Section VIII

Demographics

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Demographics in Hampton Roads

Hampton Roads was the 37th most populous metropolitan area in 2017, behind San Jose, Austin, and Nashville, and ahead of Providence, Milwaukee, and Jacksonville. The region's population grew to 1.73 million in 2017, adding just under 2,000 individuals to the region. While the region's population growth is steady, it lags behind several of its reference MSAs. The Hampton Roads region has trailed national and state levels of population growth since the early 1990s.

Hampton Roads has consistently had a high level of births relative to deaths in the region, which in theory should lead to a much higher population growth. On average, the region has experienced significant out-migration (on average, 1,350 persons per year for the last 10 years). Since this region has low levels of unemployment, it is theorized that this out-migration is driven by military families that start families in this region, but move as they leave the service.

The share of the population 65 and older remains fairly small in Hampton Roads, at just 13.8% in 2016, but this share has increased from 10% in 2000, likely because of the declining presence of military personnel and aging of the national population. While not as significant as in the U.S. overall, this has pushed the region's dependency ratio to 65.5% from a low of 61.5% in 2011. The dependency ratio indicates the number of potential dependents (persons 65 and older, as well as minors) an economy needs to support for every person in their prime working age (persons aged 20-65). It has traditionally been difficult for regions with a higher dependency ratio to make investments and grow their economy, although several factors can mitigate these risks.

Another change over time has been that the number of females has surpassed males in the region's population. This is likely derived by the decreasing number of military personnel in the region and the growth of the rest of the population and economy.

With some slight differences, the occupational mix in Hampton Roads mirrors that of the nation, with a slightly higher percentage employed in engineering and architecture occupations. This is related to the needs of the federal government presence in the region, including both the Department of Defense and research institutions.

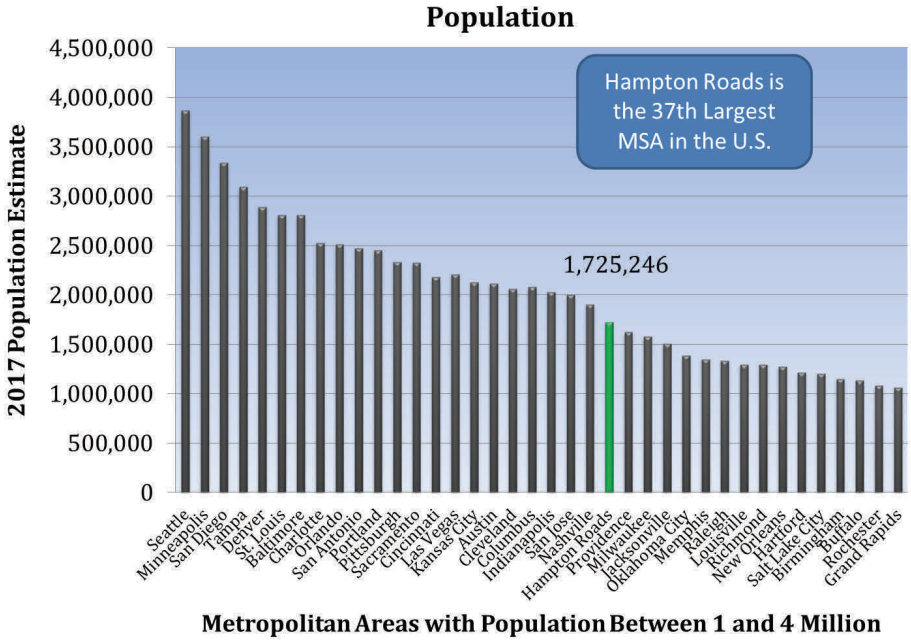
Figure 8.1 Population of Hampton Roads and Reference Metro Areas

Why is it important?

Population provides a context for understanding many economic and social indicators.

