

CHAPTER 1 POPULATION

1.1 Introduction

Census tracts are geographic divisions within the community, defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. They generally correspond to population density, i.e., smaller tracts for higher density areas, lower density tracts for lower density areas. Census tracts are divided further into planning districts. Districts have boundaries which roughly correspond to the shape of established villages or neighborhoods. For the purposes of this plan, the Town's single census tract (C.T. 414) will serve as the planning district.

Population and housing data are provided by census tract, thereby making the choice of C.T. 414 as the planning district logical for the Town. The rural character of the community, the very low density, scattered, residential development and the lack of definable neighborhoods supported use of a single planning district.

Best available data were used for statistics. However, some statistics cannot be extrapolated to current year estimates with confidence, and in those instances, 1980 Census figures were used.

Table 1-1 shows that the population increased rapidly from 1960 to 1970 with a 40 percent increase. The population has been increasing since 1970 but at a decreasing rate.

Table 1-1
Population Trends in Little Compton, 1950 - 1990

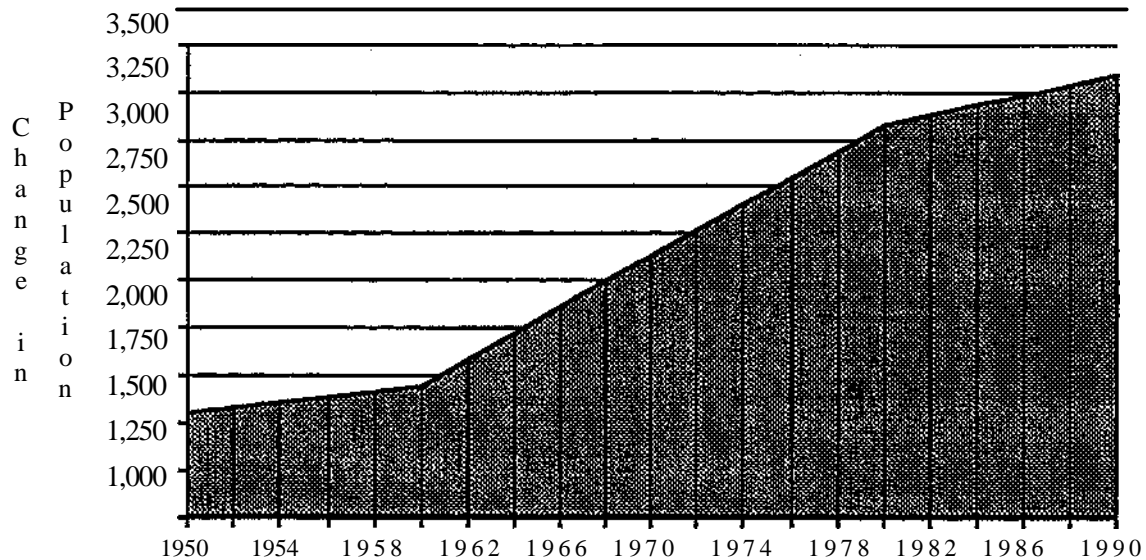
Year	Total Population	Percent Change
1950	1,556	-
1960	1,702	+9.38%
1970	2,385	+40.13%
1980	3,085	+29.35%
1990	3,339	+8.23%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

The 1990 population of 3,339 people represents nearly a 114 percent increase in the population since 1950, a 40 percent increase since 1970 and a 8 percent increase since 1980. Between 1980 and 1987, there were 326 births, and 247 deaths in Little Compton, a natural

increase of 79 persons.¹ Projections in Table 1-2, prepared by the Rhode Island Department of Administration Division of Planning, indicate the following population estimates for the upcoming years.

