POPULATION BRIEF
Trends in the Western U.S.
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Washington

The population of the State of Washington has grown rapidly in recent years, increasing from about 4.1 million in 1980 to 6.7 million in 2010, a boost of 62.7 percent. Washington is the second most populous state in the western region (behind only California). Six western states had higher growth rates than Washington during this 30-year period. In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the population of Washington grew by 830,419 persons, an increase of 14.1 percent.

Population change patterns varied widely by county in Washington. In five counties (Clark, Franklin, San Juan, Snohomish, and Thurston) the population more than doubled between 1980 and 2000. In the decade from 2000 to 2010, the county with the highest percentage population increase was Franklin (58.4 percent). The largest numerical increases from 1980 to 2010 were in King (661,500), Snohomish (375,615) and Pierce (309,582), all in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metropolitan Area. These same three counties also had the largest numerical increases in the 2000-2010 decade. In contrast to these rapidly growing counties, Garfield County had a smaller population in 2010 than in 1980. Both Garfield and Pacific Counties had population declines from 2000 to 2010.

The Washington population is heavily concentrated in the three county Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metropolitan Area (King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties). Figure 1 shows that 51.2 percent of the state's residents lived in these three counties in 2010. Washington has 14 other metropolitan counties. An additional 36.6 percent of the population lived in these counties. Finally 12.2 percent of the residents lived in one of the 22 nonmetropolitan counties. Figure 2 indicates that population growth in metro counties exceeds the population growth in nonmetro counties. From 1980 to 2010, the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue Metro Area grew by 64.3 percent, the other metro areas by 68 percent and the nonmetro counties by 43.5 percent.

Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Washington Population

As presented in Table 2, 72.5 percent of the Washington population was White in 2010. The minority population in Washington has steadily increased from 9.8 percent in 1980 to 27.5 percent in 2010 (Figure 3). Five of the 13 states in the western region have a smaller proportion of their population that is minority than Washington. In five counties, more than 90 percent of the residents are White. In other parts of the state, Hispanic population growth has been especially rapid. In 2010 Hispanics represented 11.2 percent of the total population. In two Washington counties (Adams and Franklin), Hispanics are now a numerical majority. In four additional counties (Chelan, Douglas, Grant, and Yakima), Hispanics comprise between one-fourth and one-half of the county population. In Ferry and Okanogan Counties, Native Americans represent a substantial share of the population.

Educational Attainment in Washington

Nearly 90 percent of Washington residents' age 25 and older had at least a high school degree in 2010, while 30.8 percent were college graduates (Table 3). Five states in the western region had a higher proportion of their residents who were high school graduates than Washington, while only Colorado had a higher proportion of college graduates. In 14 Washington counties, more than 90 percent of adults had a high school degree. In comparison, the proportion of high school graduates was only 66.7 percent in Adams County and 68.1 percent in Franklin County. Over 44 percent of adults were college graduates in King, San Juan and Whitman Counties, while the proportion with a college degree is only 13.6 percent in Adams and Grant Counties.

Educational attainment varies widely for different segments of the population. Especially significant are variations by race/ethnicity. While more than 90 percent of White and Black adults have a high school degree, this proportion is only 64 percent for Hispanics. Additionally, 47 percent of Asians and 32.4 percent of Whites are college graduates, compared to 14.5 percent of Hispanics and 15 percent of Native Americans. Figure 5 shows that educational attainment levels are better for metro residents than for nonmetro residents.

Income and Poverty in Washington

The median household income in Washington in 2009 was $56,479 (Table 3). Three western states had median household incomes higher than Washington. Incomes varied widely by county. The median household income was $67,706 in King County and $64,677 in Snohomish County. In comparison, median household incomes were less than $40,000 in Ferry, Grays Harbor, Okanogan, Pacific, Pend Oreille, and Whitman Counties. Table 3 also shows that 12.3 percent of Washington residents were living in poverty in 2009. Four states in the western region had a lower poverty rate than Washington. Again, there were substantial differences in poverty rates by county. Less than 10 percent of the residents of Island, King, Kitsap, San Juan, and Snohomish Counties were in poverty. In comparison, poverty rates exceeded 20 percent in Kittitas, Whitman and Yakima Counties. Finally, Table 3 shows that the median value of owner-occupied homes in Washington in 2009 was $277,600. These values ranged from $487,500 in San Juan County to $113,500 in Garfield County.

Incomes and poverty levels also varied widely for people with different characteristics. Figure 6A shows that while household incomes average $63,960 for Asians and $56,004 for Whites, they were just above $40,000 for Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans. Similarly, Figure 6B shows that 8.3 percent of Whites and 9 percent of Asians were living in poverty compared to 20.3 percent of Blacks. Figures 7A and 7B show that incomes were much higher and poverty rates much lower for metro compared to nonmetro residents.

