

# CHAPTER 2: REGIONAL PROFILE

## GEOGRAPHY

Situated in southeastern Vermont, the Windham Region consists of 23 towns in Windham County, the neighboring towns of Readsboro, Searsburg, and Winhall in Bennington County, and Weston in Windsor County. The region is bordered by Massachusetts to the south and New Hampshire to the east. At over 920 square miles (590,000 acres), the region accounts for roughly 9.6 percent of the State's total land area and roughly 7.5 percent of the State's total population. The Windham Region has several distinct sub-regions, defined by isolating topography and exhibiting similar economic and land use patterns.

The present-day Connecticut River Valley and adjacent Southern Vermont Piedmont is characterized by relatively flat and gently rolling land near the Connecticut River, with hills, small mountains, and narrow valleys in the uplands. Glacial processes left boulders and scrapped and scarred bedrock ledges, leaving behind deposits of clay, sand, and gravel. This process also included the formation of Lake Hitchcock, an extensive and valley-filling water body that contributed to the fertile agricultural soils now present in the region's valleys. In more recent times, the Connecticut River and its tributaries have been instrumental in shaping the valley's settlement pattern of villages and towns separated by fields and forests.

The Green Mountains are the principal element of physical geography in the western part of the region, with Stratton Mountain being the highest point in the region at 3,936 feet. This part of the region generally receives more precipitation and experiences lower temperatures because of its higher elevations. As a result, the main concentration of historic development is in the valleys, some of which are narrow while other high valley areas are surprisingly broad. Outlying areas mainly consist of large woodland areas on higher elevation land. The extensive forests in the Green Mountains along with productive lower elevation woodlands support a small but important forest-based economy throughout the region. The topography in the western part of the region also led to the development of ski areas and tourist resorts.

In addition to the Connecticut River, the other major rivers in the region are the Deerfield, Green, North, Saxtons, West, and Williams, all of which are tributaries of the Connecticut River. There are two major flood control reservoirs on the West River, the Ball Mountain and Townshend Dams. Somerset and Harriman Reservoirs are two major water storage reservoirs for hydropower generation on the Deerfield River.

Several significant transportation routes provide access to and through the Windham Region. There are two active

rail lines in the region: the New England Central Railroad runs along the Connecticut River, hosting both freight and Amtrak passenger service, and the freight-only Green Mountain Railroad connects Bellows Falls to Rutland. Interstate 91 and U.S. Route 5 traverse the Connecticut River Valley north/south. Route 100 runs north/south through the Green Mountain in the western part of the region. Vermont Route 9, part of the National Highway System, provides east/west access from Brattleboro to Bennington, and between New Hampshire and New York. Vermont Route 103, also part of the National Highway System, connects Interstate 91 in Rockingham with Rutland in western Vermont. Finally, Vermont Route 30 runs north and west from Brattleboro through the West River Valley towns of Dummerston, Newfane, Townshend, Jamaica, and Winhall, eventually providing connection to the town of Manchester.

## HISTORY

### EARLY SETTLEMENT

The Abenaki people lived in present-day Vermont when European settlers arrived and depended on seasonal hunting, fishing, gathering, and agriculture.<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest sites of native agriculture in northern New England is the Skitchewaug site in the Connecticut River Valley near present-day Springfield, Vermont and dates to the year 1100. Agriculture is thought to have become more prevalent by 1300 with the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash in the Connecticut River Valley.<sup>2</sup> The rise of agriculture also led to more permanent settlements. Historians have noted there were several major bands of Abenaki in Vermont, each with larger settlements on tributaries to the Connecticut River. The closest major village to the Windham Region was in present-day Northfield, Massachusetts (Squakheag).<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that between 2,000 – 6,000 Abenaki lived in the upper Connecticut River Valley at the time of European arrival.<sup>4</sup>

### EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

When early European settlers arrived, the region was heavily timbered with abundant wildlife. Initially, there was little interest in establishing permanent settlements and the majority of European activity was related to the fur trade, which peaked in the mid-1650s. However, the British began pushing into southern Connecticut River Valley in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and established Fort Dummer near present-day Brattleboro in 1724. A more significant influx of Europeans into Vermont began in the early 1760s. By this time, the Abenaki population had declined severely due to disease, the impacts of the fur trade, and warfare between the French and British over the previous

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Society of Windham County

<sup>2</sup> Klyza, Christopher McGrory & Trombulak, Stephan C. (2015). *The Story of Vermont: A Natural and Cultural History*. Chicago: University Press of New England

<sup>3</sup> Klyza & Trombulak

<sup>4</sup> Klyza & Trombulak

decades.

