

Demographics Outline

Background

Starting from the late 1900's and ongoing today, in 2022, West Windsor has experienced substantial changes in the demographics of its inhabitants. Before the late 1900's, West Windsor was a predominately white, Christian area. Although the municipality began moving away from its rural origins as early as the 1920's (see our Suburbanization page for more information!) to become the suburbia we see today, the town remained primarily white and Christian before the early 2000's.

For example, in a 1977 survey conducted by the *Windsor-Heights Herald* on its readership, white respondents numbered 91.6% of the newspaper's followers, with Black and Spanish readers each at 5.0%, and "Oriental" readers at 1.0%. By contrast, the 2015 US Census Bureau finds that in West Windsor, the community has witnessed a dramatic increase of Asian inhabitants, with Asian-Indian populations at 60.36% and Chinese at 26.08%. This is particularly interesting given the rapid population increase New Jersey underwent by the end of the 1900's, with suburbs like West Windsor and surrounding areas experiencing growth "almost twice as fast in the 1980's as it did in the 1970's."¹

The impetus for this substantive population growth likely came from legal decisions made by the state. Actions taken by the New Jersey Supreme Court reflect this, with Mount Laurel I (1975) and II (1983) deeming it unconstitutional to develop economically-discriminatory zoning ordinances for land use. The doctrine resulted in the 1985 creation of the Fair Housing Act and the Council on Affordable Housing (COAH) to monitor the state's housing needs and approve municipal housing plans without bias. Analogously, the township faced a staggering 87% population boom between 1980-1990,² with a majority of real estate built for moderate-density, suburban-type homes.³

Mount Laurel

Mount Laurel, a historically black community due to its history of involvement in the Underground Railroad, was developing the land through the use of "Planned Unit Developments" (PUDs) to attract white middle-class and upper middle-class families.

¹ [October 1st, 1984], *Windsor-Heights Herald*, *State's population growth up in 1980s*
<https://www.digifind-it.com/hightstown/pdfJS/pdfViewer/web/viewer.html?file=../../data/windsor-herald/1984/1984-10-31.pdf#search=%22demographics%22> (properly cite)

²https://www.communitynews.org/towns/west-windsor-plainsboro-news/new-wave-of-residential-development-may-alter-west-windsor-master-plan/article_c1ff4ece-1900-592c-8eb9-4ab6f426e607.html

³ [October 1st, 1984], *Windsor-Heights Herald*, *State's population growth up in 1980s*
<https://www.digifind-it.com/hightstown/pdfJS/pdfViewer/web/viewer.html?file=../../data/windsor-herald/1984/1984-10-31.pdf#search=%22demographics%22>

Yet due to the marketing goals and development of the farmland to a suburbia, the township renovation plans looked close to fiscal zoning. As a result, a substantial amount of white middle-class residents left the city while much of the poorer African American citizens were “relocated,” as the PUDS were directly targeted to forcibly remove them.

Bill Haines, then-mayor of the Mount Laurel Township, was most indicative of this through his sentiment to his town’s residents, stating, ““If you people can’t afford to live in our town, then you’ll just have to leave...” to a crowd of 60 African-American parishioners.

After a class action litigation was filed against Mount Laurel to accuse the township that they were using zoning power to exclude affordable housing opportunities from poor residents, a series of court cases evolved to reach the state Supreme Court. In 1975, the New Jersey Supreme Court implemented Mount Laurel I and Mount Laurel II (1983) to prohibit the development of economically discriminatory land ordinances. In their decision, the justices stated it was unconstitutional to implement “municipal land use regulations that prevent affordable housing opportunities.”⁴ The decision determined that state development had to provide affordable housing for lower-class residents in the region, through preventing targeted class discrimination through housing development.

The COAH was therefore created to monitor the state’s housing needs and review and approve municipal housing plans without bias, leading to the population and demographic changes we see today.

Religion

West Windsor has many dynamic religious institutions affiliated with different sects and ethnicities. Notable to West Windsor history are older churches such as the Saint David the King church, built in 1992, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and the Mercer County Church of Christ.

Yet more recently built are the institutions targeted to address the religious beliefs of more ethnicities in the community. For example, the Princeton Korean Community church was developed in 2005 as a vibrant response to the burgeoning Korean-American population in West Windsor. It exists today as a central point for many Christian Korean-Americans in the community. Similarly, the Korean community center received approval from the West Windsor Planning Board in 2017 for its development. Created by the Korean Community Center Foundation, the 7,875 square-foot center will offer numerous amenities such as classrooms,

⁴ CITE

conference rooms and lecture halls. Upon development, the center will offer educational, social and health services for interested adults and Saturday language classes to children.⁵

Similarly, the OCM Canaan Church was developed in 2005 as a place of worship for the growing Chinese-American population in the township. Though not much is known about it, INSERT.

More recently however is the development of the slightly troubled BAPS Mandir. Though construction began for the temple in 2010, the behemoth project finally ended four years later. The Mandir, meaning temple in Hindi, was the second phase of the Hindu American Religious Center, with its early completion targeted to facilitate leveled growth of the center.⁶ The construction of the project was operated by the 104-year old worldwide civic and religious organization, BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, which sponsors religious, cultural, and social service activities globally.⁷ The temple is a site of Hindu worship for the substantial population of South-Asian-American citizens in the township, and it hosted religious and community-bonding events nightly. Notably of late however, the temple has faced troubling allegations of slavery and unfair labor during its development, and is actively undergoing a federal legal suit regarding these accusations.

