FACT SHEET - Dane County Population Projections 2020-2050 August 2025

BACKGROUND

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) prepares population projections for every jurisdiction in the state, typically every 5 years. These projections are used by municipalities, utilities, employers, state agencies and others throughout the state to plan for the future. The projections inform land use and infrastructure planning, business investment, and efforts to preserve farmland and natural resources.

Fueled by unique local assets, Dane County has experienced strong population growth for over 100 years. The rate of growth slowed after 1970 but has been consistently higher than DOA's projections (see graph on next page). In response, some local entities develop their own projections to more accurately anticipate their needs. The result is a patchwork of differing projections about our future growth.

A "Regional Data Group" (RDG) of local planning and demography specialists gathered in 2024 and 2025 to research trends in population, housing, and jobs in the county.[1] The objectives of this work are **1)** to establish a set of accurate population projections to inform local planning processes and **2)** to encourage use of these projections for local planning. The RDG intends to review and update these projections every five years.

POPULATION PROJECTION AND METHOD

The Regional Data Group estimates the Dane County 2050 population at **887,000 residents**.

This is about 325,000 more residents than the 2020 Census count of 561,504 (a 58% increase). This represents 160,000 new housing units, not including the additional units needed to correct for past underproduction, restore healthy vacancy rates and reduce pressure on home prices.[2]

The analysis considered:

- DOA projections assume a statewide decline in population, beginning this decade, due to dropping birth rates and modest in-migration.
- DOA's projections show growth continuing in Dane County through 2050, averaging 11.5% growth per decade. The rate of growth has only been that low in two decades during the past 125 years: 1900-1910 and 1970-1980. In all other decades the growth rate ranged from 13.5% to 31.1%.
- Data on Dane County's population, housing, and jobs over the past 40 years show exponential growth curves rather than straight-line trends. Jobs have grown faster than population, with more workers living outside Dane County. Households have increased faster than housing units, resulting in lower vacancy rates. 887,000 is the median value among separate projections based on trends in population, housing, and jobs. If we see this number of people in 2050 our growth rate will have averaged 16.5% per decade, 2020-2050.
- The Growth Factors described at right and a shift in local housing development policies due to the housing shortage are expected to sustain growth through 2050.

GROWTH FACTORS

Job growth in stable industries, including healthcare, education, advanced manufacturing, bio-medical research, IT and professional and financial services, supported by the continual influx of UW students.

UW-Madison attracts students from around the nation and world, some of whom settle here; UW Madison ranked 6th in research in U.S., attracting investment in industries supported by research.

