



Population & COVID-19 Context

Prepared for United Way of Kennebec Valley

Presented by Plimpton Research
FEBRUARY 2021

Contents

Population

- Age
- Gender and Sexuality
- Race/Ethnicity
- Languages Spoken at Home
- Recent Immigrants
- People with Disabilities
- Languages Spoken

COVID-19 Context

- Census Pulse Surveys
- Unemployment Claims
- 211 Calls

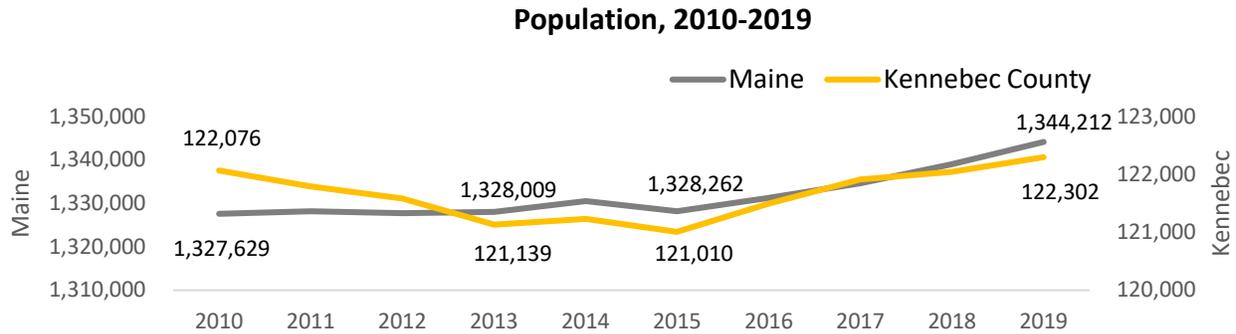
This paper provides background and context for United Way of Kennebec Valley (UWKV's) set of white papers on its three priority areas: Education, Financial Stability, and Health.

Covering 867 square miles, Kennebec County is the tenth largest of Maine's 16 counties by area and the fourth largest in population. Kennebec County is bordered by Androscoggin, Franklin, Lincoln, Sagadahoc, Somerset, and Waldo Counties. Maine's capital city of Augusta is the largest community in Kennebec County, with 18,605 people. Augusta is Maine's 12th most populous city. Waterville has a population of 16,646 people and is Maine's 15th largest municipality.

Augusta is the location of many employers such as state agencies, the headquarters of statewide organizations, law firms, financial institutions, other associated businesses, and the University of Maine at Augusta. The city is also the home of MaineGeneral Medical Center, the county's largest private employer, and many other health care providers.

Population

In recent years, Maine has become the oldest state in the U.S. Our birth rate is declining, and since 2013, deaths in Maine have outnumbered births each year. However, the state's population has continued to grow slowly, thanks to in-migration from other countries and other parts of the U.S. A recent Maine Children's Alliance analysis notes that every county except Aroostook saw more people move in than move out in 2019.

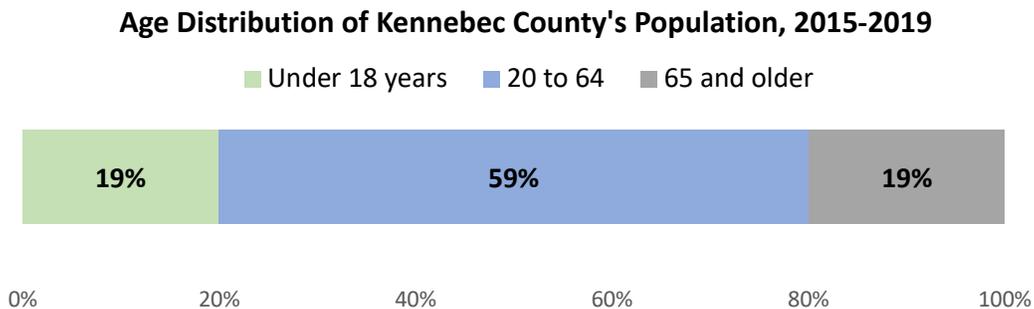


Source: U.S. Census Bureau Annual Estimates

In 2019, Kennebec County's population stood at 122,302 people, up slightly from 122,076 in 2010. The county's population dropped from 2010 to 2015 but has since rebounded (see the chart above). Kennebec has just under one-tenth of Maine's population.