Early European settlers focused primarily on clearing land for homestead sites and agriculture. Harvested timber was used primarily for building and fuel, with potash, tannin, and other commodities being secondary uses. However, by the late 1700s the region had become more connected with the rest of New England and larger commodity markets centered in urban areas. This transformed the timber industry into a cornerstone of the region's economy. An additional effect, combined with land clearing for agricultural activities, was an almost complete transformation of the region from being forest covered to cleared land.

## SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

Physical limitations played a dominant role in the region's development pattern. European settlement first occurred in the Connecticut River Valley where water, rich soil, and access to natural transportation routes were available. Settlement and land clearing soon spread throughout much of the region. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, villages evolved in the valleys, such as Wilmington, often attracted by water power for mills and manufacturing.

A linear pattern of development was the natural response to the river and stream valleys as was the establishment of a road system along those same streams, linking village nodes in each major valley. These roads encouraged a land use pattern of mixed residential and commercial uses radiating from villages. The resulting pattern, readily visible today, is one of small villages located in stream valleys with expansion out along connecting roads.

## AGRICULTURE

During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, agriculture shifted from subsistence farming to market-based production. Difficult soil conditions and increased competition from farmers in the west would eventually result in a decline in agriculture in the region beginning around the Civil War and continuing to 1900.

In the early 1800s, Vermont became a world leader in wool production with prized Merino sheep imported from Spain. The Town of Westminster was one center for wool production in the state and during the height of wool production, many carding, spinning, and weaving mills were established in small towns. The Vermont sheep industry peaked in 1840 and declined dramatically after the Civil War, when demand for wool declined and global competition arrived in the form of wool from Australia and New Zealand. Eventually, dairy farming replaced sheep operations as the dominant agricultural activity in Vermont. Presently, dairy farming is declining, existing farms are diversifying, and many smaller diverse farming operations and specialty food manufacturers are appearing.

## POPULATION CHANGES

Beginning in the mid-1800s, Vermonters began to move around. Many hill farms were abandoned by their owners after years of clearing, grazing, and cultivating took their toll on the thin soils and steep slopes so common in the region. Some people moved west to take advantage of more fertile land and encouraged by the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 and the Homestead Act of 1862. Other farmers moved to larger, nearby towns for jobs in growing industries. Compared to other regions in New England, Vermont experienced relatively little in terms of industrial development which meant people were more likely to move out of state for jobs. In the smaller villages, businesses that relied on hill farms subsequently failed, and in some cases the villages themselves were abandoned. The Civil War also contributed to Vermont's population decline, as soldiers emigrated after the war to more fertile lands in the Ohio Valley.

While the period of 1790 to 1830 had seen significant population growth in the region, this growth levelled off for more than a hundred years until around 1950. Between 1850 and 1930, 77 percent of the region's towns saw steady declines in population. The only towns to see relatively steady growth during this period were Brattleboro, Rockingham, and Readsboro, which was associated with new industries and corresponding job growth in these communities. In the mid-1900s, many of the region's smaller towns began to see population increases, often fueled by ski area development or the back to the land movement. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these increases have slowed. The population of Brattleboro and Rockingham has seen relatively little change.

## MANUFACTURING AND OTHER INDUSTRIES

The prevalence of rivers and streams in the region provided power for woolen mills, paper mills, and other industries, as well as transportation routes. Log drives occurred on the larger rivers until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Roads and railroads utilized river corridors and included routes along the Connecticut, West, and Deerfield Rivers. Railroads played an important role in shaping the region and encouraged the development of Brattleboro and Bellows Falls as regional centers. The railroads carried freight and passengers, bringing more people to the region and facilitating commerce with Boston, New York City, and points south and west.

## BRATTLEBORO AND BELLOWS FALLS

Prior to the arrival of the railroads to Vermont in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, commerce largely depended on Vermont's waterway transportation on rivers and canals. Bellows Falls was the site of the first canal in the State to initiate construction. Roads at the time tended to be only marginally passable. Brattleboro and Bellows Falls benefitted significantly as a result of the railroad expansion into Vermont between 1848 and 1870. At the same time, the population of outlying towns was in decline, especially for more remote communities in the hills. Brattleboro hosted

a range of industries, including organ manufacturers, an iron foundry, a hospital, print shops, and a cigar factory. Bellows Falls was an industrial center that included paper mills, a farm machinery company, lumber mills, and a marble works. The industries in both towns provided jobs and appealed to many who abandoned farming to work in factories. In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the development of Interstate 91 as part of the extensive national highway system allowed Brattleboro and Bellows Falls to emerge as warehousing and trucking centers.

