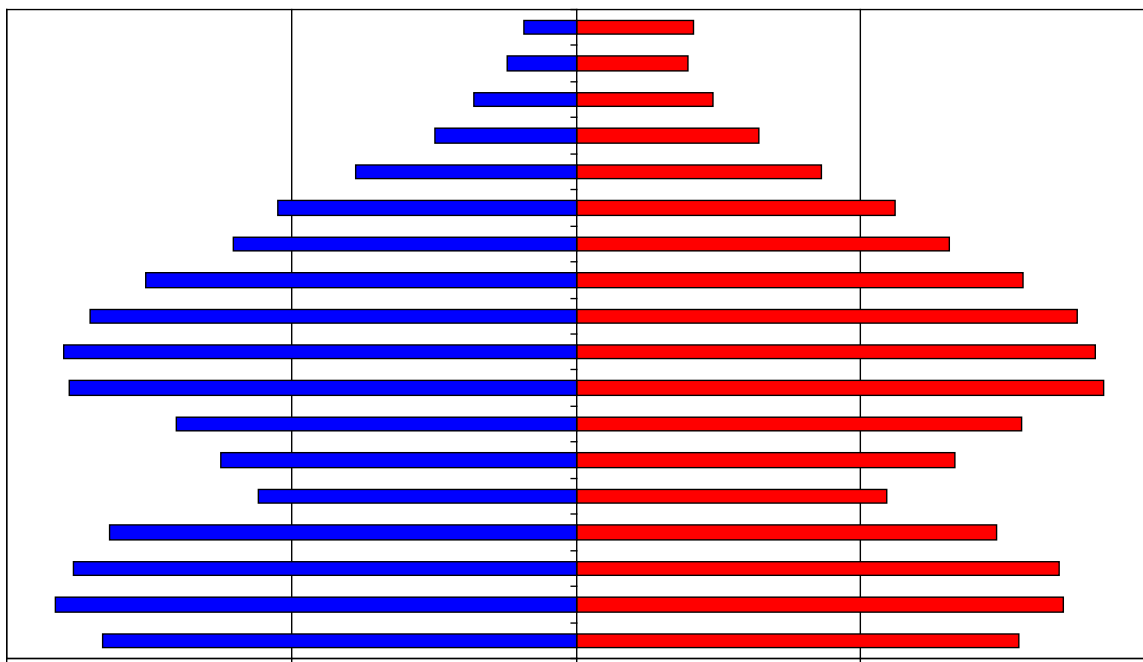




Thomaston Public Schools, CT

Demographic Study Report 2025



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Executive Summary

1. The resident total fertility rate for Thomaston Public Schools over the life of the forecasts is below the replacement level. (1.18 vs. the replacement level of 2.1)
2. Most in-migration to the district will occur in the 0-4- and 22-39-year-old age groups.
3. The local 18-22-year-old population continues to leave the district, moving out to college. Another migration outflow is in the 75+ age groups, as empty-nester housing turnover continues to be a driver of migration flow.
4. The primary factor causing the district's enrollment to decrease over the next 10 years is the low fertility not sufficiently supplanted by in-migration.
5. Changes in year-to-year enrollment over the next ten years will primarily be due to varying size of cohorts entering, moving through, and leaving the school system.
6. The median age of the district's population will increase from 45.1 in 2020 to 45.7 in 2035.
7. The rate, magnitude, and price of existing homes will continue to be the major factor affecting the amount of population and enrollment change.
8. Total district enrollment is forecasted to decrease by 88 students, or -10.8%, between 2025-26 and 2030-31. Total enrollment is forecasted to then decrease by 52 students further, or -7.2%, from 2030-31 to 2035-36.

INTRODUCTION

By demographic principle, distinctions are made between projections and forecasts. A projection extrapolates the past (and present) into the future with little or no attempt to take into account any factors that may impact the extrapolation (e.g., changes in fertility rates, housing patterns or migration patterns) while a forecast results when a projection is modified by reasoning to take into account the aforementioned factors.

To maximize the use of this study as a planning tool, the ultimate goal is not simply to project the past into the future, but rather to assess various factors' impact on the future. The future population and enrollment change of each school district are influenced by a variety of factors. Not all factors will influence the entire school district at the same level. Some may affect different areas at dissimilar magnitudes and rates causing changes at varying points of time within the same district. The forecaster's judgment, based on a thorough and intimate study of the district, has been used to modify the demographic trends and factors to more accurately predict likely changes. Therefore, strictly speaking, this study is a forecast, not a projection; and the amount of modification of the demographic trends varies between different areas of the district as well as within the timeframe of the forecast.

To calculate population forecasts of any type, particularly for smaller populations such as a school district, realistic suppositions must be made as to what the future will bring in terms of age specific fertility rates and residents' demographic behavior at certain points of the life course. The demographic history of the school district and its interplay with the social and economic history of the area is the starting point and basis of most of these suppositions particularly on key factors such as the age structure of the area. The unique nature of each district's and attendance area's demographic composition and rate of change over time must be assessed and understood to be factors throughout the life of the forecast series. Moreover, no two populations, particularly at the school district and attendance area level, have exactly the same characteristics.