Figure 1. Distribution of Washington Population, 1980-2010

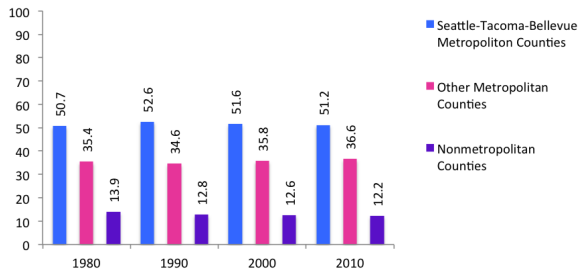


Figure 2. Percent Population Change in Washington, 1980-2010

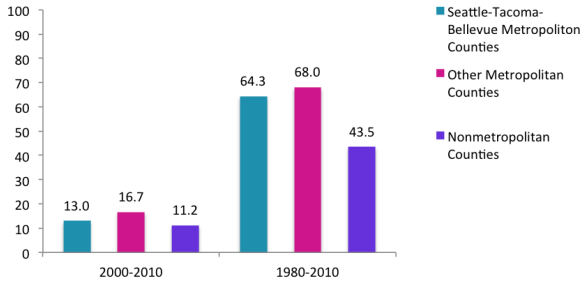


Figure 3. Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Washington Population (Percent), 1980-2010

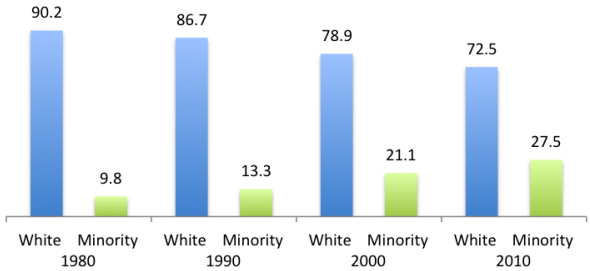
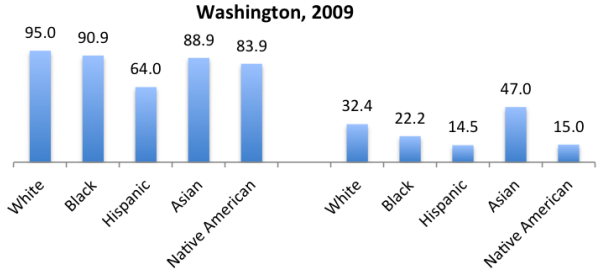


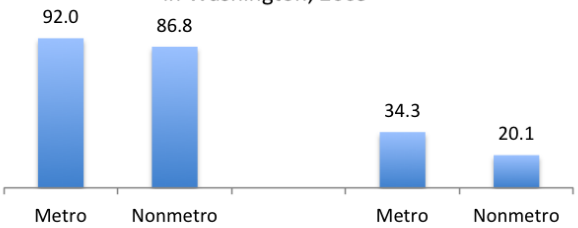
Figure 4. Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity in Washington, 2009



Percent High School Graduates

Percent College Graduates

Figure 5. Educational Attainment by Residence in Washington, 2009



Percent High School Graduates

Percent College Graduates

Figure 6A. Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in Washington, 2009

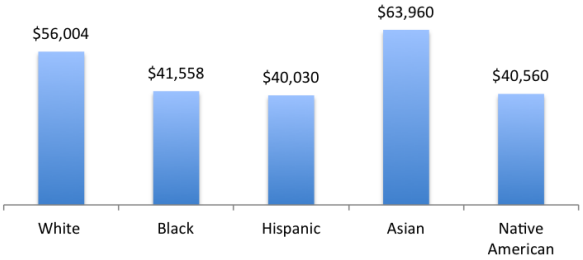


Figure 6B. Percent of Persons in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity in Washington, 2009

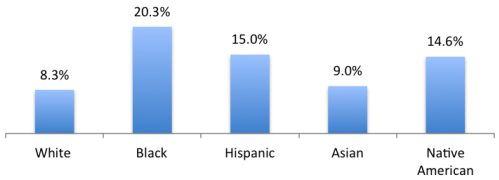
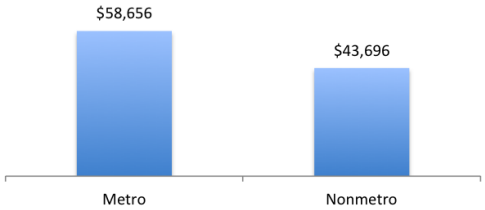