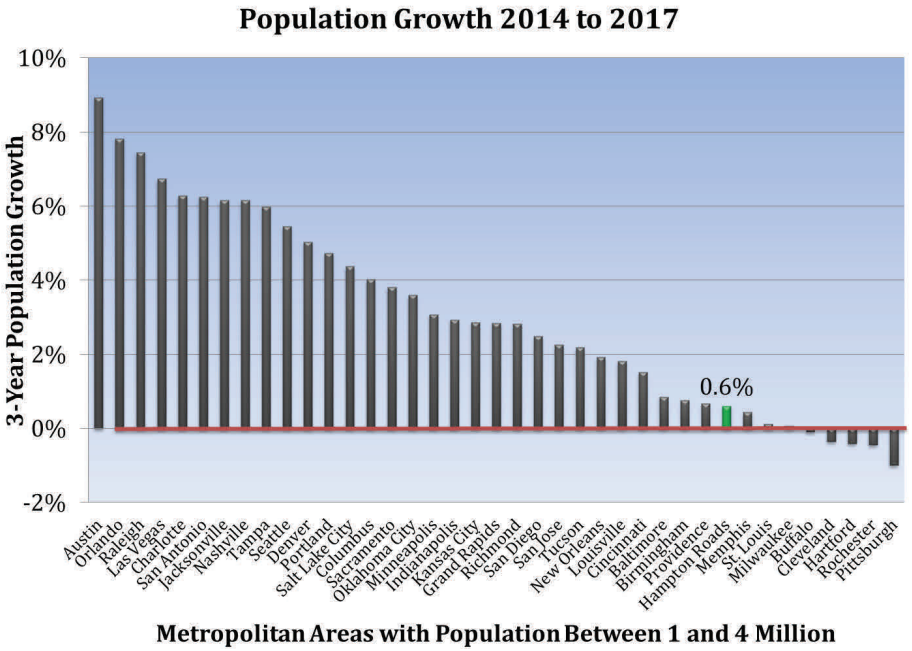
How are we doing?

With a population of 1.7 million persons, Hampton Roads is the 37th largest metropolitan area in the country. It was 36th just six years ago, but Nashville has been growing very rapidly for a number of years and moved past Hampton Roads in 2011.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, HRPDC

Figure 8.2 3-Year Population Growth Rate of Hampton Roads and Reference Metro Areas



Why is it important?

Population growth is indicative of the relative attractiveness of a region. Regions that have a robust economy often have rapid population growth as they attract new residents.

How are we doing?

Over the past three years, Hampton Roads has grown, but not as quickly as many similar sized metro areas. Some areas that have seen high levels of population growth include Austin, Orlando, and Raleigh.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, HRPDC

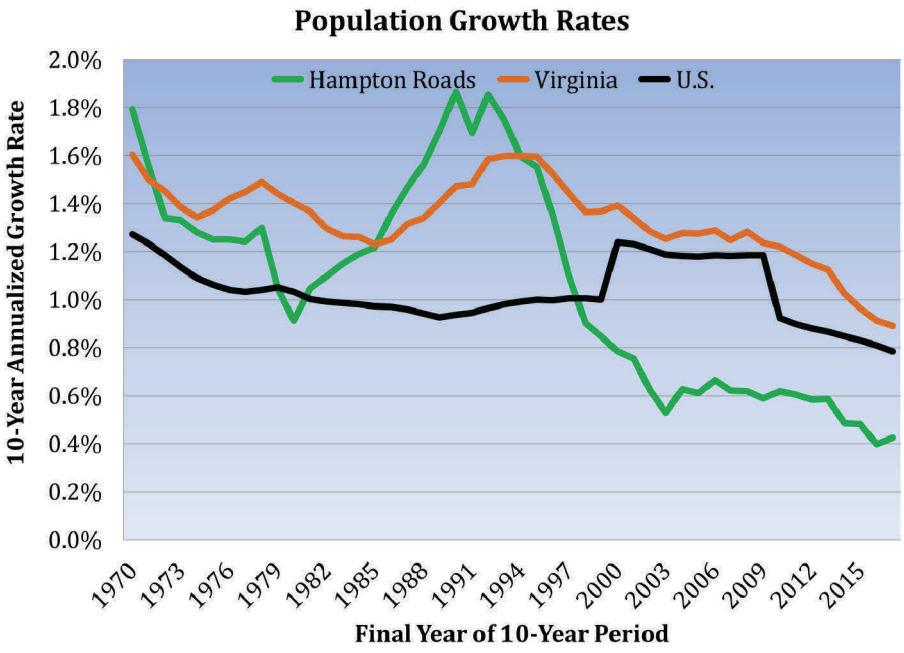
Figure 8.3 Population Growth Rates in Hampton Roads, Virginia, and the U.S.