The manifest purpose of these forecasts is to ascertain the demographic factors that will ultimately influence the enrollment levels in the district's schools. There are of course, other non-demographic factors that affect enrollment levels over time. These factors include, but are not limited to transfer policies within the district; student transfers to and from neighboring districts; placement of "special programs" within school facilities that may serve students from outside the attendance area; state or federal mandates that dictate the movement of students from one facility to another (No Child Left Behind was an excellent example of this factor); the development of charter schools in the district; the prevalence of home schooling in the area; and the dynamics of local private schools.

Unless the district specifically requests the calculation of forecasts that reflect the effects of changes in these non-demographic factors, their influences are held constant for the

life of the forecasts. Again, the main function of these forecasts is to determine what impact demographic changes will have on future enrollment. It is quite possible to calculate special "scenario" forecasts to measure the impact of school policy modifications as well as planned economic and financial changes. However, in this case the results of these population and enrollment forecast are meant to represent the most likely scenario for changes over the next 10 years in the district and its attendance areas.

The first part of the report will examine the assumptions made in calculating the population forecasts for Thomaston Public Schools. Since the results of the population forecasts drive the subsequent enrollment forecasts, the assumptions listed in this section are paramount to understanding the area's demographic dynamics. The remainder of the report is an explanation and analysis of the district's population forecasts and how they will shape the district's grade level enrollment forecasts.

DATA

The data used for the forecasts come from a variety of sources. The Connecticut Department of Education database was used for historical October enrollment data for school years 2019-20 to 2024-25. Thomaston Public Schools provided enrollment data for 2025-26 which used as launch year for the forecasts and for live-attend analysis and maps. The data used for the calculation of migration models came from the United States Bureau of the Census, 2010 to 2020, and the models were designed using demographic, housing and economic factors. The base age-sex population counts used are from the results of the 2020 Census. Finally, yearly birth and death records were obtained from Connecticut Department of Public Health.

The Census Bureau is releasing annual estimates of demographic variables at the block group and tract level from the American Community Survey (ACS). There has been wide scale reporting of these results in the national, state and local media. However, due to the methodological problems the Census Bureau is experiencing with their estimates derived from ACS data, particularly in areas with a population of less than 60,000, the results of the ACS are not used in these forecasts.

To develop the population forecast models, past migration patterns, current age specific fertility patterns, the magnitude and dynamics of the gross migration, the age specific mortality trends, the distribution of the population by age and sex, the rate and type of existing housing unit sales, and future housing unit construction are considered to be primary variables. In addition, the change in household size relative to the age structure of the forecast area was addressed. While there was a slight drop in the average household size in Thomaston Public Schools as well as most other areas of the state during the previous 20 years, the rate of this decline has been forecasted to slow over the next ten years.

ASSUMPTIONS

For these forecasts, the mortality probabilities are held constant at the levels calculated for the year 2020. While the number of deaths in an area are impacted by and will change given the proportion of the local population over age 65, in the absence of an extraordinary event such as a natural disaster or a breakthrough in the treatment of heart disease, death rates rarely move rapidly in any direction, particularly at the school district or attendance area level. Thus, significant changes are not foreseen in district's mortality rates between now and the year 2035. (At this point in time, there is insufficient data of the geographic and age level impacts of COVID-19 on mortality rates. We assume that most areas would have returned to their traditional mortality rate levels by 2022). Any increases forecasted in the number of deaths will be due primarily to the general aging of the district's population and specifically to the increase in the number of residents aged 65 and older.

Similarly, fertility rates are assumed to stay fairly constant for the life of the forecasts. Like mortality rates, age specific fertility rates rarely change quickly or dramatically, particularly in small areas. Even with the recently reported rise in the fertility rates of the United States, overall fertility rates have stayed within a 10% range for most of the last 40 years. In fact, the vast majority of year to year change in an area's number of births is due to changes in the number of women in child bearing ages (particularly ages 20-29) rather than any fluctuation in an area's fertility rate.

The resident total fertility rate (TFR), the average number of births a woman will have while living in the school district during her lifetime, is estimated to be 1.18 for the total district for the ten years of the population forecasts. A TFR of 2.1 births per woman is considered to be the theoretical "replacement level" of fertility necessary for a population to remain constant in the absence of in-migration. Therefore, in the absence of migration, fertility alone would be insufficient to maintain the current level of population and enrollment within the Thomaston Public Schools over the course of the forecast period.