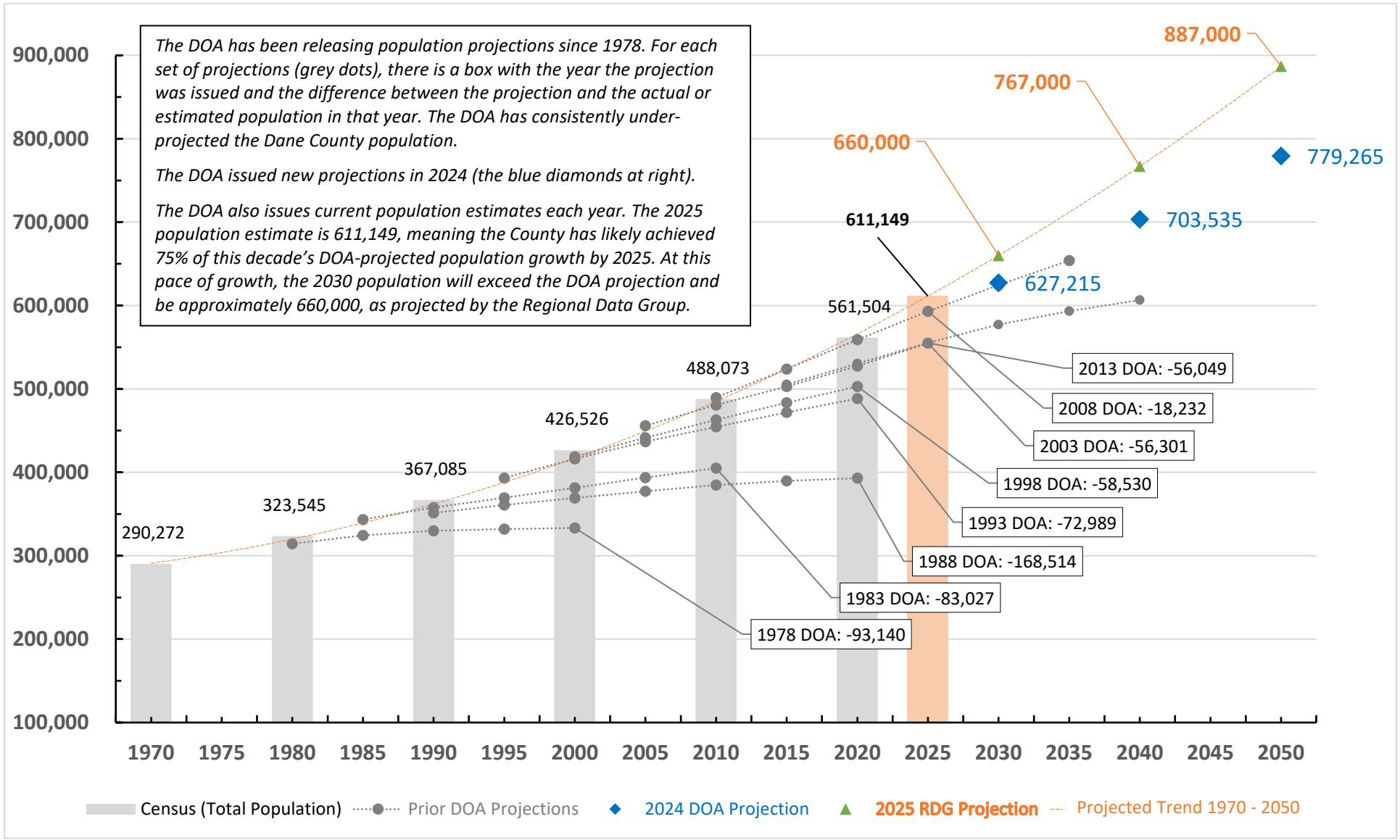
Exceptional healthcare services with five major hospitals and over a dozen clinics forming a regional healthcare hub.

Urban and rural amenities including walking, biking and transit infrastructure; cultural institutions; an attractive natural setting; and world-class agriculture.

[1] The Regional Development Group (RDG) includes the Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC), the Greater Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), Dane County Planning, the City of Madison, and the UW-Madison Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture.

[2] 2010 to 2020, Dane County produced 8,000 fewer units than the number of new households, significantly reducing vacancy rates, *Regional Housing Strategy, 2024*.

DANE COUNTY POPULATION – ACTUAL AND PROJECTED



MUNICIPAL PROJECTIONS

The Regional Data Group prepared local population projections compatible with a county-wide total of 887,000 – see the tables on the following pages.

1. **County Growth Rate VS Municipal Growth Rates:** The County's population projection reflects a growth rate of 16.5% per decade. Though many of the municipal projections reflect a similar exponential growth trend, some do not.
2. **Rounding:** 2050 Projection values are rounded upward to the nearest multiple of 5, 50, 100, 500, or 1,000 depending on community type and size. This is meant to convey some of the uncertainty inherent in population projections.
3. **City and Village Projections:** The Capital Area Regional Planning Commission modeled municipal population growth as part of the Regional Development Framework (RDF), adopted in 2022. That model looked at each community, their active development, planned development, and the location and development patterns illustrated in the Framework's growth scenario. That same model was initially applied in the current process to allocate the 2020-2050 population growth - each community was assigned the same percentage of growth, applied now to a larger projected county-wide population control total.
   Those "percent-of-growth" projections were then compared to other methods of projecting growth at the local level, including:
   - A linear projection,
   - A second-order polynomial projection,
   - The recent Department of Administration (DOA) population projections, and
   - A "percent-of-total" allocation based on the RDF model.