Figure 1-1
Population Trends in Little Compton, 1950 - 1990



Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Table 1 - 2
Population Projections to the Year 2020

Year	Total Population	Percent Change
1990 Census	3,339	
1990	3,492	4.5
1995	3,601	3.2
2000	3,718	3.2
2005	3,830	3.0
2010	3,953	3.2
2015	4,062	2.7
2020	4,171	2.6

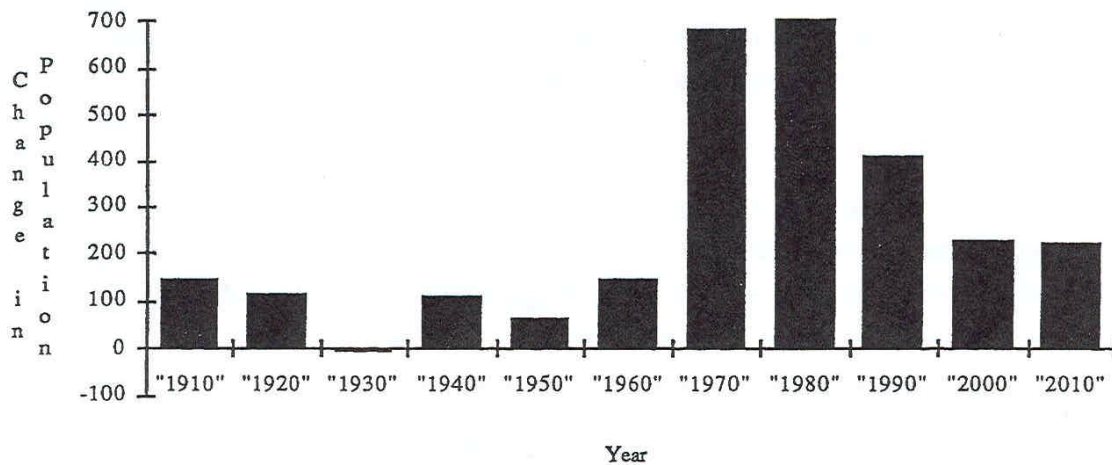
Source: R.I. Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning.

These figures suggest an increasing population but, one which will grow at a slower rate than in the 20 past years. A 13.3 percent increase in total population is estimated for the next twenty years (1990-2010) compared to a 46 percent increase for the past 20 years.

¹ United States Department of Commerce attached the following caveat to the 1990 housing and population figures - "The population counts set forth herein are subject to possible correction for undercount or overcount."

Figure 1-2 shows population growth by the actual change which occurred every ten years, to illustrate the rate of increase. Little Compton's rate of growth began to taper off after 1910 and actually declined slightly during the depression period between 1920 and 1930. Because Little Compton was primarily a farming community, it did not experience the great exodus of population which was prevalent in other New England towns, due to mill closures and loss of other types of employment. Between 1930 and 1960, growth remained between 64 and 146 persons per decade. In the two decades between 1960 and 1980, there were dramatic increases, in new residents, with an increase of 683 by 1970, and 700 by 1980. A much smaller increase was experienced between 1980 and 1990, around 254 people. Based on State future population estimates, the rate of growth will level out to about 6.4 percent per decade or about 220 people every ten years, and will have dropped to a 5.5 percent increase by the year 2020.

Figure 1-2
Actual Population Changes, 1920 to 2010



Sources: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980.- Projections, RI Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning.

1990 census figures show Little Compton's population to be 4.5 percent below the projected population. Building permit activity during the 1980's indicates Little Compton's population is 10 percent above the census figure of 3,339, and is 5.2 percent above the state projection of 3,492. A high percentage of seasonally occupied housing (34 percent in 1980) makes estimating current population difficult and further complicates population projections beyond 5 years.

Two different population projections to the year 2020 were made. Projection #2 is based on total housing units enumerated in the 1990 census, and projection #3 is based on the 1991 property revaluation conducted by Jerome Appraisal Company, Inc. Despite the uncertainties involved in making projections based on historical building trends they can provide the Town a glimpse of the possible future population based on what has happened in the past. Table 1-3 shows persons per unit rates for the Town from 1970 to the present

**Table 1-3
 Persons Per Housing Unit, 1970 - 1990**

Year	Population	Total Housing Units	Persons Per Unit
1970	2,385	1,329	1.79
1980	3,085	1,694	1.82
1990	3,339	1,850	1.80
		2,061*	1.62

• Total Units as per 1991 Revaluation.
 Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

The development rate of the 1980's is used as a base for determining the future development rate and the actual rate may vary considerably from that which is predicted. Swings in the economy, technology, and environmental regulation will all affect future development.

It is reasonable to predict a diminishing development rate based on the fact that less developable land will be available in each succeeding year as parcels are committed to some type of land use which removes its future development potential. Table 1-4 shows the development rate used in population projections No. 2 and No. 3.

