

Accessing the Power of the N.H. Population Spreadsheet

Sample Project

Suggested Procedure

- Using the “table” worksheet of the document “N.H. Population, 1767-2002” (accessible from the NHHS Web site [<http://www.nhhistory.org/edu/support/nhgeogindex.htm>] or CD-ROM), sort data by the population of 1800 in descending order. List the ten most populous towns on a sheet of paper. The table below may serve as a model. (Of course, the model may simply be given to students, but if an objective of the exercise is to let students learn how to manipulate data, then it will be useful for them to compare the populations on their own or in small groups.)
- Repeat the sorting and listing process for every twenty-year period through the year 2000.
- For each period, mark the towns that appear on the list for the first time and those that dropped below the top ten. (Note that the model table shows rising towns in boldface; towns dropping below the top ten are crossed out and in red.)
- Using the outline map in the document “N.H. Towns” (accessible from the NHHS Web site or CD-ROM) have students color in any town that is or was a member of the top ten. (If students are working in small groups, then you may wish to assign a block of decades to each student in the group and have the members create and label separate maps, e.g., 1800–1840, 1860–1900, etc.)
- Have students discuss their results and pose questions that arise from studying the map(s) and the table they created. (See below for some suggested lines of inquiry.)
- Have students conduct research to answer some of their questions. In addition to published local histories available for use at the N.H. Historical Society’s Tuck Library (<http://www.nhhistory.org>), community profiles available on the state’s Web site “Municipal Government in New Hampshire” (<http://www.state.nh.us/municipal/>) may provide pertinent background information. Since 1800, twenty-six different towns have been among the top ten. It is possible for each student or group of students to “adopt” one or more of the towns for research.

Possible Lines of Inquiry

- What characteristics made such towns as Gilmanton, Barrington, Sanbornton, Weare, and Meredith among the largest towns in the early days? Why may Portsmouth's importance have continued longer?
- What happened to towns that dropped from the top-ten list? (Use the "graph" worksheet to plot their growth). Did their populations shrink? Why? Or were they merely surpassed by faster growing towns? What might account for the changes in population?
- What caused Manchester to rise apparently from nowhere to the number one position?
- What sections of the state have been home to the largest towns? Are there patterns to their location? If so, are there towns that seem not to fit the pattern?
- By contrast, are there sections of the state that have consistently been among the lowest in population? If so, why? (Hint: as a start, try sorting by county population in ascending order to highlight the counties with historically low population.)
- What historical or geographical forces have been at work to make the towns' populations rise or fall?

N.H. Population Rankings

	1800	1820	1840	1860
1	Portsmouth	Portsmouth	Portsmouth	Manchester
2	Gilmanton	Gilmanton	Dover	Concord
3	Barrington	Sanbornton	Nashua	Nashua
4	Sanbornton	Londonderry	Concord	Portsmouth
5	Londonderry	Dover	Gilmanton	Dover
6	Rochester	Concord	Meredith	Somersworth
7	Weare	Weare	Somersworth	Keene
8	Chesterfield	Rochester	Manchester	Claremont
9	Amherst	Hopkinton	Claremont	Rochester
10	Westmoreland	Meredith	Exeter	Exeter

Drop

~~Barrington~~
~~Chesterfield~~
~~Amherst~~
~~Westmoreland~~
~~Sanbornton~~
~~Londonderry~~
~~Weare~~
~~Rochester~~
~~Hopkinton~~
~~Gilmanton~~
~~Meredith~~

	1880	1900	1920	1940
1	Manchester	Manchester	Manchester	Manchester
2	Concord	Nashua	Nashua	Nashua
3	Nashua	Concord	Concord	Concord
4	Dover	Dover	Berlin	Berlin
5	Portsmouth	Portsmouth	Portsmouth	Dover
6	Keene	Keene	Dover	Portsmouth
7	Rochester	Berlin	Keene	Keene
8	Somersworth	Rochester	Laconia	Laconia
9	Claremont	Laconia	Rochester	Claremont
10	Laconia	Somersworth	Claremont	Rochester

Drop

~~Exeter~~
~~Claremont~~
~~Somersworth~~

	1960	1980	2000
1	Manchester	Manchester	Manchester
2	Nashua	Nashua	Nashua
3	Concord	Concord	Concord
4	Portsmouth	Portsmouth	Derry
5	Dover	Salem	Rochester
6	Berlin	Dover	Salem
7	Keene	Rochester	Dover
8	Rochester	Keene	Merrimack
9	Laconia	Derry	Londonderry
10	Claremont	Laconia	Hudson

Drop

~~Berlin~~
~~Claremont~~
~~Portsmouth~~
~~Keene~~
~~Laconia~~