Why is it important?

Population growth tracks closely with other expressions of economic growth. Changes in population can impact employment and income statistics. Smoothing the growth for ten years allows for observation of underlying trends.

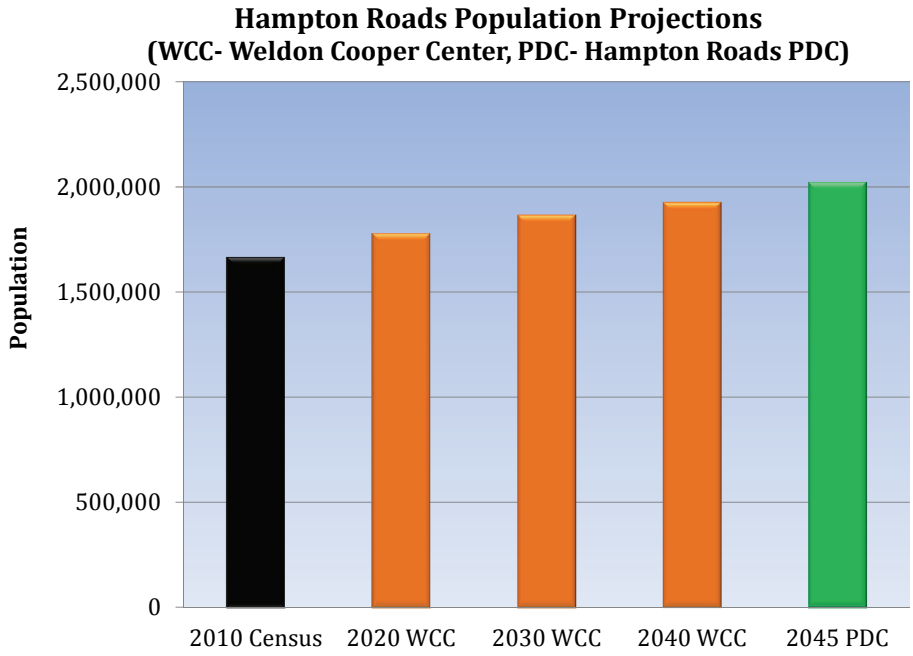
How are we doing?

Hampton Roads has seen high levels of population growth when the federal government invests heavily in defense, such as during the 1960s and again at the end of the 1980s. Since the 1990s Hampton Roads' population growth has lagged behind that of Virginia and the nation.



Source: Weldon Cooper Center, U.S. Census Bureau, HRPDC

Figure 8.4 Projected Hampton Roads Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Weldon Cooper Center, HRPDC

Why is it important?

While long-term forecasting is not an exact science, it is important to look at potential population growth to estimate needed infrastructure, housing, and services in the region.

How are we doing?

Hampton Roads' population growth has been consistent over the long-term trend. While there are concerns about the future of defense spending and its impact on population growth, projected growth in employment in the region suggests that the population will continue its slow but steady expansion.