## TOURISM AND LAND CONSERVATION

In the late 1800s, tourists were attracted to the Windham Region for its heritage, natural beauty, and recreational activities. The State began taking a more active role in tourism as well – in the 1890s the Board of Agriculture began promoting Vermont as a place for urban residents to rest and recover, and in 1946 the Vermont Development Commission founded *Vermont Life* magazine to promote tourism and the state generally.

Around this same time, conservation became an important movement in Vermont, reflecting trends at the national level. The state established its forest system in 1909 recognizing the important role of forests in providing natural resources, wildlife habitat, scenic landscapes, and recreational opportunities. Today, the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources maintains numerous State Forests, Parks, and Wildlife Management Areas throughout the Windham Region. The Green Mountain National Forest was established in 1932 and today covers land in Readsboro, Searsburg, Wilmington, Somerset, Dover, Wardsboro, Stratton, Jamaica, Winhall, Londonderry, and Weston.

Beginning in the 1950s, the ski industry began to play a significant role as skiing and accommodations brought increasing number of skiers and visitors during winter months. The development of the interstate highway system in the 1960s began a new era characterized by easy and convenient access to the region from large metropolitan areas. This would result in explosive growth in vacation homes and related facilities. In the 1980s and 1990s, the region's ski resorts focused on expansion and development of other winter recreation activities such as snowmobiling, as well as golf and mountain biking to attract year-round visitors.

## MODERN VERMONT

The rise in the tourism economy and opening of the interstate highway system in the region contributed to new development pressures unseen since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1850 and 1960, the Region's population remained essentially flat at around 31,000 residents total. Between 1960 and 2000 the population grew from 31,319 to 46,449, an increase of nearly 50 percent. Population growth levelled off after 2000, returning to the slower rates seen prior to 1950.

While the State was actively promoting tourism, there was also a growing recognition during this time that the associated development impacts could be detrimental to the aspects of Vermont that were drawing tourists to the

state in the first place—its rural landscapes and historic villages. Governor Deane Davis appointed the Commission on Environmental Control in 1969 to study these development concerns, many of which were concentrated around the growing ski resorts in the Windham Region. A major piece of legislation that came from the Commission’s work was Act 250, passed in 1970, which set up a state permitting process for certain types of large development projects. Act 250 remains one of the critical tools in State land use planning today.

Improved transportation infrastructure also allowed for the development of new types of industries, like precision manufacturing and warehousing. These industries have been concentrated in Brattleboro and Bellows Falls, taking advantage of the interstate and rail network. As manufacturing has evolved and become less dependent on raw materials, new businesses have been drawn to the region for its quality of life amenities.

Energy production in the region has also evolved. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw hydropower development on the Deerfield and Connecticut Rivers. The Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in Vernon was decommissioned in 2014 after more than 40 years of operation. Vermont Yankee accounted for approximately 70 percent of the state’s net generation of power in 2010. During this same time, the region has seen an increase in renewable energy production sites, and in particular solar arrays. The largest commercial wind farm in the eastern U.S. went online in Searsburg in 1997, and was expanded in 2017.

Three final important trends in the region during the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been the local food movement, a recognition of the impacts of climate change, and growing opportunities for remote work. The region has seen an increase in small-scale agricultural producers that have been supported by local farmers markets, community supported agriculture models, and local distribution hubs.

In terms of climate change, the region has experienced warmer temperatures in summer and winter months and an increase in the intensity of rain storms. Two recent events, Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and the July 2023 flash floods, hit the Windham Region particularly hard in terms of damage to property and infrastructure and are indicative of heavier rain events we can expect in the future.

Finally, with the improvements in telecommunication technology, there has been a growth in the number of remote workers in the region. This includes seasonal home owners that are able to make longer visits to the region with the ability to work remotely, and new residents that have decided to make Vermont their full-time residence for quality of life reasons but can still keep a job located elsewhere.

## REGIONAL DATA

The following section provides a summary of population and demographic data for the region. Data on housing characteristics can be found in the Housing Chapter and data on economic characteristics can be found in the

Economic Development Chapter. Where appropriate, an analysis of the data and trends has been included to provide a more detailed story behind these numbers.