A close examination of data for the Thomaston Public Schools has shown the age specific pattern of net migration will be nearly constant throughout the life of the forecasts. While the number of in- and out-migrants has changed in past years for the Thomaston Public Schools (and will change again over the next 10 years), the basic age pattern of the migrants has stayed nearly the same over the last 30 years. Based on the analysis of data it is safe to assume this age specific migration trend will remain unchanged into the future. This pattern of migration shows most of the local out-migration occurring in the 75+ age groups, as empty nester homeowners continue to leave the district, as well as in the college-age 18-22 age groups. Most of the local in-migration occurs in the 0-4 and 22-39 age groups as families and young professionals move into existing housing and new developments. It is important to note that rent-based migration, although frequent, usually remains cyclical and stable – the in-migration and out-

migration cancel each other out. The changes in migration magnitude and patterns that are not related to new construction, usually occur due changes in the household structure in turnover of existing homes.

As Litchfield County is not currently contemplating any major expansions or contractions, the forecasts also assume that the current economic, political, social, and environmental factors, as well as the transportation and public works infrastructure (with a few notable exceptions) of Thomaston Public Schools and its attendance areas will remain the same through the year 2035. Below is a list of assumptions and issues that are specific to the Thomaston Public Schools. These issues have been used to modify the population forecast models to predict the impact of these factors more accurately on each area's population change.

These are the key assumptions that, if violated, would lead to a change in enrollment beyond the forecasted margin of error:

- a. Private school and home school enrollment rates will remain within $\pm 5.0\%$ of the current levels;
- b. The rate of students transferring into and out of the Thomaston Public Schools will remain at the 2020-21 to 2025-26 average;
- c. The unemployment rates for the Litchfield County and Naugatuck Valley will remain below 7.5% for the 10 years of the forecasts;
- d. The district yearly average of single- and multi-family home unit sales remains between 80 and 120 units.

Additionally, the forecasts for the Thomaston Public Schools assume that throughout the study period:

- e. The national, state or regional economy does not go into deep recession at any time during the 10 years of the forecasts; (Deep recession is defined as four consecutive quarters where the GDP contracts greater than 1% per quarter)
- f. Interest rates have climbed from a historic low in 2020 and will not fluctuate more than one percentage point in the short term; the interest rate for a 30-year fixed home mortgage stays below 8.0%;
- g. The rate of mortgage approval stays at 2015-2020 levels and lenders do not return to "sub-prime" mortgage practices;
- h. There are no additional restrictions placed on home mortgage lenders or additional bankruptcies of major credit providers;
- i. The rate of housing foreclosures does not exceed 125% of the 2020-2025 average of Litchfield County for any year in the forecasts;
- j. All currently planned, platted, approved, and permitted housing developments are built out and completed by 2034. All housing units constructed are occupied by 2035;

- k. The intra district student transfer policy remains unchanged over the next 10 years;
- l. The State of Connecticut does not change any of its current laws or policies regarding Charter Schools, Vouchers or inter district transfers;
- m. No additional Charter schools open in the district over the next 10 years;
- n. The inflation rate for gasoline will stay below 5% per year for the 10 years of the forecasts;
- o. Businesses within Thomaston Public Schools and the surrounding communities remain viable;
- p. The number of existing home sales in the district that are a result of “distress sales” (homes worth less than the current mortgage value) will not exceed 20% of total homes sales in the district for any given year;
- q. Housing turnover rates (sale of existing homes in the district) will remain at their current levels. The majority of existing home sales are made by home owners over the age of 55;
- r. The rate of foreclosures for commercial property remains at the 2020-2025 average for Litchfield County.

If a major employer in the district or in Litchfield County closes, reduces or expands its operations, the population forecasts would need to be adjusted to reflect the changes brought about by the change in economic and employment conditions. The same holds true for any type of natural disaster, major change in the local infrastructure (e.g., highway construction, water and sewer expansion, changes in zoning regulations etc.), a further economic downturn, any additional weakness in the housing market or any instance or situation that causes rapid and dramatic population changes that could not be foreseen at the time the forecasts were calculated.

Additionally, this study does not take into account a potential impact of changes in federal immigration enforcement policies. Speculating on the magnitude and severity of these measures and how they might affect the enrollment in the district in the future is beyond the scope of this study.

Finally, all demographic trends (i.e., births, deaths, and migration) are assumed to be linear in nature and annualized over the forecast period. For example, if 1,000 births are forecasted for a 5-year period, an equal number, or proportion of the births are assumed to occur every year, 200 per year. Actual year-to-year variations do and will occur, but overall year to year trends are expected to be constant.

METHODOLOGY

The population forecasts presented in this report are the result of using the Cohort-Component Method of population forecasting (Siegel, and Swanson, 2004: 561-601) (Smith et. al. 2004). As stated in the **INTRODUCTION**, the difference between a projection and a forecast is in the use of

explicit judgment based upon the unique features of the area under study. Strictly speaking, a cohort projection refers to the future population that would result if a mathematical extrapolation of historical trends. Conversely, a cohort-component forecast refers to the future population that is expected because of a studied and purposeful selection of the components of change (i.e., births, deaths, and migration) and forecast models are developed to measure the impact of these changes in each specific geographic area.