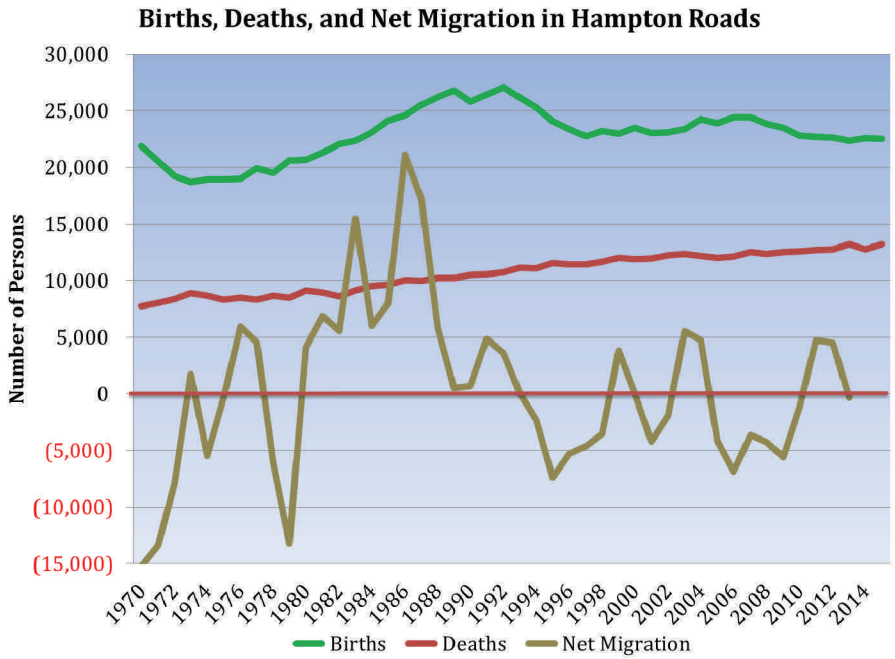
Figure 8.5 Components of Population Change in Hampton Roads

Why is it important?

Changes in regional population are due to births, deaths, and migration. Reviewing the components of population provides a clearer picture of changes in a region's demographics.

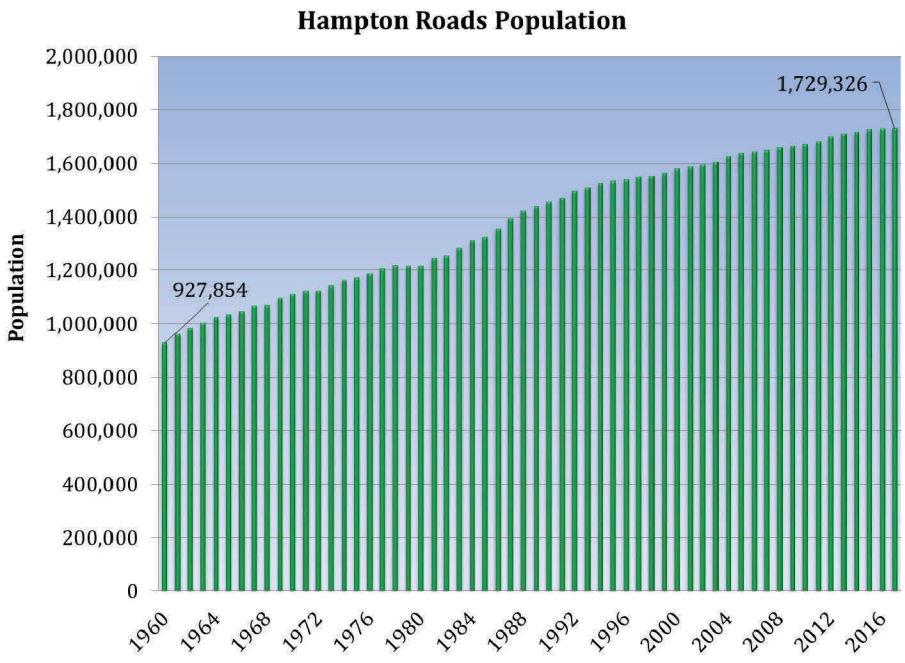
How are we doing?

