

# Vermont Legislative Joint Fiscal Office

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## ISSUE BRIEF

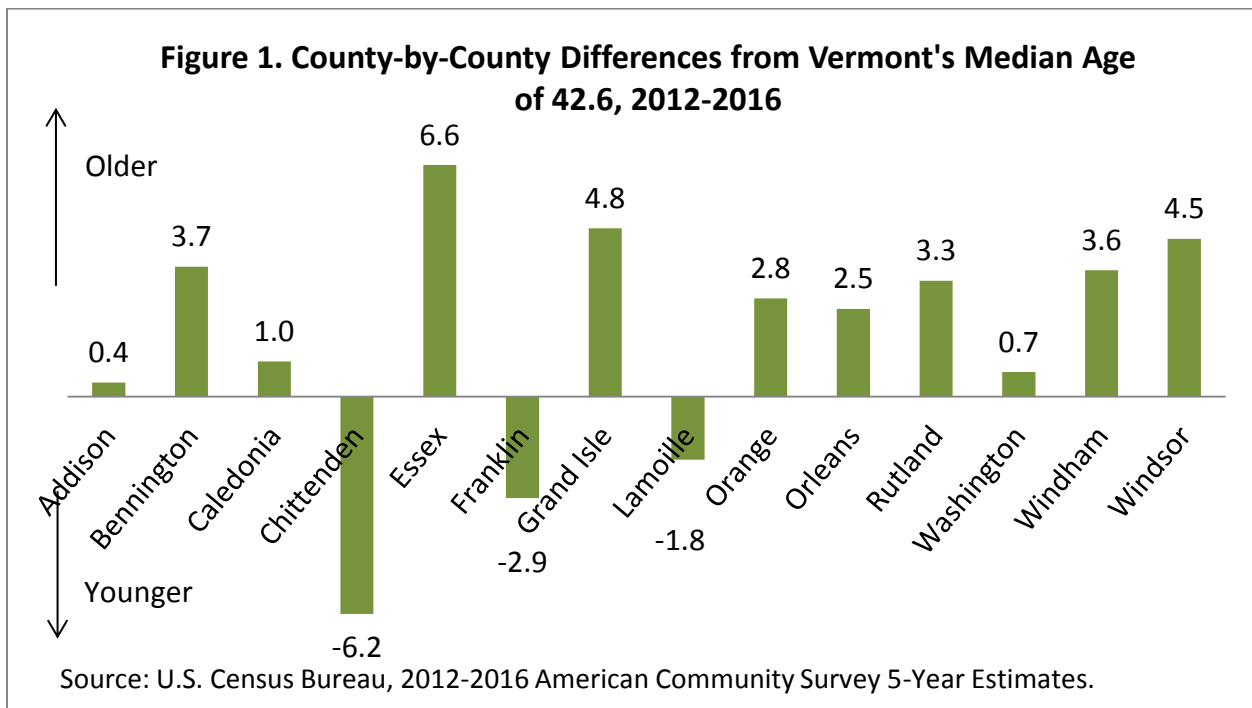
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### The Aging of Vermont: How Do the Counties Differ? How Does Vermont Compare to Other Northeastern States?

