

# **FINDINGS FROM COMPARISON OF SUMMARY VASHON-MAURY ISLAND CENSUS DATA 1950 TO 2010**

## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper compares summary Census data for Vashon-Maury Island for each of the ten years 1950-2010. Patterns, findings and analysis of this information is highlighted, as revealed through Census information. Topics covered include population numbers, household size, gender, race, marital status, birthplace, home ownership, education, age, relationship, employment industry, and income. Each research finding is followed by commentary offering an historical context.*

## **NOTES CONCERNING THIS COMPARISON**

The comparative information in this paper is from Vashon-Maury Island (VMI) Federal Census data, available every ten years from 1950-2010. Only half of the VMI Census data from 1950 has been located, which means that, other than total population, it will not be possible to include this year in the comparisons made here.

The following table has been prepared to accompany this analysis:

- Table One: Comparative Summary of Federal Census Data for Vashon-Maury Island (1950-2010).

## **FINDINGS**

**Research Finding:** The number of individuals on Vashon-Maury Island (VMI) has increased from 1950 through 2010, although the rate of increase has slowed. The population went up at least 25 percent from the previous 10 years in 1960, 1970 and 1990 (1980 showed a 13 percent increase), but dropped to a single digit increase in 2000, with the lowest percent of increase for any ten years appearing from 2000 to 2010 (4.9%).

A similar pattern is seen looking at the number of households (figures only available from 1970 through 2010).

**Historical Background:** Vashon-Maury Island shared in the rapid growth of the Pacific Northwest region resulting from emigration spurred by World War II industrial expansion and continued this growth during the Cold War era as the region expanded and as the Baby Boom led to sharp rises in population. The 44% increase in population from 1940 to 1950, and the 33.2% increase from 1950 to 1960 were a product of this regional economic growth and the Baby Boom, but were unsustainable rates as the economy slowed following the military spending cuts of the post-Vietnam War era and the subsequent “Boeing Bust” of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The growth rate began to slow to a still healthy 20.5% between 1960 and 1970, but slowed dramatically to 13.2% between 1970 and 1980 as the region suffered the impacts of this recession. From

1980 to 1990, growth reached the 1960s levels for the last time as VMI and the region saw a recovery based on new emerging software technologies and the regions' reputation as an ecological haven. From 1990 to the present, VMI has seen population increase slow dramatically as the region's growth has slowed and as VMI has seen a significant demographic shift to smaller families, gentrification, and a flood of retirees. The decline in the growth rate to 8.1% from 1990 to 2000, and to 4.7% from 2000 to 2010, is likely to continue as the demographics of the Island shift in these ways.

**Research Finding:** Average household size has shown a decrease through the years (data are only available from 1970-2010). Unlike what was seen in Census information prior to 1950, the definition of who should be included in a single household has remained the same in this later information.

**Historical Background:** With the end of the Baby Boom in the 1960s, the average size of American families began to decline as Boomers had fewer children. This decrease in family size is reflected in smaller average household size. Although family size and household size are not always the same, there is a close correlation between them. This trend toward smaller households is predicted to continue into the foreseeable future.

**Research Finding:** From 1980 through 2010, it is clear that the Census Bureau divided VMI into two Census Tracts. These were defined as 277.01 (northern half of the Island) and 277.02 (southern half of the Island). There were also two Census Tracts used to divide VMI data in 1950 (0022 for the northern half and 0023 for the southern half). It is not clear if 1960 Census data were subdivided into Census Tracts.

From 1980 on, the dividing line for the two Census Tracts remained the same (see the Island map with the Census Tracts geographically defined in this section of The Census Project website). For all four Decennial Census years (1980-2010), over half of the Island population has lived in the northern part of VMI. This division has been at least 54% for three of those years, but dipped to 51% in the 2000 Census.

Further geographic subdivisions, Census Blocks, were utilized by the Census Bureau for VMI information from 1990 through 2010. Researchers attached to The Census Project are attempting to locate geographic descriptors and additional data for these subdivisions.

**Historical Background:** Vashon has always been viewed as a single entity by most non-residents, but on the Island there has always been a split between the northern and the southern parts. This "divide" was originally called the Mason-Dixon Line after the famous line dividing the North and the South in the Civil War. This island split was reflected in a focus on Seattle for the northern half of VMI and Tacoma for the southern half. It was also seen in the existence of two high schools, one at Vashon and one at Burton; in Island topographic features; in rainfall amounts that vary in different parts of the Island, and in diverse soils. All of this helps intensify the perceived differences

between the two halves of the Island. The Census Tract and Block divisions only perpetuate this perceived split.