Five sets of data are required to generate population and enrollment forecasts. These five data sets are:

- 1. a base-year population (here, the 2020 Census population for the Thomaston Public Schools);
- 2. a set of age-specific fertility rates for the district to be used over the forecast period;
- 3. a set of age-specific survival (mortality) rates for the district;
- 4. a set of age-specific migration rates for the district; and;
- 5. the historical enrollment figures by school and grade.

The most significant and difficult aspect of producing enrollment forecasts is the generation of the population forecasts in which the school age population (and enrollment) is embedded. In turn, the most challenging aspect of generating the population forecasts is found in deriving the rates of change in fertility, mortality, and migration. From the standpoint of demographic analysis, the Thomaston Public Schools is classified as a “small area” population (as compared to the population of Connecticut or to that of the United States). Small area population forecasts are more complicated to calculate because local variations in fertility, mortality, and migration may be more irregular than those at the regional, state or national scale. Especially challenging is the forecast of the migration rates for local areas, because changes in the area's socioeconomic characteristics can quickly change from past and current patterns (Peters and Larkin, 2002.)

The population forecasts for Thomaston Public Schools were calculated using a cohort-component method with the populations divided into male and female groups by five-year age cohorts that range from 0-to-4 years of age to 85 years of age and older (85+). Age- and sex-specific fertility, mortality, and migration models were constructed to specifically reflect the unique demographic characteristics of each of the attendance areas in Thomaston Public Schools.

The enrollment forecasts were calculated using a modified average survivorship method. Average survivor rates (i.e., the proportion of students who progress from one grade level to the next given the average amount of net migration for that grade level) over the previous five years of year-to-year enrollment data were calculated for grades two through twelve. This procedure is used to identify specific grades where there are large numbers of students changing facilities for non-demographic factors, such as private school transfers or enrollment in special programs.

The survivorship rates were modified or adjusted to reflect the average rate of forecasted in and out-migration of 5-to-9, 10-to-14 and 15-to-17-year-old cohorts to each of the attendance zones in Thomaston Public Schools for the period 2019 to 2024. These survivorship rates then were adjusted to reflect the forecasted changes in age-specific migration the district should experience over the next five years. These modified survivorship rates were used to project the enrollment of grades 2 through 12 for the period 2024 to 2029. The survivorship rates were adjusted again for the period 2029 to 2034 to reflect the predicted changes in the amount of age-specific migration in the district for the period.

The forecasted enrollments for kindergarten and first grade are derived from the 5-to-9-year-old population of the age-sex population forecast at the elementary attendance zone district level. This procedure allows the changes in the incoming grade sizes to be factors of forecasted population change and not an extrapolation of previous class sizes. Given the potentially large amount of variation in kindergarten enrollment due to parental choice, changes in the state's minimum age requirement, and differing district policies on allowing children to start kindergarten early, first grade enrollment is deemed to be a more accurate and reliable starting point for the forecasts. (McKibben, 1996) The level of the accuracy for both the population and enrollment forecasts at the school district level is estimated to be $\pm 2.0\%$ for the life of the forecasts.

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The Methods and Materials of Demography: Second Edition, Academic Press: New York, New York. 2004.
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Appendix A: Supplemental Tables

Table 1: Forecasted Population Change, 2020 to 2035

	2020	2025	2020-2025 Change	2030	2025-2030 Change	2035	2030-2035 Change	2020-2035 Change
DISTRICT TOTAL	7,450	7,220	-3.1%	6,950	-3.7%	6,630	-4.6%	-11.0%

Table 2: Household Characteristics, 2020 Census

	HH w/ Pop Under 18	% HH w/ Pop Under 18	Total Households	Household Population	Persons Per Household
DISTRICT TOTAL	786	25.0%	3,145	7,442	2.36

Table 3: Householder Characteristics, 2020 Census

	Percentage of Householders aged 35-54	Percentage of Householders aged 65+	Percentage of Householders Who Own Homes
DISTRICT TOTAL	34.0%	29.2%	73.9%

**Table 4: Percentage of Households that are Single Person
Households and Single Person Households that are over age
65, 2020 Census**

	Percentage of Single Person Households	Percentage of Single Person Households and are 65+
DISTRICT TOTAL	29.1%	13.3%

Table 5: Elementary Enrollment (K-6), 2025, 2030, 2035

	2025	2030	2025-2030 Change	2035	2030-2035 Change	2025-2035 Change
DISTRICT TOTAL	382	335	-12.3%	335	0.0%	-12.3%

Table 6: Age Under One to Age Ten Population Counts, by Year of Age: 2020 Census

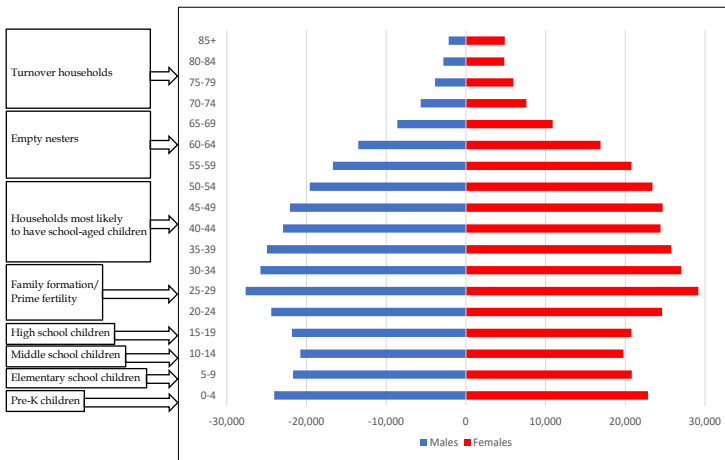
	Under 1 year	1 year	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	11 years	12 years	13 years
DISTRICT TOTAL	34	62	61	66	73	62	79	77	73	81	88	68	90	70

