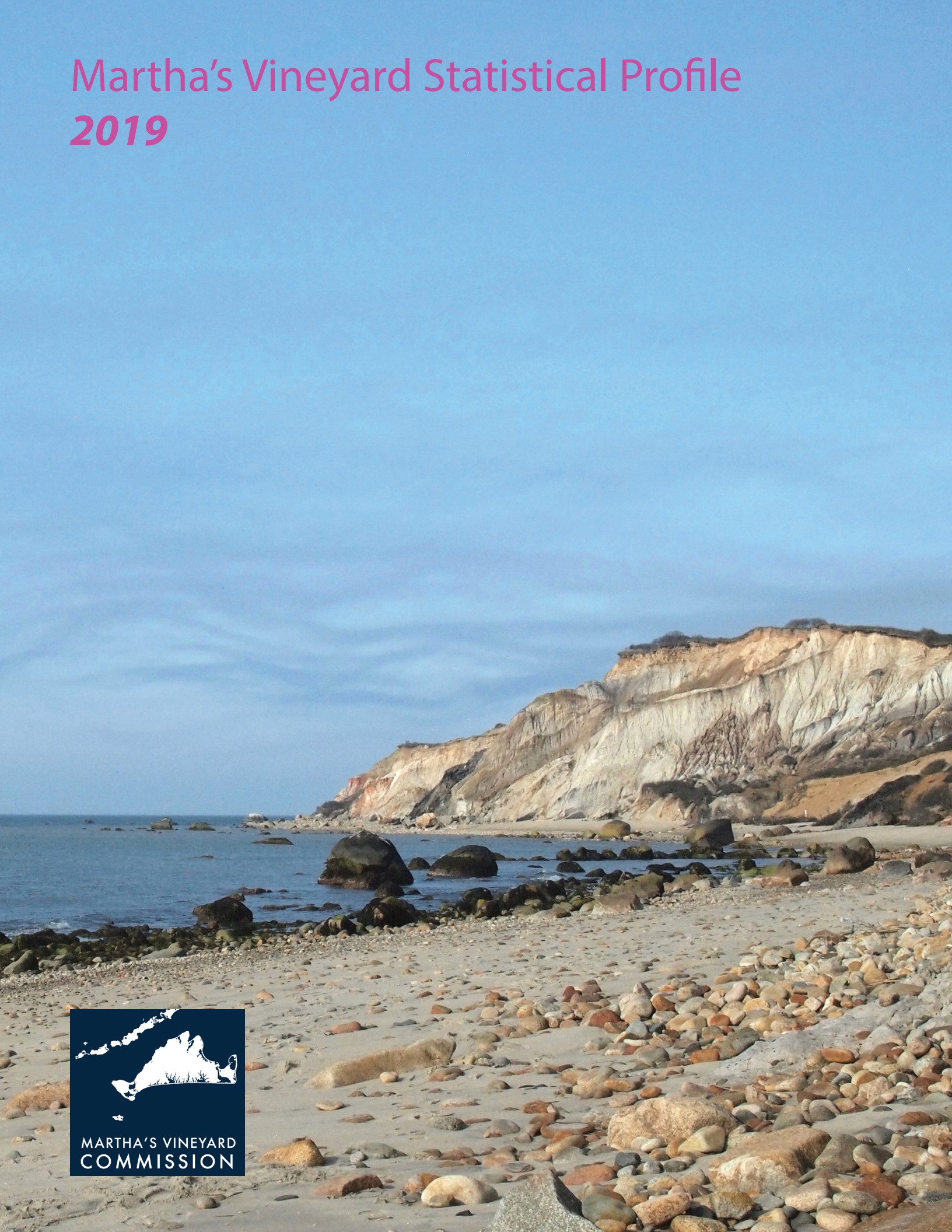


Martha's Vineyard Statistical Profile 2019





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Project manager: Lucy Morrison
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Above: A cruise ship docks at the Tisbury Wharf in Vineyard Haven
Cover: Gay Head Cliffs in the off-season

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Introduction

A commercial fisherman hauls his final lobster pot of the morning. Kids step off the bus and find their way to homeroom on the first day of school. Another town meeting is called to order and residents argue over the annual budget. Two cars collide at the Five Corners. A summer resident turns out the lights and heads to the ferry in September.

Life in Dukes County never ceases, and neither does the constant record keeping that aims to keep track of it. In logbooks and spreadsheets, on the backs of receipts or called in over the phone, the numbers add up all year, but relatively few people ever see them. This report aims to change that by collecting as many of those numbers as possible in one place and sharing them with the public. It is intended as a resource for towns, residents, businesses, nonprofits and others as they plan for the future, reflect on the past and navigate the present. Front to back, it tells something of a story in numbers, but we also invite you to flip open to any page and begin exploring the data.

As with the morning lobsters and the kids on the bus, statistics seldom stay put, so we plan to update this report every two years, using the latest figures from a variety of sources.

Some highlights in this edition include an Islandwide accounting of nonprofit assets and revenue between 2014 and 2016; and a tally of Community Preservation Act projects since 2001 (along with the annual state matches that have declined considerably over that time). We also present long-term data related to weather and climate that shows increases in rainfall and mean temperatures that exceed the regional trends, and 10-year data sets tracking the value of commercial fish species landed in Dukes County.

This report does not aim to answer all the questions that might arise from the data, but we hope it serves as a starting point for discussion and further planning (and record keeping). We welcome any feedback you may have that will help us improve future editions. Comments may be sent to Lucy Morrison at morrison@mvcommission.org, or the following address:

Martha's Vineyard Commission
PO Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557
(508) 693-3453



Methods

All of the numbers in this report were freely obtained and most were publicly available. To help ensure accuracy, we cross-checked information from multiple sources, sought guidance from public officials, statisticians and others, and wherever possible relied on local agencies that collected the data themselves.

What resulted is something of an eclectic portrait of Dukes County, highly detailed in places and more impressionistic in others. The report generally stops short of assigning cause and effect to apparent changes over time, but does point out some key trends, and describes weaknesses and anomalies in the data. In most cases, we apply the same parameters to each Island town (and occasionally to other counties and the state as a whole), for broader context.

Much of the data relies on the American Community Survey (ACS), which is administered by the US Census Bureau and provides annual estimates related to various topics and geographies. Unlike the 10-year Census, which in principle tallies every resident in the United States, the ACS is based on sample populations, so the results typically include a margin of error. The data are more accurate at the state and county levels, and somewhat weaker for smaller towns. But they also provide a consistent measure over time, and among towns and counties, which makes them useful for comparison and as a statistical baseline.

The topics here generally cover the years 2007–2017, with variation according to reporting schedules and the availability of data. The American Community Survey, for example, operates on a roughly two-year delay, with its 5-year estimates for 2017 now available online. In some cases, changes in reporting or classification methods at the local, state or federal levels have led to blips in the data over time, which we make an effort to point out. Altogether, we cite data from 70 different sources, including Island towns and organizations, state and federal agencies and other groups.

Despite its limitations, public data offers a wealth of insight into the workings and diversity of Dukes County, and we believe the selections we present here provide a solid foundation for better understanding our past, present and future.







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P.O. Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557
(508) 693-3453
www.mvcommission.org