

Chapter 2: Community Profile

The 1996 Somerset County Comprehensive Plan included a chapter titled *Demographic Patterns and Projections*; the information included therein has been updated and expanded upon for this plan update. The *Community Profile* focuses on demographic data, socioeconomic data, and projections gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, and the Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center. Analysis of this data informs the comprehensive planning process, demonstrating Somerset’s changing nature and anticipating its future conditions.

2.1 Population

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Somerset County totaled 24,618 people in 2020. Excluding the 2% increase from 1980 to 1990 and the less than 1% decrease from 2010 to 2020, the population of Somerset County has experienced an average growth rate of 0.54% since 1970.

Table 2-1.

Historic and Projected Total Population for Somerset County, Maryland								
	Census 1970	Census 1980	Census 1990	Census 2000	Census 2010	Census 2020*	Population Projections	
							2030	2040
Somerset County	18,924	19,188	23,440	24,747	26,470	24,618	27,450	28,310

Source: Prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center, December 2020
U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census.

The average growth rate of 0.54% experienced in the previous decades is projected to continue through 2045, as indicated on Table 2-2, at an average rate of 0.53%.

Table 2-2.

Historic and Projected Total Population for Somerset County, Maryland - Annualized Growth Rate								
	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	Growth Rate Projections		
						2020-2030	2030-2040	2040-2045
Somerset County	0.14%	2.02%	0.54%	0.68%	-0.69%	1.15%	0.31%	0.13%
Lower Eastern Shore Region	1.35%	1.16%	1.36%	1.15%	0.25%	0.97%	0.66%	0.51%

Source: Prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center, December 2020
U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census.

Overall, the historic annual rate of population growth for Somerset County, at less than 1%, is comparable to that of the whole Lower Eastern Shore Region, at just over 1%. Following this trend, the populations of both Somerset County and the Lower Eastern Shore Region are projected to increase through 2045 (Figure 2-1).

Somerset County has 320 square miles of land area, with an average of 60.1 people per square mile, as of July 1, 2021 (according to the [Maryland Statistical Handbook](#)).

2.2 Race & Ethnicity

Results of the 2020 U.S. Census indicate that people from White alone (not Hispanic or Latino) and Black alone (not Hispanic or Latino) race comprise the majority of Somerset County’s population, at 52.3% and 38.4% respectively (Figure 2-2).

2.3 Income & Poverty

The median household income for Somerset County in 2021 was \$47,131. Comparatively, the median household incomes of adjacent counties are: Wicomico County (\$61,846), Worcester County (\$70,952), and the State of Maryland (\$90,129).

Per the Maryland Statistical Handbook, as of 2021, Somerset County’s rate of poverty is 23.1% and the State’s rate of poverty is 10.3%. The poverty rate for Somerset County is higher than that reported for Worcester County (10.3%) and Wicomico County (14.2%).

2.4 Employment & Jobs

The number of full and part-time jobs in Somerset County remained steady from 2011 to 2021. The rate of change was 0.3%, or an additional 30 jobs during that time period. During the same time period, the Lower Eastern Shore Region experienced a 6.7% rate of change or an additional 7,637 jobs. In 2011, the average wage

