

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Department of Planning and Zoning
301 King Street, Room 2100
Alexandria, VA 22314

**2011 American Community Survey
Narrative Summary of Estimates for the City of Alexandria**

January 28, 2013

Introduction

The American Community Survey is a survey conducted continually by the U.S. Census Bureau since 2005. The survey is completed by only about 1% of households each year, but provides information on a wide variety of community characteristics. 2011 data was released by the Census Bureau on September 20, 2012.

Because the sample size in the survey is small, estimates can often vary up and down from year to year within a wide range without indicating with certainty that there is a similar change or a trend in the larger population. In part because of this limitation, the current survey revealed no new directions of change in Alexandria's social, economic or demographic profiles since 2010. The 2011 survey did confirm trends that were made evident in the changes from Census 2000 to the decennial census of 2010 and the 2010 American Community Survey estimates.

This brief summary highlights some of the characteristics reported in the most recent survey. Additional information may be found on the Census Bureau's web site, www.census.gov. Additional tables and graphs from the 2011 survey, and information on additional characteristics and trends from the initial seven years of American Community Survey will be posted from time to time on the city's statistics and demographics web page at www.alexandriava.gov/Demographics.

Demographic Profile

The Census Bureau estimates the total population of the city as 144,301 in 2011. Based on other statistics from the estimate including housing units, household size, age distribution and vacancy rate, this estimate seems to suffer from the same issues that resulted in very high estimates for 2007-2009 compared to the actual count from the 2010 Census. With a Census 2010 population of 139,966 and a relatively small number of housing units completed between April, 2010 and July of 2011, a more realistic estimate for the population in 2011 is between 140,500 and 141,500.

Median age of the population is estimated to have risen to 35.7 from the Census 2010 median age of 35.6.

The share of total population under 5 years of age is estimated to have risen to 7.4% in 2011 from 7.1% in 2010, a statistically significant change, and 6.2% in 2000. The share from age 5 to 9 is estimated to have fallen to 4.8% in 2011 from 5.4% in 2010, but was similar to the 4.6% share in 2000. The fact that enrollment in Alexandria's public elementary schools has increased

significantly since 2010 indicates that the actual share of population in the 5-9 age group is probably higher than indicated by this estimate, and is likely to have increased since 2010.

The share of the population 65 and older fell to 8.7% in 2011 from 9.1% in 2010, a statistically significant change, and from 9.0% in 2000. The share in this age group continues to be low compared to that in other age groups in the city and to the 2011 national share of 13.3% for the over-65 population. This low share compared to other age groups reflects the low birth rates of the 1920s and 1930s, and the low share compared to the national average is in part due to the relatively high cost of housing in the city and the competition from workers seeking housing close to employment. However, the senior age group is expected to grow in share substantially over this decade and the two decades following as the baby boomers enter this age group in greater numbers.

The Hispanic share of the population continues to rise, and the black or African American share to fall, both at slow rates on a long trend since the 1990s. The Hispanic share of the population rose to an estimated 16.4% of the population from 16.1% in 2010, a statistically significant change, and from 14.7% in 2000. Black or African American share fell to 21.1% in 2011 from 21.8% in the 2010 Census and 22.5% in 2000. The non-Hispanic white share of the population fell to 52.9% in 2011 from 53.5% in the 2010 Census, statistically a less than significant change, and 53.7% in 2000.

Economic Profile

Labor force participation of Alexandria's population aged 16 years and over continues to rise, up to 79.8% in 2011 from 74.1% in 2007, a statistically significant increase, and 74.4% in 2000.

Unemployment as measured by the American Community Survey continued a variable but generally rising trend of the past four years, up to 6.4% in 2011, compared to Virginia's 2011 unemployment rate of 7.6%, and a national unemployment rate of 10.3%. Alexandria's 2011 unemployment rate was almost double the very low rate of 3.4% in 2007, a statistically significant increase. Unemployment stood at 3.2% in the city in 2000. (Census figures for unemployment are based on different definitions and a different survey than the monthly unemployment statistics of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.)

Working at home has grown substantially to 6.2% of workers in 2011 from 3.1% in 2007, a statistically significant change, and from 3.5% in 2000.

Commuting by public transportation by workers living in Alexandria fell to 18.2% in 2011, a statistically significant drop from its high of 23% in 2007 (at the peak of gas prices), but is still higher than the 16.4% rate in 2000.

Walking, carpooling and working at home have kept single-occupant vehicle (SOV) commuting down relative to the number in 2000 in spite of the recent decline in use of public transportation. 60.8% of workers living in Alexandria commuted by SOV in 2011, compared to 63.3% in 2007 and 62.8% in 2000.

The percentage of families with children with incomes below the poverty line has averaged about 10% over the past five years, with a minimum of 7.9% and a maximum of 12.0%. These differ-

ences from year to year are within the range of sampling variation and do not indicate a significant change or trend.