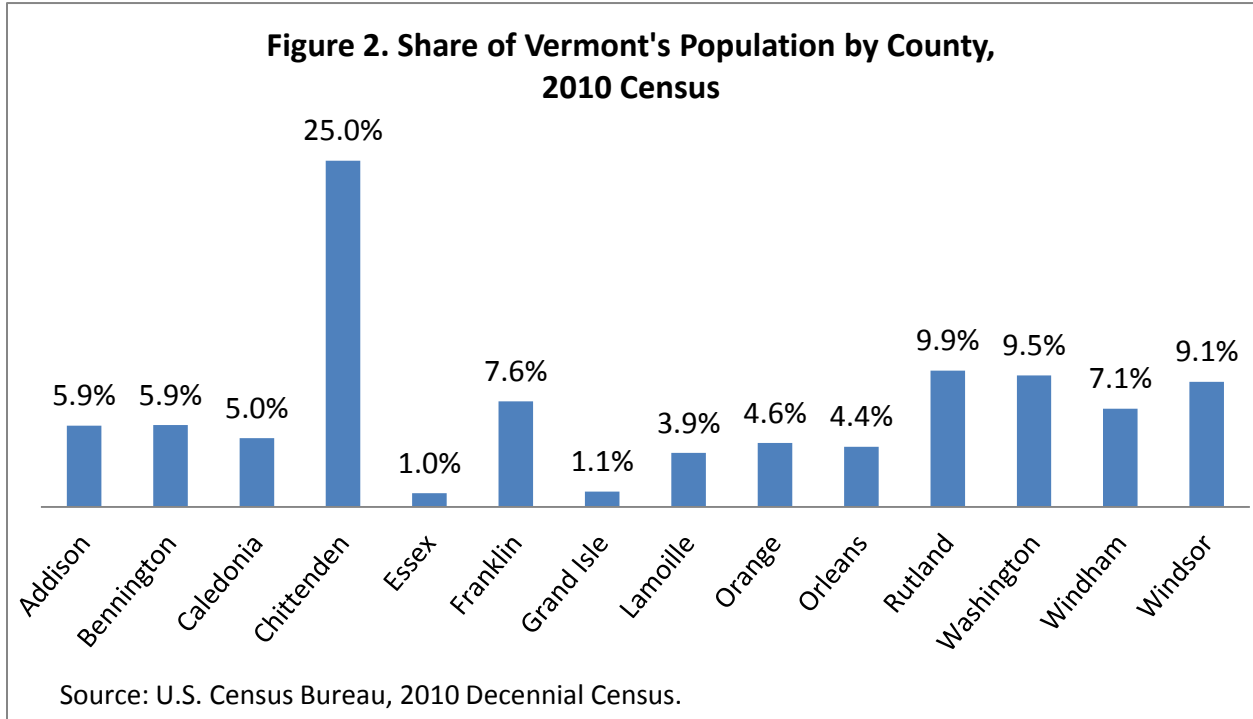
During the years 2012-2016, the median age of Vermont's population was 42.6 according to the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate. The median age tells us that half the residents of Vermont were older than 42.6, and half the residents were younger than 42.6. Vermont's median age is almost 5 years older than the median age for the United States as a whole measured during the same period which was 37.7.<sup>1</sup>

But some counties in Vermont have older populations than others, suggesting that their needs for services such as child care or senior programs might differ significantly. The county with the oldest population is Essex County with a median age of 49.2, or 6.6 years older than the state median. Second oldest is Grand Isle at 47.4, or 4.8 years older. As expected, Chittenden County has the youngest population in Vermont with median age 36.4, or 6.2 years younger than the state median (see Figure 1). Franklin County is second youngest with its median age 39.7, or 2.9 years younger.



<sup>1</sup> Another measure of an aging population is the share of the population age 65 and older. However, the only accurate counts of population by single year of age come from the Decennial Census. Census estimates for years between Decennial Census years are less accurate, explaining the reliance on the 5-year survey estimates here.

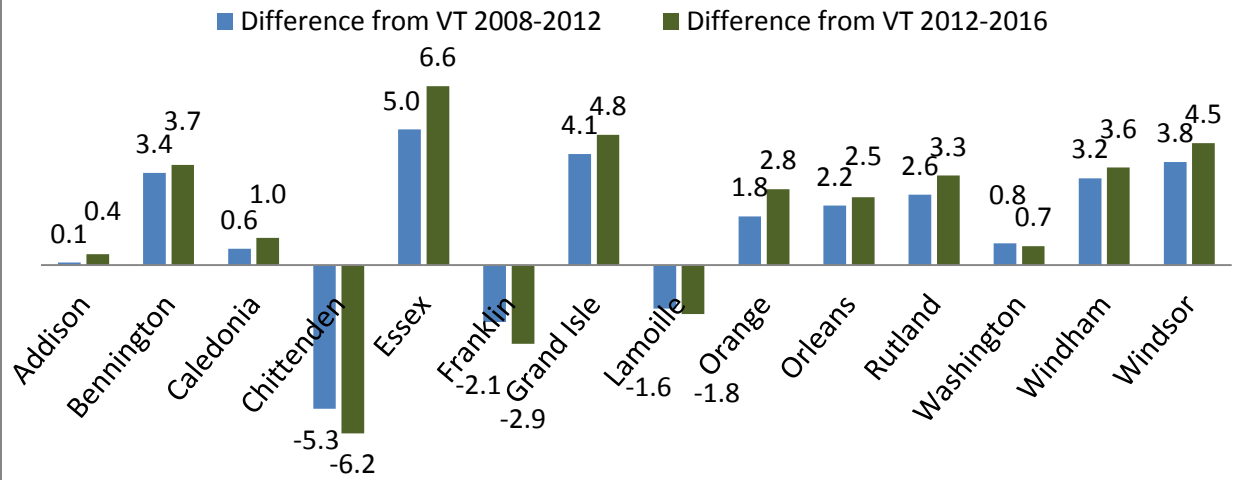
The largest share of Vermont’s population lives in its youngest county. Chittenden County had one-quarter of the State’s population according to the 2010 Decennial Census (see Figure 2). The oldest county, Essex County, has just 1 percent of the State’s population, and the second oldest county, Grand Isle County, is the second smallest county.