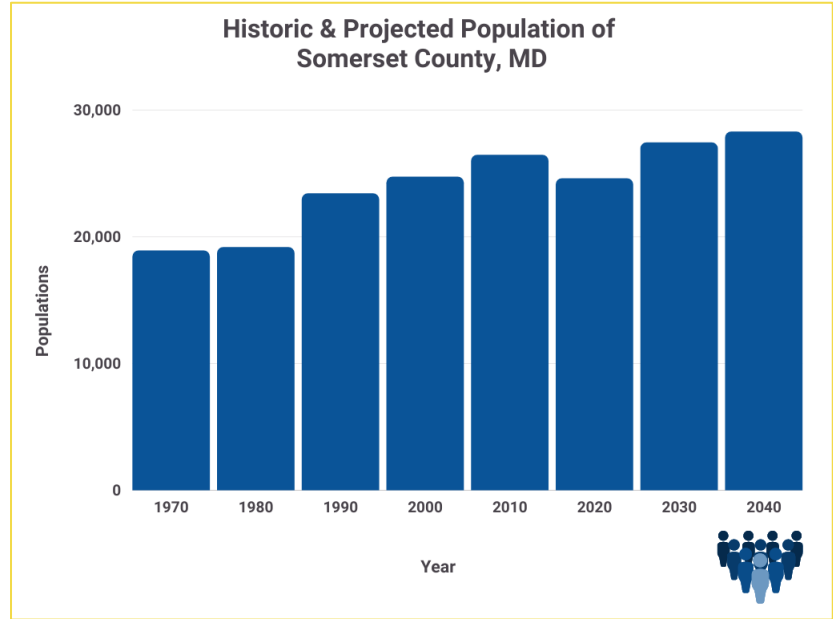


Figure 2-1: Historic and Projected Population of Somerset County, MD.

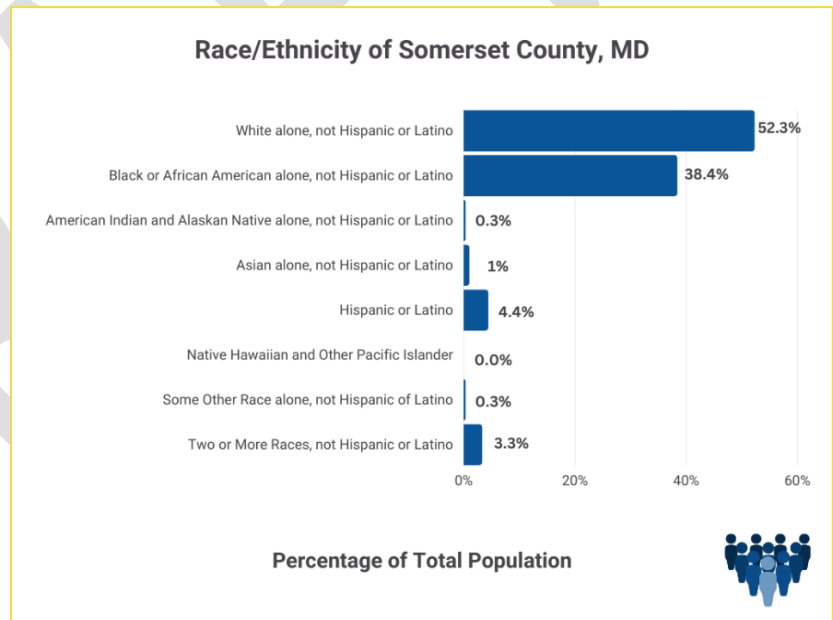


Figure 2-2: Race/Ethnicity of Somerset County, MD.

per job for Somerset County was \$39,652 (in current dollars). The average wage increased to \$54,689 in 2021, which translates to a 37.9% change. This change is depicted in Table 2-3, below.

Table 2-3.

Average Wage (current Dollars) per Job in Somerset County, Maryland: 2011 to 2021											
2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% of Change 2011-2021
\$39,652	\$39,853	\$40,744	\$41,802	\$43,397	\$43,575	\$45,997	\$45,416	\$49,184	\$53,714	\$54,689	37.9%

Source: Data extracts prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, Projections and State Data Center, from U.S. BEA & Table CAINC6N, CAEMP25N, January 2023.

2.5 School Enrollment

According to Somerset County’s Public Schools’ website, total student enrollment in grades K through 12 for the Fall of 2021 was 2,565, compared to 2,681 in 2011. The Maryland Department of Planning projects enrollment to increase 11.1% to 2,850 by 2031. This upward trend is consistent with the projected population increase for Somerset County by 2030 (Section 2.1).

