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Seneca County

General Overview

Formed in 1804, Seneca is a geographically small county located southeast of Rochester, between Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. Seneca is well known as the home to the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention, a pivotal first step in the modern Women's Rights Movement.

While Seneca is the second smallest county by population and smallest by area in the Finger Lakes Region, its population has grown more than the region and every regional county besides Ontario. Seneca has a particularly low rate of prekindergarten participation.

Demographic Overview

Seneca County had the second highest population growth in the region:

- Seneca's population grew by 4.3% from 2000 to 2016, on par with the state (4.0%) and slightly higher than the region (1.1%) but below the nation (14.8%).
- Seneca's population in 2016 was 34,800 – just 3% of the total regional population – and was the second smallest county by population in the region.

Like other counties in the region, Seneca County's population is aging:

- Seneca's population 85 and older grew by 42% from 2000 to 2016, below the growth in the nation (46%) but above growth for the state and region (both 40%). Seneca also had a large increase (19%) in the number of residents ages 60 to 84 – below the nation (29%) and region (21%) but above the state (13%).
- Seneca's population under 20 fell by 13%, equal to the region but greater than the loss for the state (8%) and in contrast to a 3% increase nationally. However, the number of residents ages 20 to 39 grew by 1%, in contrast to the decline in the region (6%).

All ethnic groups in Seneca grew in population, but growth was faster for minorities:

- The comparatively small number of Asian, African American, and Hispanic residents grew from 2000 to 2016, while the number of white residents remained essentially flat. The African American population grew by 122%, well above increases for the state (2%) and region (12%).
- However, Seneca remained overwhelmingly white (92% of total population): in 2016, African Americans and Hispanics made up just 5% and 3% of the total population respectively.

The share of households with married couples fell from 2000 to 2012-16 while the share of households with residents living alone grew:

- In 2012-16, 17% of households were composed of married couples with children, a 6-point decrease from 2000. The proportion of households with married couples without children decreased by 2 points to 29% in 2012-16.
- From 2000 to 2012-16, households with residents living alone grew from 25% of the total to 30%.

Arts, Culture and Leisure

Between 2005 and 2016, total tourism revenue grew by more than the state and region, while recreational revenue per resident has been stagnant:

- In 2016, Seneca County generated \$1,560 in tourism revenue per resident, below the state (\$3,240) but above the region (\$1,305). From 2005, tourism revenue per resident grew by 61%, more than the state (18%) and region (7%).
- Tourism revenue in Seneca (\$54 million) made up 3% of the region's total tourism revenue, a share in line with its relative population. From 2005, Seneca's total revenue grew by 59%, a larger increase than the region (7%) and every county in the region besides Yates (67%).

Recreational spending per resident is at the same rate as it was in 2005 and is lower than the state and region:

- In 2016, there was \$50 in recreation spending per resident in Seneca, lower than the state (\$363) and region (\$72). Revenue per resident is at the same level it was in 2005, a 2% decrease from its peak of \$53 in 2008. While Seneca's recreation spending has remained flat from 2005, the region decreased by 5%. The state's recreation spending, however, increased by 34% in this time period.

Children and Youth

The child poverty rate in Seneca is relatively low and has stayed fairly flat while the state, nation and region increased.

- In 2012-16, the child poverty rate in Seneca was 15%, lower than the state (22%), region and nation (both 21%). Seneca had a lower rate than all counties in the region but Ontario.

The rate of single-parent families has increased since 2000, but by less than the region and nation:

- In 2012-16, 35% of Seneca families were headed by single parents, equal to the national rate and lower than the state (37%) and region (39%). Only two counties, Genesee and Yates, had a lower rate.
- The rate of single-parent families increased by 10 points in Seneca from 2000 to 2007-11, then fell by 5 points from 2007-11 to 2012-16.

Seneca's rate of child abuse and neglect has consistently been higher than the state and region:

- In 2016, there were 22 cases of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children in Seneca – above the state (16) and regional (18) rates.
- Seneca's rate has decreased by 19% since 2000, in contrast to a 21% increase for the state and 25% increase regionally.

Teen pregnancy fell by more than half from 4.8% of 15- to 19-year-olds in 2000 to 2.0% in 2015. Seneca's rate in 2015 was slightly lower than the region (2.2%).

Seneca was lagging in mothers accessing early prenatal care, with 64% of mothers in 2015 accessing early care, a decrease from 73% in 2000. Seneca's rate in 2015 was below the state (76%), nation (77%), and region (79%). Of regional counties, Seneca had the second lowest rate.