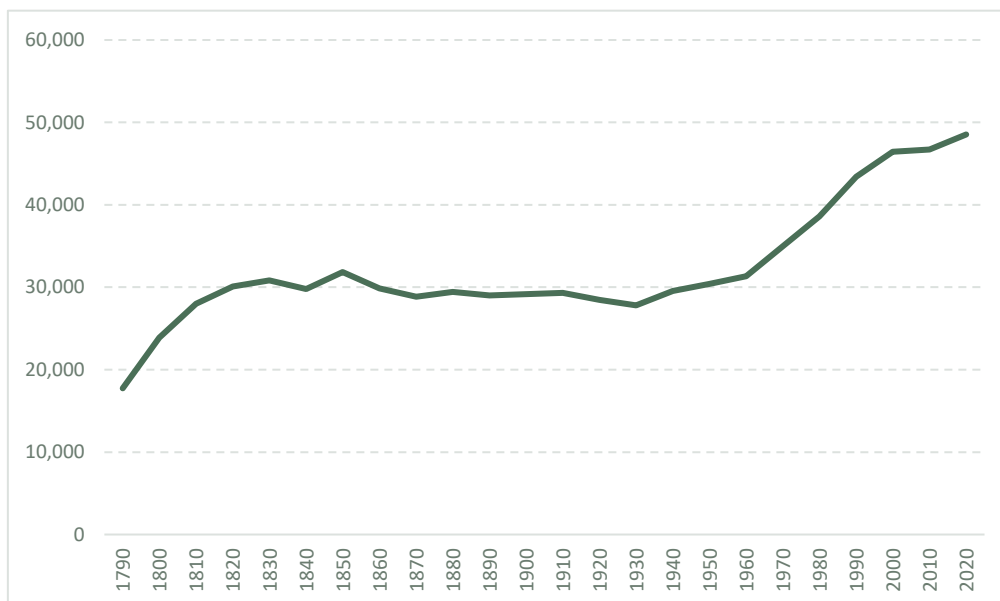
The information was gathered from the 2020 Census, recent American Community Surveys, and other resources. All data sources are referenced. The most extensive and reliable source for a large portion of the data relevant to the planning process is the U.S. Census Bureau. Complete surveys are completed on a ten-year cycle and collect “point-in-time” data. The Regional Plan is updated on an eight-year cycle.

The American Community Survey (ACS) provides five-year **estimates**. Generally, when the ACS was used in this planning process, WRC used the five-year estimates for the years 2016 – 2020 or 2017-2021. As a result, ACS data can only provide a general estimate of the existing conditions and has a relatively large margin of error for smaller geographies, such as the town level. This should be kept in mind when analyzing data and making direct comparisons between ACS data and Census data. Despite the limitations, the ACS data still provides useful information for the planning process.

## POPULATION

The population of the 27 towns that make of the Windham Region totals 48,538, as reported in the 2020 Census. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of the region grew by 1,818, or approximately 3.9 percent. This compares with a population growth of approximately 2.8 percent for Vermont as a whole. The population percentage increase between 2010 and 2020 was noticeably higher than the previous decade (2000 to 2010) when the population grew by only 0.6 percent.

FIGURE 1-1: WINDHAM REGION POPULATION (1790 – 2020)

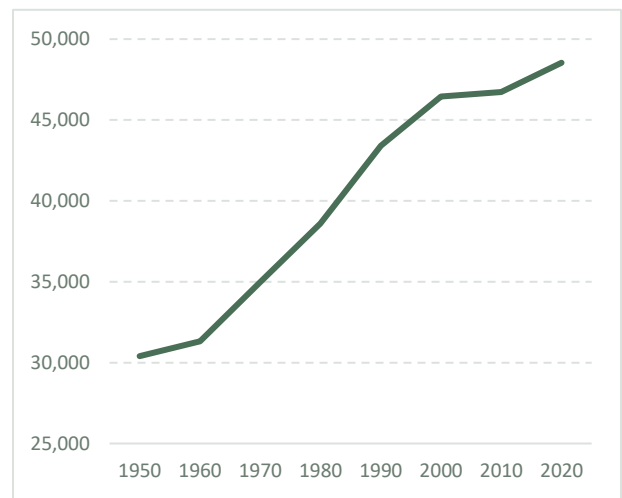


Data Source: U.S. Census (2010, 2020) Vermont Indicators (<http://www.vcgi.org/indicators> (1790 - 2000))

It should be noted there may be an issue with the population count for the town of Marlboro, which would artificially inflate the region's population for 2020. According to the Census data, Marlboro's population increased by 644 between 2010 and 2020, from 1,078 to 1,722, a growth rate of 60 percent. The ACS 2020 5-year estimates show that Marlboro saw a net decrease in housing units by one during this same time. This discrepancy may have to do with the counting of the student population on the former Marlboro College campus, which closed at the end of 2019-2020 academic year. The additional 644 residents in Marlboro, as reported by the 2020 Census, accounts for roughly one-third of the population growth in the region during the past decade and if it were to be subtracted out, the population growth for the region would be closer to 2.5 percent versus 3.9 percent.

