

# CHAPTER 3: PHYSICAL SETTING

---

To set the framework in which the current and future transportation systems of El Dorado County function, a comprehensive characterization of the area is needed. Information included in this section describes the location, population, and demographics of the county, as well as projections for future employment, housing, and population growth.

## **LOCATION**

El Dorado County is located in the western foothills and mountains of the Sierra Nevada, extending eastward from the eastern edge of California's Central Valley. The western portion of El Dorado County is characterized by rolling foothills, increasing in elevation to the east. The county is bordered by Placer County to the north, Amador County to the south, Sacramento County to the west, and the State of Nevada to the east. A significant portion of Lake Tahoe is located in El Dorado County. In total, El Dorado County covers 1,805 square miles, ranging in elevation from approximately 200 feet above sea level to 10,881 feet above sea level at the highest peak.

There are two incorporated cities in El Dorado County: Placerville-the county seat; and South Lake Tahoe, which falls under the jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency. Numerous unincorporated communities are spread throughout El Dorado County, including but not limited to El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, Shingle Springs, El Dorado, Diamond Springs, Latrobe, Fairplay, Somerset, Grizzly Flat, Camino, Pollock Pines, Coloma/Lotus, Garden Valley, Georgetown, Rescue, Mt. Aukum, Pleasant Valley, Kyburz, Strawberry, and Cool. Map 3-1 illustrates the location of El Dorado County within California, while Map 3- 2 highlights designated places within the county.

**Map 3-1: El Dorado County Location in California**





EL DORADO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
**El Dorado County Cities and Places**

Data Source: El Dorado County GIS, 2018  
 Map Source: EDCTC, 2019

EDCTC Jurisdiction  
 Tahoe Basin  
 Highways  
 Major Roads

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles
 
 N  
 ↑

**Map 3-2: Cities and Places of El Dorado County**

## **CLIMATE**

The weather in El Dorado County varies significantly depending on elevation, ranging from warm, dry summers and mild winters in El Dorado Hills and Placerville to cooler summers and snowy winters in South Lake Tahoe. Typically, temperatures in the lower elevations are warmer in both summer and winter, while higher-elevation mountain areas experience cooler temperatures year-round.

The primary rainy season in El Dorado County occurs between November and April; severe rainfall events and damaging winter storms do occur on occasion. The Sierra Nevada snowpack serves as a critical water source for the region during the dry summer months, as the gradual snowmelt replenishes reservoirs along the western slope.

**TABLE 3-1: TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION IN EL DORADO COUNTY**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Average Annual Maximum Temperature</b>	<b>Average Annual Minimum Temperature</b>	<b>Average Annual Total Precipitation</b>
Placerville	71.3	43.8	38.16
Georgetown	67.8	45.5	52.98
South Lake Tahoe	58.1	34.0	12.98

Source: Western Regional Climate Center, <https://wrcc.dri.edu/summary/Climsmnca.html> 2024

## **CHARACTER**

El Dorado County is truly Gold Country, as it is where the California Gold Rush began. From the rolling landscapes of El Dorado Hills to the historic narrow streets of Placerville, all the way up the iconic Pony Express Trail to Lake Tahoe, El Dorado County is rich in history. The Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park in Coloma features a full-scale replica of Sutter's Mill and attracts up to 500,000 visitors annually.

El Dorado County boasts a diverse array of agricultural resources. The renowned orchards of Apple Hill™ draw tens of thousands of visitors each fall for the annual harvest. The wineries of El Dorado have gained national acclaim since 1984, when the County was officially designated as a wine district appellation under the El Dorado name by the federal government. In 2001, the Fairplay sub-region received a similar designation, further cementing the area's reputation for winemaking.

The Red Hawk Casino, owned and operated by the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians. The casino employs over 1,000 people and is conveniently located off US Highway 50 in Shingle Springs serving more than 10,000 visitors daily. The tribe is also developing housing on the Rancheria providing affordable homes for tribal members.