By the end of World War II, the population on VMI had shifted to more than half on the north side of the Island Mason-Dixon Line. The primary reason was Vashon Town replacing Burton and Dockton as the largest community and becoming the commercial center of the Island. This change was driven by the growth of Seattle as the preferred destination over Tacoma for commuters and commerce. The population shift to the north end of the Island can be expected to continue into the foreseeable future.

**Research Finding:** The gender split male/female on VMI has shifted slightly from 1960 to 2010, showing an increase in females every ten years. From 1960 through 1980, half of the individuals on VMI were males. This changed in 1990 when slightly more females were seen, then building to a maximum percentage of 51.5% in 2010.

**Historical Background:** This trend reflects the general pattern in America as the population ages and women continue to live increasingly longer than men. Other factors include a decrease in natal morbidity and the number of female births exceeding male births. All of these trends are predicted to continue into the foreseeable future.

**Research Finding:** The non-white population of VMI has never been high, but is showing a gradual increase. Looking at information available from 1960-2010, the lowest number (1.8%) was reported in 1980; the greatest number (8.1%) was noted in the latest 2010 Census.

In 1980, the Census Bureau first reported the percent of the population who were Spanish surname (labeled as Latino or Hispanic in later years). This segment of the population has never been large on VMI but has experienced growth every ten years from 1.2% in 1980 to 4.1% in 2010.

**Historical Background:** This finding is not surprising and is consistent with general national and regional trends in non-white population. The Census has traditionally under-reported non-whites for a number of reasons, but as society has increasingly become multicultural, VMI has experienced a similar, although smaller, increase in non-whites. While the Hispanic population has been the largest part of the non-white population on VMI, 1.2% of 1.8% in 1980 to 4.1% of 8.1% in 2010, the increase of other non-whites has been significant. The diversity of this non-Hispanic non-white population has increased and will likely continue. The growth of non-whites on VMI should also continue as the American population becomes more diverse.

**Research Finding:** Information on marital status for VMI was found from 1970 through 2000. Unfortunately, these figures are no longer collected through the Decennial Census, so are not included in the 2010 Census. Looking at information available from these four decades, the percent of those married has decreased from 69% to 60%, while the percent of those divorced rose from 4% to 15% during that same timeframe.

The percent of the population who are single/never married has remained constant at around 21%.

**Historical Background:**

These findings are as to be expected given the population changes on the Island.

**Research Finding:** The percent of those born outside the United States has decreased from 8% in 1960 to 2% in 2000. These data are no longer collected through the Decennial Census as of 2010. The share of VMI residents born in Washington has remained constant during this timeframe at 34%.

**Historical Background:** The aging and deaths of the original foreign born immigrant populations in the United States in general, throughout the Pacific Northwest region, and on VMI explains this decline. The dislocations of large populations after World War II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the influx of skilled immigrants, and the growth in political refugees have all continued to bring foreign-born populations to Vashon, but only in small numbers.

The consistent number of VMI residents born in Washington State reflects the stability of the VMI population, however, lack of change in the percentage reflects movement on and off the Island of emigrant populations from other parts of the Northwest region, from California, and from throughout the United States.

**Research Finding:** Home ownership, versus housing rental, has been seen for more than three-fourths of the population. This hovered around 78%, from 1960 through 2010. A slight decrease to 75% was seen in 1980, but rebounded to 77% in 1990 and then 80% in 2000.

**Historical Background:** The stability of home ownership on VMI reflects the island's appeal as an ex-urban residential community close to two major population centers in Seattle and Tacoma. The decrease in the 1980 Census largely reflects the "Boeing Bust" and recession of the 1970s within the Pacific Northwest. The rebound in 1990 and 2000 shows the increasing gentrification and aging of the Island population, since both of these groups tend to have higher levels of home ownership.

**Research Finding:** The percent of the population completing at least four years of college has increased dramatically since 1960, when statistics showed no one fitting this category. In 1970, 21% of the population reported finishing at least four years of college. This rose every ten years to 49% by 2000. These data are no longer part of the Decennial Census, beginning in 2010.

**Historical Background:** The increase in education level on VMI is a reflection of this trend nationally but is also a feature of the ex-urban appeal and gentrification the Island has experienced as a more educated group of professionals have chosen to make their home on VMI.

**Research Finding:** The percent of those on VMI who are age 65 or over has increased from 1970, at 12%, to 2010, at 18%. In 1960, 13% of the population was age 65 or older. On the other end, the percent of those under age 18 has decreased dramatically from 37% in 1960 to 20% in 2010.

**Historical Background:** The aging of the VMI population is a function of the general aging of the American population as the Baby Boom generation has grown older and number of children per family decreased bringing down average family size. In addition as VMI continues to attract a more highly educated, married or once married, home owning population, this trend will continue. These same factors help explain the decrease in those under age 18.