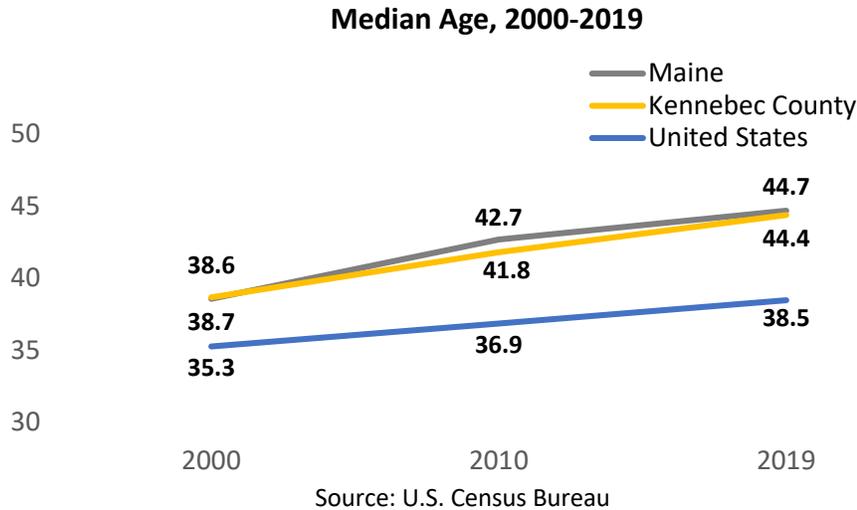
Age

Kennebec County's age distribution is similar to that of the whole state, with about one-fifth (19%) child residents, about one-fifth (19%) seniors, and three-fifths (59%) adults ages 20-64, as shown below. The median age in Kennebec County (44.4 years) is just below the state median of 44.7, but well above the national median age of 38.5 years.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Since 2000, the gap between the national and state/county median ages has grown, as shown in the following chart.



Gender and Sexuality

Overall, 51% of Kennebec County’s population is female and 49% is male. It is likely that nonbinary gender identities will be represented in Census and other official data sources in the near future. Schools are already beginning to offer gender categories other than female and male in data collection forms.

LGBTQ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning, terms used to describe sexual orientation or gender identity. The Movement Advancement Project estimates that 5% of Maine adults are LGBTQ, and that Maine’s LGBTQ population over age 12 numbers 60,000 people.

Race/Ethnicity

About 96% of Kennebec County residents are white, just above the state average of 94%. Nearly 2% of the county’s population is Hispanic or Latino, and about 1% each are Asian and Black or African American.

Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2015-2019

	Kennebec County	Maine
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.5%	0.6%
Asian	0.9%	1.1%
Black or African American	0.9%	1.4%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	1.6%	1.7%
White	95.7%	94.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Five-Year Estimates

Languages Spoken at Home

In Kennebec County, nearly 96% of residents typically speak only English at home. Among the 4% of residents who speak other languages at home, 0.8% speak Spanish, 2.5% speak other Indo-European languages, and 0.8% speak Asian language (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019).

In the 2019 Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, the proportions of students reporting that anything other than English is spoken at home were:

- 6% of high school students at Cony and
- 2% of Gardiner Area High School students.

Recent Immigrants

The Capital Area New Mainers Project (CANMP) estimates that about 100 families—or about 525 people—from other countries have moved to Augusta since 2015. Sixty of the families are from Iraq, 20 are from Syria, and 20 are from other countries including Afghanistan, Morocco, Rwanda, and Mexico. Most recent immigrant families are living in southern parts of Augusta. CANMP staff expect five to seven new immigrant families to move to Augusta each year going forward.

People with Disabilities

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that about 22% of adults in Maine have some type of disability. Assuming the same rate as the state average, Kennebec County would have about 21,000 disabled adults. Statewide, about 11% of adults have cognition disabilities and 10% have mobility disabilities.

COVID-19 Context

2020 was marked by the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which caused many businesses and schools to shut down temporarily in March. While some work and learning has moved online, many aspects of pre-pandemic life remain dormant. Limited post-pandemic data are available, but we know that jobs and incomes have been disrupted for many people. The impacts have not been equally distributed, and some groups of people, geographic areas, and industries have been damaged much more than others.

A few data sources provide a snapshot of COVID-19 impacts.

Census “Pulse” Surveys

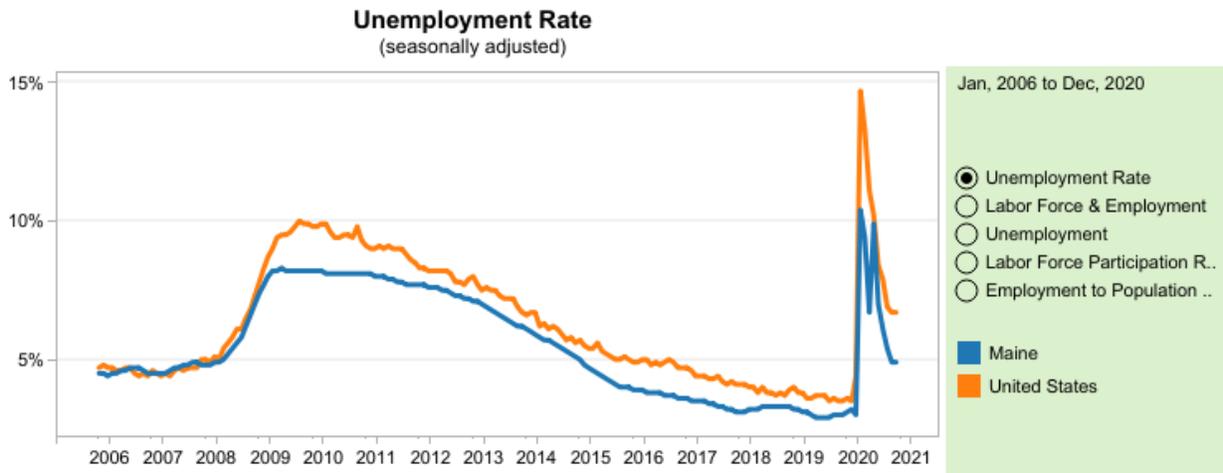
The U.S. Census Bureau has been conducting “Pulse” surveys of representative American households since April 2020. These surveys have found that Mainers are slightly less likely to have faced economic effects from the pandemic than residents of many other states. The effects have still been widespread here. The latest survey found that, in Maine:

- 37% of households have a member who has substituted some or all of their typical in-person work for telework because of the coronavirus pandemic.

- 29% of adults live in households where it has been somewhat or very difficult to pay for usual household expenses during the coronavirus pandemic, compared with 35% nationally.
- 22% of Mainers expect someone in their household to have a loss in employment income in the next 4 weeks. The national average is 27%.
- 31% of adults delayed medical care due to the pandemic.

Unemployment Claims Data

The trend in unemployment claims shows the abrupt and severe disruption in employment caused by the pandemic. Maine’s unemployment rate spiked in April 2020 from a historically low rate to well above the highest level of the Great Recession in 2008. The impact nationally was even more severe, as shown below. The latest Maine unemployment rate of 4.9% in December 2020 was high compared with 3.0% in December 2019, but already much lower than the 2020 peak of 10.4% in April.



Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information

At the county level, Kennebec saw an unemployment rate of 4.3% in December 2020, up from 2.8% the year before. Unemployment in Kennebec County is a bit lower than the state average of 4.7% (see the following table).

Unemployment rates	Kennebec County	Maine	Maine County Range
December 2019	2.8%	2.9%	2.2% - 4.5%
December 2020	4.3%	4.7%	3.8% - 6.3%

Source: Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information

211 Calls

211 Maine is a free, confidential information and referral service that connects people of all ages across Maine to local services. United Way of Kennebec Valley’s 211 call data shows that the call

volume more than doubled from 2,043 total calls in 2019 to 5,426 calls in 2020. In 2020, the top reason for calling was COVID-19 control, accounting for 47% of all 211 calls. There were 2,537 COVID-19 control calls, more than the total number of 211 calls for any reason in 2019. In 2020, 211 received:

- 249 calls about rent payment assistance, up from 145 calls in 2019 (a 70% increase).
- An additional 93 calls about rent payment assistance coded as COVID-19 related.
- 115 calls about food pantries, up from 83 calls in 2019.
- Nearly twice as many calls about homeless motel vouchers (89 calls) as in 2019 (52 calls).

Sources

Augusta Housing Authority, December 2020, *Augusta Housing Market Summary, Vision & Best Practices*, Levine Planning Strategies, LLC

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Disability & Health U.S. State Profile Data for Maine*, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/maine.html>

KIDS Count Data Center, Population Reference Bureau analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Household Pulse Surveys, <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#USA/1/0/char/0/271>

Kennebec Valley Community Action Program, *Community Needs Assessment 2018*, www.kvcap.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/KVCAP-2018-Community-Needs-Assessment-Final-Report.pdf

Maine Children's Alliance, *Maine Demographics: Recent Shifts and Opportunities for the Future*, January 2021, [www.mekids.org/site/assets/files/1731/maine childrens alliance demographics data brief 2020.pdf](http://www.mekids.org/site/assets/files/1731/maine_childrens_alliance_demographics_data_brief_2020.pdf)

Maine Department of Labor, Center for Workforce Research and Information, Unemployment and Labor Force, www.maine.gov/labor/cwri/laus.html

Maine Developmental Disabilities Commission, *Annual Report Submitted to the 130th Legislature*, January 2021, [www.maineddc.org/images/Reports/MDDC Annual Rpt to the Legislature 2021.pdf](http://www.maineddc.org/images/Reports/MDDC_Annual_Rpt_to_the_Legislature_2021.pdf)

Movement Advancement Project, Equality Maps, *Maine's Equality Profile*, [www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/profile state/ME](http://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/profile_state/ME)

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey Demographic and Housing Estimates, <https://data.census.gov/>

U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties in Maine: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019, www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2010s-counties-total.html

U.S. Census Bureau, Household "Pulse" Survey interactive data map, <https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/hhp/#/>

United Way of Kennebec Valley, *211 Maine: Top 20 Call Categories*, 2019 and 2020 reports