FIGURE 1-2: WINDHAM REGION POPULATION (1950 – 2020)

The Windham Region has experienced uninterrupted population growth since 1950. The greatest population growth during a ten-year period occurred from 1980 to 1990, with a 12.5 percent increase in population. The statewide population growth for that same period was 10 percent. From 1950 to 2000, the average ten-year population growth was 7.9 percent. Since 2000, the rate of growth in the region has slowed substantially.



Data Source: U.S. Census (2010, 2020) Vermont Indicators (<http://www.vcgi.org/indicators> (1790 - 2000))

Time will tell whether the uptick in the rate of population growth between 2010 to 2020 will continue, although there are several factors that may lead to continued growth in the region. The region saw an influx of residents as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic beginning in early 2020. The in-flow of residents has included second homeowners in the region making the area their permanent residence, and newcomers to the region, many from urban areas seeking a different type of lifestyle.

Southeastern Vermont has also been welcoming new Americans through the Community Asylum Seekers Project and the Ethiopian Community Development Corporation. Finally, WRC anticipates more individuals resettling in the region due to the impacts of climate change making other areas of the country less hospitable. These factors are expected to bring new residents into the region over the upcoming years, but it is unlikely we would experience the

same rate of growth as between 1960 to 2000.

The table below shows the town population changes that have occurred from 1990 to 2020. Towns that experienced the highest average percentage change (20 percent or greater) are highlighted in purple. Town that experienced less growth or population decline are highlighted in blue. Communities that experienced the most growth include Dover, Marlboro, Stratton, Windham, and Winhall.

TABLE 1-1: WINDHAM REGION TOWN POPULATIONS (1990 – 2020)

Town	1990	2000	2010	2020	Avg Pct Change 1990-2020	Pct Change 2010 - 2020
ATHENS	313	340	442	380	8.2%	-14%
BRATTLEBORO	12,241	12,005	12,046	12,184	-0.1%	1%
BROOKLINE	403	467	530	540	10.4%	2%
DOVER	994	1,410	1,124	1,798	27.1%	60%
DUMMERSTON	1,863	1,915	1,864	1,865	0.0%	0%
GRAFTON	602	649	679	645	2.4%	-5%
GUILFORD	1,941	2,046	2,121	2,120	3.0%	0%
HALIFAX	588	782	728	771	10.6%	6%
JAMAICA	754	946	1,035	1,005	10.6%	-3%
LONDONDERRY	1,506	1,709	1,769	1,919	8.4%	8%
MARLBORO	924	978	1,078	1,722	25.2%	60%
NEWFANE	1,555	1,680	1,726	1,645	2.0%	-5%
PUTNEY	2,352	2,634	2,702	2,617	3.8%	-3%
READSBORO	762	805	763	702	-2.5%	-8%
ROCKINGHAM	5,484	5,309	5,282	4,832	-4.0%	-9%
SEARSBURG	85	96	109	126	14.0%	16%
SOMERSET	2	5	3	6	70.0%	200%
STRATTON	121	136	216	440	58.3%	104%
TOWNSHEND	1,019	1,149	1,232	1,291	8.2%	5%
VERNON	1,850	2,141	2,206	2,192	6.0%	-1%
WARDSBORO	654	854	900	869	10.8%	-3%
WESTMINSTER	3,026	3,210	3,178	3,016	0.0%	-5%
WESTON	488	630	566	623	9.6%	10%
WHITINGHAM	1,177	1,298	1,357	1,344	4.6%	-1%
WILMINGTON	1,968	2,225	1,876	2,255	5.8%	20%
WINDHAM	251	328	419	449	21.8%	7%
WINHALL	482	702	769	1,182	36.3%	54%

Data Source: U.S. Census (2010, 2020) Vermont Indicators (<http://www.vcgi.org/indicators>) (1990, 2000)

The towns of Dover, Stratton, Windham, and Winhall are located in the western area of the region and generally either have a ski resort in the community or are in close proximity to a ski area. It should also be noted that the town of Winhall is located adjacent to the town of Manchester, outside of the Windham Region, and its proximity to this commercial and job center could be one reason it has seen population growth. All four of these communities have a high number of second homes as a percentage of their total housing stock: Dover (82%), Stratton (94%), Windham (62%), and Winhall (81%). The population increase in these communities may partially be a result of second homes owners making these their permanent residences.

