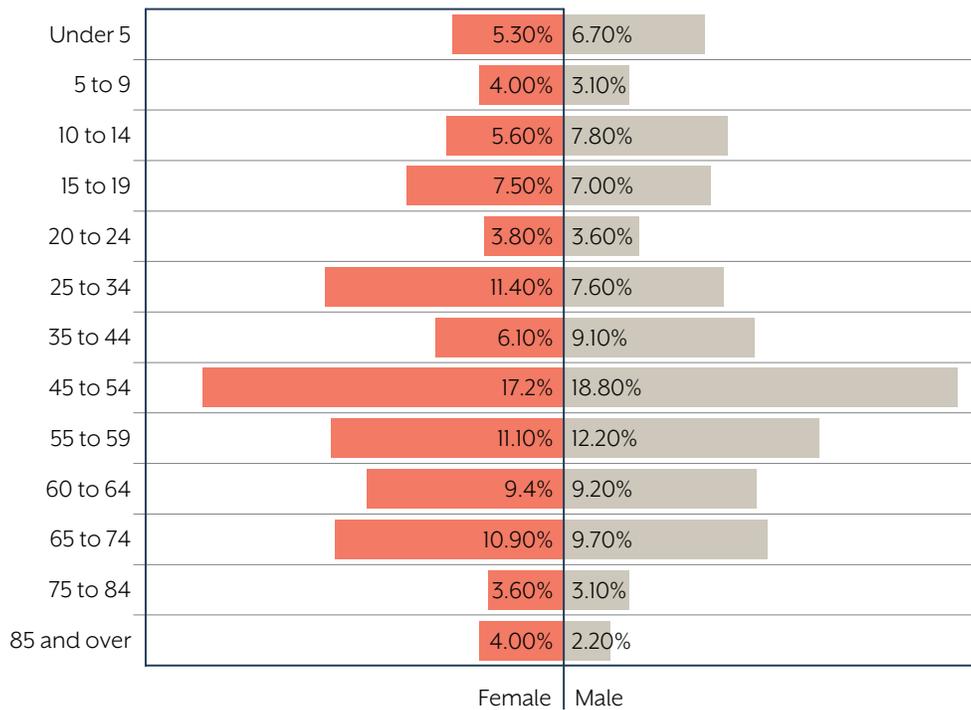


**TABLE 2.3: POPULATION BY AGE GROUP 2000, 2010, & 2015**

AGE GROUP	2000	2010	*2015	2000-2010 % CHANGE	2010-2015 % CHANGE
Under 5 Years	87	68	123	-21.8%	81.2%
5 to 9 Years	145	126	74	-13.1%	-41.3%
10 to 14 Years	155	115	137	-25.8%	19.3%
15 to 19 Years	95	106	150	11.6%	41.7%
20 to 24 Years	72	80	77	11.1%	-4.3%
25 to 34 Years	228	152	199	-33.3%	30.9%
35 to 44 Years	327	196	155	-40.1%	-20.9%
45 to 54 Years	373	316	371	-15.3%	17.4%
55 to 59 Years	144	197	240	36.8%	21.8%
60 to 64 Years	76	172	192	126.3%	11.6%
65 to 74 Years	103	168	214	63.1%	27.4%
75 to 84 Years	73	60	70	-17.8%	16.7%
85 Years and Over	33	35	65	6.1%	85.7%

Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey

**FIGURE 2.4 POPULATION PYRAMID**



Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey,



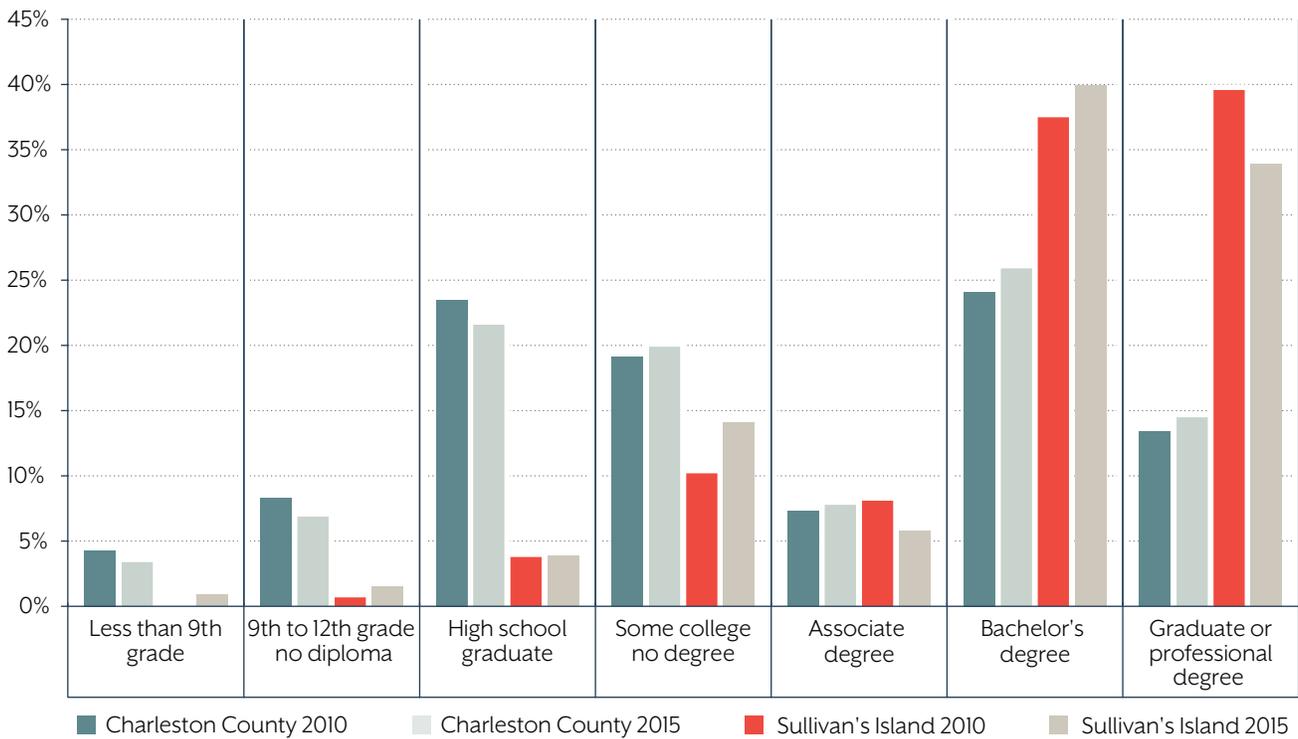
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

With some of the highest-valued land per acre in the BCDCOG region, incomes needed to purchase and maintain properties on Sullivan’s Island are greater than other areas within the region.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the education levels, at least over the past 30 years, have remained high for the Town. This is to be expected as higher education levels are positively correlated with higher incomes.

Figure 2.5 shows residents with “some college, no degree” to “Less-than-9th-grade” educations are lower than Charleston County’s averages, which further highlights Sullivan’s well-educated population. This is further evidenced by that fact that residents of Sullivan’s Island have much higher percentages in both those with “Bachelor’s degrees” and “Graduate or professional degrees.”

3. Urban 3. “The Value of Placemaking: The Cost and Impact of Development Patterns on the Tri-County Region.” [https://issuu.com/scbiz/docs/the\\_value\\_of\\_placemaking](https://issuu.com/scbiz/docs/the_value_of_placemaking)

**FIGURE 2.5: HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION ATTAINED (2010-2015)**



Source: US Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey

