

CHAPTER 3. COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

Population and demographic change are among the most important measures to express growth or decline and its likely impact on land uses in a community. Therefore, it is helpful to recognize the Township’s “community characteristics” in preparing a realistic and meaningful Master Plan.

Reports for the year 2022 are based on United States Census Bureau reports. The Population Estimates Program produces and disseminates the official estimates of the population and housing units via the United States Census Bureau website for years in between official census reports. *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates Data for 2022 are available as published in December, 2023*, and retrieved from *Census Reporter Profile page for Wells Township, Tuscola County, MI*. *Neilsburg Research* adds focused, executable insights, including useful comparisons to current state and national figures, and offers free use of their datasets and insights.

Recent Population Trends

It is appropriate to examine population growth and decline in the Township in the past few decades, including information regarding most recent population trends. Since 1970, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that the Township’s population increased from 1,002 to 1,535, or by a total of 533 persons. This represents a 53% increase over 50 years. Census figures for the Township are expressed numerically in the following figure.

Figure 3.1. Total Population by Decade for Wells Township, Michigan 1960-2022

Year	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2022
# of residents	805	1,002	1,501	1,528	1,749	1777	1590	1586
# change from previous census	-	+197	+499	+27	+221	+28	-187	-4 from 2020
% change from previous census		+24.5%	+49.8%	+1.5%	+14.5%	+1.6%	-10.5%	.25% from 2020

Census Reporter Profile page for Wells Township, Tuscola County, MI
Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau as reported by Neilsburg.com

As Figure 3.1 shows, the Township experienced much growth in the 1970’s, which has never been duplicated. It is clear that the population trends in Wells Township are not consistent from decade to decade.

Population growth figures since the 2000 Census are presented in the Figure 3.2. Figure 3.3 shows population figures for Wells Township and Tuscola County. Although there is slight variation, Wells Township is projected to continue to contain about 3% of the total population for Tuscola County.

Figure 3.2. Population by Year for Wells Township 2000-2022

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
# of residents	1,749	1,759	1,760	1,771	1,771	1,766	1,754	1,743	1,720	1,702	1,777	1,769
# change		+10	+1	+11	0	-5	-12	-11	-23	-18	+75	-8
% change		0.57	0.06	0.63	0	-0.28	-0.68	-0.63	-1.32	-1.05	4.41	-0.45

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
# of residents	1,747	1,737	1,730	1,725	1,712	1,702	1,702	1,696	1,590	1,585	1,586
# change	+22	-10	-7	-5	-13	-10	0	-6	-105	-5	+1
% change	-1.24	-0.57	-0.4	-0.29	-0.75	-0.58	0	-0.35	-6.19	-0.38	0.06

Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau as reported by Neilsburg.com

Figure 3.3. Population Comparison by 5 Years for Wells Township and Tuscola County 2000-2020

Year	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
# of residents Wells Township	1,749	1,766	1,777	1,725	1,590
# of residents Tuscola County	58,266	57,484	55,729	53,323	52,289
% Wells population in Tuscola County	2.99%	3.05%	3.18%	3.23%	3.04%

Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau as reported by Neilsburg.com

The overall growth rate between 2000 and 2020 for Tuscola County indicates a loss of 10.26%, with 5,977 residents leaving the county. Wells Township shows a loss of 159 residents and total decrease of 9.1% in this twenty year period. For the period if 2000-2010, Wells Township’s population increased by 28 (1.60%) compared to the rate of growth for the United States which was 9.63%. From 2010 to 2020, Wells Township’s population decreased by 187 (10.5%) compared to a 7.17% increase for the United States. The population peaked in 2010 at 1,777.

Figure 3.4 compares population losses since the 2010 Census for Wells Township with those of adjoining townships, ordered largest gains to largest losses. With only one adjoining township showing gains, Wells Township shows greater population losses than seven of eight adjoining townships within the 10-year period.

Figure 3.4. Population Losses for Wells and Adjoining Townships 2010-2020

Township Name	Dayton	Ellington	Novesta	Almer	Fremont	Kingston	Koylton	<u>Wells</u>	Indianfields
% of Residents lost	+72	-7	-48	-85	-145	-98	-100	-187	-330
% of Population lost	+3.9%	-5%	-3.2%	-4.1%	-4.4%	-6.2%	-6.3%	-10.5%	11.8%

Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau as reported by Neilsburg.com

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Population Projections

Projections have implications regarding future land use necessities, the demand for various public services and capital improvements, and they help to understand the future position of the Township in terms of growth and total population. Studies of population growth by decade since 1970 show inconsistent growth patterns which, when averaged for projection purposes, may lead to incorrect assumptions in light of today’s economy. It is clear that past growth and current decreased population numbers create conflicting projections. Although the recent trend may suggest that Wells Township has reached its population peak and is in decline, the possibility of growth outward from the city of Caro must be considered.

Given current conditions, it is likely that population fluctuations will continue to mirror economic conditions.

Demographic Data

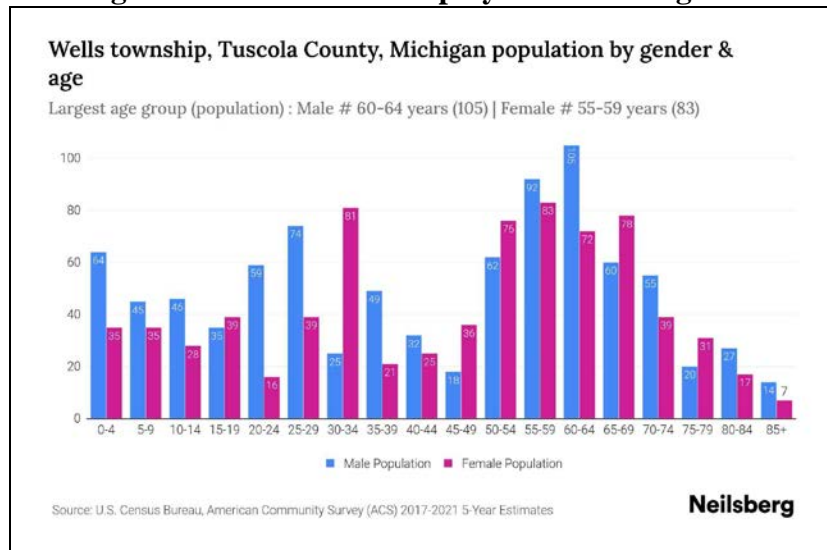
Aging Trends

Contemplating age characteristics can assist in determining the type of housing and community services that may be needed.

In 2022, the median age of Wells Township residents is 51.5, which is about 20 percent higher than the Tuscola County median age of 44.7, about 10% higher than the Michigan median age of 39.9, and about 20% higher than the United States median age of 38.5. The median age represents the mid-point in the range of all ages within the Township when all ages are listed in order.

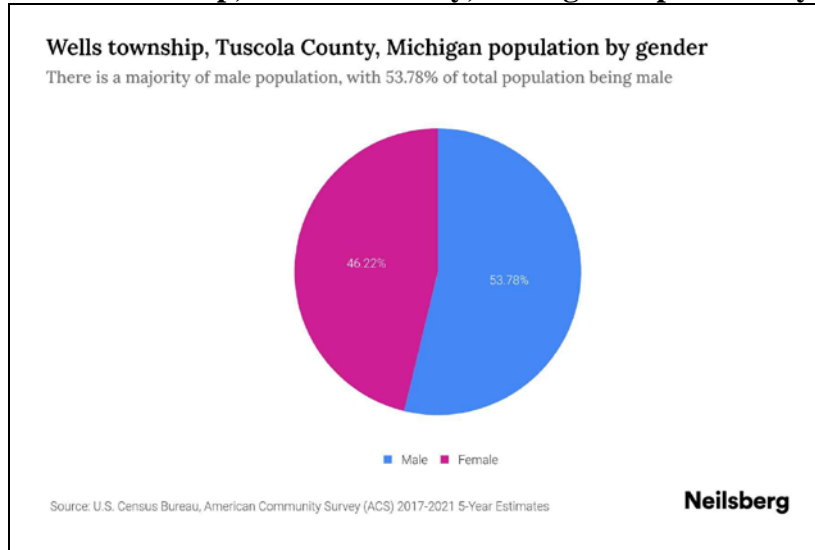
As the post World War II baby boomers age, median age has risen predictably and substantially, with an increased median age from 38 years in 2010 to 51.5 in 2022.

Figure 3.5. Wells Township by Gender & Age 2021



Gender

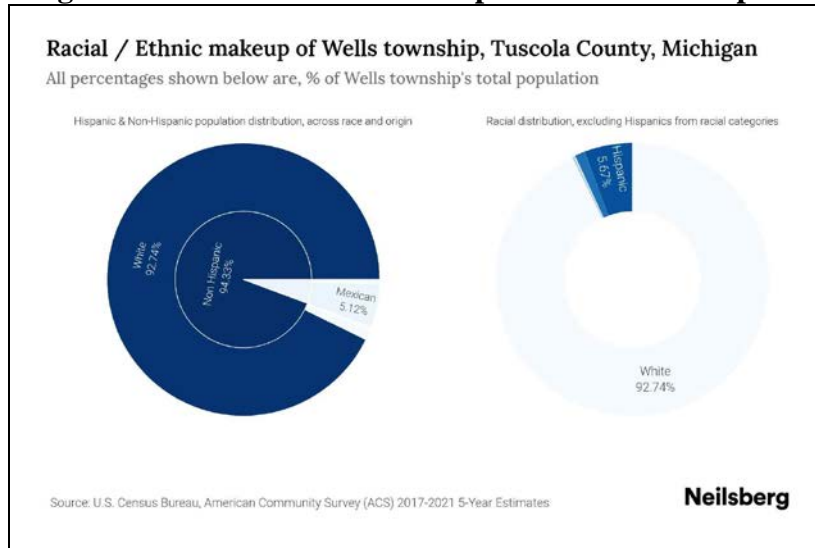
Figure 3.6. Wells Township, Tuscola County, Michigan Population by Gender 2021



In 2022, males made up 54% of the population, with females making up 46% of the population. This statistic has remained consistent for Wells Township and nationally since 2010. It should be noted that the American Community Survey asks a question about the current sex of the respondent, but not about gender, sexual orientation, or sex at birth, with Male or Female as the two choices.

Race and Ethnicity

Figure 3.7. Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Wells Township 2021



Neilsberg provides most current race and ethnicity characteristics for Wells Township, updated in 2024. At this time, the U.S. Census Bureau considers race and ethnicity to be two separate and distinct concepts, although this may be revised in future census questioning. Racial distribution includes identification with one of five groups, whereas all respondents are categorized by membership in one of two ethnic categories. These are

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“Hispanic or Latino” and “Not Hispanic or Latino.” Racial distribution is as follows: 96.46% of the Township is White Non Hispanic, 0.18% Black or African American, 0% American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.18% Asian, 0.12% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 3.05% report as multiracial.

By ethnicity, 5.67% of the total population is Hispanic or Latino, and 94.33% of the total population is Non-Hispanic. The population is becoming increasingly diverse, although an absolute majority is clearly shown (more than 50% of the populations belonging to one particular race). This information is not likely to affect land use in the Township.

Educational Attainment and Income

In addition to age, gender, and ethnicity characteristics, it is appropriate to catalog educational attainment trends in the community. This information may be an indicator of local school district quality and the opportunities for higher education in the region, which are often significant concerns for families moving to an area.

The 2022 Census indicates that within Wells Township the educational attainment levels are less than county, state, and national high school graduation levels. Most significant is the difference in the attainment of a Bachelor’s Degree or higher, which shows much lower levels in Wells Township, as the following table illustrates.

Figure 3.8. Educational Attainment Comparisons 2022

	Wells Township	Tuscola County	Michigan	U.S.
% High School Graduate	87.3	91.5	91.8	89.1
% Bachelor’s degree or higher	14.2	15.3	31.1	34.3

Censusreporter.org, United States Census Bureau

Michigan compulsory attendance requires that a child who was age eleven on or after December 1, 2009 or who was age eleven before that date and entered grade 6 in 2009 or later shall attend school from age six to eighteen. The legislation assumes that this increase from age six to sixteen will urge more students to complete high school, thereby increasing graduation rates in 2016 and beyond. However, high school graduate numbers in Wells Township have decreased from 89% in 2016 to 87.3%, while County and State numbers have increased more than 2% each. Those with a Bachelor’s degree or higher is slightly less than Tuscola County, and about half the rate of that in Michigan and nationally.

Figure 3.9. Economic Characteristic Comparisons 2000, 2014, 2022

	Wells Township			Tuscola County			Michigan	U.S.		
	2000	2014	2022	2000	2014	2022	2022	2000	2014	2022
Median household income (dollars)	43,200	42,688	71,442	40,174	44,017	59,815	68,505	41,994	53,482	74,580
Individuals below poverty level*	9.8%	12.7%	7.1%	8.2%	15.3%	12.3%	13.1%	12.4%	15.6%	11.5%