Community Engagement

Voter registration in Seneca County lagged behind state and regional rates:

- In 2016, 76% of voting-age adults were registered, below 82% for the region and 80% for the state.
- The registration rate fell by 12 points from 2000 – similar to Yates County's decrease, and by far the largest drop in the region. In contrast, the state and region increased by 2 and 1 points respectively.

In the midterm election of 2014, 34% of voting-age residents voted, just below the region (35%) but above the state (25%). Seneca's turnout of 51% in the 2016 presidential election was below both the region (58%) and the state (55%).

Seneca County's share of registered borrowers decreased by 17 percentage points since 2000, but library visits have increased:

- In 2016, 52% of residents of Seneca's county library system were registered borrowers, below the state (55%) and the region (63%) and a sharp decline from its rate of 62% in 2015.
- The number of library visits increased 78% in Seneca, a larger increase than for the state, region, and third largest county-level increase in the region.

In 2015, charitable giving in Seneca County, at \$3,406 per tax return, was the third highest in the region after Monroe and Ontario. Average charitable giving was up 12% from 2011, a smaller increase than for the state (26%) and region (25%).

Economy

While the unemployment rate has recovered somewhat since the recession, it remains slightly higher than in 2000:

- In 2016, the unemployment rate in Seneca was 4.7%, similar to the nation (4.9%) and state (4.8%), and on par with the region.
- The unemployment rate has fallen by 3.5 points since its peak in 2010 (8.2%) – similar to the regional change, though a smaller decrease over that period than at the state and national level. It remains a half point above its low in 2000.

Job growth since 2001 has outpaced most regional counties:

- The total number of jobs grew 11% from 2001 to 2016, a larger increase than the region (4%) and every regional county except Yates and Ontario, but lower than the state (18%), and nation (17%).
- The Manufacturing sector neither lost nor gained jobs from 2001 to 2016, in contrast to large decreases for the nation, state, and region. The number of Government jobs rose 16%, versus decreases the state and region of 2% and 3% respectively.
- In 2016, the largest sectors were Government, Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (19% and 20% of the total respectively) and Manufacturing (15% of the total jobs).

Salary growth in Seneca was well above the state, nation, and region, although the average salary remained lower than the nation, state, and region in 2016:

- In 2016, the average salary in Seneca was \$43,440, compared to \$52,950 for the nation, \$67,090 for the state, and \$46,460 for the region.
- The average salary grew by 19% from 2000 to 2016 after adjusting for inflation – a greater increase than the nation (9%), state (8%), region (3%) and every other county in the region except Ontario.

Education

Seneca's prekindergarten participation rate was very low compared to the state and region:

- In 2016, just 42% of eligible children were enrolled in prekindergarten, compared to 52% for the state and 44% for the region.
- Seneca's participation rate rose just 17 points from 2001, in contrast to increases of 37 and 33 points for the state and region.

Students in Seneca generally matched their peers in the state and region on Common Core-aligned tests in math and fared worse in English:

- In 2017, 38% passed 8th grade English and 25% passed 3rd grade English, below state and regional levels.
- However, just 8% passed 8th grade math and 40 % passed 4th grade math below the state (22% and 43% respectively).

Seneca students performed relatively better on Regents tests:

- In 2017, 83% of students passed the Common Core Algebra 1 Regents, compared to 78% for the region and 75% for the state.
- Seneca's pass rate for English Regents in 2017 (85%) was almost on par with the region (84%) and the state (84%).

Seneca's graduation rate has improved, rising 10 points from 2008 to 83%, slightly lower than the region.

Adults in Seneca were less educated than in the nation, state or region:

- In 2012-16, 50% of Seneca residents ages 25 and older had attended at least some college, lower than in the region (62%), nation (59%), and state (59%).
- Seneca also had a particularly low rate of adults who had attained a bachelor's or higher (20%) compared to the state (35%) and region (31%).
- The percent of adults who had less than a high school diploma was higher in Seneca (15%) than the region (10%) and similar to the state (14%).

Spending per student by school districts in Seneca County has increased 83% since 2000, after adjusting for inflation – a greater increase than the state, region and every county in the region. In 2016, Seneca school districts spent \$24,314 per student, above every county in the region and the state.