The percentage of the population without health insurance coverage stood at 15.6% in 2011, up from 10.1% in 2008, the first year this question was included in the American Community Survey. The unemployed members of the labor force are much less likely to have health insurance than other segments of the population. There are wide annual variations in this very small sample, but an average of about half of the unemployed had no health insurance over the four sample years.

Alexandria's Rank in the U.S. for Household Income and Individual Earnings

The American Community Survey 1-year estimates are published only for the United States, states, metropolitan areas, and smaller areas including counties, independent cities and places with populations of approximately 65,000 or more. The survey covers the United States and Puerto Rico. Data is not released for smaller counties and towns or for census tracts and smaller geographic divisions because the small sample size used makes survey results inconclusive or misleading for many such areas. Data for these geographic areas with smaller populations is released only as 3-year or 5-year averages.

Counties and independent cities cover all the territory in the United States and Puerto Rico, so the comparison of Alexandria to counties and independent cities (the few cities like Alexandria which are jurisdictionally not part of any county) includes many rural areas that are quite unlike Alexandria in character. The 2011 survey covers only 822 counties and independent cities of the more than 3000 total in the U.S. and Puerto Rico because the remainder have populations less than 65,000. This ranking excludes places that are neither counties nor independent cities, such as Santa Monica, California; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Bellevue, Washington, and many other places that like Alexandria are inner suburbs in major metropolitan areas.

Places as the term is used in the census includes incorporated cities and towns (such as Santa Monica, Cambridge and Bellevue) as well as recognized more urbanized areas of counties that are not incorporated, such as Silver Spring and Columbia, Maryland; and Centreville and Arlington, Virginia. This comparison ranks Alexandria among areas that are more like it as centers of population and economic activity, and in most cases is a more useful and meaningful comparison. The 2011 survey reports data for 562 places, also limited to places with a population at or above the 65,000 threshold.

Alexandria's ranking among counties and independent cities. The city's median household income (the household income at which half of households have higher and half lower incomes) was estimated at \$82,748 in 2011, up from \$80,293 in 2010. The city ranked 26 for median income, or in the top 4%, out of 822 counties and independent cities in the U.S. and Puerto Rico for which data was provided in the 1-year estimates.

Rankings are not the precise indicators they may seem to be. National rankings based on this annual sample have a large margin of error because they are based on such a small sample of households from each community. Rankings can change substantially from year to year simply as a result of sampling variation. The margin of error around Alexandria's 2011 median house-

hold income estimate is plus or minus \$7,051, which means that based on the survey sample, there is a 90% probability that the actual median income for all households is between \$89,799 and \$75,697. These values encompass the estimates of medians for 35 other counties and independent cities in the list. Based on this confidence interval, the city's position is likely to fall between 16th and 52nd in this ranking. Loudoun, Fairfax and Arlington Counties, with median household income estimates of \$119,134, \$105,797 and \$100,735 placed 1, 2 and 3 in the national rankings for large counties and independent cities. The city's median household income in 2011 was 164% of the estimated national median of \$50,502.

The city has an economically diverse population and a relatively small average household size, both of which tend to make the median household income in the city lower than that of communities in the region with larger households (which are likely to have more members with income), and compared to more suburban communities which often have a smaller share of low- and moderate-income households. The city's small average household size, combined with an unusually small proportion of children in the population, gives the city a relatively high per capita income. Alexandria's per capita income in 2011 was \$52,241, compared to \$61,032 for Arlington County, \$48,516 for Fairfax County, \$44,732 for Loudoun County, \$32,123 for Virginia and \$26,708 for the U.S.

Individual earnings. Household income includes all sources of income (wages, social security, pensions, interest and dividends, capital gains, rent and other income) of all individuals in a household. Earnings includes the wages, salary, bonuses, tips and other miscellaneous income of individual workers related to their employment. Alexandria ranked 4th for median resident worker earnings (with the city's 90% confidence interval on median earnings placing it between 3rd and 10th) of all counties and independent cities reported in the survey, behind Arlington and Loudoun counties in Virginia and Howard county, Maryland. The city's median earnings was estimated at \$52,313 for 2011, up slightly from \$50,132 in 2010, and significantly higher than the regional median of \$45,371 and the national median of \$29,538. Median earnings for male full-time year-round workers was estimated at \$71,469, well above the 2010 estimate of \$63,027, and placed Alexandria 17th among counties and independent cities reported in the survey. Median earnings for female full-time year-round workers was estimated at \$64,620, the third highest in the nation behind Marin County, CA and Howard County, MD.

Ranking among places. Alexandria ranked 41st for median household income among the 562 places in the 2011 survey, directly behind Bellevue, Washington. Alexandria's 90% confidence interval on its median income places it between 29th and 60th. Highest in the U.S. was Flower Mound, Texas, a suburb in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area with an estimated median household income of \$123,294.

