A Demographic Exploration of Frederick County Comparing US Census Bureau and Frederick County Planning Division Population Estimates

Welcome to the August, 2005 edition of "A Demographic Exploration of Frederick County." This month, the focus will be on updated population and housing unit estimate statistics of Frederick County. The US Census Bureau released its' annual population and housing unit estimates in July, 2005. For further information on the demographics and other statistics of Frederick County, please visit:
http://www.co.frederick.md.us/planning/Demographics/Demographics.htm

In July 2005, the US Census Bureau released updated population estimates. This month's article will focus on the information and statistics provided by the US Census Bureau and how they compare to the statistics of the Frederick County Planning Division.

All population estimates are an approximate total. Everyday people are moving, being born, and dying. The cultural processes of our mobility and our life cycles affect the number of people living within a given boundary at a given time. Hence, it is virtually impossible for the US Census or the County of Frederick to know exactly how many people live in this County. The best way we can estimate the number of people living within the boundary of Frederick County is through a series of formulas and methodologies. A methodology is a set of principals and statistical formulas used to calculate a population. The Frederick County Division of Planning and the US Census Bureau use different methodologies to calculate their population estimates.

Due to the different methodologies used, the totals for the population estimates may not be the same. The purpose of this article is not to delve into the different methodologies themselves, but to let people know that the population estimate totals are going to be different. The different ways or methodologies used to obtain population estimates will result in various totals. For example, according to the US Census Bureau, from July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004 Frederick County grew by 21,074 people. This is an average of 4,215 new residents per year. According to the Division of Planning, Frederick County had 21,352 new residents between July 1, 2000 and July 1, 2004. This is represents 4,270 new residents annually (Figure 1).

Comparison of US Census and Frederick County Population Estimates						
	July 1, 2000	July 1, 2001	July 1, 2002	July 1, 2003	July 1, 2004	Change July 1, 2000 to July 1, 2004
US Census	196,579	202,388	209,103	213,623	217,653	21,074
Frederick County Planning Division	197,465	204,691	210,156	214,269	218,817	21,352
Difference	-886	-2,303	-1,053	-646	-1,164	-278

Figure1.

According to the US Census Bureau, on July 1, 2004, Frederick County was still the 7th largest County in Maryland. 4% of Maryland's residents call Frederick County home. It is also

one of the fastest growing Counties in Maryland. The population increased 11% from 2000 to 2004 (Figure 2). When comparing Frederick County's population to other County's in the region it is best to use the US Census Bureau's population estimates. The US Census Bureau creates population estimates on the national, state, and local levels. This makes for a cleaner and more accurate comparison. The Division of Planning only calculates the population of Frederick County, no other jurisdiction. Most other counties in Maryland work the same way. Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and many others calculate their own population estimates.

The 7 Largest Counties in Maryland			
	July 1, 2004	July 1, 2000	Change July 1, 2000 - 2004
Montgomery County	921,690	873,341	48,349 (6%)
Prince George's County	842,967	801,515	41,452 (5%)
Baltimore County	780,821	755,995	24,826 (3%)
Anne Arundel County	508,572	491,347	17,225 (4%)
Howard County	266,738	249,576	17,162 (7%)
Harford County	235,594	219,506	16,088 (7%)
Frederick County	**217,653**	**196,579**	**21,074 (11%)**

Figure 2.

The US Census Bureau publishes annual population estimates; however, the estimates are one year behind. They are also only annual estimates. In July 2005 the US Census Bureau released its' annual population estimates for 2004. The Frederick County Planning Division publishes population estimate updates every January and July for the current year. For the most current population estimate and for small time interval information it is best to use the Frederick County estimates (Figure 3).

Population Estimates Calculated by the Frederick County Division of Planning		
Date	Frederick County	Increase 2000 – 2005
July 1, 2005	223,036	2,307
January 1, 2005	220,729	1,912
July 1, 2004	218,817	2,097
January 1, 2004	216,720	2,451
July 1, 2003	214,269	2,462
January 1, 2003	211,807	1,651
July 1, 2002	210,156	2,448
January 1, 2002	207,708	3,017
July 1, 2001	204,691	2,276
January 1, 2001	202,415	4,950
July 1, 2000	197,465	N/A

Figure 3.

Using locally calculated statistics can sometimes offer the best accuracy. For example, in the town of Burkittsville there were 171 residents according to the 2000 US Census. With only 171 people in this area it is very easy to keep track of how many people move, are born, or die

within this community. The statically formulas processed through the US Census Bureau will not necessarily be able to portray such accurate data. However, at this time the Frederick County Planning Division does not compile population estimates for the municipalities within its' boundary. Hopefully this will be changing in the future as the Planning Division receives and maintains more data at these smaller scales. The only jurisdiction the County Planning Division office estimates is Frederick City.

According to the US Census Bureau, Frederick City has lost its 2nd largest city in Maryland status. Frederick City is now the 4th largest city in Maryland. Rockville and Gaithersburg have now surpassed Frederick City in population. However, Frederick City only trails by 91 people (Figure 4).

The Top 5 Cities in Maryland According to the US Census Bureau			
	July 1, 2004	July 1, 2000	Increase 2000 - 2004
Baltimore city	636,251	648,554	-12,303
Gaithersburg city	58,091	53,044	5,047
Rockville city	57,100	47,824	9,276
Frederick city	57,009	53,103	3,906
Bowie city	53,840	51,655	2,185

Figure 4.

Using different methodologies will result in differing totals. The US Census Bureau and the Frederick County Division of Planning use different methodologies to estimate the population of Frederick County and its' municipalities. The annually updated population estimates published by the US Census Bureau are very informative. They offer a way to compare different areas within Maryland or the nation. However, they are only updated annually and lag behind one year. The Frederick County Division of Planning estimates allow for more local information and data to be involved in the estimating process and offer a current biannual look at the population development within the County. To find out more about how the US Census Bureau conducts their population estimates please visit their website at www.census.gov. For further information on the methodology used by Frederick County please contact Amber DeMorett at 301-694-1155.