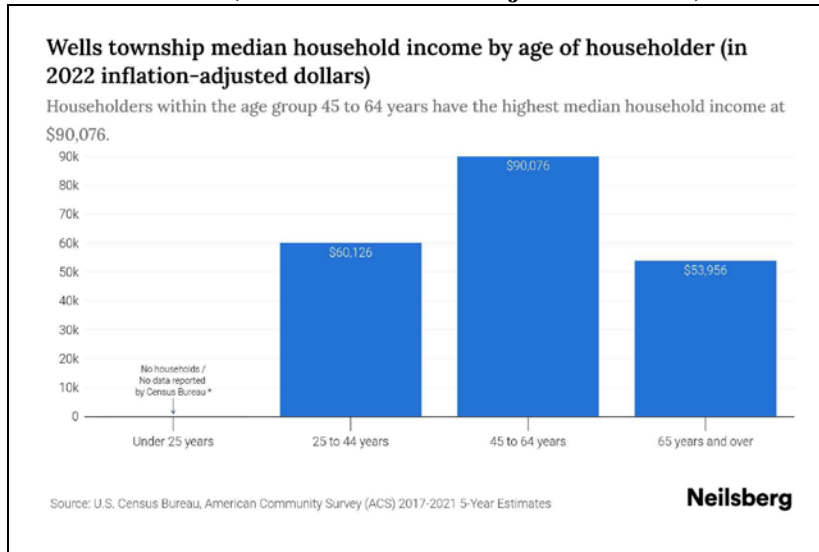
(Continued)	Wells Township			Tuscola County			Michigan	U.S.		
	2000	2014	2022	2000		2000	2014	2022	2000	2022
Children (Under 18) below poverty level*			9%			14.6%	17.9%			12.5%
Seniors (65 and over) below poverty level*			7%			10.8%	9%			10%

Population Estimates Program, United States Census Bureau

*U.S. poverty level is \$15,060 for individuals, \$25,820 for a family of 3, \$31,200 for a family of 4, \$36,580 for a family of 5, \$41,960 for a family of 6, \$47,340 for a family of 7, \$52,720 for a family of 8, add \$5,380 for each extra person for families of 9+ (2024)

Economic data shows a higher median household income as compared with Tuscola County and Michigan. Fewer are below the poverty level as individuals, children, and seniors. The median household income is the middle data point when all of the data are listed in order.

Figure 3.10. Wells Township Median Household Income by Age of Householder (In 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars)



The following observations are derived from income data (Neilsberg).

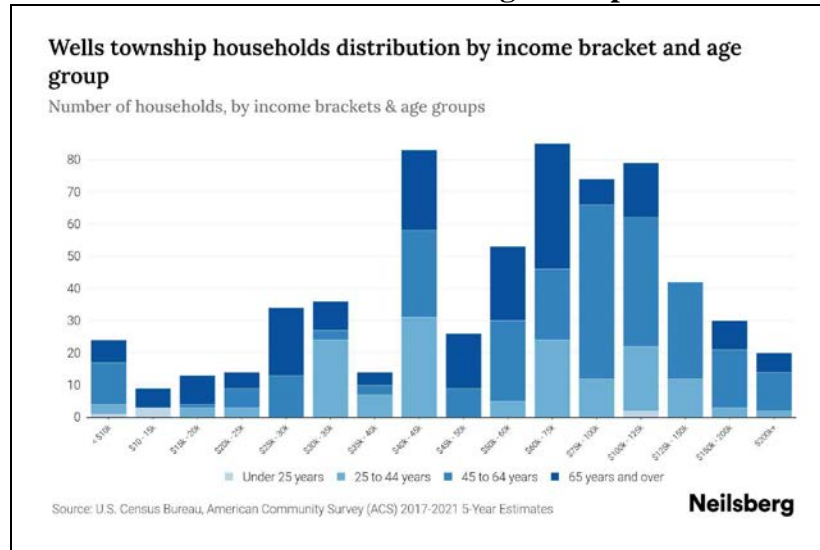
In terms of income distribution across age cohorts, in Wells township, the median household income stands at \$90,076 for householders within the 45 to 64 years age group, followed by \$60,126 for the 25 to 44 years age group. Notably, householders within the 65 years and over age group, had the lowest median household income at \$53,956.(Neilsberg)

Upon closer examination of the distribution of households among age brackets, it reveals that there are 6(0.94%) households where the householder is under 25 years old, 149(23.43%) households with a householder aged between 25 and 44 years, 276(43.40%) households with a householder aged between 45 and 64 years, and 205(32.23%) households where the householder is over 65 years old.

In Wells Township, the age group of 45 to 64 years stands out with both the highest median

income and the maximum share of households. This alignment suggests a financially stable demographic, indicating an established community with stable careers and higher incomes.

Figure 3.11. Wells Township Households Distribution by Income Bracket and Age Group 2021



IMPLICATIONS – COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS

1. The data defining community characteristics may be re-examined periodically to determine trends that may develop.
2. Growth must be expected and planned for, both in additional residences and by filling vacant properties. The Township should be prepared to accommodate this growth without infringing on the rural attributes that define it. Zoning practices will determine the effect that growth has on the rural character of the Township and the future quality of the natural environment.
3. As the median age of the population rises, the need for services offered closer to home may also increase. Consideration of the Township Hall as a location for some services and recreational opportunities may benefit Wells seniors.