Most of the communities that experienced slower average growth (less than 3 percent) or population decline during this period are located in or just outside of the Connecticut River Valley: Guilford, Brattleboro, Dummerston, Westminster, Rockingham, and Newfane. The other two towns with slow growth or population decline were Grafton and Readsboro. The towns of Guilford, Dummerston, Putney, Westminster, and Newfane saw significant population growth in the period between 1960 to 2000. This growth began to level off beginning in 2000 and has remained relatively stable since then or decline. The two historically industrial and population centers for the region, Brattleboro and Rockingham, saw their residential populations generally plateau earlier – approximately by 1970 for Brattleboro and by 1960 for Rockingham.

As noted earlier, there is a discrepancy in the population count for the town of Marlboro in the 2020 Census that may be skewing the data for that community. Somerset is unincorporated and its population has been less than 10 people since 1950. Large percent population changes can result from the increase or decrease of only several individuals in Somerset.

The table below shows the population changes that have occurred in the region's incorporated villages and census designated places (CDP) from 1990 to 2020. CDPs are locally recognized communities with a population concentration, but lack legal status. Many of the CDPs in the region were recently added for the 2020 census and historical data is not available for these settlements. Additionally, as noted in the table below, the boundaries for some CDPs have changed between Census counts which accounts for some of the population increase or decrease seen in these areas. Despite efforts to encourage development within the region's village centers and downtowns, all of the villages and CDPs with data going back to 1990 have seen a population decrease over this 30-year period. As of 2020, the total population within village and CDPs was 17,390, approximately 36% of the region's total. This trend has implications for land use and development strategies for the communities in which these villages and CDPs are located.

TABLE 1-2: VILLAGES AND CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACES POPULATIONS (1990 – 2020)

Village/Census Designated Place (CDP)	1990	2000	2010*	2020*	Avg Pct Change 1990-2020	Pct Change 2010 - 2020
Algiers CDP	-	-	-	186	-	-
Bellows Falls village	3,313	3,165	3,148	2,747	-6%	-13%
Brattleboro CDP*	8,612	8,289	7,414	7,352	-5%	-1%
Chimney Hill CDP	-	-	-	263	-	-
Grafton CDP	-	-	-	49	-	-
Harmonyville CDP	-	-	-	92	-	-
Jacksonville village	244	237	223	213	-4%	-4%
Jamaica CDP	-	-	-	174	-	-
Londonderry CDP	-	-	-	180	-	-
Newfane village	164	116	118	-	-14%	-
North Westminster village/CDP*	268	271	247	262	-1%	6%
Putney CDP	-	-	523	571	-	9%
Readsboro CDP	-	-	321	297	-	-7%
Saxtons River village	541	519	565	479	-3%	-15%
South Londonderry CDP	-	-	-	147	-	-
Stratton Mountain CDP	-	-	-	335	-	-
Townshend CDP	-	-	-	199	-	-
Wardsboro CDP	-	-	-	70	-	-
West Brattleboro CDP*	3,135	3,222	2,740	2,803	-3%	2%
West Dummerston CDP	-	-	-	77	-	-
Westminster village	399	276	291	287	-9%	-1%
Weston CDP	-	-	-	77	-	-
Whitingham CDP	-	-	-	91	-	-
Wilmington CDP*	-	-	463	439	-	-5%