Finally, the Muslim Center of Greater Princeton has arguably the longest history of the three in West Windsor. Though unofficially created in 2002 in a small, one-room office, it has since developed greatly. The center expanded to various larger office spaces throughout the years through community funding. As the Institute of Islamic Studies was established as the major Muslim center in the Mercer County area, the mosque eventually gained enough funding to develop to its state today. In 2018, it finished construction to become a INSERT square-foot building, hosting various language classes, prayer rooms and community events every night. The mosque has been well-attended by the township: in its first year, it witnessed strong growth as nearly 1,000 people attended its Friday service, and the mosque continues its philanthropic services to the municipality today.⁸

School System

The change in demographics of an area can be without doubt seen in its schools, for this purpose, we interviewed three teachers who currently teach at West Windsor Plainsboro High School South, in which all of them have worked in West Windsor since at least the beginning of 2000s. In the interviews, we asked questions about their remarks to the student body they can contact in their classroom and in their daily work as a teacher or advisor.

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Interview

Interview with Mr. Connor

Mr. Connor is a history teacher at West Windsor Plainsboro High School South since 1975 and has coached around 10 sports, he has walked through most of the changes West Windsor has had over the past 40+ years. Mr. Connor recently retired after the 47th year of his teaching career at High School South (2021-2022 school year).

In this, interview, we incorporate questions that doesn't not only address to the group of students in his classroom and on the field (sports) but also about what is taught to them about American History

Q: If you can recall, what was the proportion of gender in your classes (since 1975)?

There weren't many changes in the gender ratio. I've always counted the number of boys and girls in my class and they've always been roughly 50-50.

Q: Did any student come into the classroom with an already existing bias of American history?

Well, to be honest, since most of the parents are highly educated. Immigrant students were pretty objective when learning the history of a non-native country. On the other hand, compared to students that were raised in the district, they know relatively less. But all of them were pretty open-minded. I've never felt offended in my classroom no matter what background my students are from and I'm always open to debate any historical topics.

Q: Do you think there was a shift and demographic (ethnicity) in the classroom since 1975?

I mean...At first, there were lots of what I would call it Western European (Caucasian). Actually most of my students were white in the 70s and early 80s. Since, maybe the mid-80s, the immigration rate began to increase and you would be able to see more diversity among students in my class. There were students from Poland, Egypt, Turkey. There were African American students. There were students that were mixed (you might have an Asian mom and a white dad). But African Americans have always not been as numbered as other ethnicities.

Currently, the school is Indian heavy and they've brought the emphasis on education to the community. which is partially why West Windsor has good education and opportunities compared to other parts of the US.

Q: Do you think that these immigrant influx might have also changed student choices in terms of clubs and perhaps their extracurriculars?

Well, like I've mentioned before, you can certainly see more diversity in and outside of the classroom which makes our culture more mutual. Athletically, American football isn't as attractive as previously. Before, that was the sport that really dominated the club activities and right now, as other sports mature...for example badminton, football might not be one of their top options for kids, you know. Football is really about teamwork and if you don't have that sufficient

number of athletes, it's kind of hard to run it. It's not like tennis where you can play in a group of two.

Ms. Glassband

Ms. Glassband is an AP teacher for English Language and English Literature at High School. She also works as an advisor for many school clubs such as Woman Empowerment.

Q: Were some clubs becoming relatively less dominant than previously (football, etc)? What type of club are the newly emerged clubs (national competition, sports, artistic, etc)?

Students have become more interested in recent years in starting their own clubs. They do more outreach in the community and these clubs have been created by kids, not necessarily part of a national chapter. Our clubs are more academic and altruistic these days.

Q: Is there any change in gender ratio amongst the students (your students)?

I haven't seen this trend. I had active membership from girls and boys when I began and we still do. However, I recently advised Students Demand Action, an advocacy group focused on demanding changes to our gun laws and the overwhelming majority of members were female.

Q: What are the changes in students' most popular classes? What (in your mind) could be the cause of it?

I teach AP Language and AP Literature and the numbers are higher than they've ever been. This is a national trend. More kids take AP classes than ever before. I can't blame them; the pressure comes from the top. College is incredibly competitive and students are sent a very clear message: *Take the most challenging classes you can take.* I wish that pressure didn't exist, but it does, so our students feel they need to push themselves to take the hardest classes we offer. When I went to high school, AP classes were filled only with students who wanted to major in those particular subjects; that's not the case anymore.

Mr. Hamnett is a teacher at West Windsor since 2000, he first began as a teacher for regular classes and later became an AP teacher 14 years later

Q: Were some clubs becoming relatively less dominant than previously (football, etc)?

Yes, it has been changing for a while. Sports like Football and baseball were very popular 10-15 years ago but the numbers have gone down. Other sports like track, swimming, cross country, and tennis have remained very popular and successful.

Q: What type of club are the newly emerged clubs (national competition, sports, artistic, etc)?

I know that Fencing was added years ago as a new sport. Our other Nationally successful clubs like Science Olympiad, FPS and MUN have been strong for a long time

Q: Is there any change in gender ratio amongst the students (your students)?

Gender ratios have not changed much, it has been near 50/50. I am not sure if participation in club and sport ratios have changed. I know as a former computer teacher, we tried to increase the number of females in computer science classes, since that was male dominant.

Over the past thirty years, as the influx of immigrants and the enhancement of education increases, the residents of West Windsor shifted from a white majority population to an Indian(Asian) majority population. Subsequently, the emphasis on “American” sports weakens as the support of more intellectual and academic activities grows. It cannot be said that this wouldn’t happen without the accroissement of Asian residents in recent decades. However, it is also essential to not overlook the pressure that colleges and universities are sending to high school students.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the West Windsor township has seen a great evolution over the course of its history, From its origin as a largely monolithic, white and rural township, it has developed over the late 1900s and early 2000s to become the sprawling and diverse suburban township it is today.