

Rowan County 2006 Population, Socioeconomic, Environmental, and Population Groups at Risk Profile

Population

- Demographics

In 2005, Rowan County's estimated population of 135,099 reflected a 22.1% increase from 110,605 in 1990. During the same period, North Carolina's population grew at a quicker pace of 31%.

Table 1.

Rowan County Population as Compared to North Carolina

	Population			
	1990	2000	2005	% Growth (1990-2005)
Rowan	110,605	130,340	135,099	22.1
North Carolina	6,628,637	8,049,313	8,683,242	31

(U.S. Census Bureau)

The Rowan County population age distribution remained essentially unchanged between 1990 and 2000. The 25 to 54 year age group constituted the largest proportion of the Rowan County population at 43% in 1990 and 41.2% in 2000. Residents younger than 24 years comprised 33.8% (1990) and 33.6% (2000) while those 55 and older was 23.2% and 25.2% for 1990 and 2000, respectively.

Gender distribution did not change appreciably from 1990 to 2004. Representing 51.5% of the population in 1990, the female proportion of the population decreased to 50.6% in 2000 and maintained this level through 2004.

Table 2.

Demographic Profile of Rowan County by Gender and Age

Gender and Age	1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	53,643	48.5	64,380	49.4
Female	56,962	51.5	65,960	50.6
Under 5 years	7,459	6.7	8,566	6.6
5 to 9 years	7,308	6.6	9,090	7.0
10 to 14 years	7,253	6.6	9,374	7.2
15 to 19 years	7,654	6.9	8,654	6.6
20 to 24 years	7,567	6.8	8,384	6.4
25 to 34 years	17,742	16.1	18,041	13.8
35 to 44 years	16,000	14.5	20,737	15.9
45 to 54 years	11,793	10.6	17,388	13.3
55 to 59 years	5,389	4.9	6,569	5.0
60 to 64 years	5,547	5	5,332	4.1
65 to 74 years	9,871	8.9	9,360	7.2
75 to 84 years	5,454	5	6,603	5.1
85 years and over	1,568	1.4	2,242	1.7

(U.S. Census Bureau)

Rowan County became more racially and ethnically diverse over the past 15 years. In 1990, the majority of residents were White (83%) and Blacks were the largest minority at 16.1%. The remaining 0.9% was “other races.” By 2004, Whites dropped to 80%, Blacks decreased slightly to 15.7% and “other races” increased to 4.3%. The Hispanic/Latino population rose dramatically from 0.59% to 5.4%, a 9-fold increase. It should be noted that Hispanics/Latinos is an ethnic group made up of persons of any race.

Socioeconomic

- Employment

Between 1990 and 2006, the business and industry landscape of Rowan County evolved from a predominantly manufacturing base to a more diverse economy founded not only on manufacturing but also to a larger degree on the service, government and healthcare sector. Unfortunately, many hardworking Rowan County

families suffered economic hardship and uncertainty during the transition. The downsizing and closing of several textile and furniture operations occurred over the intervening years, positioning Rowan County's unemployment rate to spiral upwards reaching a zenith of 12.6% recorded in August 2003. Following the 2003 closing of Pillotex Textiles (formerly Fieldcrest Cannon), in neighboring Cabarrus County, close to 1,400 workers lost their job in Rowan County. Over time, the county's unemployment rate has steadily declined to 4.5% in March 2006, same as the state. Comparing the top 10 Rowan County employers for 1998 and 2006 reflects the dramatic economic changes experienced in Rowan County.

Table 3.

Top 10 Rowan County Employers

1998	2006
Freightliner Corporation	Freightliner Corporation
Rowan-Salisbury Schools	Rowan-Salisbury Schools
Food Lion, Inc	Food Lion, Inc
Trevira	W.G. Heffner VA Medical Center
W.G. Heffner VA Medical Center	Rowan Regional Medical Center
Rowan Regional Medical Center	Invista
Fieldcrest Cannon	Rowan County Government
Cone Mill	City of Salisbury
Rowan County Government	NC Piedmont Correctional Center
China Grove Textiles	Meridian Automotive Systems

(Rowan County Chamber of Commerce)

- Income, Poverty and Health Insurance

While per capita income and median household monthly income is less in Rowan County than North Carolina, the percent of families living below poverty is lower locally than for the state overall. Also, the home ownership rate, one indicator of wealth, is higher in Rowan. The percent of children and adults without health insurance is similar between Rowan and North Carolina.

Table 4.