Hampton Roads continues to see significant natural increases. While the region's birthrate is higher than its death rate, several periods of negative migration have prevented the region from experiencing high levels of population growth. Many servicemembers enter and leave the region each year as a result of military orders and deployments.



Source: Weldon Cooper Center, Virginia Department of Health, HRPDC

Figure 8.6 Hampton Roads Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Weldon Cooper Center, HRPDC

Why is it important?

Total population indicates the attractiveness of the region in terms of economics and quality of life. Larger populations also mean larger markets, which is important for attracting development and businesses.

How are we doing?

Population has grown steadily over the past 53 years, with the exception of slight declines in 1979 and 1980.

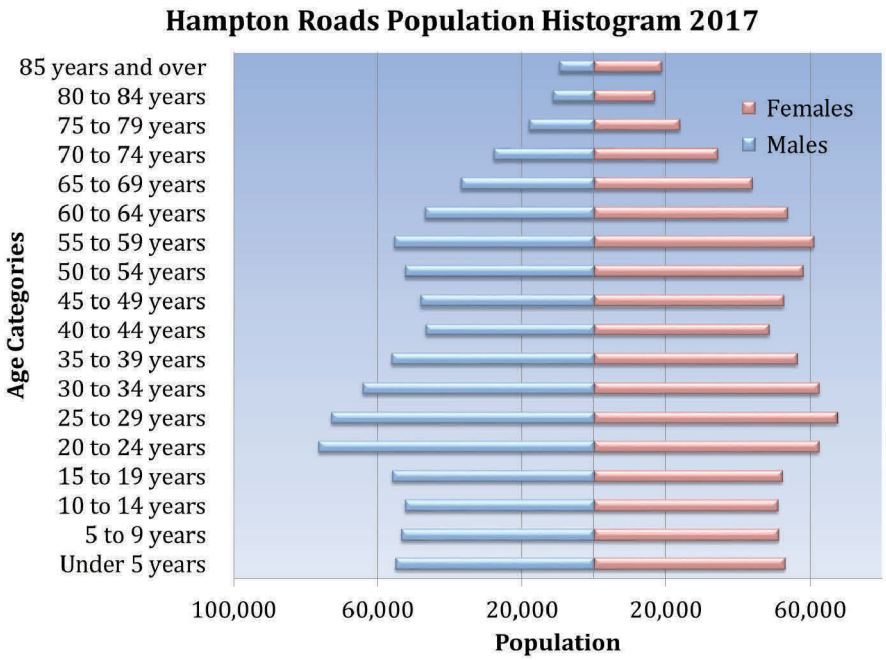
Figure 8.7 Age Distribution of Hampton Roads Population

Why is it important?

The age distribution of a region's population has social and economic implications. It provides insight into the need for family and senior services, as well as indicates the availability of labor. Growing populations have a histogram that looks like a pyramid.

