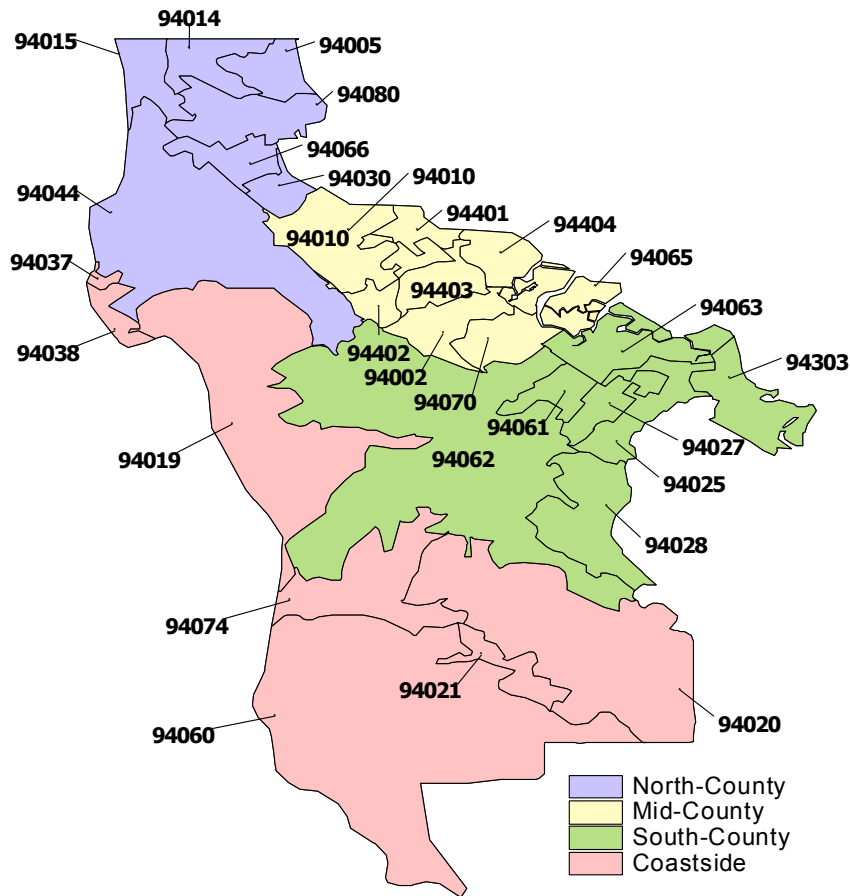


Geography and Population of the County

Occupying 531 square miles, San Mateo County is characterized by its geographic contrasts. The county is bound on the west by the Pacific Ocean, on the east by the San Francisco Bay, to the north is San Francisco County and City, and to the south is Santa Clara County. The county is often referred to as the Peninsula. The dense urbanization of the Bay Area Corridor stands in marked contrast to the agricultural, parks and preserves, and undeveloped lands of the rural Coastside regions. Four regions are typically described: North-County, South-County, Mid-County, and the Coastside.

Figure 1-a. San Mateo County with County Regions and Zip Codes

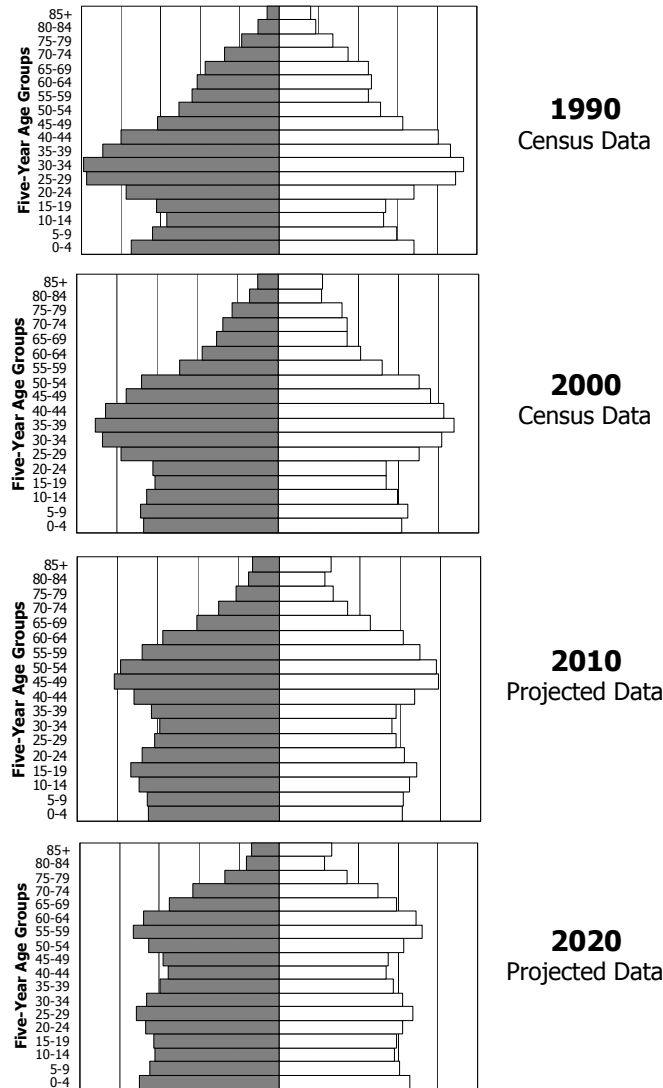


Although the county is geographically the third smallest county in California, it is the thirteenth most populous. The total population of the county from the 2000 United States Census was estimated at 707,161 persons, representing an 8.6% increase from 1990 (N= 651,401), compared to a 13.8% growth statewide for the same time period.