Looking back to the American Community Survey estimates from 2008-2012, almost all counties have seen increases in the difference between their median age and the State’s median age in the more recent survey. In other words, older counties are becoming older and younger counties are becoming younger relative to the State’s median age. Every county but one with median age above the State’s median age in 2008-2012 has an even higher median age relative to the State’s in 2012-2016 (see Figure 3). The one exception is Washington County where the difference between the median age and the State’s median age shrunk slightly from 0.8 years to 0.7 years.<sup>2</sup> And the three counties with median age below the State’s median age in 2008-2012 saw even greater differences in 2012-2016, suggesting they are becoming even younger relative to the State’s median age.

<sup>2</sup> In fact, such a small change is not statistically significant, as the margin of error for Washington County is 0.3.  
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**Figure 3. Difference between a County's Median Age and the Vermont Median Age of 41.7 in 2008-2012 and 42.6 in 2012-2016**

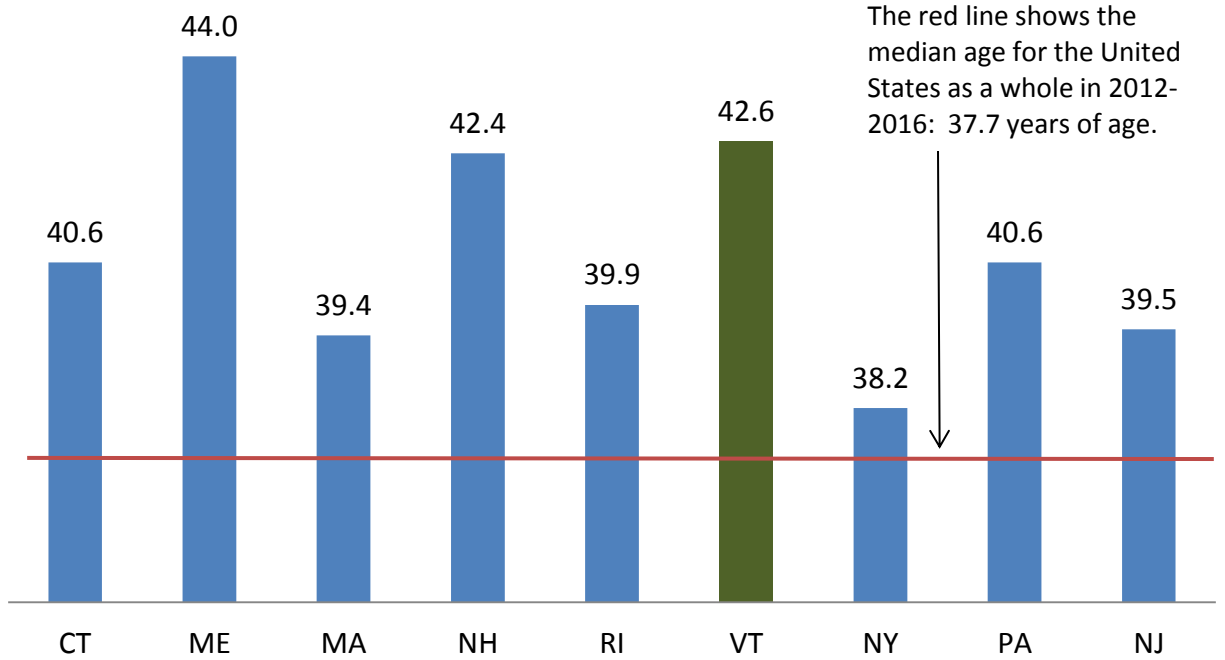


Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2012-2016 and 2008-2012.