Appendix B: Population Pyramids

Population pyramids are an effective tool to graphically represent age-sex composition of a given geographical area. They are designed to provide a detailed picture of structure of a population, with age and sex group intervals represented as horizontal bars stacked on one another. Most commonly, the pyramids are represented in 5-year age intervals, with the oldest group being open ended (on top). Male population groups are presented on the left, and female groups are given on the right side of the graph. For the purpose of this report, pyramids are represented as absolute numbers, since these types of pyramids show differences in overall population numbers between age-sex groups and between different geographical areas. Since the size of population between different attendance zones, regions and the district as a whole varies significantly, the pyramids are represented at different scale groupings, varying from: very small (up to 400 per age-sex group); small; (up to 800 per age-sex group); medium-sized (up to 1,200 per age-sex group); large (up to 1,600 per age-sex group); and very-large (up to 2,000 per age-sex group). The scales for the regions as well as for the whole district are naturally larger and are adjusted accordingly.

The shapes of the pyramids, along with the magnitude of the scales, are powerful tool with which one can quickly gain insight into population dynamics of analyzed area. Various types of shapes offer demographers visual aids in determining possible underlying trends regarding not just the age-sex composition of the area, but also provide clues to population components of change (fertility, mortality, and migration). They might also provide insight into possible type of housing, workforce, education level and presence of group quarters (such as correctional institutions, colleges, senior care facilities, etc.) All these factors should be considered when analyzing population trends of a certain area and more importantly while trying to ascertain future trends that this area might experience.

With all of this in mind, one can consider a population pyramid as a demographic fingerprint of a certain area. Consider the pyramid below:

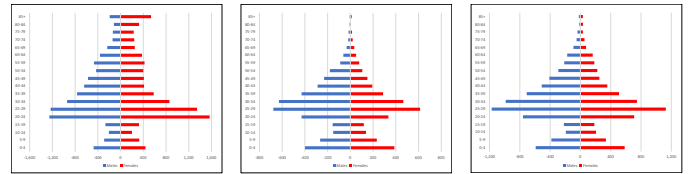


We can classify age groups into eight approximate categories (with an obvious note that 5-year age groups will not perfectly match school levels):

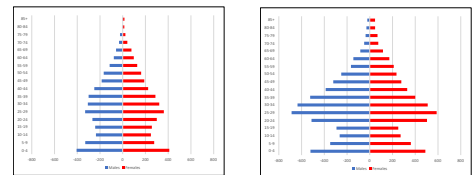
- Ages 0-4 - Pre-K children;
- Ages 5-9 - Elementary school children;
- Ages 10-14 - Middle school children;
- Ages: 15-19 - High school children;
- Ages: 20-34 - Family formation/prime fertility;
- Ages 35-54 - Households most likely to have school-aged children;
- Ages 55-74 - Empty nesters; and
- Ages 75 - Turnover households.

Using different kinds of typologies, we can classify elementary attendance zones into 7 different types, as follows:

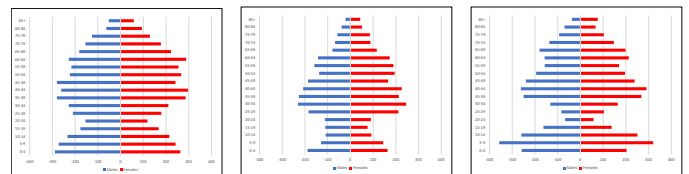
- Multi-family - high SES (socioeconomic status): characterized by high proportion of population in their 20s and early 30s, most likely to be renting apartments. In addition, characterized by higher SES.



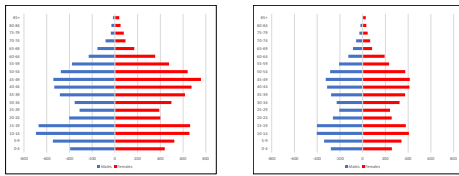
- Multi-family - low SES: characterized by high proportion of population in their 20s and early 30s, most likely to be renting apartments. In addition, characterized by lower SES.



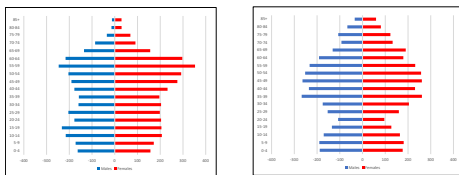
- Young suburban: characterized by high proportions of population in their 30s and 40s, as well as young children (pre-K and elementary schoolers).