Measures of Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Status

Measure	Rowan County	NC	Time Period
Per capita income	\$25,326	\$28,071	2003
Median household monthly income	\$37,691	\$39,438	2003
Home ownership rate	73.6	69.4	2000
Percent of residents enrolled in Work First	1	1.1	2003
Percent of residents receiving Food Stamps	8.8	9.2	2005
Percent of Children receiving Food Stamps	16.6	18.2	2005
Persons below poverty (%)	12.1	13.4	2003
Percent of children below poverty	17.4	19.1	2003
Percent of children enrolled in NC Health Choice insurance	5.4	5.9	2004
Percent of population (0-18 years) without health insurance	11.9	11.3	2004
Percent of population (age 19 to 64) without health insurance	19	20.6	2004
Percent of population (age 0 to 65) without health insurance	17	18	2004

(2006 Rowan County Quality of Life Report Card; www.co.rowan.nc.us/health)

Environment

- Water Quality

Water quality protection is extremely important. Approximately one-half of Rowan County residents obtain drinking water from private onsite wells. Research conducted by the Rowan County Environmental Health staff revealed that approximately twenty-five percent of private water supply wells are contaminated with bacteria. Because of the rural nature of Rowan County, private water supply wells will be the primary water source for the majority of the population for the foreseeable future. The Rowan County Health Department collects water samples from all of the permitted establishments as well as providing this service to private citizens.

During 2007, Rowan County will be taking some additional measures to protect the private water supply wells in the county. Steps are being taken to develop and implement a set of local rules that would require placement determination,

inspection and sampling of all new wells. A private water supply well is defined as a well that serves less than fifteen (15) connections or less than twenty-five people.

On July 19, 2006, House Bill 2873 titled "An act to require permitting and inspections of new private drinking water wells and to require water quality testing of private drinking water wells" was ratified. The requirements of this bill become effective July 1, 2008.

- **On-Site Wastewater**

According to recent data, approximately one-half of the Rowan County residents use on-site septic tank systems to dispose of the wastewater that they generate. Using the N.C. Laws and Rules for Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems, the Rowan County Environmental Health Staff evaluate each site where a septic system (new or replacement) is to be installed. A major portion of the Rowan County Environmental Health program is devoted to soil/site evaluations and design, permitting and inspections of septic tank systems. Detailed records are kept on each site evaluated and each system that is installed. Each Environmental Health Specialist is authorized and registered by state procedures.

- **Restaurant and Other Foodhandling Establishments**

Food protection is vital to the health and safety of the Rowan County residents. Rowan County has approximately 600 establishments that serve food. This means that thousands of meals are being prepared and served daily. The Department of Public Health maintains a permitting and inspections program to identify and minimize food safety risks to the dining public. The Rowan County Environmental Health staff focus on the prevention of food safety hazards through food service worker education, establishment design, equipment standards, cleanliness standards and proper food handling practices.

During FY 05-06, Rowan County Health Department Environmental Health staff conducted 1,090 inspections of foodhandling establishments. Ninety-nine percent (1,081) of establishments received an A grade. Only 9 received a B grade and no C grades were issued.

- **Childhood Blood Lead Poisoning**

Lead is a highly toxic metal that was once used for many years in products found in and around our homes. Lead poisoning is a medical condition that arises when too much lead gets into the body and causes harm. Consumption of even very small amounts of lead from old paint chips or dust can lead to poisoning with children 6 years and younger especially at risk. A blood test is the only way to detect elevated blood lead levels in one's body and it is recommended for children between 1 and 5 years old.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies a blood lead level of 10 ug/dL or higher as a cause for concern among children. Rowan County Health Department Environmental Health Specialists coordinate investigations for children with elevated blood lead levels to seek the source of lead exposure and identify prevention and control strategies. During FY 05-06, 118 children received blood lead screenings with 6 cases exceeding 10 ug/dL. Investigations revealed a number of potential sources from exposure to peeling paint and contaminated soil to eating candy from outside the United States that may have contained lead.

Population Groups at Risk

The Rowan County United Way led our community in preparing the Rowan County 2006 Health and Human Service Needs Assessment. The comprehensive assessment identified several population groups at risk for poor health or in need of health-related resources. Various community task forces and coalitions are working to address many of the problems impacting these at risk populations.

Table 5.

Population Groups at Risk for Poor Health or In Need of Health-Related Resources

Group	Problem
Low income residents	Access to affordable medical and dental care
Uninsured and underinsured residents	
Overweight children and adults	Access to health and wellness and prevention programs
African Americans	High infant death rate
Middle and high school students	Substance abuse including alcohol and tobacco
Hispanics	Awareness about health services Access to affordable medical and dental care
Older adults and families caring for older adults	Access to daily help with elderly at home

(Rowan County 2006 Health and Human Services Needs Assessment; www.co.rowan.nc.us/health)