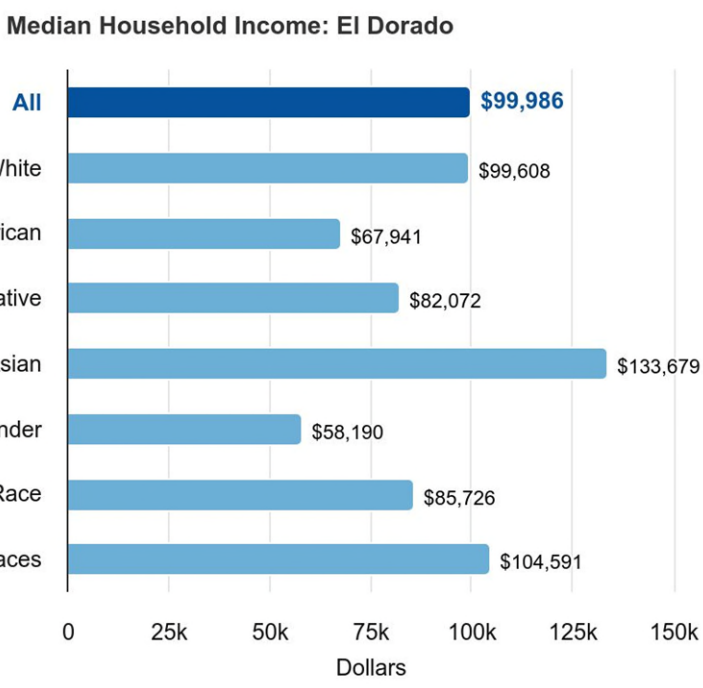
Of the 1,805 square miles in El Dorado County, over half is publicly owned in the form of national forests, parks, and recreational areas. The combination of vast public lands, privately owned timberlands, parks, campgrounds, orchards, wineries, and recreational facilities helps preserve and promote open spaces for which the County is widely recognized. The climate, geography, agriculture, recreation, and rich history of El Dorado County makes it a highly sought-after destination and an exceptional place to live.

The western portion of El Dorado County, stretching from Cameron Park to the Sacramento County Line, is increasingly suburban and urban in nature. The communities of Cameron Park and El Dorado Hills resemble other fast-growing communities in eastern Sacramento County and the City of Folsom. According to the 2010 US Census, this area is classified as urban and offers a variety of residential, employment, and service sector opportunities.

This area also includes the El Dorado Hills Business Park, located south of U.S. Highway 50, on the west side of Latrobe Road. The 900-acre business park is home to more than 200 companies, including one of the county's largest employers, Broadridge.

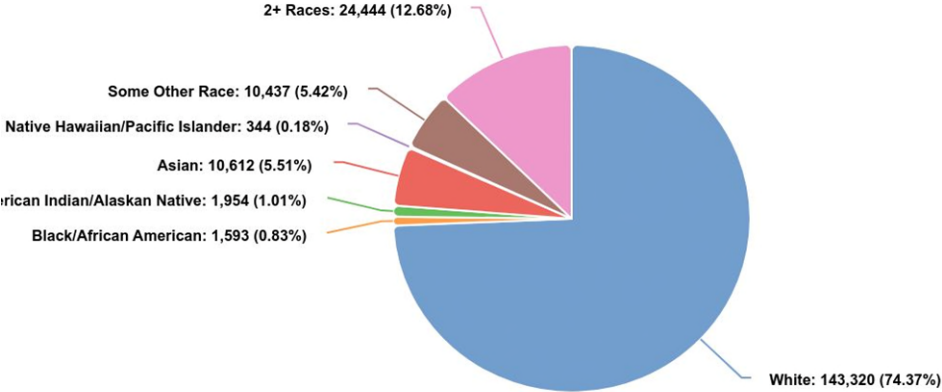
El Dorado County has diverse socio-economic, cultural, and lifestyle character, which attracts a wide range of residents and visitors. Among this diversity are populations with unique needs, requiring accessible and multi-modal transportation options, including bikeways, public transit, and emergency services.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



Source: [welldorado.org](http://welldorado.org) (2024) Includes El Dorado County portion of Lake Tahoe Basin