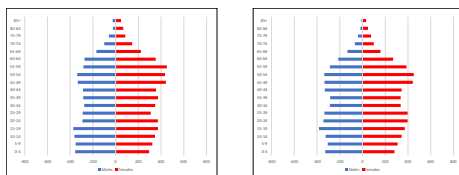
- d) Old suburban: characterized by high proportions of population in their 40s and 50s, as well as older children (middle and high schoolers).



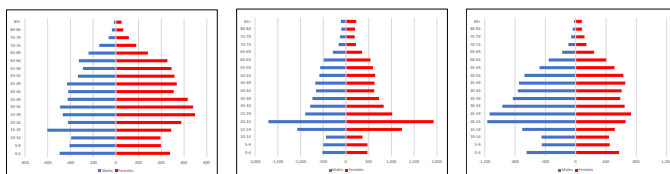
- e) Turnover: characterized by population in 50s and 60s, empty nest households more likely to sell a house and downsize.



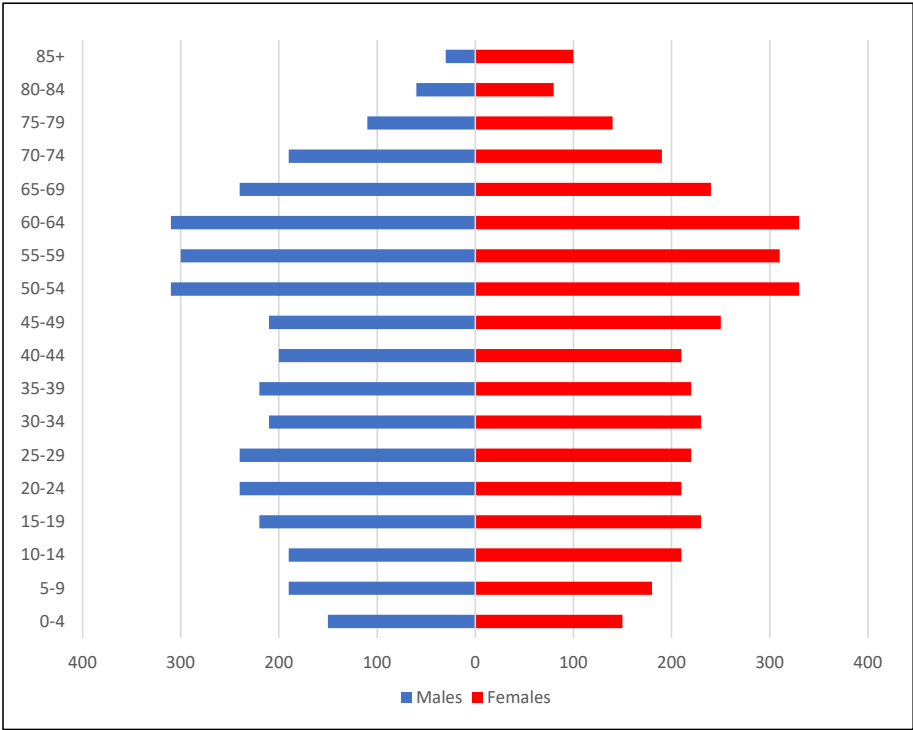
- f) Mixed: characterized by mixed population of various ages and types of housing.



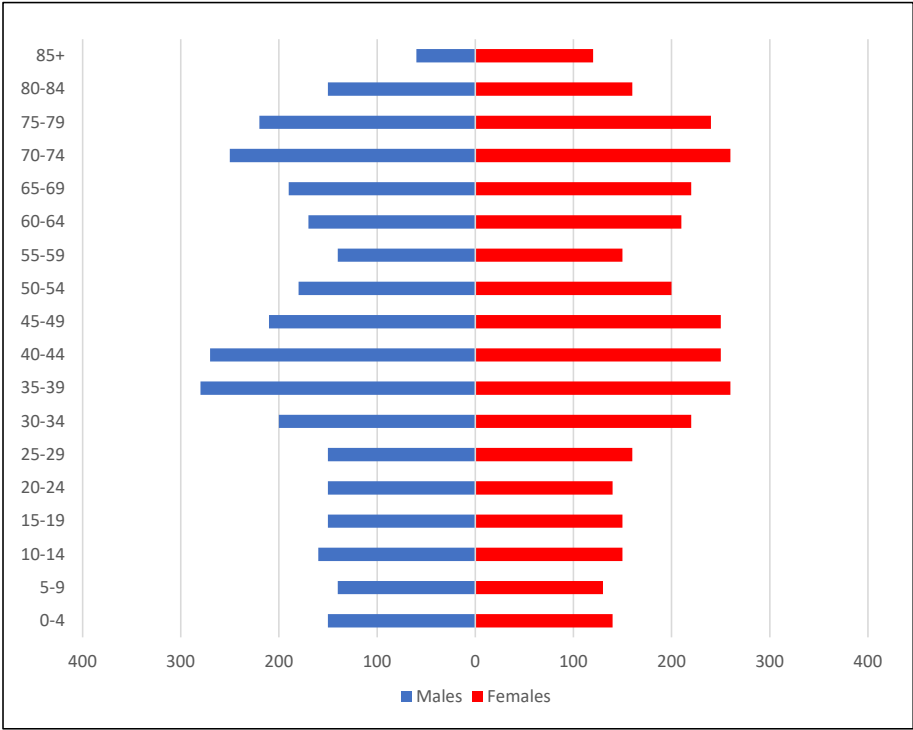
- g) Group quarters: characterized by presence of one specific group of population that is living in either retirement homes, correctional facilities, army bases, student dorms, etc.



