

## 2. COUNTY PROFILE

### Geography

Worcester County is the easternmost county in the State of Maryland and includes the entire length of the State's coast along the Atlantic Ocean. The County contains approximately 679 square miles (227 of which are water) and most of the land area is agricultural. The Towns of Berlin, Ocean City, Snow Hill, and Pocomoke City all are located within Worcester County (**Figure 2-1**).

Much of Worcester County's terrain is considered coastal. The lowest elevation is sea level along the Atlantic Ocean, and the highest, at 49 feet, is along Maryland Route 12, just south of the Wicomico County Line.

### County History

The Native American tribes of the area that later became Worcester County were part of the Algonquin Nations. In 1524, Giovanni de

Verrazano was one of the first Europeans to explore the area. He was followed in the early 1600s by Captain John Smith and others who explored the Atlantic Coast of Maryland and created detailed maps of the area. Henry Norwood of England and other explorers shipwrecked off the shore of Worcester County in 1650 on their way to the Virginia Colony and years later, Norwood published a well-read journal of his experiences.

In 1669, the Maryland Council established Worcester County, naming it after Henry Somerset, the Earl of Worcester. In 1742, Worcester County was officially established. Several border disputes flared in the following years. Some Virginia residents wanted Somerset and Worcester counties to be a part of Virginia, but Virginia Governor William Berkeley rejected them. Charles Calvert and William Penn argued over Worcester's northern boundary for many years, a dispute that was not resolved until the Mason Dixon Line was surveyed and accepted by Maryland and Pennsylvania in 1764.

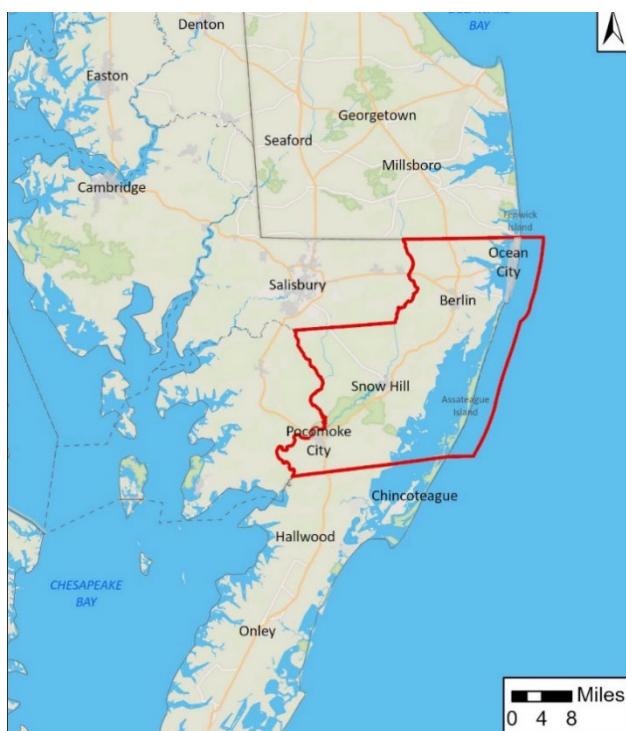
The first courthouse for the County was built in Snow Hill in 1743 and Snow Hill has been the county seat ever since. Two historic fires destroyed courthouse in 1834 and 1893, and the current Victorian historic courthouse has essentially remained the same since it was rebuilt in 1894.

Of the municipalities in Worcester County, Snow Hill was officially incorporated in 1812, Berlin in 1868, Pocomoke City in 1878, and Ocean City in 1880.