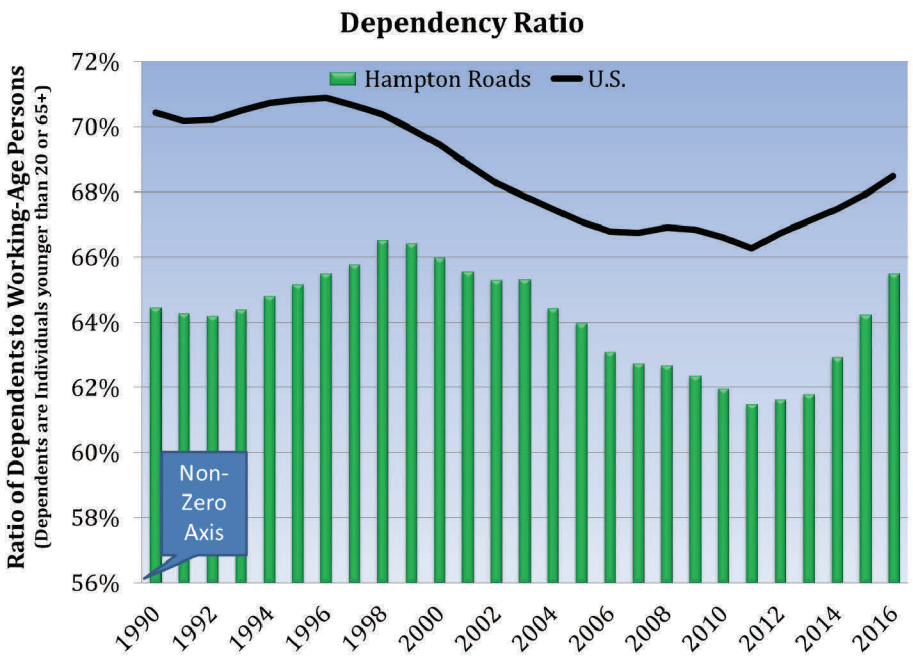
How are we doing?

Hampton Roads does not have a rapidly expanding population of minors, nor does it have a large elderly population. Rapid growth is seen for the 20-24 and the 25-29 age groups, which is related to military personnel stationed in the region.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, HRPDC

Figure 8.8 Dependency Ratio in Hampton Roads and the U.S.



Source: Regional Economic Modeling Inc., HRPDC

Why is it important?

This illustrates the extent to which the working age population supports dependents (both children and adults). The size of the dependency ratio has a causal link to GDP growth.

How are we doing?

The dependency ratio has increased since the onset of the Great Recession, both nationally and regionally, driven by baby boomers moving into retirement age. While the population shifts have been small in absolute terms, increasingly fewer workers are supporting a larger population of dependents.

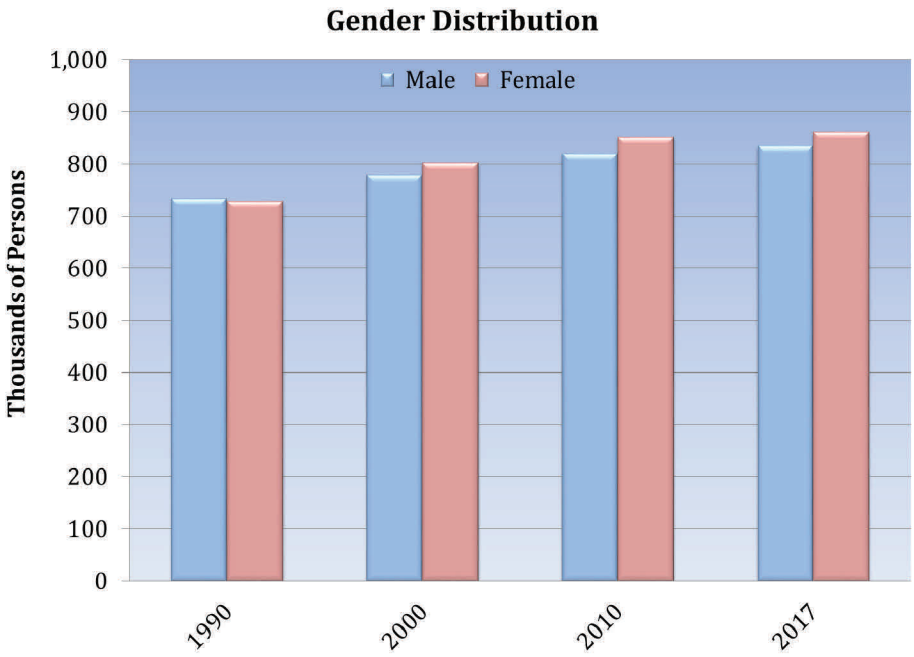
Figure 8.9 Gender Distribution of the Hampton Roads Population

Why is it important?