Thomaston Public Schools Total Population – 2020 Census



Thomaston Public Schools Total Population – 2035 Forecast



Appendix B: Population Forecasts

Thomaston Public Schools - 2025 Population Forecast

Total	2020	2025	2030	2035
0-4	300	330	310	290
5-9	370	280	270	270
10-14	400	430	310	310
15-19	450	360	390	300
20-24	450	340	270	290
25-29	460	500	390	310
30-34	440	500	530	420
35-39	440	510	560	540
40-44	410	410	490	520
45-49	460	350	350	460
50-54	640	480	380	380
55-59	610	460	350	290
60-64	640	620	490	380
65-69	480	550	540	410
70-74	380	460	530	510
75-79	250	330	410	460
80-84	140	180	240	310
85+	130	130	140	180
Total	7,450	7,220	6,950	6,630
Median Age	45.1	44.4	44.5	45.7

	2020 to 2025	2025 to 2030	2030 to 2035
Births	270	260	240
Deaths	320	350	400
Natural Increase	-50	-90	-160
Net Migration	-180	-170	-160
Change	-230	-260	-320

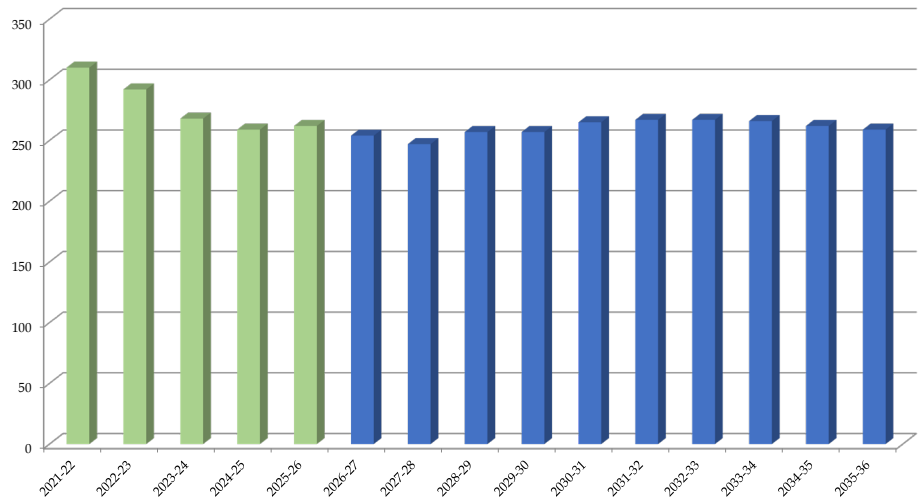
Differences between period Totals may not equal Change due to rounding.

Appendix D: Enrollment Forecasts

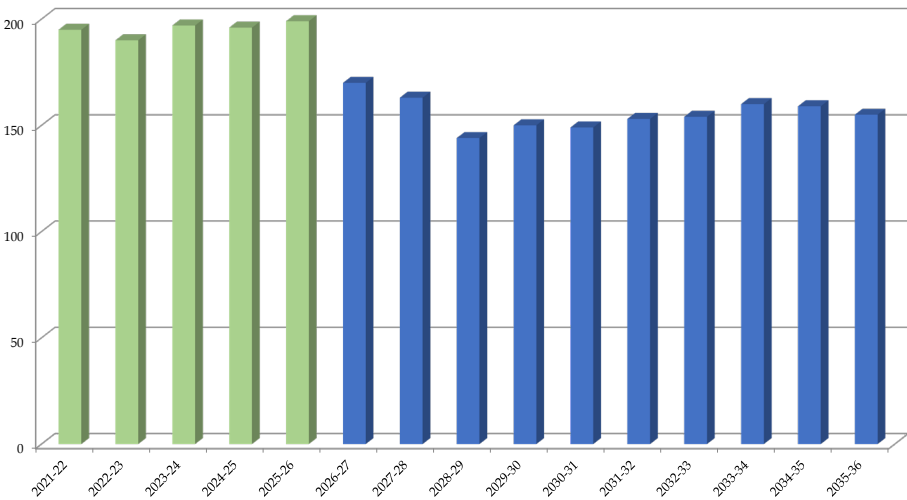
Thomaston Public Schools: District Total