### Historic Properties

There is one protected barrier island area within the County, the Assateague Island National Seashore. This area is a historical and cultural piece of the County that is protected from development. There are

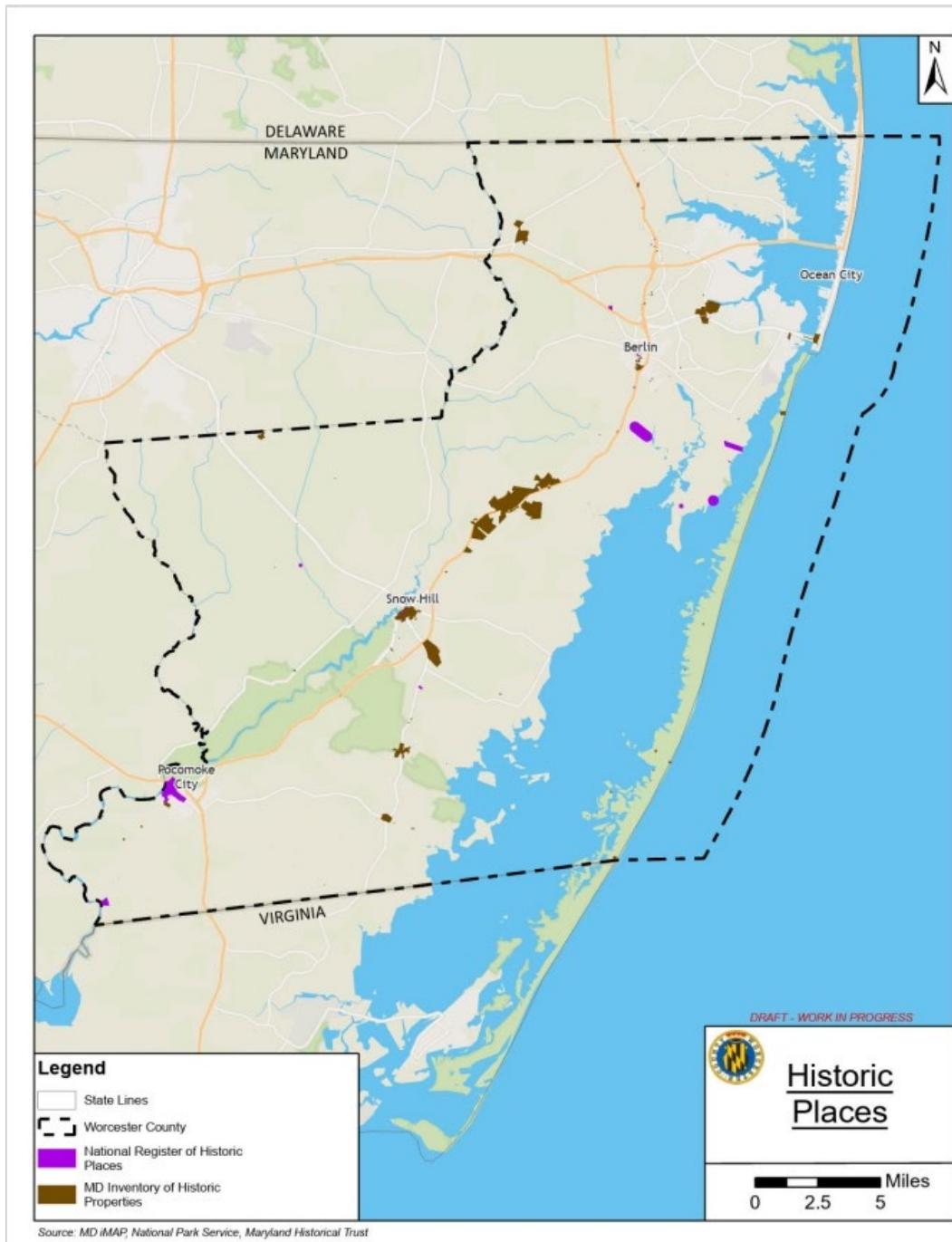
Figure 2-1: Location Map



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also several properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places, as noted on **Map 2-1: Historic Places**. Full descriptions and histories of each of the properties identified can be found on Maryland Historical Trust's website ([mht.maryland.gov](http://mht.maryland.gov)) as well as on the National Register of Historic Places ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)).

**Map 2-1: Historic Places**



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### Demographic Characteristics

Demographics are important to understand the growth of the County. Demographic information can help to identify and understand trending population growth and dynamics and can be utilized to identify future housing, employment, community services, and public infrastructure needs to support the changing community.