**Table 1-4
 Development Rates, Trends and Projections**

Period	Units	Built	Percent of 1980's Rate
1985-1990		163	100%
1990-1995		147	90%
1995-2000		125	77%
2000-2005		100	61%
2005-2010		75	46%
2010-20/5		52	32%
2015-2020		34	21%

Source: Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Planning; Albert Veri & Associates, Inc.

Population projections based on building activity in Table 1-4 and Figure 1-3 use different person per unit figures. Projection No. 1 is done by the State Division of Planning using a

modified cohort survival method (see Table 1-5). Projection No. 2 assumes a person per unit figure of 1.80 based on the total number of housing units counted in the 1990 decennial census. Projection No. 3 assumes a person per unit figure of 1.62 based on the total number of units as per the 1991 property revaluation conducted by Jerome Appraisal Company, Inc.

**Table 1-5
Population Projections No. 1, 2 and 3**

Year	1970	1980	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
#1 State Projection	2,385*	3,085*	3,492	3,608	3,722	3,835	3,946	4,057	4,168
#2 Based on Census - 1.80 / Unit			3,339*	3,605	3,830	4,011	4,146	4,240	4,301
#3 Based on Revaluation - 1.62 / Unit			3,339*	3,577	3,779	3,941	4,063	4,147	4,202

* U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1970, 1980,
RI Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning.

**Figure 1-3
Population Projections No. 1, 2 and 3**

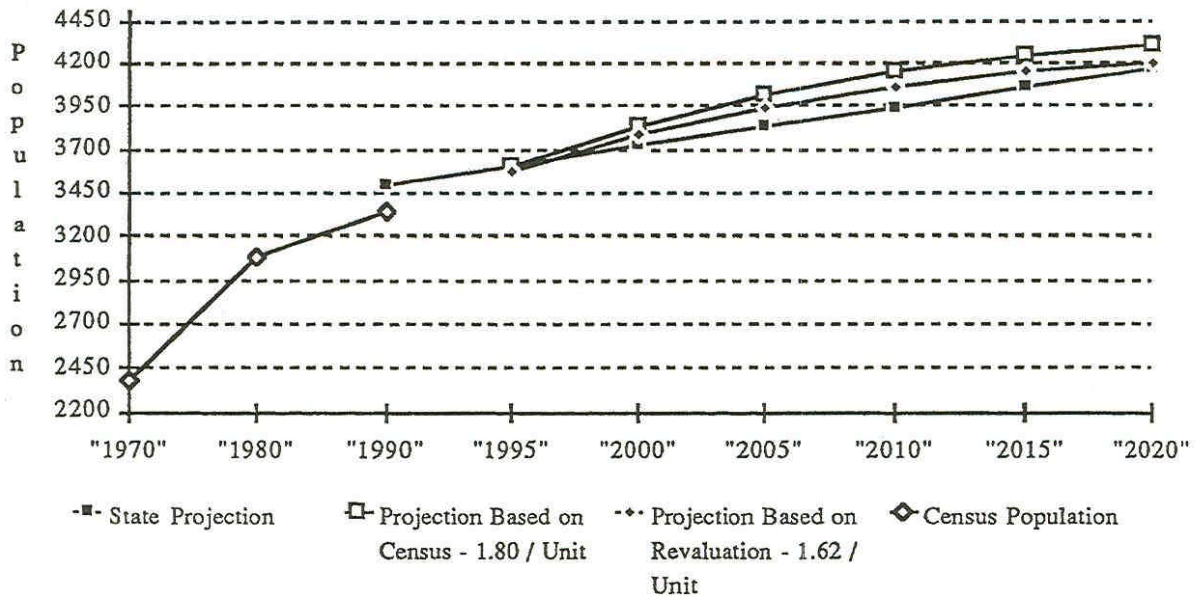


Table 1-6 shows the population density of Little Compton relative to the State. The Town's density is significantly below the density for the State as a whole. In 1990 there will be just short of four acres of land for every one person in Little Compton. State-wide there will be .68 acres for every one person.