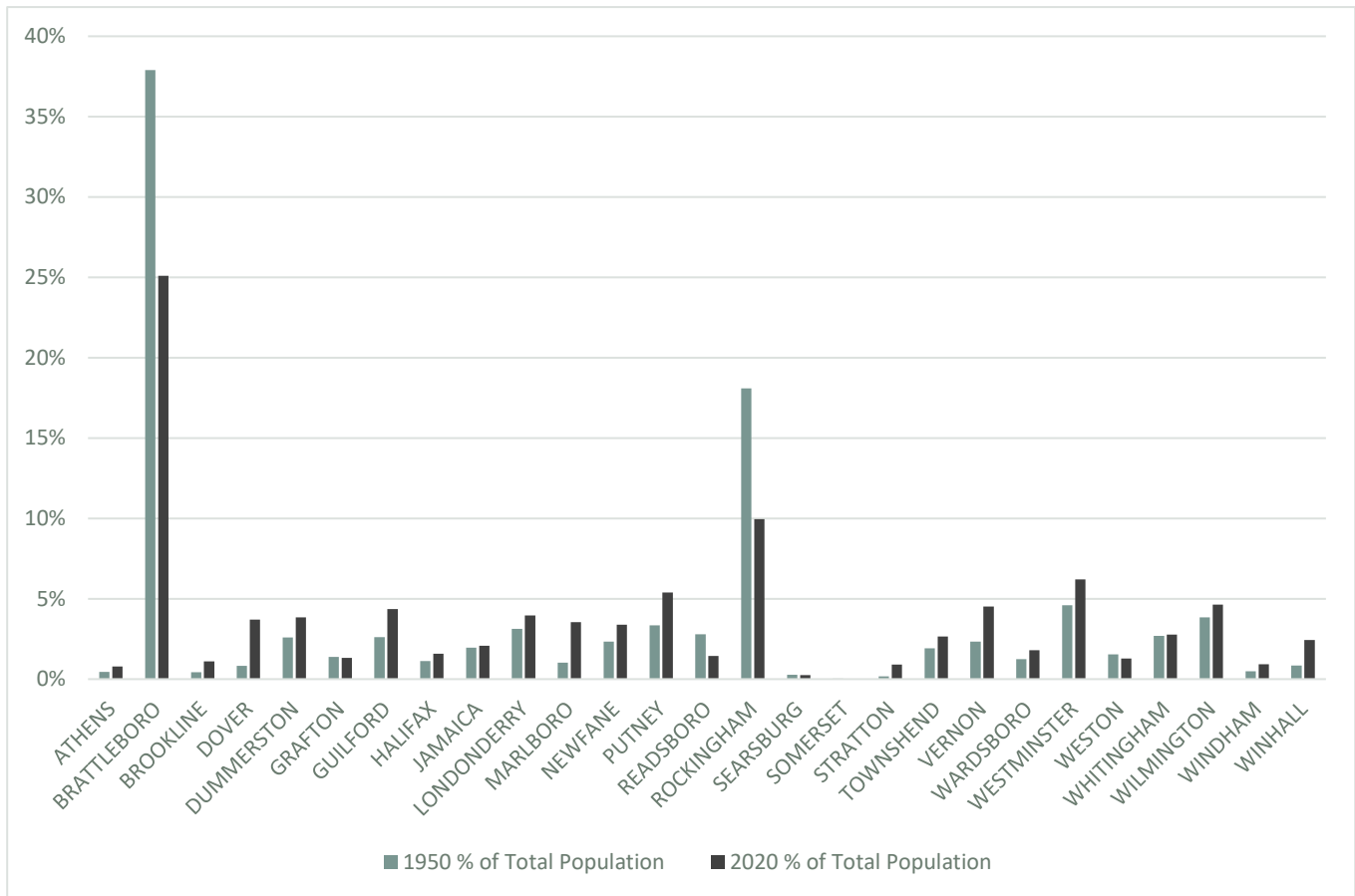
\*Some CDP boundaries changed in the 2010 and 2020 Census, which accounts for some of the population increase or loss seen in these areas. For example, the Brattleboro CDP and West Brattleboro CDP boundaries were reduced significantly for the 2010 Census and this contributed to the apparent decrease in population in these areas. The North Westminster village/CDP enlarged in the 2020 Census to include approximately 18 additional housing units. The Wilmington CDP enlarged in 2020 as well, but there was still a population decrease.

Data Source: U.S. Census (2010, 2020) Vermont Indicators (<http://www.vcgi.org/indicators>) (1990, 2000)

The table below shows how town populations as a percentage of the region’s total population has changed from 1950 to 2020. Most significant is the substantial decrease in Brattleboro and Rockingham’s population as a percentage of the region’s total. In 1950, the combined population of Brattleboro and Rockingham accounted for approximately 56 percent of the region’s population. By 2020, this has declined to 35 percent. At the same time, all

of the other communities in the region saw an increase in their populations as a percentage of the region’s total, except Readsboro, indicating a dispersal of the population’s concentration during this period. The communities that saw the biggest increase in their percentage of the region’s population were Dover, Guilford, Marlboro, Putney, Vernon, Westminster, and Winhall.

