

# Stafford County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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## Summary of community issues and Extension office response

Priority Issue	Planned Unit Response
Supporting Agriculture	Hire an Agriculture Extension Agent, and horticulture technician ASAP to collaborate with Master Gardeners and create community programs to address problems and opportunities in the county.
Positive Youth Development	4-H Agent and Program Assistant will plan ways to engage youth to enhance youth's strengths and promote positive outcomes by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and building youth leadership strengths.
Natural Resources	Hire an Agriculture Extension Agent to provide current research-based information to citizens to help sustain the profitability of agricultural and forestry production and enhance and protect the quality of our land and water resources. The 4-H Agent will provide education through programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources in classrooms.

## Introduction

To identify key characteristics that define Stafford County and the main issues its community faces, a situation analysis was conducted during the latter half of calendar year 2023. The office experienced a staffing shortage beginning in May 2022, operating with only two County part-time programming staff and no Extension agents or administrative support staff. The situation analysis process was led by the newly hired Stafford 4-H Agent. The analysis involved the development of a Stafford County Unit Profile as well as gathering community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the county. Data and information from these two activities were analyzed by Stafford VCE staff and priority issues were identified.

Surveys were sent to stakeholders in Stafford through community Facebook groups and to 4-H Club Leaders. Unfortunately, no surveys were returned, so input was gained from six key individual interviews. Stafford VCE staff will conduct ongoing needs assessments regularly with unit volunteers, 4-H members and community members during programming.

## Unit Profile

Historic Stafford County is located just across the Rappahannock River north of the City of Fredericksburg. It is geographically a bedroom community of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Many residents commute to work in Washington and its environs north on Interstate Highway 95, U.S. Route 1, and Virginia Railway Express.

According to the United States Census, the total population of Stafford County in 2022 was estimated at 163,380. This shows an increase of about 11.4% from 2018. Stafford County is the 12th largest county in the state of Virginia. It is the 12th most populated county in the state of Virginia out of 93 counties, and the 4th fastest growing location in the Commonwealth. The Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia estimates that at the current growth rate, Stafford will surpass 180,000 residents by 2030, eclipse 210,000 by 2040, and close in on 250,000 residents by 2050.

Approximately 25.9% of the total population of Stafford County was between 0-18 years of age in 2022. This compares to 21.5% of the total population of Virginia and 21.7% nationally that is between the ages of 0-18. Programming needs in child development, life skills/decision making for youth, teen leadership, mental health, and youth activities are an important goal in a community with such a high percentage of youth.

The data indicate that the Hispanic population of Stafford County in 2021 was 15.47% compared to 10.17% for the state of Virginia.

The median household income of Stafford County residents is \$128,036 which is \$42,163 higher when compared to the median household income for the state of Virginia. Persons below poverty level are only 5.4% in Stafford County compared to 10.6% for the state of Virginia.

The population of Stafford County is somewhat fluid due to occupations with the military and federal government. Residents are well educated and affluent, with only 5.4% living in poverty compared to the national average of 11.5%. One in every four residents holds at least a bachelor's degree.

The number of total farms has decreased 11.5% in Stafford County from 2017 through 2021.

About 93% of persons 25 years or older are high school graduates compared to 91% for the state of Virginia.

# Community and Resident Perspectives

Stafford Extension staff acquires knowledge about citizen needs frequently in informal ways through established relationships with 4-H club leaders, Master Gardeners, and various community members. According to interview results, there were three issues that were concerning residents. These important issues were agriculture support, positive youth development and natural resources. The responses came from Master Gardeners, a local farmer and 4-H club leaders.

## Community Issues

### Issue 1: Supporting Agriculture

The need to support agriculture was described as an issue that Stafford County residents would like VCE to better address.

### Issue 2: Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth development was an issue identified as a priority facing Stafford County.

### Issue 3: Natural Resources

Natural Resources were identified as a pressing issue facing the county of Stafford.

## Future Programming to Address Community Issues

The Stafford VCE Office will be working to address the three priority issues identified in numerous ways. Each community issue will be looked at closely and monitored. An interdisciplinary approach will be used to best support each concern.

### Issue 1: Supporting Agriculture

Hiring a new Agriculture Agent and Horticulture Technician will be a priority in 2024, to help make an impact on the community. A strong collaboration with the Master Gardeners is needed to help tackle programming and surrounding needs. The new 4-H Agent will provide education through the 4-H Ag in the Classroom program in schools beginning in January of 2024.

### Issue 2: Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development delivery modes include traditional 4-H programs such as camp, clubs and in-school curriculum enrichment that should continue and expand. More targeted use of social media and marketing will be used to reach more community members. Emphasis will be placed on civic engagement and youth will be encouraged to attend 4-H Day at the Capitol and Congress. The 4-H Agent will share PYD curriculum with Club Leaders to collaborate on encouraging youth.

### Issue 3: Natural Resources

VCE will work in partnership with specialists, community stakeholders and educators to provide environmental education for the County. The new Agriculture Agent and Horticulture Technician will work collaboratively to address immediate needs and to develop and deliver programs designed to meet the needs of Stafford and the planning district.

## References

Population of Counties in VA - [Population of Counties in Virginia 2023 \(worldpopulationreview.com\)](https://worldpopulationreview.com)

U.S. Census Bureau – <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/VA/PST045222>

U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Virginia - <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/VA>

Virginia Counties by Population - [https://www.virginia-demographics.com/counties\\_by\\_population](https://www.virginia-demographics.com/counties_by_population)

Virginia Population Projections/Cooper Center - <https://www.coopercenter.org/virginia-population-projections>

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