Men and women require distinctive services, tend to pursue different occupations, and impact the social and economic landscape in a unique manner.

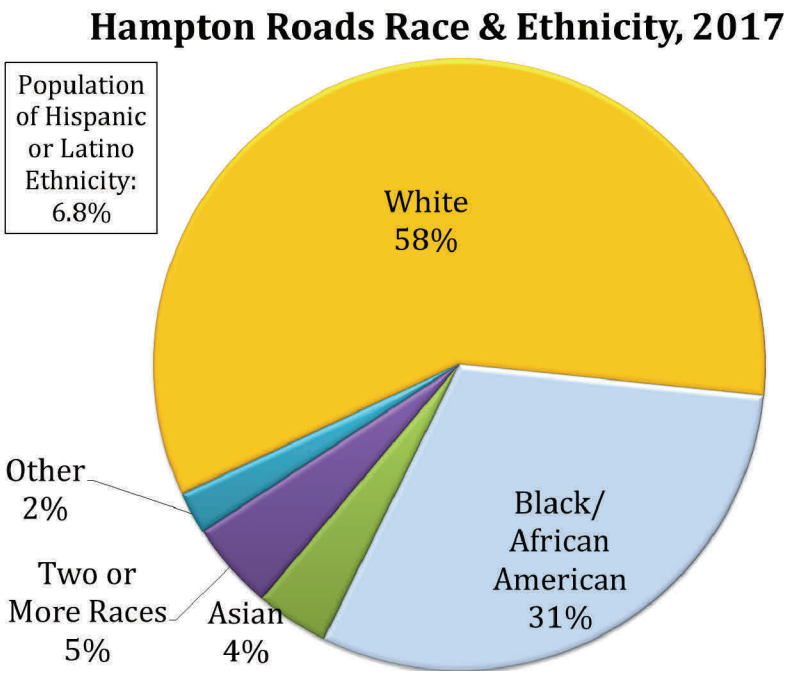
How are we doing?

Since 1992, the number of women in Hampton Roads has surpassed the number of men. Females in Hampton Roads now outnumber males by a substantial margin.



Source: Regional Economic Modeling Inc., HRPDC

Figure 8.10 Race and Ethnicity in Hampton Roads



Source: American Community Survey, HRPDC

Why is it important?

Understanding racial and ethnic diversity is important in order to ensure equal opportunities for all persons. One should employ localized diversity statistics when evaluating regional employment trends.

How are we doing?

Hampton Roads has a significant African American population relative to that of the Nation, as well as a smaller percentage of the population of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity than the U.S. average. It is notable that the percentage of the population indicating they have Hispanic or Latino ethnicity increased from 6.5% in 2016.

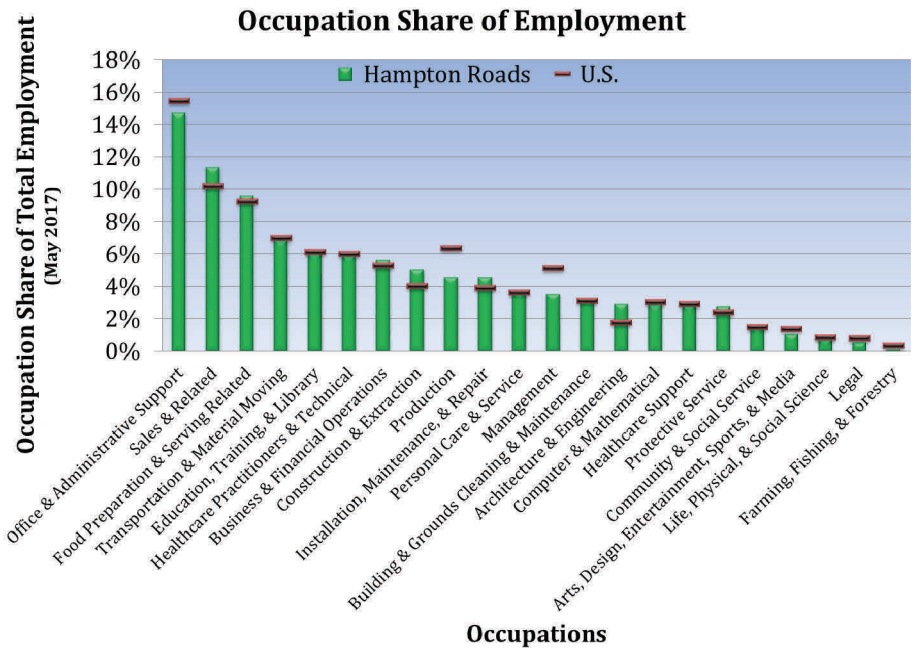
Figure 8.11 Distribution of Occupations in Hampton Roads

