

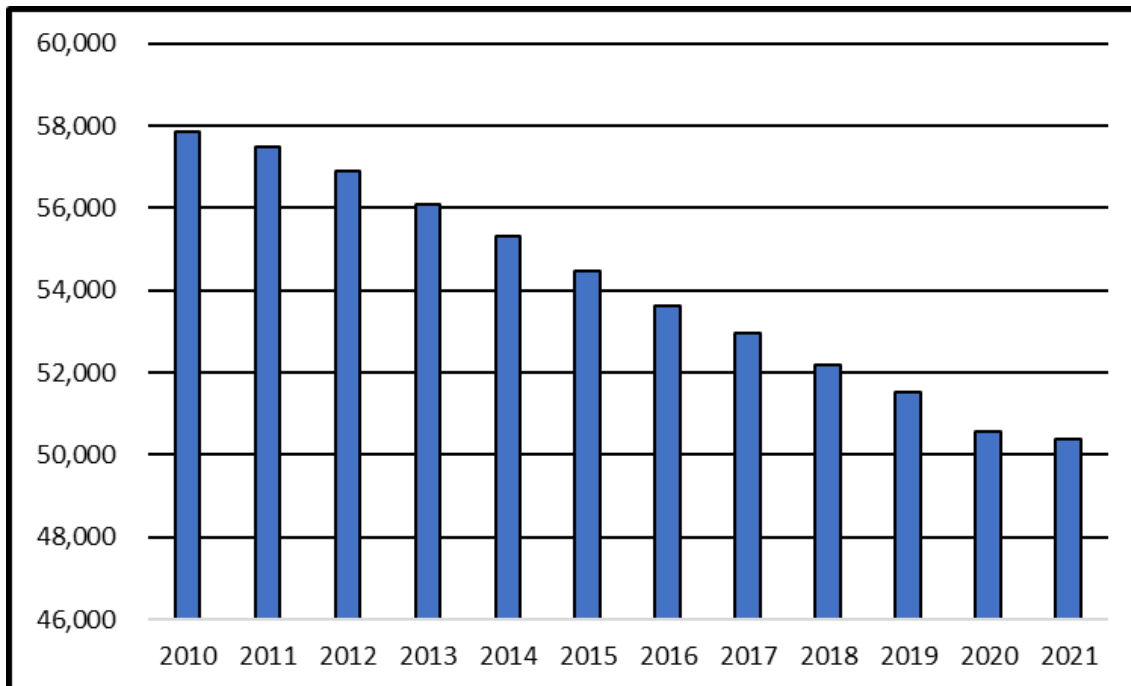
Fact Sheet: Population Dynamics in Columbus County

Source: Carolina Population Center

Population dynamics are a function of multiple factors: migration (the hardest factor to measure), as well as fertility and mortality. In particular, migration patterns changed during the last several years, so it is difficult to determine whether they have dramatically altered population projections, and whether those changes are temporary or permanent.

It may be too early to tell if the population is growing or declining in Columbus County, but it is possible people have been moving there in large numbers. On the other hand, while there is in-migration from other parts of the state or other parts of the country-- Columbus has a high death rate, a median birth rate, and also a high infant death rate -- all of which could be offsetting the population gains through migration.

1. The Columbus County population has been declining precipitously since at least 2010, but that decline appears to have leveled off somewhat between 2020 and 2021. (Source: [Official County Pop Estimates from NC OSBM](#)).



2. This leveling off could be a reflection of people moving there in larger numbers, which could be offsetting the relatively high mortality rates in Columbus County.

3. Housing construction does not necessarily equate to full-time residents. but it could be true that the 2020-2021 population data is behind the trend of people moving to Columbus because of rapid growth in Leland and other Brunswick County areas.
4. Regardless of whether people are actually moving to Columbus to live there full-time in larger numbers, it probably *is* true that residents are more likely to note the new construction and be less aware of the deaths and out-migration. On that note, Columbus County ranks in the highest quintile among NC counties in deaths per 1,000 residents. The figure below shows that quintile ranking and is from this report from [NCDHHS, Vital Statistics](#).

Death Rates

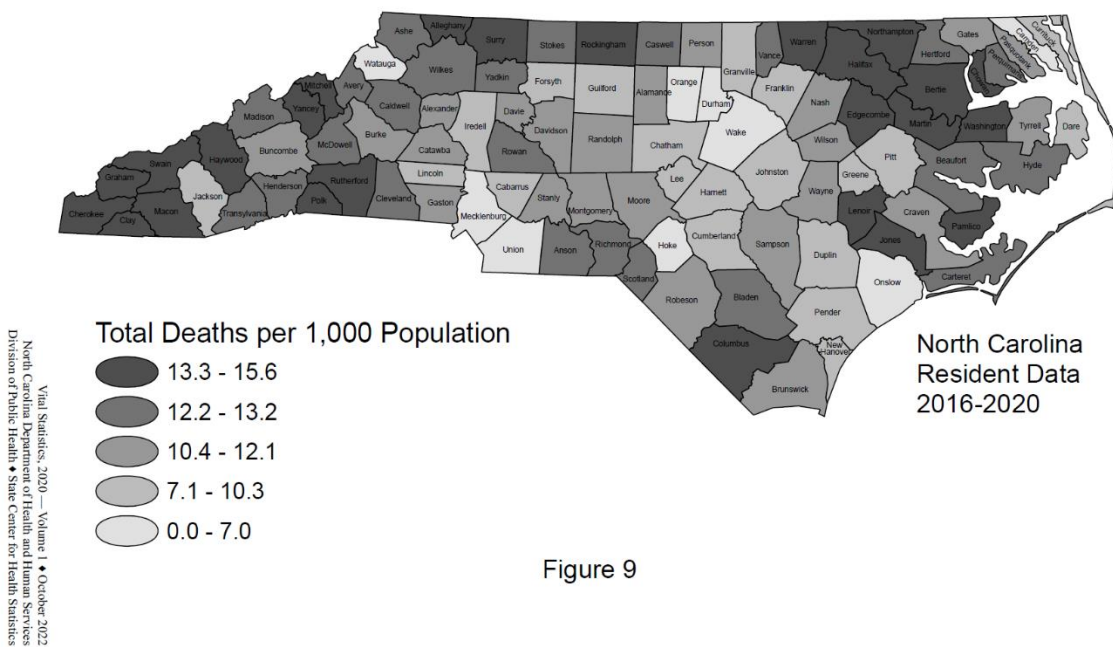


Figure 9

For further information, see Geographical Patterns in Vital Statistics on the Cohort Website at: <https://exced.sanford.duke.edu/nclf-spring-2023/resources/cape-fear-resources/>