All the New England states and other nearby states in the Northeastern United States have older populations than the country as a whole. The median age in each Northeast state during the period 2012-2016 is higher than the national average. Maine has the highest median age at 44.0, or 6.3 years above the national average (see Figure 4). Vermont has the second highest median age, followed by New Hampshire. The youngest state among the Northeastern states examined here is New York with median age of 38.2, or 0.5 years above the national median.

Looking over the last 10 years, some of the states in the Northeast are becoming older more quickly than the country. In the United States as a whole, the median age increased from 37.2 years of age during 2008-2012 to 37.7 years of age during the more recent period, 2012-2016. In other words, the median age in the United States increased 0.5 years. But in Maine over the same period, the median age jumped from 42.8 to 44.0 for an increase of 1.2 years. The median age in Maine was 5.6 years higher than the national median in the earlier period but was 6.3 years higher than the national median in the later period (see Figure 5). New Hampshire's median age started at a lower level than Maine's but increased even faster relative to the national median age, rising from 3.9 years above the national median to 4.7 years above it. Vermont became relatively older as well, rising from 4.5 years above the national median age to 4.9 years above it.

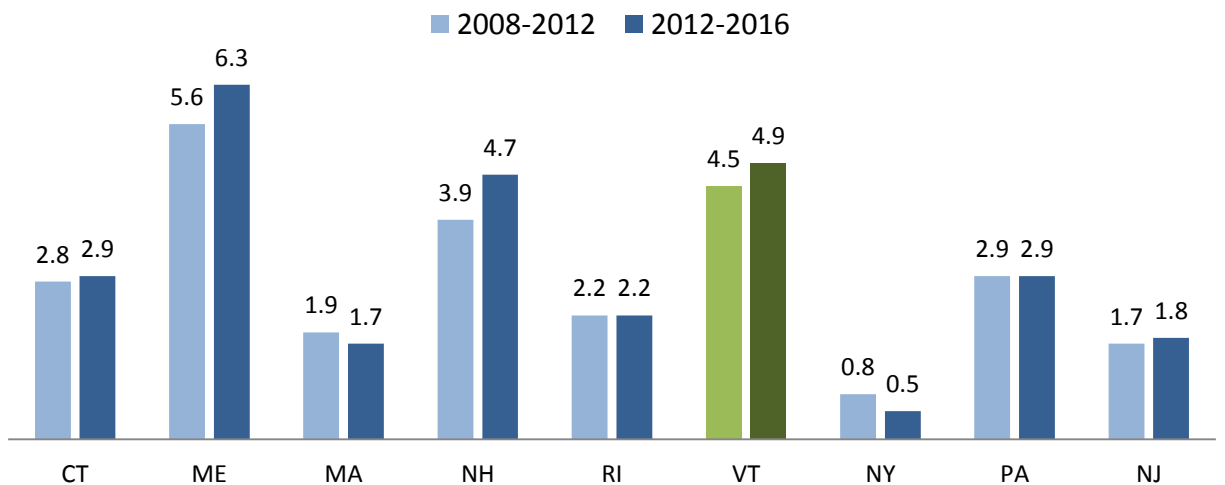
**Figure 4. Median Age in Select States in the Northeast, 2012-2016**



Source: 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

A couple of states became relatively less old compared with the national median age. Massachusetts had a median age 1.9 years higher than the national median in the earlier period, but that difference dropped to 1.7 years in the later period. New York's median age had been 0.8 years above the national median but was just 0.5 years above the national median more recently.

**Figure 5. Difference between a State's Median Age and the U.S. Median Age of 37.2 in 2008-12 and 37.7 in 2012-2016, Select States in the Northeast**



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for 2012-2016 and 2008-2012.