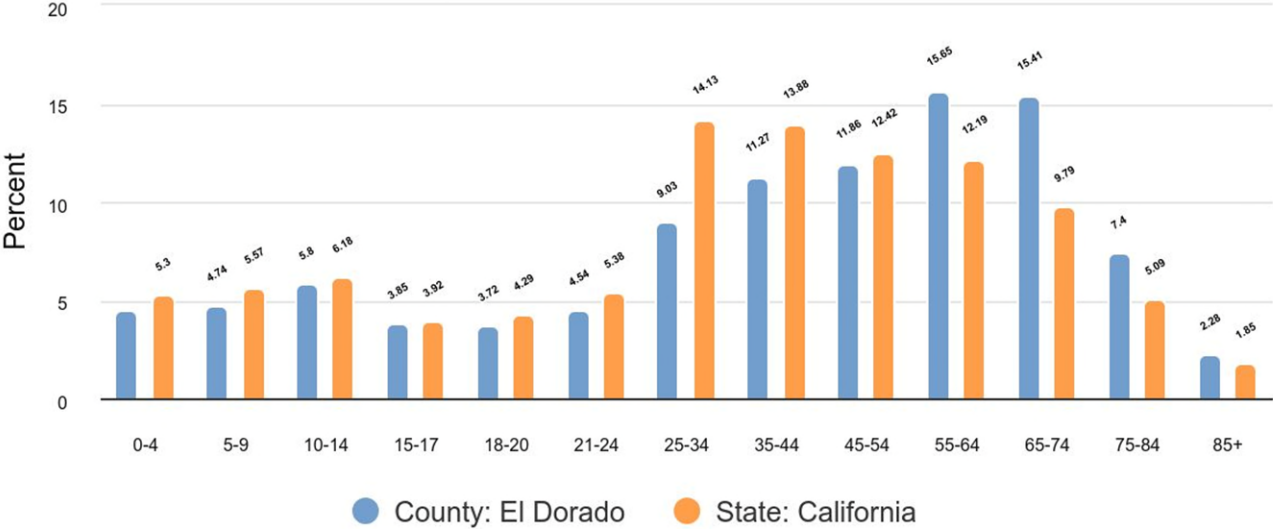
## Population by Race County: El Dorado



Claritas, 2024. welldorado.org

Source: welldorado.org (2024) Includes El Dorado County portion of Lake Tahoe Basin

## Population by Age Group County: El Dorado



Claritas, 2024. welldorado.org

Source: welldorado.org (2024) Includes El Dorado County portion of Lake Tahoe Basin

## **GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

El Dorado County has experienced a growth rate of 3.7% over the last decade. However, since reaching its peak in 2021, there has been a decline of 3.25%. The majority of the County's residents, 157,873 people, live in rural and suburban regions outside the two incorporated cities.

Between 2007 and 2015, El Dorado County experienced a natural population increase, with births exceeding deaths. In contrast, in 2016, the number of deaths exceeded births, indicating a decline in natural population growth. Between 2013 and 2016, there was an increase in net migration, with a total of 1,095 in-migrants in 2016. In that same year, individuals aged 40 and over accounted for a majority of the population. The age ranges of 18 to 24 and 25 to 39 were significantly below the California average in 2015. Between 2006 and 2016, the County's population aged considerably, with substantial growth in the age groups 55 and older age groups and notable declines in age groups 55 and younger. With an aging population, healthcare-related transportation services will become increasingly important to the County.

El Dorado County became more racially diverse between 2010 and 2015, with distinct trends among various ethnic and racial groups. However, the county still maintains a significantly higher percentage of Caucasians compared to the California state average. While the overall population diversity increased in El Dorado County, the American Indian population declined by 37.7 percent, and the Asian population decreased by 9.3 percent. These decreases were offset by substantial increases in the Black or African American population (274.7 percent), the Pacific Islander population (306.1 percent), and the population identifying as two or more racial groups (86.8 percent).

Source: [2017 EDC Demographic Profile.pdf](#)

As the Regional Information Center for the Sacramento area, the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) has prepared and adopted population and employment forecasts for the *development* of the Regional Transportation Plan. The forecasts below reflect the anticipated growth *within* El Dorado County over the 20-year horizon of this plan. SACOG developed these population and employment forecasts in consultation with local jurisdictions and the US Census.

### **POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

The population forecasts included in the Regional Transportation Plan were developed by SACOG. These forecasts are presented at various intervals, as shown in Table 3-2, with historical 2020 data provided for comparison for each jurisdiction.