**Table 1-6
Population Density**

Measure	Little Compton	State
Total Acreage	13,512	684,089
1960 Persons/Acre	.13	1.25
1970 Persons/Acre	.18	1.39
1980 Persons/Acre	.23	1.38
1990 Persons/Acre	.26	1.47

1.2 Regional Population

Little Compton's regional context, for the purposes of this study, includes Tiverton, Newport, Middletown, Bristol, Barrington, Warren, Portsmouth, Providence, and East Providence, Rhode Island, and Westport, Fall River, and New Bedford, Massachusetts. These municipalities were chosen because of geographic proximity. Also, these communities were either specifically mentioned, or were in an area mentioned in responses to the community survey which asked a respondent to identify the Town or area where the chief wage earner worked.

Table 1-7 shows the population of each town and city in the region in 1980 and the projected population for 1990. Little Compton's population accounts for less than one percent of the

**Table 1-7
Regional Population, 1980-1990**

Community	1980 Population	1990 Population	Percent of Region	Actual Change 1980-1990	Percent Change 1980-1990
Little Compton	3,085	3,492	0.6	407	13.2
Tiverton	13,526	14,852	2.7	1,326	9.8
Westport, MA.	13,763	13,980	2.6	217	1.6
Newport	29,259	29,632	5.5	373	1.3
Portsmouth	14,257	16,857	3.1	2,600	18.2
Middletown	17,216	18,341	3.4	1,125	6.5
Bristol	20,128	20,570	3.8	442	2.2
Barrington	16,174	16,216	3.0	42	0.3
Warren	10,640	11,815	2.2	1,175	11.0
Providence	156,804	158,920	29.4	2,116	1.3
East Providence	50,980	50,543	9.3	-437	-0.9
Fall River, MA.	92,574	88,920	16.4	-3,654	-3.9
New Bedford, MA.	88,478	96,566	17.9	8,088	9.1
Total	512,627	540,704	100.0	13,820	2.6

Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980. Projections, RI Dept. of Administration, Division of Planning, Massachusetts Data Center.

region's total population. Warren, the Town within the region which is closest in population size to Little Compton, has more than three times as many people. Its isolated location at the tip of the

east bay section of Rhode Island and the lack of an established industrial base make the Town unique in the region and have contributed to its sparse settlement pattern.

1.3 Age and Gender of Population

According to the 1980 Census, over one-quarter of the Town's population were between the ages of 25 and 44, followed by the 45 to 64, and 55 to 74 year age groups (20-year groupings) (see Table 1-8). The smallest number of residents, 5.35 percent, were in the under 5 age group. Close to the same percentage were found in the 75+ age group, with 5.78 percent.

Of the total population in 1980, approximately 51.2 were women, and of those residents aged 65 or older 58 percent were women. The median age for the total population was 34.5 years in 1980. Residents aged 65 and older comprised nearly 16 percent of the population.

The results of the citizen survey generally support the data found in the 1980 Census. The greatest percentage of those responding (33 percent) were between the ages of 18 to 44.²

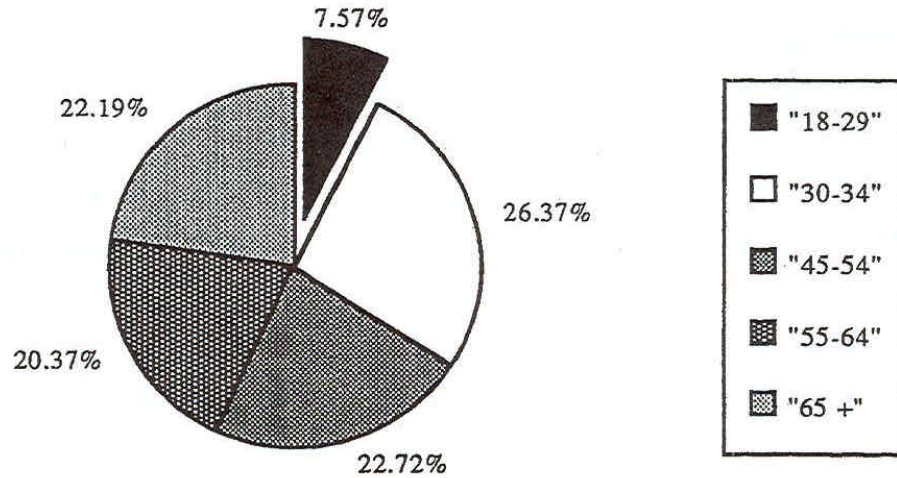
**Table 1-8
Age Distribution of the Population
Little Compton and Rhode Island**