2.6 Housing

Total housing units constructed in Somerset County increased significantly in 2014 and 2015 as shown on Table 2-4. This increase resulted from the construction of multi-family housing units which were primarily apartments constructed in proximity to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) campus. There were 55 housing units constructed per year on average between 2011 and 2021.

The median residential sale price* in Somerset County increased by 25.4% overall between 2011 and 2021, from \$147,500 to \$185,000. Values for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021 may indicate an emerging upward trend (Figure 2-3).¹

* Arms-length transactions only.



Figure 2-3: Median Residential Sale Price, Somerset County, MD.

¹ Maryland Department of Planning, from MD Property View. Prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, July 2022.

Table 2-4.

Total Housing Units Authorized for Construction in Somerset County, Maryland: 2011 to 2021											
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Residential	60	15	26	48	31	25	16	36	25	20	62
Multi-Family Housing	-	-	2	92	150	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Housing Units*	62	15	28	140	181	25	16	36	25	20	62

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. Manufacturing and Construction Statistics Division. Residential Construction Branch. Prepared by Maryland Department of Planning. Planning Services Division. 2021. <https://planning.maryland.gov/MSDC/Pages/newhh/2020/annual2020.aspx>

* Includes incorporated and unincorporated areas.

2.7 Agriculture

The total number of individual farms in Somerset County decreased from 301 in 2002 to 255 in 2017. However, the number of acres farmed increased from 56,650 to 59,440 over the same time period, an increase of 4.92%.²

2.8 Economic Development

Since its initial settlement, Somerset County has gone through several phases of economic development: a period of agricultural production during the first two centuries of its existence, a period of water-dependent industry growth and subsequent stability sparked by the Port of Crisfield, and a period of state-sponsored development associated with construction and operation of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and the Eastern Correctional Institution (ECI), both near Princess Anne.

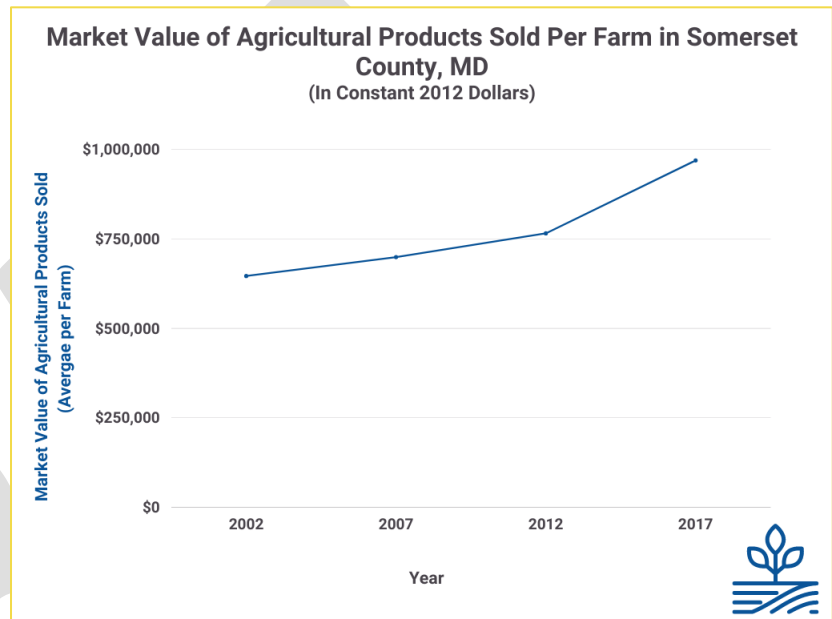


Figure 1-4: Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Per Farm in Somerset County, Maryland.

Source: Prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, July 2021. Extracted from 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017 Census of Agriculture.

Note: Data have been adjusted to 2012 constant dollars using the Producer Price Index (PPI).