   The RDG selected for each jurisdiction the trendline that best corresponded to an understanding of the community's circumstances. In cases where communities are landlocked and infill/redevelopment opportunities are constrained the 2050 projection was reduced from the initial “percent of growth” projection. The 2050 projection was increased in cases where housing production levels have recently been strong and there is room to grow with good regional transportation access.
4. **Town Projections:** Population projections for Dane County towns reflect DOA projections rounded up to the next multiple of five. The RDG anticipates some additional growth in unincorporated areas by 2050 but is unable to predict where that growth will occur. The "Unallocated Town Growth,” 5,080 additional residents by 2050, is added to the total for all towns but is not assigned to any specific jurisdictions.
5. **Town Dissolutions:** The Town of Madison was dissolved in 2022 and its territory and population distributed to the Cities of Madison and Fitchburg by intergovernmental agreement. The Town of Blooming Grove is scheduled to be dissolved in 2027 by intergovernmental agreement and its territory and population absorbed by the City of Madison. The Town of Burke is scheduled to be dissolved in 2036 by intergovernmental agreement and its territory and population absorbed by the City of Madison, City of Sun Prairie, and Village of DeForest. The population projections for each of the receiving municipalities incorporate these jurisdictional changes.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

These projections support the planning and preparation necessary to maintain community stability and the quality-of-life features Dane County residents desire:

- **Adequate, safe, and affordable housing options**
- **Safe and reliable transportation options**
- **Green spaces for recreation and habitat protection**
- **Clean water**
- **Proximity to rural areas**
- **Sustainable farming and local food production**

TRENDS TO WATCH

The Regional Data Group will continue to monitor trends and conditions, offering updated local projections every 5 years. Things to watch:

Climate migration within the U.S. is anticipated but hard to predict. Wisconsin has been shown to be a relatively safe and affordable place to live, less vulnerable to extreme weather and risks to life and property from wildfires, hurricanes, extreme drought, etc. Will this drive growth here?

Household size has been falling for various reasons, including economic instability and uncertainty for young adults, and a large population of older adults (baby boomers). Will household size rebound or continue to shrink, and how will this affect housing demand and population?

National economic conditions affect growth and birth rates in a variety of ways. Will interest rates fall again? Will young adults pursue home ownership or feel more confident about having children?

Global economic, political and climate conditions could affect all of the above, including immigration pressures and policies and the cost of construction materials.

Dane County City & Village Population Projections (August 2025)							
Community	2000 (Census)	2010 (Census)	2020 (Census)	2030 (RDG)	2040 (RDG)	2050 (RDG)	2050 (DOA)
Dane County	**426,526**	**488,073**	**561,504**	**660,070**	**767,000**	**887,000**	**779,265**
Fitchburg	20,501	25,260	29,609	*37,430*	*44,530*	*52,500*	52,245
Madison	208,054	233,209	269,840	*324,580*	*378,520*	*437,000*	371,138
Maple Bluff	1,358	1,313	1,368	1,480	1,610	1,750	1,648
McFarland	6,416	7,808	8,991	11,410	14,050	17,000	13,713
Middleton	15,770	17,442	21,827	26,420	31,410	37,000	35,295
Monona	8,018	7,533	8,624	9,190	9,810	10,500	10,240
Shorewood Hills	1,732	1,565	2,169	2,340	2,540	2,750	2,557
Central	**261,849**	**294,130**	**342,428**	**412,850**	**482,470**	**558,500**	**486,836**
Cottage Grove	4,059	6,192	7,303	11,150	15,320	20,000	19,833
DeForest	7,368	8,936	10,811	12,820	*15,050*	*17,500*	17,442
Sun Prairie	20,369	29,364	35,967	44,270	*54,850*	*65,000*	55,644
Verona	7,052	10,619	14,030	18,860	24,110	30,000	26,194
Waunakee	8,995	12,097	14,879	18,400	22,220	26,500	24,833
Windsor[i]	5,286	6,345	8,754	11,550	14,590	18,000	16,983
First Ring	**53,129**	**73,553**	**91,744**	**117,050**	**146,140**	**177,000**	**160,929**
Belleville*	1,795	1,848	1,909	2,240	2,600	3,000	3,356
Black Earth	1,320	1,338	1,493	1,650	1,810	2,000	1,942
Blue Mounds	708	855	948	1,120	1,300	1,500	966
Brooklyn*	502	936	1,026	1,320	1,640	2,000	1,183
Cambridge*	1,014	1,348	1,539	1,980	2,460	3,000	2,092
Cross Plains	3,084	3,538	4,104	4,830	5,620	6,500	4,699
Dane	799	995	1,117	1,380	1,670	2,000	1,173
Deerfield	1,971	2,319	2,507	2,960	3,450	4,000	2,903
Edgerton*	42	97	146	180	210	250	196
Marshall	3,432	3,862	3,787	4,310	4,870	5,500	4,122
Mazomanie	1,485	1,652	1,768	1,990	2,230	2,500	1,964
Mount Horeb	5,860	7,009	7,754	9,040	10,430	12,000	8,934
Oregon	7,514	9,231	11,179	13,090	15,170	17,500	17,235
Rockdale	214	214	207	220	230	250	179
Stoughton	12,354	12,611	13,173	15,090	17,170	19,500	12,870
Outlying	**42,094**	**47,853**	**52,657**	**61,400**	**70,860**	**81,500**	**63,814**
2050 Towns	**57,691**	**61,159**	**63,552**	**63,865**	**64,320**	**64,920**	**64,859**
Unallocated Town Growth				1,540	3,210	5,080	
All Towns	**69,454**	**72,537**	**74,675**	**68,770**	**67,530**	**70,000**	**67,686**