Why is it important?

Employment is often classified by industry, although persons seeking employment typically search by occupation. A single industry can capture diversity in workforce needs and potential incomes. Examining occupational distribution allows for a more precise analysis of the region's workforce.

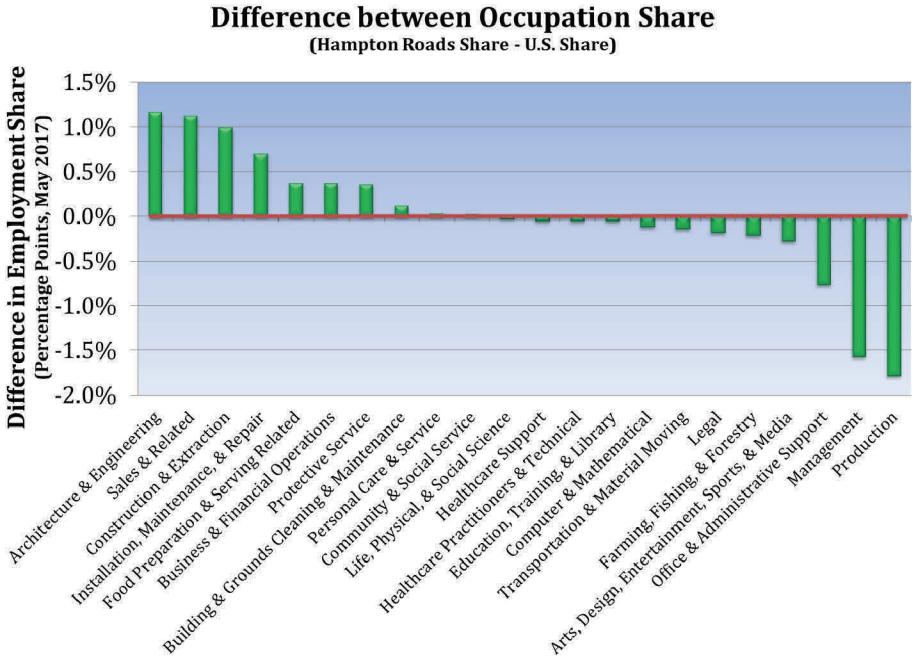
How are we doing?

Hampton Roads has significant diversity within occupations available to its residents, ranging from office and administrative jobs that comprise 14.9% of the region's employment to farming, fishing, and forestry that employ 0.1%.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, HRPDC

Figure 8.12 Comparative Occupation Percentage for Hampton Roads and the U.S.



Why is it important?

The differences between the occupation mix in Hampton Roads and the U.S. indicate some of the differences in the underlying economy. This also reflects underlying education levels and areas of potential growth for the Hampton Roads workforce.

How are we doing?

Hampton Roads has a greater percentage of employment concentrated in architecture & engineering, as well as construction & extraction than the nation as a whole.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, HRPDC