

## Element: Population

The Population Element provides descriptive data and analysis of the residents of the City of Folly Beach. This information can be used by the City, utility providers, and other levels of government, as well as private interests, to determine the types and levels of services demanded in Folly Beach. Currently the daily population of Folly Beach is mostly transient. Most of the people on the island during most of the year are tourists. The long term population of Folly is made up of mostly full time, resident homeowners. However, there is also a large group of full time, resident renters. Over the next 10 years, the City seeks to promote a balance between full time residents and visitors, maintain demographic and socio economic diversity, and attract families to live on Folly Beach.

**Five Year Update:** Since 2015 there has been a perceived decline in long term renters on the island. An updated Census count is not available to document this decline. However, the loss of older homes and conversion existing houses to short term rentals has undoubtedly impacted this population. Other population updates noted in this section are taken from the *2019 Community Profile* produced by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). Esri's products are used by the Berkeley Dorchester Charleston Council of Governments for regional planning. They are developed from a variety of sources including the latest US Census, administrative records, and private datasets.

### Demographics

The permanent population of Folly Beach was listed at 2,617 at the time of the *2010 Census*. This represents a growth of 501 people or 23% over the population counted in the *2000 Census*. The growth in permanent population continues a trend that began in 1970 and accelerated in the 1990's as Folly Beach began to grow and redevelop. Although permanent population growth has been steady, it has not met the projections laid out in the original *1998 Comprehensive Plan* which predicted a total 2015 population of 2,981. Future increases in the number of permanent residents may be limited by the lack of land to build new housing units and the increasing cost of property and insurance on the island.

**Five Year Update:** ESRI estimates that the 2019 population of Folly Beach is 2,894. This would represent an additional 277 people moving to the island since 2010 which translates to almost a 10% increase in total population. If these estimates are verified during the 2020 Census, it will put the City within 100 people of hitting the 2015 population estimates from the first comprehensive plan produced in 1998.

*TABLE 3: Population By Age* breaks down the population of Folly Beach by age groups in five year intervals. Although Folly Beach is generally considered to have an older population, the numbers show that 11.4% of the permanent residents are under the age of 19. This number highlights the importance of planning for youth activities and recreational facilities on the island. Young adults and young professionals aged 20 to 39 make up 27.0% of the population on Folly Beach. At just under 1/3 of the population, this age group represents a substantial bloc. Although the population in these age groups represents the most likely ages of young families, the number of children and teenagers on the island has decreased since the *2005 Comprehensive Plan* when the 17 and under age group represented 15.2% of the population. Another significant change from the *2005 Plan* occurred in the 20-24 year old subgroup. In 2005 this group numbered 248. In the latest census there were only 140. This drop of 44% is most likely attributed to the decline in college aged residents as rents and property values have increased. It is interesting to note that the age distribution of adults over 20 seems to be relatively even. 27% of the population is aged 20 to 39, 32.4% of the population is aged 40-59, and 28.4% of the population is aged 60 and above. The largest age groups are 60 to 64 and 55 to 59 representing 10.3% and 9.9% of the population, respectively. The median age is 47.7 years, a sharp increase from the *2000 Census* which reported a median age of 41.1 years old.

TABLE 3: POPULATION BY AGE		
Age	Number	Percent
Under 5 years	78 <b>98</b>	3 <b>3.4</b>
5 to 9 years	60 <b>98</b>	2.3 <b>3.4</b>
10 to 14 years	84 <b>98</b>	3.2 <b>3.4</b>
15 to 19 years	75 <b>110</b>	2.9 <b>3.8</b>
20 to 24 years	140 <b>110</b>	5.3 <b>3.8</b>
25 to 29 years	251 <b>217</b>	9.6 <b>7.5</b>
30 to 34 years	191 <b>217</b>	7.3 <b>7.5</b>
35 to 39 years	148 <b>202</b>	5.7 <b>7</b>
40 to 44 years	181 <b>202</b>	6.9 <b>7</b>
45 to 49 years	173 <b>182</b>	6.6 <b>6.3</b>
50 to 54 years	235 <b>182</b>	9 <b>6.3</b>
55 to 59 years	258 <b>243</b>	9.9 <b>8.4</b>
60 to 64 years	269 <b>243</b>	10.3 <b>8.4</b>
65 to 69 years	204 <b>217</b>	7.8 <b>7.5</b>
70 to 74 years	108 <b>217</b>	4.1 <b>7.5</b>
75 to 79 years	67 <b>93</b>	2.6 <b>3.2</b>
80 to 84 years	43 <b>93</b>	1.6 <b>3.2</b>
85 years and over	52 <b>67</b>	2 <b>2.3</b>
Median age (years)	47.7	( X )

The male and female gender breakdown on Folly Beach is roughly equal with males representing 51.3% of the population and females 49.7%. The median age for females is 49.1 and for males 47 years old. Both genders are very similarly distributed across age groups with the exception of 15 to 24 year olds where females outnumber males almost 2 to 1. The situation is reversed in the over 60 population with a slightly less than 2 to 1 ratio of males to females.