Worcester County's demographics were collected from available U.S. Census data. It is important to note that, due to sampling and surveying error, the data collected and presented cannot be construed as an indisputable measure of the County's existing conditions.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau changed the methodology they use to collect and present information. They stopped distributing the traditional 'long form' survey that provided enhanced data, published as Summary File 3 and Summary File 4 in the decennial census. These files included social statistics (including educational attainment, household relationships, veteran status, disability status, ancestry, language spoken) and economic data (such as employment, occupation, poverty status).

These summary files were replaced by the American Community Survey (ACS) data, which are available in five-year estimates. For this plan, all references to ACS data are from the 2016-2022 ACS data, unless otherwise noted. All references to the Census are taken from the decennial U.S. Census and the applicable year(s) are noted.

### Population

Worcester County is comprised of Berlin, Ocean City, Snow Hill, and Pocomoke City. Based on the 2022 American Community Survey Demographic and Housing Data, the total population of Worcester County is 52,827, with 48.9 percent being male, and 51.1 percent being female. The breakdown of the population by town is displayed in **Table 2-1**.

**Table 2-1: Population Comparisons**

Town	Male	Female	Total
Berlin	2,242	2,814	5,056
Ocean City	3,123	3,756	6,879
Snow Hill	1,215	1,144	2,359
Pocomoke	2,149	2,169	4,318
County	25,841	26,986	52,827

Source: 2022 American Community Survey; note that these numbers do not include unincorporated areas

### Race and Ethnicity

**Table 2-2** compares the County's racial composition to that of the State of Maryland. The change in racial composition between 2010 and 2020 for Worcester County is shown in **Table 2.3**. As the data show, there have been slight variations in the County since 2010, particularly in the group of people who identify as two or more races.

**Table 2-2: Racial Composition Comparisons**

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	County		State	
Race	#	%	#	%
<b>One Race</b>	49,818	95%	5,661,424	92%
<b>White</b>	41,845	80%	2,983,674	48%
<b>Black or African American</b>	6,236	12%	1,823,687	30%
<b>American Indian &amp; Alaska Native</b>	136	0%	26,649	0.4%
<b>Asian</b>	753	1.4%	404,207	7%
<b>Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander</b>	8	0%	3,088	0.1%
<b>Some Other Race</b>	840	2%	420,119	7%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	2,642	0.05	503,236	8%
<b>Total Population</b>	52,460		6,164,660	

Source: 2020 U.S. Decennial Census; note that these numbers do not include unincorporated areas

**Table 2-3: Change in County Racial Composition**

Race	2010		2020		% Change
	#	%	#	%	
<b>One Race</b>	50,616	99%	49,818	95%	-2%
<b>White</b>	42,690	83%	41,845	80%	-2%
<b>Black or African American</b>	7,194	14%	6,236	12%	-13%
<b>American Indian &amp; Alaska Native</b>	127	0.2%	136	0.3%	7%
<b>Asian</b>	440	1%	753	1%	71%
<b>Native Hawaiian &amp; Pacific Islander</b>	133	0%	8	0%	-94%
<b>Some Other Race</b>	127	0.2%	840	2%	561%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	426	1%	2,642	5%	520%
<b>Total Population</b>	51,133		52,460		-

Source: 2010-2020 U.S. Decennial Census; note that these numbers do not include unincorporated areas

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (US OMB) defines the race and ethnicity categories that federal agencies must use to collect data—including the Census Bureau. Local, state, tribal, and federal programs use these data, and they are critical factors that inform numerous policies, particularly for civil rights.

In the 1970s, Latino advocacy groups lobbied the federal government to create a separate category for Hispanics and Latinos. Before this time, both categories were grouped under the “White” race. When surveys were distributed, they often did not reach Hispanic and Latino households; those that did were not in Spanish, so results were far from accurate.