As of 2021, Somerset County had an average civilian labor force of 8,824. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, unemployment in the County decreased from 8.4% in 2020 to 7.5% in 2021. State-wide unemployment rates for those years were 6.7% and 5.8%, respectively. The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS) results indicate that employees in Somerset County have a shorter commute time (24.2 minutes) than the typical U.S. worker (26.9 minutes). Residents commuting outside of the County to work make up 45.8% of the civilian labor force, as suggested by ACS 5-year Estimates (2016 to 2020).

As of 2021, Somerset County’s 414 private sector businesses employ 3,360 workers, which comprises 53.9% of the total civilian labor force.³ Major employers from 2021 to 2022 included:

² USDA National Agricultural Statistics System and prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning, July 2021.

³ Maryland Department of Commerce, Brief Economic Facts, Somerset County, Maryland. February 2022.

Table 2-5.

Major Employers – Somerset County, Maryland		
Major Employers (2020-2021)	Product/Service	# of Employees
The University of Maryland	Higher Education	889
Sysco Eastern Maryland	Food Products Distribution	390
Somerset Community Services	Services for the Disabled	360
Sherwin Williams/ Rubberset	Painting Supplies	220
Chesapeake Health Care	Medical Services	206
Tidal Health	Medical Services	200
Aurora Senior Living of Manokin	Nursing Case	175
Food Lion	Groceries	101
Southern Connection Seafood*	Seafood Processing & Wholesale Distribution	100
Peraton	Space and Missile Defense	70
Handy International*	Seafood Processing	70
Mountaire Farms	Chicken Egg Hatchery	62
Eastern Shore Drywall	Drywall & Insulation Contractors	60
Metompkin Bay Oyster*	Seafood Processing & Wholesale Distribution	60
McDonald's/Baxter Enterprises	Restaurants	50
Baxter Enterprises	Restaurant	39
Tidewater Express	Trucking Services	36
Hardee's	Restaurant	35
Millenium Microwave Corporation	Electric Sub System Manufacturing	25
PNC Financial Services Group	Banking Services	15
<i>Excludes post offices, state and local governments, national retail, and national foodservice; includes higher education.</i>		
<i>*Includes seasonal workers.</i>		

Source: 2022 Brief Economic Facts, Somerset County, Maryland - Maryland Department of Commerce

The Maryland Department of Commerce acknowledges Somerset County as a major seafood processor and poultry producer and commends its rich agricultural harvest. The County has two established Enterprise Zones – the City of Crisfield and the Town of Princess Anne – and participates in the One Maryland Tax Credit Programⁱ. The Somerset County Economic Development Commission (EDC) seeks to attract the aerospace industry, consider alternate energy projects, and achieve broadband coverage throughout the County.

The ongoing Eastern Shore Pipeline expansion project brought natural gas service down from Salisbury (Wicomico County) alongside US Route 13. The pipeline continues through Princess Anne, terminating near ECI in Westover. Further expansion, up from Pocomoke City (Worcester County), is slated to serve the southern US Route 13 corridor. Development has begun on a 65-acre site in north Princess Anne on the west side of US Route 13. This site, slated for mixed-used development, is served by a new stoplight on US Route 13 at the intersection of UMES Boulevard.

An example of recent major economic development is the Crisfield-Somerset County Airport Hanger Project. The plan is to replace five hangers with one unit that can house 10 airplanes. AECOM, which is handling the planning and permitting, estimates the cost will be \$1 million for which Somerset County has raised \$850,000 from state sources as of the beginning of 2023. Improvements in the last few years include a self-serve fuel pump, an ADA compliant bathroom and the office was painted and furnished in cooperation with UMES. The airport layout plan was also updated and approved by the FAA.

ⁱ [The One Maryland Tax Credit Program](#) is an income tax credit for businesses that invest in an economic development project in a Tier 1 County and create a minimum number of qualified jobs. The amount of tax credit a business qualifies for depends on the number of jobs it creates and qualified costs it incurs.