**TABLE 3-2: POPULATION PROJECTIONS 2025 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SACOG MTP/SCS**

<b>Regional Analysis Districts (RADs)</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2045**</b>	<b>2050</b>
El Dorado County Total*	163,085	171,724	177,563	180,483
Cameron Park-Shingle Springs	33,497	35,063	36,589	37,352
Coloma - Lotus	8,484	8,729	8,747	8,756
Diamond Springs	12,967	13,359	13,921	14,202
El Dorado High Country	2,241	2,230	2,387	2,466
El Dorado Hills	48,450	54,176	57,343	58,927
Georgetown	8,793	8,833	8,849	8,857
Mt Aukum - Grizzly Flat	6,936	6,987	6,982	6,979
Pilot Hill	5,431	5,441	5,445	5,447
Pollock Pines	15,692	15,709	15,708	15,707
Placerville	20,594	21,197	21,592	21,790

\*Excludes Tahoe Basin

\*\*Interpolated linearly between 2035 and 2050

Source: SACOG, April 2024. Based on Draft growth allocation for 2024 MTP/SCS.

**HOUSING (DWELLING UNIT) PROJECTIONS**

El Dorado County has an estimated 94,837 housing units. For the County as a whole, 76.1% of homes are owner-occupied. However, only 44% of housing units in South Lake Tahoe are owner-occupied, which affects this number. Many homes in that area are not primary residences but rather second homes. El Dorado County home values have decreased 2.3% over the past year. The median home value of owner-occupied housing is \$654,227. The median list price per square foot in El Dorado County is \$315, which is lower than the State of California average of \$398.

Source: California Association of Realtors, Jan 2024

Housing forecasts are developed by SACOG. Housing forecasts are provided at varying intervals, as shown in Table 3-3. For comparison, historical 2020 data is included for each jurisdiction.

**TABLE 3-3: HOUSING PROJECTIONS 2025 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SACOG MTP/SCS**

<b>Regional Analysis Districts (RADs)</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2035</b>	<b>2045**</b>	<b>2050</b>
El Dorado County Total*	67,050	71,095	73,967	75,403
Cameron Park-Shingle Springs	12,823	13,547	14,332	14,725
Coloma - Lotus	3,286	3,392	3,409	3,417
Diamond Springs	5,301	5,504	5,760	5,888
El Dorado High Country	1,523	1,523	1,590	1,623
El Dorado Hills	16,905	19,565	21,109	21,881
Georgetown	3,548	3,568	3,574	3,577
Mt Aukum - Grizzly Flat	3,845	3,855	3,855	3,855
Pilot Hill	2,314	2,316	2,320	2,322
Pollock Pines	7,690	7,698	7,698	7,698
Placerville	9,815	10,127	10,320	10,417

\*Excludes Tahoe Basin

\*\*Interpolated linearly between 2035 and 2050

Source: SACOG, April 2024. Based on Draft growth allocation for 2024 MTP/SCS

## EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS

The County's largest employment sector is Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Assistance, employing 17,623. Professional, Scientific and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services employ 12,356. Arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food services come in third, employing 11,514.

Employment forecasts included in the Regional Transportation Plan are based on the expected increase in building square footage or acreage as outlined in each local general plan. SACOG converts these factors into employment figures using calculated holding capacities that align with those assumed in the local general plans. Employment forecasts are provided at varying intervals, as shown in Table 3-4. For comparison, historical 2020 data is included for each jurisdiction in Table 3-5.

**TABLE 3-4: EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS 2025 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SACOG MTP/SCS**