**Research Finding:** The number of “householders” (assumed to represent the same as “household heads” designed in earlier Censuses) as a percent of all relationships increased from 1960 through 2010 (data on relationships were not found for the 1980 Census, and the 1960 information is for those in the white racial group only – thus excluding 138 individuals). Looking at household relationships, the presence of related children has gone down over the years. There has also been a slight decrease in the presence of other related relatives (not including spouse) as a percent of the household make-up. This has gone down from 7% in 1960 to 3% in 2010. On the other hand, there was a slight increase in non-relatives within the household from 1% in 1960 to 8% in 2010. Spouses as a percent of the household make-up has stayed steady at around 23%.

**Historical Background:** These findings are consistent with the changes in household size (more households, fewer individuals per household), and with the increases in housing costs. While the presence of single-never-married individuals has stayed constant, the number of those who are divorced has increased, balanced against a decline in the percent of married. These fluxes in marital status add to the changes seen in relationships among those in the household.

**Research Finding:** Industry for those on VMI was reported in the 1970-2000 Censuses. Employment-related data are no longer collected with the Decennial Census, beginning in 2010. Different descriptors were used for various Census years, making comparison difficult.

The percent of employed individuals involved in manufacturing of durable goods decreased from 1970 to 1990 (from 26% to 15%). Nondurable goods manufacturing remained about the same, ranging from 3% to 5%. The percent of employed individuals in construction increased slightly from 4% in 1970 to 8% in 2000, while those involved in agriculture, forestry and fisheries decreased slightly from 5% in 1970 to 2% in 2000. The percent of the employed engaged in wholesale trade remained consistent at around 3% to 4%, while those in retail trade increased from 11% in 1970 to 14% in 1980 and 1990, only to drop to 9% in 2000.

**Historical Background:** The use of different descriptors for each Census makes comparing Industry data difficult. The shifts described above are consistent with the loss of the K2 ski and winter sports production plant on VMI in the 2000s, and the continued presence of small non-durable manufacturing industries on the island. The increase in household numbers, the increase in average age and educational level all point to a population building new homes and remodeling existing residences which can account for the increase in construction employment. The decrease in agriculture, forestry and fishing reflects the continued decline of these resource extractive industries as the sources of natural agricultural decline on the Island. The stability of the wholesale trade numbers are not surprising, while the overall decrease in retail trade numbers show the increasing mobility of the population to shop off-Island and, more recently, on-line. The rise in 1980 and 1990 retail trade is more difficult to explain.

**Research Finding:** Response related to income was found in VMI data from 1960 through 2000. This information has been excluded from the Decennial Censuses beginning in 2010. Because the economic scale differs over time, examining the percent increase for the median income from decade to decade may be the only relevant comparison. This can only be done through three Decennial Census periods, 1980, 1990, and 2000.

Looking at median family, household and per capita income; the rates show a higher increase from 1980 to 1990 than from 1990 to 2000. The greatest rate of increase is for per capita income, which rose 82% from 1980 to 1990. The smallest increase was seen in family income from 1990 to 2000 (63%).

**Historical Background:** This particular data set is very limited and difficult to assess. The increase in per capita income from 1980 to 1990 is a reflection of the post Boeing Bust economic recovery of the 1980s and the first waves of the new gentrification of the Island as individuals with higher income levels began to see VMI as an alternative to Seattle-Tacoma. The result was a rapid expansion of the suburban areas north, south, and east of those cities. The 1980 to 1990 expansion was difficult to sustain as the recession of the early 1990s slowed growth on the Island. Without data for the 2000 to 2010 period and for the pre-1980 period, it is difficult to make a full analysis of per capita income.

**Research Finding:** Figures related to poverty level are only available for three Censuses, 1980, 1990, and 2000. This information is no longer collected via the Decennial Census, starting in 2010. The poverty rate through these thirty years remained around 6%, with a very slight increase to 7% in 1980.

**Historical Background:** The low level and the stability of poverty level percentages reflects the stability of the VMI population as an exurban, educated population who are largely employed, older or retired homeowners.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

**Dr. Alice Larson** has a doctorate in Social Welfare Research from the University of Washington. For over 30 years, she has worked with non-profit and government agencies throughout the country in a social service/research capacity offering design and development, community assessment, and evaluation assistance on a range of topics. She is considered an expert in data development and analysis particularly around demographic information.

**Dr. Bruce Haulman** has a PhD in History from the University of Washington. He is a retired professor of history at Green River Community College, the author of *Vashon-Maury Island: Images of America* (2011) and *A Brief History of Vashon* (2015 in press), on the board of the Vashon-Maury Island Heritage Museum, Voice of Vashon, and Friends of Mukai.

Prepared April 27, 2014