**Five Year Update:** Updated figures show in *Table 3* show that the estimated changes in population age distribution are relatively minor. The lower percentage of 20-29 year old residents could be seen as a confirmation of declining long term rentals to college students and recent graduates. Also, the increase in the percentages of age groups 0-19 and 30-44 could be seen as confirmation of the anecdotal increase in young families moving to the island.

TABLE 4: *Population By Race* presents a count of the different racial groups on Folly Beach. The population of the City continues to be overwhelmingly White with only 3.7% of the population listed as non white.

TABLE 4: POPULATION BY RACE		
RACE	Number	Percent
Total population	2,617	100
One Race	2,596	99.2
White	2,520	96.3
Black or African American	39	1.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	8	0.3
Asian	12	0.5
Asian Indian	3	0.1
Chinese	1	0
Filipino	1	0
Japanese	3	0.1
Other Asian	4	0.2
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	3	0.1
Other Pacific Islander	3	0.1
Some Other Race	14	0.5
Two or More Races	21	0.8
White; American Indian and Alaska Native	8	0.3
White; Asian	4	0.2
White; Black or African American	2	0.1
White; Some Other Race	2	0.1

Black or African Americans constitute 1.5% of the population, with no other racial group exceeding 1%. These numbers are consistent with the *2005 Plan* and illustrate that there has been little to no increase in racial diversity on Folly Beach in the last 10 years. Folly Beach remains a community whose racial demographics are drastically different from the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester region which has a non white population of well over 50%.

The *2010 Census* also presents data about households on Folly Beach and the relationships between the people living here. The latest data shows that 72.7% of the people living in Folly Beach households are either homeowners or spouses of the homeowner, 13.5% are children of the homeowner, 2.4% are other relatives of the homeowner, and 11.5% are non related. When households are broken down by type 47% are labeled as families (two or more people related by blood or marriage) and 53% as non family households. The *2005 Comprehensive Plan* showed a family to non family ratio 46% to 54%. This means that the number of families as a proportion to the total population is growing. However, the size of the families is shrinking. The average household size is 1.92

and represents a continuation in the trend of decreasing household size on Folly Beach. In 1980 the average household size was 2.07. The decrease in household size can be attributed to the decrease in the number of families with children on the island. The lack of convenient schools and the high cost of ownership may be partly responsible. Another trend that has continued on Folly is the increase of single person households. A very high percentage of the non family households on Folly are single member households. In 2010, 522 households were reported as having only one member. This is an increase of 46% from the 2000 Census report of 355 single households.

### Seasonal Population

Discussion about the population of Folly Beach is incomplete without an acknowledgement that the total population of Folly Beach should be considered the sum of both the permanent population and the seasonal population. Seasonal population growth occurs primarily between March and October and

peaks between June and September. The City maintains a list of rental registrations, which provides information on 618 homes that are registered as short-term rentals. These rentals have an average listed maximum occupancy of 8.5 people. Assuming even a modest 75% total occupancy, the short term rentals on the island have the potential of adding 5,253 people to the resident population on any given day. This is almost 200% more than the total number of permanent residents. This number is increased even further by the large numbers of day trippers to the island. No exact figures exist, but estimates given by the Public Safety Department are in the range of 8,000 and 11,000 thousand people on a typical summer day and between 15,000 and 20,000 on holiday weekends. The extreme difference between the permanent population and the actual daily population presents challenges for planning and operating the City. In particular, Public Works and Public Safety must be funded and staffed in such a way as to be able to scale up operations from June to September and then wind down during the slower months.

Five Year Update: Beginning in 2018 the City began tracking short term rentals with a new automated software that has increased compliance. For the 2019 year to day the City has issued 980 short term rental licenses. The highest number of rentals marked as actively advertised at any one time was 879. Applying the same 75% occupancy rate and average occupancy results in a peak rental population of 5,603 additional people temporarily on the island. The City has also been tracking vehicles onto and off the island for several years. The average number of cars coming onto Folly Beach now exceeds 1,000,000 per year.

### Population Projections

TABLE 5 Projections summarizes information provided by the Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments. It is based on projections covering the period between the 2010 and 2020 US Census. If the predictions in this chart hold true, Folly Beach will continue to grow in a manner consistent with the past. There will be a slow and steady increase in the number of households and families, the median age will rise as the population gets older, the average size of households will decrease, and the city will remain a predominately White community.

TABLE 5: PROJECTIONS	2010	2019
Population	2617	2933
Households	1363	1554
Families	641	764
Median Age	47.1	48.3
Household Size	1.92	1.89
Percent White	96.3	90.8