Alexandria's estimated median annual earnings for all resident workers of \$52,313 placed it 16th among 562 places reported in the survey. Six California cities topped the list with Palo Alto highest at \$71,443. The 90% confidence interval around its median earnings estimate means Alexandria's actual median earnings is likely to fall between 12th and 29th in the ranking, within the top 5% or so nationwide.

Alexandria's estimated median earnings for male full-time year-round workers at \$71,469 ranked it 46th of 562 places. The 90% confidence interval on this estimate means that Alexandria's actu-

al median earnings for this group probably fell between 33rd and 62nd in the ranking. Palo Alto also topped this list with estimated median annual earnings of \$132,902.

Female full-time year-round workers living in Alexandria had an estimated median earnings of \$62,620, ranking 10th among all reported places in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The 90% confidence interval on this income estimate means that Alexandria's actual median earnings for this group probably fell between 6th and 24th in the ranking, placing it firmly in the top 5%. Mountain View, California led this list with estimated median annual earnings of \$76,481.

Social Profile

Family households made up an estimated 45% to 48% of the city's households from 2007 to 2011. 12.7% of households were family households consisting of a married couple with their own children under 18 years, compared to 13.2% in 2010 and 12.4% in 2000.

Sample estimates of the percentage of households composed of a single person ranged between 42.7% and 47.2% for the five years from 2007 to 2011, indicating this characteristic is in the same general range as the decennial census figures of 43.4% in 2010 and 2000 based on the complete population count. Alexandria placed fourth among the 822 counties in the U.S. reported in the 2011 survey in its share of single-person households. The remaining 9.4% of households in the 2011 survey were made up of two or more individuals unrelated by birth or marriage.

Educational attainment of the city's population continues to increase. The percentage of residents 25 or older with a bachelor's degree or higher averaged 59.1%, ranging between 57% and 61.2%, from 2007 to 2011, compared to 54.3% in 2000. 29.3% were estimated to have graduate or professional degrees in 2011, compared to 24.8% in 2000.

An average of 20.9% of residents had lived in a different house one year ago over the past five years of surveys, ranging between 19.3% and 23.4% over the five years. Of the 20.8% who moved in the past year in 2011, 6.3% had moved from within Alexandria, 6.1% from elsewhere in Virginia, 6.3% from another state and 2.2% from abroad. Of 2011 residents aged 18 to 24, nearly 38% had moved from a different house in the past year, while of those aged 65 to 74, only 1.5% had moved to their current residence in the past year. Many of those who moved from a different county or state are likely to have moved within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region. Data in the 2000 Census is based on different time periods, and cannot be readily compared. For the U.S. as a whole in 2011, 15.2% lived had in a different house one year ago. Of those who moved, 9.2% had moved within the same county, 3.1% from a different county in the same state, 2.3% from a different state, and 0.6% from abroad. Alexandrians were more than twice as likely as residents of the U.S. as a whole to have moved from outside their current home county or independent city in the past year.

Housing Profile

The American Community Survey shows an owner housing vacancy rate of 0.7%, down from 1.9% in 2010 and 1.0% in 2000. This is an extremely low vacancy rate and shows a tight market for ownership housing. The rental housing vacancy rate is estimated at 2.4% in 2011, down from

2011 American Community Survey Narrative Summary

3.5% in 2010 and 2.4% in 2000. Rental vacancy is also very low compared to long-term averages for rental property, showing a strong demand for rental housing and potential for rising rents.

The total number of occupied housing units is estimated at 64,361, compared to 68,082 in 2010 and 61,889 in 2000. The number in the estimate shows a significant decline since the 2010 Census. While some construction projects, most notably the James Bland public housing project redevelopment, have resulted in the demolition of some existing housing units before new housing was constructed, the net loss has been no more than 50 units at any one time, and the City has no evidence of such a significant decline in the number of occupied units in the City since 2010.

43.6% of occupied housing units are estimated to be owner-occupied, up somewhat from 43.1% in the 2010 Census and 40% in 2000, continuing a slow trend to a higher share of owner occupancy of the city's housing stock. 56.4% are renter-occupied, compared to 60% in 2000. This change since 2000 reflects condominium conversions, new townhouse and condominium construction, and changes in the number of investor-owned single-family units and condominiums that are rented. Both ownership and rental housing continue to be constructed in the city.

Summary and Conclusions

The 2011 American Community Survey does not reveal any dramatic changes in Alexandria's population and economy. A substantial share of Alexandria's housing stock continues to be well suited to providing housing for workers commuting to jobs in Alexandria and other employment centers in the center of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region, particularly for younger workers and those with small families. The City's population distribution by age continues to show a high percentage of young singles and couples in their twenties and thirties, and a low number of school-age children and seniors, compared to the national average and to areas outside the Beltway. The city continues to be economically, racially, ethnically and culturally diverse, with a substantial foreign-born population and only slightly greater than half the population identified as non-Hispanic white.

Contact Information.

For questions or additional information about the data provided in this report, please contact Pat Mann, Urban Planner, at 703.746.3857.