Regional Analysis Districts (RADs)	2020						2035					
	Educ. / Gov't / Health	Retail / Food	Office / Service	Ind'l / Warehouse	Home-based Bus. / Other	Total	Educ. / Gov't / Health	Retail / Food	Office / Service	Ind'l / Warehouse	Home-based Bus. / Other	Total
El Dorado County Total*	11,491	9,408	18,410	6,558	5,707	<b>51,574</b>	13,164	11,490	20,567	6,557	5,707	<b>57,486</b>
Cameron Park-Shingle Springs	1,302	2,175	4,061	1,158	1,247	<b>9,943</b>	1,535	2,629	4,806	1,158	1,247	<b>11,375</b>
Coloma - Lotus	105	101	151	68	341	<b>766</b>	105	101	151	68	341	<b>766</b>
Diamond Springs	460	236	350	175	415	<b>1,636</b>	460	328	358	172	415	<b>1,733</b>
El Dorado High Country	19	32	43	45	74	<b>213</b>	19	32	43	45	74	<b>213</b>
El Dorado Hills	2,288	1,940	7,761	2,323	1,926	<b>16,238</b>	3,552	2,696	8,991	2,323	1,926	<b>19,489</b>
Georgetown	325	263	399	124	241	<b>1,352</b>	325	263	399	124	241	<b>1,352</b>
Mt Aukum - Grizzly Flat	163	82	849	96	141	<b>1,331</b>	163	82	849	96	141	<b>1,331</b>
Pilot Hill	93	70	113	29	156	<b>461</b>	93	208	135	29	156	<b>621</b>
Pollock Pines	623	691	389	385	480	<b>2,568</b>	623	785	404	385	480	<b>2,677</b>
Placerville	6,113	3,818	4,294	2,155	686	<b>17,066</b>	6,290	4,366	4,430	2,157	686	<b>17,928</b>

\*Excludes Tahoe Basin

Source: SACOG, April 2024. Based on Draft growth allocation for 2024 MTP/SCS.

**TABLE 3-4: EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS 2025 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN AND SACOG MTP/SCS (cont.)**

Regional Analysis Districts (RADs)	2045**						2050					
	Educ. / Gov't / Health	Retail / Food	Office / Service	Ind'l / Warehouse	Home-based Bus. / Other	Total	Educ. / Gov't / Health	Retail / Food	Office / Service	Ind'l / Warehouse	Home-based Bus. / Other	Total
El Dorado County Total*	13,671	12,625	21,962	7,023	5,707	<b>60,988</b>	13,924	13,192	22,660	7,256	5,707	<b>62,739</b>
Cameron Park-Shingle Springs	1,599	3,134	4,986	1,365	1,247	<b>12,331</b>	1,632	3,386	5,076	1,468	1,247	<b>12,810</b>
Coloma - Lotus	105	195	166	68	341	<b>875</b>	105	241	174	68	341	<b>929</b>
Diamond Springs	460	330	385	241	415	<b>1,831</b>	460	331	399	275	415	<b>1,880</b>
El Dorado High Country	19	32	43	45	74	<b>213</b>	19	32	43	45	74	<b>213</b>
El Dorado Hills	3,819	3,006	10,004	2,410	1,926	<b>21,164</b>	3,952	3,160	10,510	2,453	1,926	<b>22,002</b>
Georgetown	325	263	399	124	241	<b>1,352</b>	325	263	399	124	241	<b>1,352</b>
Mt Aukum - Grizzly Flat	163	82	849	96	141	<b>1,331</b>	163	82	849	96	141	<b>1,331</b>
Pilot Hill	93	208	135	29	156	<b>621</b>	93	208	135	29	156	<b>621</b>
Pollock Pines	623	785	404	385	480	<b>2,677</b>	623	785	404	385	480	<b>2,677</b>
Placerville	6,464	4,591	4,590	2,261	686	<b>18,592</b>	6,552	4,703	4,670	2,313	686	<b>18,924</b>

\*Excludes Tahoe Basin

\*\*Interpolated linearly between 2035 and 2050

Source: SACOG, April 2024. Based on Draft growth allocation for 2024 MTP/SCS.

**TABLE 3-5: HISTORICAL CENSUS DATA**

	1980	1990	2000	2006	2010	2013	2016	2020	2021	2022
Population**	85,812	125,995	156,299	174,835	181,058	181,737	185,625	191,185	193,221	192,646
Households**	32,505	46,845	58,939	65,310	70,223	66,751	69,653	75,320	74,909	74,376
Registered cars and trucks	52,325	114,953	164,839	163,241	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Persons Over 16 in Labor Force	42,404	62,301	78,086	94,609	89,358	88,104	79,778	90,297	95,478	92,612
Persons who drove alone to work*	25,433	43,213	54,656	64,805	62,194	60,358	60,238	55,358	56,804	57,471
Persons carpooling to work*	7,349	8,397	9,599	10,581	9,052	8,001	7,216	5,508	6,160	6,831
Persons using public transit*	752	920	1,294	1,187	1,219	914	1,349	742	288	181
Mean commute time (in minutes)	21	24	28	29	30	29	30	29	27	32
Persons 65 years and older**	8,478	14,885	19,278	19,615	26,362	31,982	35,629	42,658	43,408	45,669
Median Household Income (Real \$'s)**	\$17,513	\$35,058	\$51,484	\$68,640	\$66,129	\$61,365	\$75,772	83,710	87,491	105,982

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. Unless otherwise noted, all data are from 1-year samples.

