

# A Statistical Snapshot of the Historic Triangle

## Introduction

Virginia's Historic Triangle, defined as the area encompassing the City of Williamsburg, James City County, and portions of York County (Bruton District, the Naval Weapons Station, and the Yorktown village), is located in the Virginia Coastal Plain on the peninsula formed by the James and York Rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. It is part of the Hampton Roads region and the Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News VA NC Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). This area has been dubbed the Historic Triangle because of its unique role in the founding of our nation. The western point of the triangle, Jamestown, located in James City County, was founded by the first settlers in 1607 and is the site of the first permanent English settlement and the first colonial government in America. Williamsburg, the northern point, served as Virginia's colonial capital during most of America's struggle for independence. The eastern point, Yorktown, where independence was won, is located in York County and is the site of the final major battle of the American Revolutionary War.



With 207 square miles, the Historic Triangle occupies slightly over half the total land area (53%) of the Virginia Peninsula, which also includes lower York County and the Cities of Newport News, Hampton, and Poquoson. In population, however, the Historic Triangle represents only 17% of the Peninsula's total population of approximately 484,000.

- Land Area: 207 square miles
- Population: 94,026
- Population Density: 454 persons per square mile
- Average Household Size: 2.45 persons per household
- Average (Mean) Household Income: \$86,793

## **Population and Demographics**

- According to the 2010 Census, the Historic Triangle is home to slightly more than 94,000 people. The population has grown by about a third (34%) since 2000. Over three quarters of this growth – 79% – took place in James City County, which now accounts for 71% of the Historic Triangle’s population; Williamsburg and upper York County/Yorktown account for 15% and 14% of the population respectively. The area’s population grew by 34.4% between 2000 and 2010 – 39.3% in James City County, 17.3% in Williamsburg and 31.2% in York County (upper York/Yorktown). By comparison, the state of Virginia grew by 13.0% between 2000 and 2010.
- The Historic Triangle is less racially diverse than the MSA or the state as a whole, with whites representing 78% of all residents, blacks 14%, and Asians 3%. American Indians and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, and other races represent a combined total of 2% of the population, while another 3% of residents fall into the “Two or More Races” category. The MSA and the state of Virginia have smaller proportions of whites (60% and 69% respectively) and larger proportions of both blacks (31% and 19% respectively) and Asians (4% and 6% respectively). Hispanics make up 5.0% of the population, compared with 5.4% in the MSA and 7.9% in Virginia.
- The average household size in the Historic Triangle – at 2.45 persons per household, according to the 2010 Census – is relatively low; the MSA has an average of 2.55 persons per household while the Virginia average is 2.54.
- Compared with the MSA and the state, the Historic Triangle has more residents, proportionally, who are 55 years of age and older and fewer who are in their teens, twenties, and thirties. Those 55 and older constitute 32% of the Historic Triangle’s population, 23% in the MSA, and 24% in the state. Residents under the age of eighteen, who represent 24% and 23% of the MSA and state populations, respectively, constitute 20% of the population of the Historic Triangle.
- The population of the Historic Triangle is relatively well-educated, with 45% of residents age 25 and older holding a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (compared to 27.1% in the MSA and 33.4% in the state). Similarly, 92.1% in the Historic Triangle hold at least a high school diploma (compared to 88.8% in the MSA and 85.8% in the state).

## **Economics**

- Residents of the Historic Triangle are relatively affluent, with an average (mean) household income of \$86,793. This compares favorably with the Virginia Beach MSA (\$70,589) and the state of Virginia (\$80,851).
- The importance of tourism in the Historic Triangle is reflected in the high proportion of jobs in the Accommodation and Food Services industry, which represents 18.4% of total employment in Williamsburg, James City County, and York County. By comparison, this sector represents only 10.2% of employment in the MSA and 8.4% in the state. These are relatively low paying jobs – \$329 a week, on average – which might help to explain why the average weekly wage in the three Historic Triangle localities (\$632) trails the MSA (\$763) and Virginia (\$928) averages. The highest-paying jobs on the Peninsula, on average, are in Hampton and Newport News.
- As of July 2011, the combined unemployment rate for the three localities is 6.1%, lower than both the MSA (7.0%) and the state (6.2%) rates.

- Over three quarters of workers in the Historic Triangle age 16 and over – 78.5% – drive alone to work. Most of the rest – 10.1% of the total – carpool, while 3.7% walk, 1.2% use public transportation, 1.2% use other means, and 5.3 percent work at home. Walking to work is most prevalent in the City of Williamsburg, where walkers represent 24.7% of the employed labor force.
- At \$2 billion in 2010, total taxable sales in James City County, Williamsburg, and York County fell for the third consecutive year. The large role that tourism plays is reflected in the fact that 9.5% of the three localities' taxable sales come from accommodation (i.e. hotels and motels, bed-and-breakfasts, RV parks, campgrounds, and boarding houses), which accounts for only 3.3% of taxable sales statewide.

## Housing

- There are a total of 41,458 housing units in the Historic Triangle – an increase of 45% (12,932 units) since 2000. Single-family detached homes make up the vast majority (69%) of the area's housing stock.
- The amount of renter-occupied housing – though relatively high in Williamsburg, where it represents 56% of all occupied housing units – is disproportionately low in the Historic Triangle as a whole, representing 28% of the occupied housing stock. By comparison, rental housing represents 37% of occupied housing in the MSA and 33% across the state.
- Home vacancy rates in the Historic Triangle are slightly higher than in surrounding areas. For owner-occupied housing, the vacancy rates are 2.8% in the Historic Triangle, 2.5% in the MSA, and 2.1% in Virginia. The corresponding rates for rental housing are 8.0%, 7.6%, and 7.6% respectively.
- With almost a third of all housing units (31%) built in the last ten years, the area's housing stock is relatively young. Only 10% of housing units in the Historic Triangle are at least 50 years old, compared to 23% in the MSA and 24% statewide.
- Median house value data is not available for the Historic Triangle. However, figures for the three localities indicate that house values are generally higher than in the MSA or the state as a whole. James City County leads with a median house value of \$334,100, followed by York County (\$316,100) and Williamsburg (\$311,200). The median house value is \$233,600 in the MSA and \$247,100 statewide. Likewise, the median gross monthly rent is \$1,124 in York County, \$1,017 in James City County, and \$950 in Williamsburg. For the MSA and the state, the median gross monthly rents are \$918 and \$931 respectively.
- Compared with the MSA and the state, the Historic Triangle has a smaller proportion of households that are paying more than 30% of their income on housing. For homes with a mortgage, about a third of households in the Historic Triangle (33.6%) are spending more than 30% of their incomes on housing; for the MSA and the state, the proportions are 38.2% and 34.6% respectively. For rental housing, the figures are 46.3% for the Historic Triangle, 50.2% for the MSA, and 46.8% for the state.

### Sources:

- United States Bureau of Labor Statistics
- United States Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010 Censuses
- United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2005-09
- Virginia Department of Taxation
- Virginia Employment Commission