Once the US OMB provided for the distinct categories, government and other agencies began using these data to evaluate programs and policies to ensure that they fairly and equitably serve the needs of the Hispanic population and to monitor compliance with antidiscrimination laws, regulations, and policies. While some may expect to see the Hispanic or Latino category as part of the race question, it is

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currently asked separately because people of Hispanic origin may be of any race(s). Each decade, prior to the decennial census, questions on race, ethnicity, and ancestry are reviewed to determine if the categories and wording continue to reflect the country's diverse and rapidly changing population.

**Table 2-4, Change in Hispanic and Latino Population** provides a summary of the County's population self-reporting as Hispanic or Latino origin. The absolute number of people reporting Hispanic or Latino origin increased by 550 from 2010-2022, representing a 37 percent increase.

**Table 2-4: Change in Hispanic and Latino Population**

Ethnicity	2010		2022			% Change
	#	%	#	%		
Hispanic or Latino (Any Race)	1,473	3%	2,023	4%	37%	
Not Hispanic or Latino	49,660	97%	50,804	96%	2%	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>51,133</b>		<b>52,827</b>			<b>-</b>

Source: 2010 U.S. Decennial Census, 2022 American Community Survey; Note that these numbers do not include unincorporated areas.

### Age

In terms of age, the County has grown slightly older, overall, in the past decade. The County's population tends to be slightly older than that of Snow Hill, the jurisdiction for which data are available.

**Table 2-5: Age Distribution Comparison**

	County		State		
Age	#	%	#	%	
Under 5 Years	2,102	4%	349,193	6%	
5 to 19 Years	7,837	15%	1,149,449	19%	
20 to 64 Years	28,088	53%	3,623,239	59%	
65 Years & Over	14,800	28%	1,042,779	17%	
Median Age	50.6	0.1%	39.7	0.001%	
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>52,827</b>		<b>6,164,660</b>		

Source: 2022 American Community Survey; note that these numbers do not include unincorporated areas

**Table 2-6, County Age Distribution** shows that the County has experienced slight changes in the distribution of its population's age groups during the past decade. During the 2010-2022 period, the 20 to 64 age range decreased about four percent while the 65 and Older category increased by five percent, illustrating an aging population.

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**Table 2-6: County Age Distribution**

Age	2010		2022		% Change
	#	%	#	%	
<b>Under 5 Years</b>	2,326	5%	2,102	4%	-10%
<b>5 to 19 Years</b>	8,246	16%	7,837	15%	-5%
<b>20 to 64 Years</b>	29,032	57%	28,088	53%	-3%
<b>65 Years &amp; Over</b>	11,529	23%	14,800	28%	28%
<b>Median Age</b>	47.5	0.1%	50.6	0.1%	7%
<b>Total Population</b>	51,133		52,827		-

Source: 2010 U.S. Decennial Census, 2022 American Community Survey

### Education Attainment

Educational attainment is a metric used to identify the level of education completed by the population. This information can help identify the needs for maintaining or improving various institutions, as well as a metric to identify the types of employment or other services required to serve the local population.

**Table 2-7** compares the County's educational attainment for the population 25 years or older with that of the State. As the table shows, Worcester County has a smaller percentage of residents who have not graduated from high school or received their graduate equivalency (GED) than the State, while the percentage of the population who have some college or an associate's degree is slightly higher than the State. The percentage of County residents who have completed a bachelor's degree or graduate degree is slightly lower than the State as a whole.

**Table 2-7: Education Attainment**

Education Level for 25 Years & Older	County		State	
	#	%	#	%
<b>Not High School Graduates</b>	2,610	6%	367,917	9%
<b>High School Graduate</b>	12,135	30%	1,009,588	24%
<b>Some College, No Degree</b>	9,510	24%	735,131	17%
<b>Associates Degree</b>	3,085	8%	294,875	7%
<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	8,043	20%	996,167	23%
<b>Graduate Degree or Higher</b>	4,875	12%	882,538	21%
<b>Population 25 Years &amp; Over</b>	40,258		4,286,216	

Source: 2022 American Community Survey