People of the County

San Mateo County is also distinguished by changing demographic characteristics, with a population that is aging and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. In 1990, the post-war "baby boomer" generation (persons born between 1946 and 1965) constituted the largest share of the population (**Figure 1-b**). An echo of this cohort can also be

Figure 1-b. Actual and Projected Population Age-Sex Structures, San Mateo County, 1990-2020

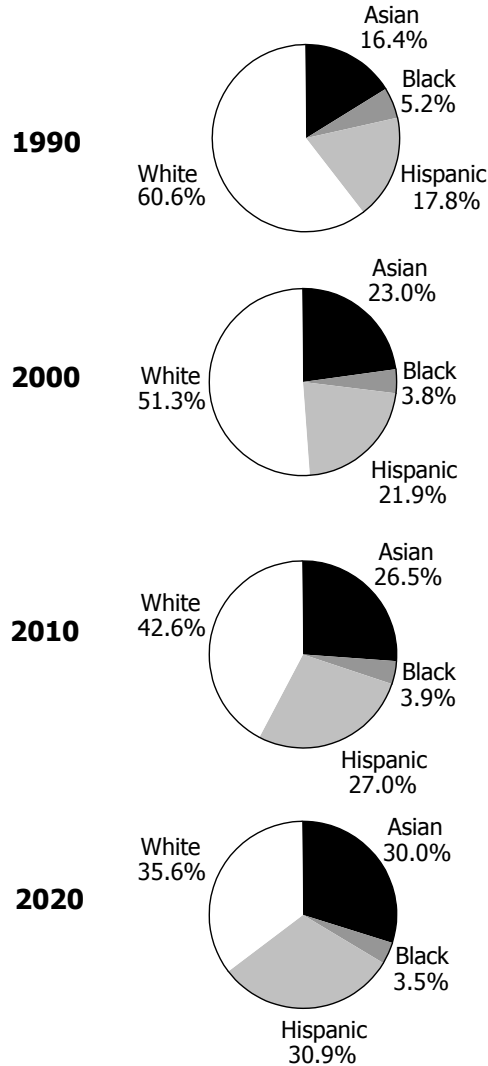


Gray bars represent males, and white bars represent females. Source data: United States Census (1990, 2000), California Department of Finance Population Projections 1998 (2010, 2020).

seen in the younger ages as female baby boomers came to childbearing age in the 1980's, peaking in 1990. Concordant with national trends, the baby boom generation represents a large proportion of the population that will enter old age during the next two decades. Population age-

sex structure projections (**Figure 1-b**) illustrate this flattening effect. Note that population projections are based on estimated future birth, death, and net migration rates and may not predict actual changes in the structure. If the current trends continue, however, the increasing proportion and number of older individuals in the county will create an unprecedented demographic shift resulting in an extraordinarily high demand for services to the older and elderly population.

Figure 1-c. Actual and Projected Racial/Ethnic Composition of San Mateo County, 1990-2020



Source data: United States Census (1990, 2000), California Department of Finance Population Projections 1998 (2010, 2020).

The racial and ethnic diversity of San Mateo County also continues to expand. The proportion of Hispanics has increased from 17.8% in 1990 to 21.9% in 2000. During the same time period, the Asian and Pacific Islander population increased from 16.4% to 23.0% and the black population

decreased slightly from 5.2% to 3.8% (**Figure 1-c**). In 2000, the United States Census allowed for the reporting of multiple races for individuals. In San Mateo County, 3.3% of residents classified themselves as multiracial. The reporting and tracking of multiracial individuals and Hispanic or Non-Hispanic ethnicity are likely to change in the future with more years of data.

The racial and ethnic change in San Mateo County mirrors that of California, except the black population across the state is increasing. The growth of the Hispanic population is largely attributed to natural increase (i.e., births minus deaths) rather than migration. Migration is responsible for most of the increase in the Asian and Pacific Islander population in San Mateo County.

Population projections are estimates based on current knowledge and trends and are made to aid in planning. Other factors, such as the current high cost of living in San Mateo County, may influence the population structure in unforeseen ways. However, the changing characteristics of the county population will continue to present a challenge to preserving and improving the overall health and well-being of the public. Subsequent chapters of this report will focus on specific issues related to health and the quality of life for the residents of San Mateo County.