Age Group	1980 Little Compton Population	Percent of Total	1980 State Population	Percent of Total
Under 5	165	5.35	56,511	6
5- 9	219	7.10	60,973	6.4
10-14	269	8.72	74,670	7.8
15-19	289	9.37	89 897	9.5
20-24	189	6.13	89,860	9.5
25-34	431	13.97	146,356	15.5
35-44	410	13.29	99 121	10.5
45-54	311	10.08	97,422	10.3
55-64	311	10.08	105,432	11.1
65-74	310	10.05	75,966	8
75+	181	5.87	50,946	5.4
Total	3,085	100.00	947,154	100

U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980.

²Note: the survey had different age categories than did the Census report, therefore it is not possible to compare the results on a one-to-one basis.

Figure 1-4
Age Distribution 1990
Citizen Survey

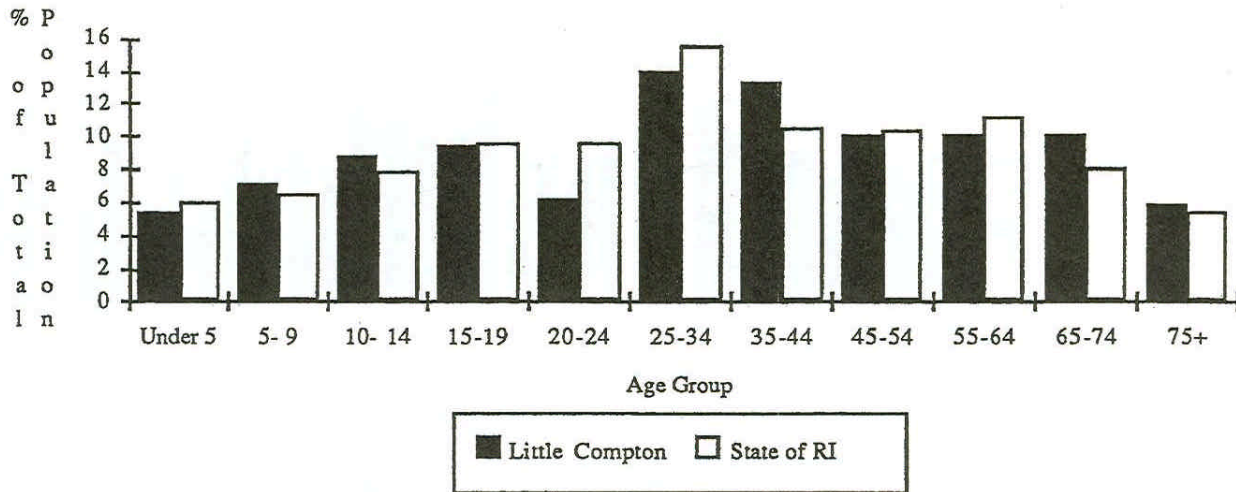


Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980.

Figure 1-5 illustrates Town and State population, distributed by age. The distribution of Town residents' ages generally followed the State distribution, although it was a somewhat older population. Variations from the State's age distribution patterns include Little Compton having a higher percentage of people in the 65 + age groups. The State as a whole had a higher percentage of people in the middle age groups than did Little Compton. The State had fifty-seven percent in the 20 to 64 age groups, whereas Little Compton had fifty-four percent in this same group. Little Compton, in 1980, had the fifth highest median age among the 32 towns in the State which had 2,500 or more people.

Projections indicate there will be decreases in population in the 0 to 4, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29 and 30-34 year age groups (see Table 1-9 and Figure 1-6). The largest decrease in an age group, approximately 33 percent, is expected in the 25 to 29 year age group. With trends leaning toward longer life expectancy, the Town's older population is expected to continue to increase as a percentage of the total population. Age groups 65 and older increased over 18 percent since 1980, and are expected to increase by 36 percent during the next 20 years.