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34	2034-35	2035-36
PK	50	64	55	65	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79	79
K	64	33	52	39	51	39	42	43	46	46	45	45	45	44	42
1	62	64	38	50	38	45	39	43	43	45	45	44	44	45	45
2	68	60	61	44	50	39	47	42	45	47	48	48	47	45	46
3	66	71	62	61	44	52	40	50	44	48	50	51	51	49	47
Total: PK-3	310	292	268	259	262	254	247	257	257	265	267	267	266	262	259
4	58	62	70	65	61	45	51	42	51	46	49	52	52	51	50
5	76	61	67	70	62	65	48	54	46	56	49	53	56	54	53
6	61	67	60	61	76	60	64	48	53	47	55	49	52	54	52
Total: 4-6	195	190	197	196	199	170	163	144	150	149	153	154	160	159	155
7	65	66	58	61	66	77	60	66	47	55	49	56	51	54	52
8	69	67	67	68	64	70	80	63	69	48	56	51	58	53	55
9	47	45	49	59	58	50	54	61	48	51	37	42	38	43	40
10	44	47	43	46	67	56	48	53	59	46	48	36	39	35	41
11	59	44	47	42	52	67	55	48	51	58	44	46	35	37	33
12	50	65	46	44	45	55	70	57	50	53	60	46	47	37	38
Total: 7-12	334	334	310	320	352	375	367	348	324	311	294	277	268	259	259
Total: PK-12	839	816	775	775	813	799	777	749	731	725	714	698	694	680	673
Total: PK-12	839	816	775	775	813	799	777	749	731	725	714	698	694	680	673
Change		-23	-41	0	38	-14	-22	-28	-18	-6	-11	-16	-4	-14	-7
% Change		-2.7%	-5.0%	0.0%	4.9%	-1.7%	-2.8%	-3.6%	-2.4%	-0.8%	-1.5%	-2.2%	-0.6%	-2.0%	-1.0%
Total: PK-3	310	292	268	259	262	254	247	257	257	265	267	267	266	262	259
Change		-18	-24	-9	3	-8	-7	10	0	8	2	0	-1	-4	-3
% Change		-5.8%	-8.2%	-3.4%	1.2%	-3.1%	-2.8%	4.0%	0.0%	3.1%	0.8%	0.0%	-0.4%	-1.5%	-1.1%
Total: 4-6	195	190	197	196	199	170	163	144	150	149	153	154	160	159	155
Change		-5	7	-1	3	-29	-7	-19	6	-1	4	1	6	-1	-4
% Change		-2.6%	3.7%	-0.5%	1.5%	-14.6%	-4.1%	-11.7%	4.2%	-0.7%	2.7%	0.7%	3.9%	-0.6%	-2.5%
Total: 7-12	334	334	310	320	352	375	367	348	324	311	294	277	268	259	259
Change		0	-24	10	32	23	-8	-19	-24	-13	-17	-17	-9	-9	0
% Change		0.0%	-7.2%	3.2%	10.0%	6.5%	-2.1%	-5.2%	-6.9%	-4.0%	-5.5%	-5.8%	-3.2%	-3.4%	0.0%
Forecasts developed October 2025															
Green cells (2025-2026 and earlier) are historical data															
Blue cells (2026-2027 and later) are forecasted years															

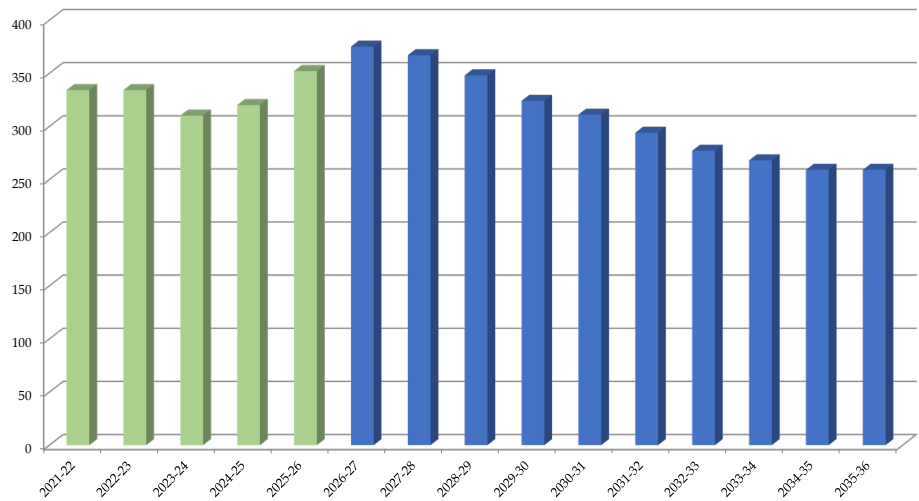
Thomaston Public Schools: PK-3rd Total Enrollment



Thomaston Public Schools: 4-6th Total Enrollment



Thomaston Public Schools: 7-12th Total Enrollment



Thomaston Public Schools: PK-12th Total Enrollment