FIGURE 1-4: TOWN POPULATION AS PERCENTAGE OF WINDHAM REGION POPULATION



Data Source: U.S. Census (2020) Vermont Indicators (<http://www.vcgi.org/indicators> (1950))

## RACE AND ETHNICITY

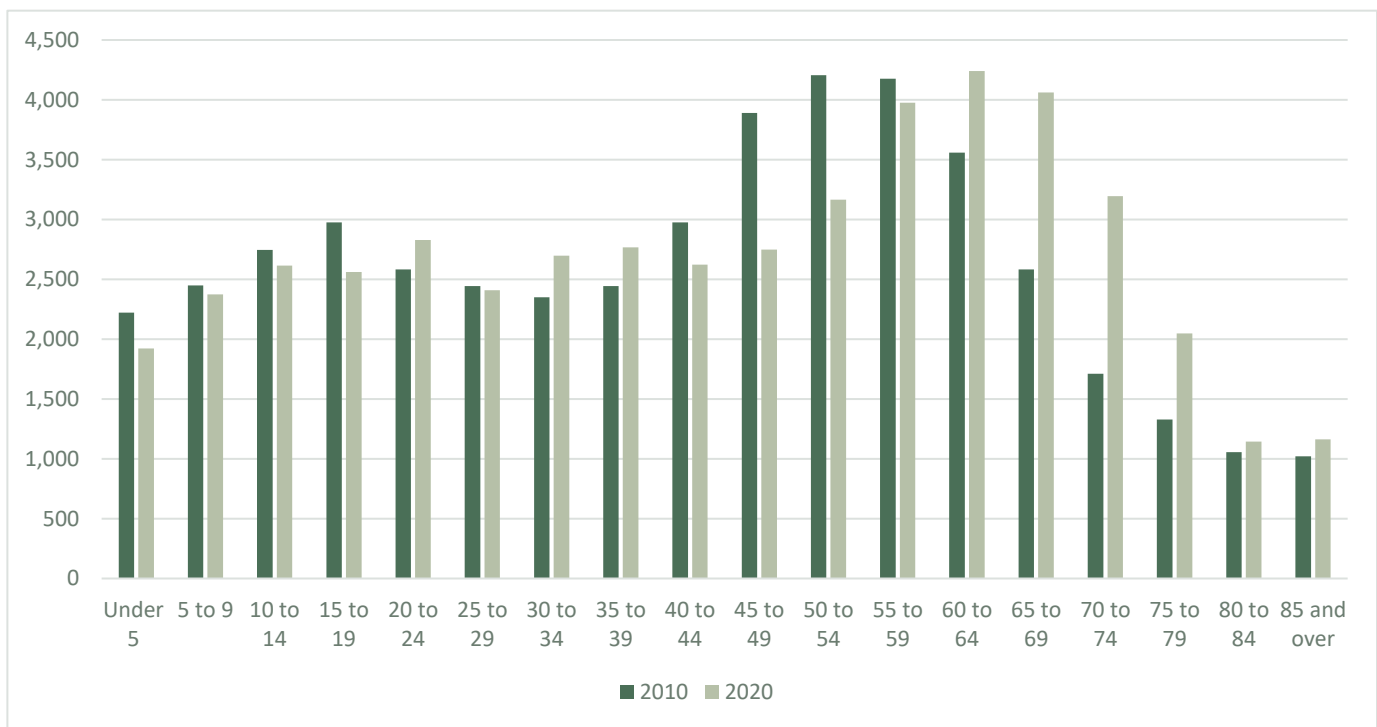
Between 2010 and 2020, the population’s racial composition became more diverse. The percent of the population identifying as white decreased from 94.3 to 89.6 percent. The group that saw the largest increase during this period was individuals identifying as being two or more races. This group grew from 1.7 percent of the population in 2010 to 4.8 percent in 2020. The other categories, including Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and Some other Races, remained generally consistent with the 2010 ratios. The percent of individuals of Hispanic or Latino origin increased from 1.8% to 2.8% of the region’s population between 2010 and 2020.

The increase in racial and ethnic diversity between 2010 and 2020 was generally seen in every community in the region and not confined to certain areas. That being said, the communities with the most diversity continue to be the larger towns along the I-91 corridor, including Brattleboro, Rockingham, Westminster, and Putney. This trend of the region becoming more racially and ethnically diverse is expected to continue, especially in light of the region’s support of resettlement efforts, such as the Community Asylum Seekers Project, and an anticipated increase in those relocating due to the impacts of climate change.

## AGE

Figure 1-5 below shows the region’s population by age in 2010 as compared to 2020. Between 2010 and 2020 the Windham Region grew older, a trend that is playing out across Vermont. The population aged 65 or older grew by 3,913 and in 2020 accounted for 24% of the region’s population compared to only 16% in 2010. At the same time, the population aged 19 or younger declined by 925 and decreased from 22% to 20% of the region’s population. The aging of the population has numerous implications for how the region supports these residents in terms of housing and services. There is also a pressing need to recruit new workers to the region as older resident begin to retire in more significant numbers.

FIGURE 1-5: WINDHAM REGION POPULATION BY AGE, 2010 - 2020



Data Source: U.S. Census, 2010 and 2020