**Figure 1-5
Comparison of Age Distribution
Little Compton and Rhode Island**



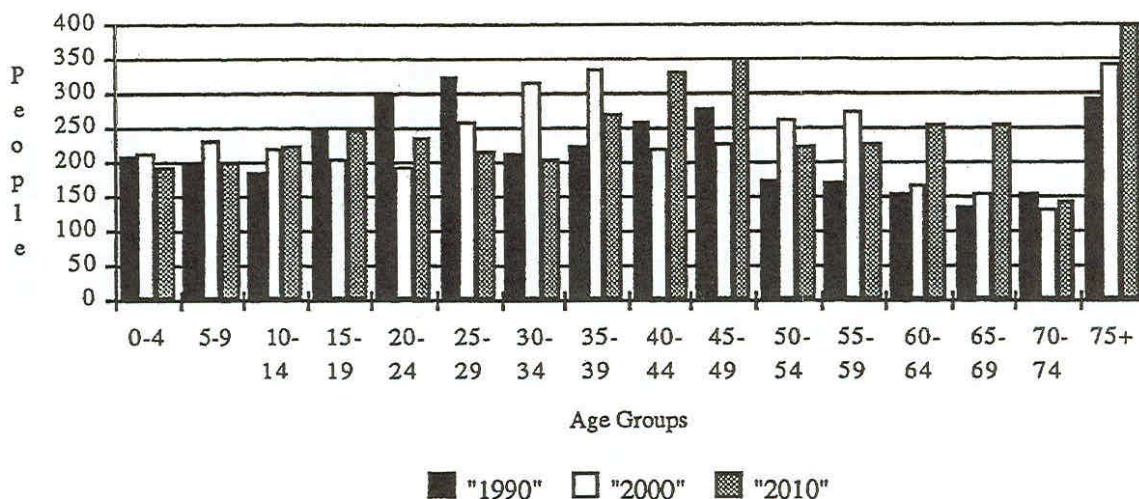
Source: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980.

**Table 1-9
Population Projections by Age, 1990 to 2010**

Age Group	1990	% of Total	2000	% of Total	2010	% of Total	% Change 1990-2010
0-4	208	5.96	209	5.62	190	4.82	-8.65
5-9	194	5.56	229	6.15	201	5.09	3.61
10-14	185	5.30	220	5.91	223	5.65	20.54
15-19	246	7.04	203	5.45	244	6.18	-0.81
20-24	300	8.59	192	5.16	233	5.90	-22.33
25-29	322	9.22	256	6.88	215	5.45	-33.23
30-34	209	5.99	314	8.44	203	5.14	-2.87
35-39	221	6.33	335	9.00	268	6.79	21.27
40-44	258	7.39	218	5.86	329	8.34	27.52
45-49	275	7.88	227	6.10	350	8.87	27.27
50-54	172	4.93	260	6.99	221	5.60	28.49
55-59	167	4.78	271	7.28	225	5.70	34.73
60-64	154	4.41	164	4.41	253	6.41	64.29
65-69	135	3.87	153	4.11	252	6.39	86.67
70-74	154	4.41	129	3.47	141	3.57	-8.44
75+	292	8.36	342	9.19	398	10.09	36.30
Total	3,492	100.00	3,722	100.00	3,946	100.00	13.00

Source: RI. Department of Administration, Division of Planning

Figure 1-6
Distribution of Population by Age, 1990, 2000, 2010



Source: RI. Department of Administration, Division of Planning

1.4 Household and Family Composition

In 1980, Little Compton had 3,085 persons in 1,113 households. Average household size was 2.77 persons. Within these households, there were 799 families, 55 percent of which had children under the age of 18. The combined total of children under age 19 was 942 or, 1.18 children per family. The percentage state-wide was very close, at 1.14 children per family.

1990 census data show an increase in the number of households and families, a reduction of household size and approximately the same number of children per family.

	1980	1990
Households	1,113	1,287
Families	799	973
Persons Per household	2.77	2.59
Children Per Family	1.18	1.176

The citizen survey revealed a slightly greater household size with 2.85 persons per household, a lower percentage with children under 18 (44%), and a larger family size with 1.89 children per family.

1.5 Education

Approximately 71.2 percent of the Little Compton population over age 25 had completed high school and 24.3 percent had completed college in 1980. State-wide, slightly over 61 percent of residents over age 25 in the region had completed high school in 1980, and 15.4 percent had completed college in 1980.

Over one quarter (28%) of the citizen survey respondents had college degrees, 20 percent had graduate degrees and around the same number had some college. Close to another quarter (24%) have received their high school diploma.