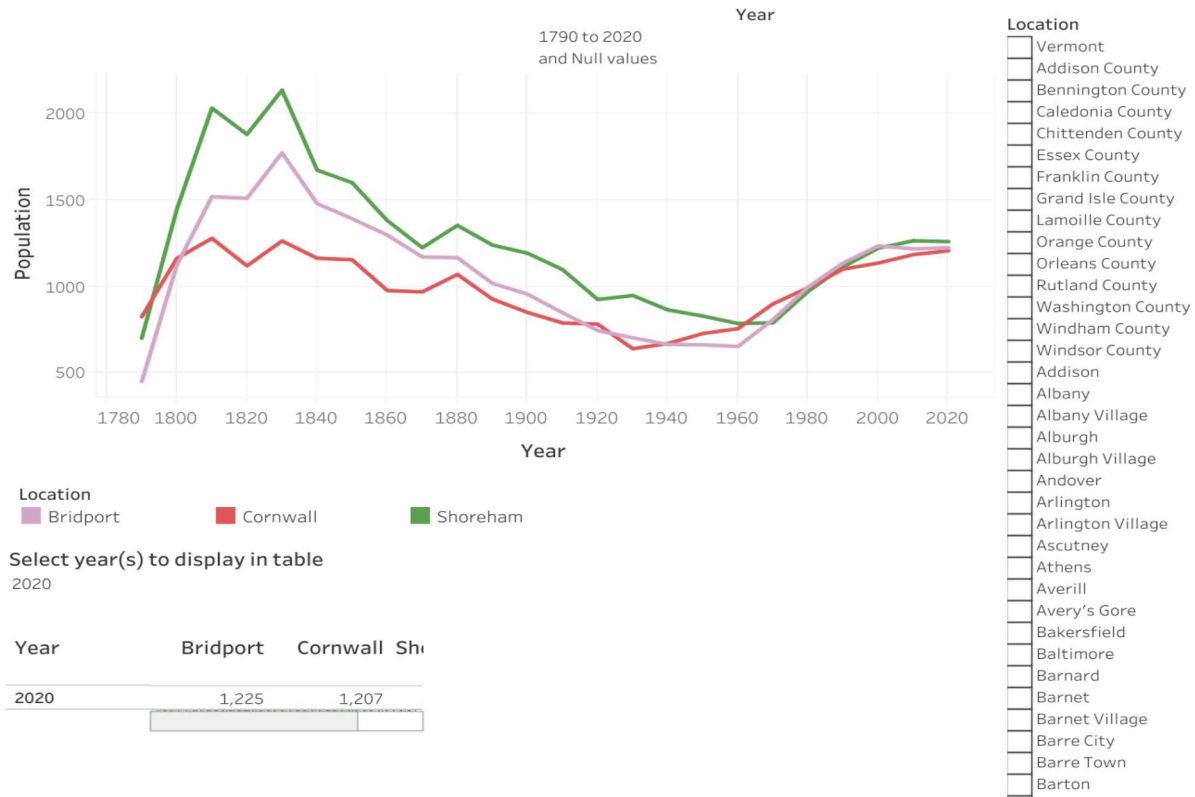Current and Historic Population

Cornwall's population grew only 1.9% from 2010-2020 to reach a total of 1207, the highest it has been since 1830. As shown by the chart below, Cornwall's population has risen and fallen, sometimes dramatically, following a pattern similar to neighboring towns. This was usually in response to economic conditions like the collapse of Vermont's sheep industry and the Depression. Cornwall's most dramatic growth came in the 1960's and 1970's when many urban dwellers "escaped" to Vermont's small towns. The uptick in the late 20th century was much more gradual.

Year
1790 to 2020
and Null values

Location
- Vermont
- Addison County
- Bennington County
- Caledonia County
- Chittenden County
- Essex County
- Franklin County
- Grand Isle County
- Lamoille County
- Orange County
- Orleans County
- Rutland County
- Washington County
- Windham County
- Windsor County
- Addison
- Albany
- Albany Village
- Alburgh
- Alburgh Village
- Andover
- Arlington
- Arlington Village
- Ascutney
- Athens
- Averill
- Avery's Gore
- Bakersfield
- Baltimore
- Barnard
- Barnet
- Barnet Village
- Barre City
- Barre Town
- Barton

Location
■ Bridport   ■ Cornwall   ■ Shoreham

Select year(s) to display in table
2020

Year	Bridport	Cornwall	Sh
2020	1,225	1,207	

Source:
U.S. Census Bureau: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (Table B01003), U.S. Decennial Census (for years 2010 and earlier)

Description:
Data set displays the inhabitants of a selected area. Data from 2010 and earlier are Census counts, which should include all members of population, with no margin of error calculated. ACS 5-year estimates also do not have margins of error at the state and county level; these controlled estimates are highly accurate and do not require a statistical test. Village population estimates are included within the estimate of the corresponding town, and should not be added together.

General Population Characteristics

Cornwall's population continues to age. According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) Five Year Estimates 2015-2019, Cornwall's median age was 53.2 years. In 2010 it was 46; almost 50 years ago in 1980, it was 28. Those residents over traditional retirement age now make up approximately 29% of Cornwall's population up from

17% in 2010. Meanwhile, the percentage of young people under 18 has dropped since 1980 though nowhere near as dramatically as the percentage of those over 65 has risen.[1]

ANALYSIS

Components of Population Change

The factors which affect where people will choose to live are so complex that there is no sure way to project population growth accurately. Given roughly half the present population in Cornwall is over 50, growth will be controlled to a great extent by in-migration. With 1207 residents in 2020, Cornwall has already just barely surpassed the Addison County Regional Planning Commission's minimum growth projection, an average percentage growth rate of 1.8%.

Ready access to jobs is one of the key determinants of population change. Cornwall has few employment opportunities so this has probably not been a crucial factor in drawing many new residents. Most commute to work outside the town. This may change thanks to changes in technology. Telecommuting had already allowed some residents to telecommute before the COVID-19 pandemic made this a much more general practice. With the improvements in the necessary infrastructure planned by Cornwall and the surrounding towns, newcomers may choose to live here no matter where they work.

Availability of land and the cost of new construction also impact a community's rate of growth. Cornwall still has open farmland which could be developed but prices per acre are high and, thanks to the pandemic, the costs of materials are high. This and the lack of rental properties limit the supply of workforce and affordable housing in town, more than likely contributing to fewer young people being able to move here. The potential closure of the school, despite the school age population holding fairly steady, and the lack of affordable childcare may also affect a young family's choice of where to live.

On the other hand, quality of life, community character and proximity to Middlebury and the College have drawn retirees to Cornwall and other towns in the area thanks to the recreational, cultural and educational opportunities college towns generally provide. This helps explain the rapid growth of the senior population and may continue to be one of the most important factors spurring Cornwall's growth. While the town could benefit from this if it finds a way to harness the time and expertise of the retirees to support community projects and improvements, it will also have to find ways to provide services to more elderly residents.

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[1] American Community Survey 2015-2019; Cornwall Town Plan 2013