Financial Self-Sufficiency

Like the state, region and nation, median household income in Seneca has been falling relative to inflation:

- In 2012-16, the median household income in Seneca was \$50,070, below the nation (\$55,320), state (\$60,740), and region (\$54,110).
- Median income fell by 6% from 2000 to 2012-16, a bit more than decreases in the state (3%) but below the national (9%) and regional (13%) decline.

The poverty rate rose from 2000 to 2012-16, but remains below the nation, state, and region:

- In 2012-16, 12% of Seneca residents lived below the poverty line, compared to 15% for the state, 15% for the nation, and 14% for the region.
- The rate rose by 1 point from 2000 to 2012-16, below the nation and region increases (3 and 4 points respectively) and greater than the state (no change).

Despite increasing from 2001, the rate of people receiving temporary assistance was lower than the state and region:

- In 2016, 1.3% of Seneca residents received temporary assistance, versus 2.9% statewide and 2.8% in the region.
- The rate rose by 0.3 points from 2001 to 2016, in contrast to a 0.8 point decrease for the state and 0.3 point decrease for the region.

In 2016, Seneca had a higher rate of people receiving emergency food (16.8 meals per resident) than the state (7.4), region (6.8), and every regional county. The rate rose by 68% from 2000, which was a smaller increase than for the region (119%) and every county in the region except Monroe.

Health

The rate of residents in Seneca lacking health insurance has fallen steadily since 2008:

- In 2015, 7% of Seneca residents lacked health insurance, a lower proportion than the state (8%) and nation (11%) but higher than the region (6%).
- The rate dropped 7 points from 2008 to 2015, a larger drop than the state and region.

The percent of people enrolled in Medicaid Managed Care is lower than the region and state:

- In 2015, 14% of Seneca residents were enrolled in Medicaid Managed Care, versus 22% statewide and 16% in the region.
- The percentage remained the same from 2015 to 2016, as was the case in many of the regional counties.

Seneca's mortality rate has risen over the past several years, in contrast with a general decline in the region and state:

- In 2015, there were 916 deaths per 100,000 residents, higher than the state (634) and region (706) and highest among the local counties.
- Seneca's rate demonstrated a significant jump from 2014 when it was 751. In 2011 and 2013, Seneca had the lowest mortality rate of the local counties.

Seneca County experienced a large increase in the number of reported cases of chlamydia infections since 2001, in line with regional and state trends. In 2016, Seneca had 319 cases per 10,000 residents, nearly triple the rate in 2001.

A rural county, Seneca County had the lowest concentration of doctors in the region (7 doctors per 10,000 residents) in 2014. This was substantially less than the regional (32) and state (37) rates.

Housing

The median home value in Seneca was much lower than the state, nation, and region:

- In 2012-16, the median home value in Seneca was \$98,200, compared to \$184,700 for the nation, \$286,300 for the state, and \$130,460 for the region.
- Median home value remained unchanged from 2000 to 2012-16, in contrast to a small decrease for the region and large increases nationally (19%) and statewide (39%).

In 2012-16, the homeownership rate in Seneca was 73%, higher than the region (68%), state (54%) and nation (64%). The homeownership rate decreased slightly from 74% in 2000.

Seneca is more affordable for home owners than for renters. Rent consumed 33% of median household income in 2012-16, above the threshold for affordability of 30%, though slightly below the regional rate of 34%. The ratio of median home value to income, a measure of affordability for home owners, remained relatively unchanged from 2000 to 2012-16, at 1.6 (up from 1.5), and remained below the state (3.4), nation (2.6), and region (1.9).

Public Safety

The rate of serious crimes in Seneca has fluctuated, in contrast to large decreases for the state, nation, and region:

- In 2016 there were 184 serious crimes per 10,000 people in Seneca County, less than the nation (284) and region (215), but higher than the state (166). However, Seneca had the third-highest rate of any county in the region.
- The serious crime rate has declined 11% since 2000, in comparison to larger decreases for the state (46%), region (39%), and nation (31%).

Although lower than the state, nation, and region, Seneca's violent crime rate has more than doubled from 9 per 10,000 residents in 2000 to 19 in 2016, in contrast to declines in the nation and state. This was also the largest increase among the regional counties.

The juvenile delinquency intake rate in Seneca County has declined by 51% since 2000, a slightly smaller decrease than in the state (53%) and the region (58%). In 2016, the rate was 58 per 10,000 children ages 7-16, higher than the state (45) and region (51). This represented a large decrease from the spike of 123 per 10,000 in 2015.

Note: Data research and analysis completed by [the Center for Governmental Research](#)