* - Dane County portion only.

i - Windsor is excluded from the "Towns" total for Census years 1980 - 2010 to reflect its incorporation as a village.

Dane County Town Population Projections (August 2025)							
Community	2000 (Census)	2010 (Census)	2020 (Census)	2030 (RDG)	2040 (RDG)	2050 (RDG)	2050 (DOA)
Albion	1,823	1,951	2,069	2,035	2,005	1,975	1,975
Berry	1,084	1,127	1,168	1,175	1,185	1,190	1,188
Black Earth	449	483	510	525	540	555	554
Blue Mounds	842	968	899	855	810	770	767
Blooming Grove	1,768	1,815	1,622	-	-		
Bristol	2,698	3,765	4,447	4,655	4,870	5,100	5,096
Burke	2,990	3,284	3,265	3,365	-		2,827
Christiana	1,313	1,235	1,235	1,195	1,160	1,125	1,125
Cottage Grove	3,839	3,875	3,791	3,735	3,685	3,630	3,628
Cross Plains	1,419	1,507	1,494	1,470	1,445	1,420	1,420
Dane	968	990	934	890	845	805	802
Deerfield	1,470	1,585	1,684	1,670	1,660	1,645	1,645
Dunkirk	2,053	1,945	1,881	1,755	1,640	1,530	1,526
Dunn	5,270	4,931	4,880	4,630	4,390	4,165	4,165
Madison	7,005	6,279	6,236	-	-		
Mazomanie	1,185	1,090	1,074	1,070	1,065	1,060	1,056
Medina	1,235	1,376	1,344	1,305	1,265	1,230	1,228
Middleton	4,594	5,877	6,792	7,405	8,075	8,805	8,805
Montrose	1,134	1,081	1,064	1,015	965	920	916
Oregon	3,148	3,184	3,125	3,020	2,915	2,815	2,813
Perry	670	729	737	725	710	695	695
Pleasant Springs	3,053	3,154	3,078	3,005	2,940	2,870	2,868
Primrose	682	731	750	760	765	775	774
Roxbury	1,700	1,794	1,871	1,815	1,765	1,715	1,715
Rutland	1,887	1,966	1,977	1,940	1,910	1,875	1,871
Springdale	1,530	1,904	2,056	2,125	2,200	2,275	2,271
Springfield	2,762	2,734	2,929	2,915	2,895	2,880	2,878
Sun Prairie	2,308	2,326	2,391	2,320	2,255	2,190	2,186
Vermont	839	819	871	920	970	1,025	1,022
Verona	2,153	1,948	1,947	2,035	2,125	2,220	2,218
Vienna	1,294	1,482	1,666	1,705	1,740	1,780	1,777
Westport	3,586	3,950	4,191	4,500	4,835	5,190	5,189
York	703	652	697	695	690	690	686
2050 Towns	57,691	61,159	63,552	63,865	64,320	64,920	64,859
Unallocated Town Growth 2020 through 2050				*1,540*	*3,210*	*5,080*	
All Towns	**69,454**	**72,537**	**74,675**	**68,770**	**67,530**	**70,000**	*67,686*