\*Compiled from 5-year sample data for 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2020.

\*\*Compiled from the Decennial Census for 2020

SACOG Info Center info@sacog.org

April 2024

## SUMMARY

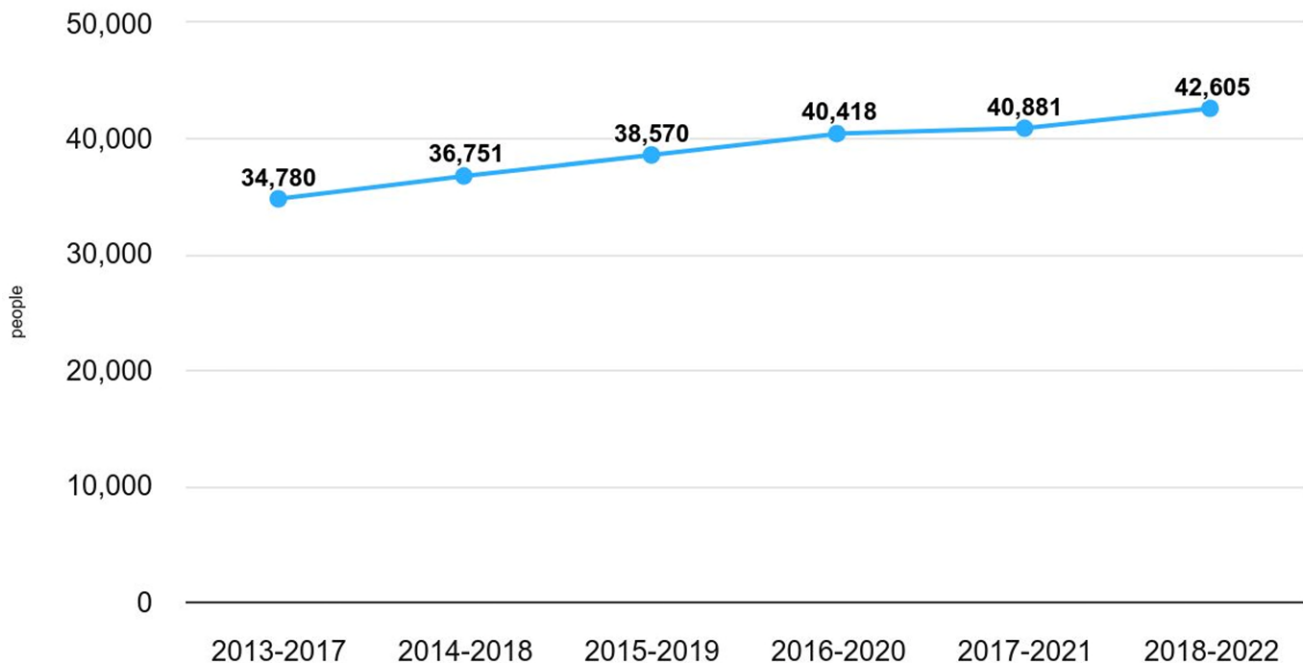
El Dorado County's communities, natural resources, open space and recreation opportunities, economic opportunities, rural lifestyle can be highly attractive to residents, workers, and businesses, creating a vibrant environment in which to plan for and implement transportation improvements. To understand how growth impacts transportation, it is useful to review historical growth trends. Notably, the population of El Dorado County has seen a significant increase in the aging cohorts over the past 20 years. Figure 3-1 highlights the increase in persons aged 65 and older in El Dorado County. This aging cohort has grown at a higher rate compared to the rest of California, a demographic shift that is likely to drive increased demand for transit services tailored to the elderly. Economic forecasts further predict that the proportion of residents aged 65 and older in El Dorado County will continue to rise.



FIGURE 3-1

Population Over Age 65 (Count)  
County: El Dorado

welldorado.org



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year (2018-2022)

Source: [www.welldorado.org](http://www.welldorado.org) (January 2025)