Figure 7A. Median Household Income by Residence in Washington, 2009



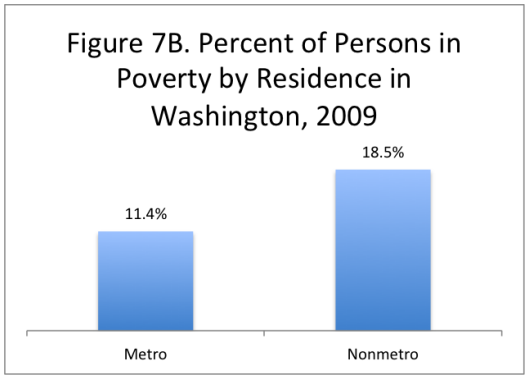


Table 1. Population Change in Washington Counties, 1980-2010

County	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change 2000 - 2010 Total	Change 2000 - 2010 Percent	Change 1980 - 2010 Total	Change 1980 - 2010 Percent
Adams	13,267	13,603	16,428	18,728	2,300	14.0	5,461	41.2
Asotin	16,823	17,605	20,551	21,623	1,072	5.2	4,800	28.5
Benton	109,444	112,560	142,475	175,177	32,702	23.0	65,733	60.1
Chelan	45,061	52,250	66,616	72,453	5,837	8.8	27,392	60.8
Clallam	51,648	56,464	64,525	71,404	6,879	10.7	19,756	38.3
Clark	192,227	238,053	345,238	425,363	80,125	23.2	233,136	121.3
Columbia	4,057	4,024	4,064	4,078	14	0.3	21	0.5
Cowlitz	79,548	82,119	92,948	102,410	9,462	10.2	22,862	28.7
Douglas	22,144	26,205	32,603	38,431	5,828	17.9	16,287	73.6
Ferry	5,811	6,295	7,260	7,551	291	4.0	1,740	29.9
Franklin	35,025	37,473	49,347	78,163	28,816	58.4	43,138	123.2
Garfield	2,468	2,248	2,397	2,266	-131	-5.5	-202	-8.2
Grant	48,522	54,758	74,698	89,120	14,422	19.3	40,598	83.7
Grays Harbor	66,314	64,175	67,194	72,797	5,603	8.3	6,483	9.8
Island	44,048	60,195	71,558	78,506	6,948	9.7	34,458	78.2
Jefferson	15,965	20,146	25,953	29,872	3,919	15.1	13,907	87.1
King	1,269,749	1,507,319	1,737,034	1,931,249	194,215	11.2	661,500	52.1
Kitsap	147,152	189,731	231,969	251,133	19,164	8.3	103,981	70.7
Kittitas	24,877	26,725	33,362	40,915	7,553	22.6	16,038	64.5
Klickitat	15,822	16,616	19,161	20,318	1,157	6.0	4,496	28.4
Lewis	56,025	59,358	68,600	75,455	6,855	10.0	19,430	34.7
Lincoln	9,604	8,864	10,184	10,570	386	3.8	966	10.1
Mason	31,184	38,341	49,405	60,699	11,294	22.9	29,515	94.6
Okanogan	30,639	33,350	39,564	41,120	1,556	3.9	10,481	34.2
Pacific	17,237	18,882	20,984	20,920	-64	-0.3	3,683	21.4
Pend Oreille	8,580	8,915	11,732	13,001	1,269	10.8	4,421	51.5
Pierce	485,643	586,203	700,820	795,225	94,405	13.5	309,582	63.7
San Juan	7,838	10,035	14,077	15,769	1,692	12.0	7,931	101.2
Skagit	64,138	79,555	102,979	116,901	13,922	13.5	52,763	82.3
Skamania	7,919	8,289	9,872	11,066	1,194	12.1	3,147	39.7
Snohomish	337,720	465,642	606,024	713,335	107,311	17.7	375,615	111.2
Spokane	341,835	361,364	417,939	471,221	53,282	12.7	129,386	37.9
Stevens	28,979	30,948	40,066	43,531	3,465	8.6	14,552	50.2
Thurston	124,264	161,238	207,355	252,264	44,909	21.7	128,000	103.0
Wahkiakum	3,832	3,327	3,824	3,978	154	4.0	146	3.8
Walla Walla	47,435	48,439	55,180	58,781	3,601	6.5	11,346	23.9
Whatcom	106,701	127,780	166,814	201,140	34,326	20.6	94,439	88.5
Whitman	40,103	38,775	40,740	44,776	4,036	9.9	4,673	11.7
Yakima	172,508	188,823	222,581	243,231	20,650	9.3	70,723	41.0
State Total	4,132,156	4,866,692	5,894,121	6,724,540	830,419	14.1	2,592,384	62.7

Table 2. Percentage of Population by Race/Ethnicity for Washington Counties, 2010

County	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
Adams	38.8	0.6	59.3	0.7	1.9
Asotin	92.6	0.4	3.0	0.5	1.4
Benton	74.5	1.3	18.7	2.7	0.9
Chelan	70.7	0.3	25.8	0.8	1.0
Clallam	84.6	0.8	5.1	1.4	5.1
Clark	81.8	2.0	7.6	4.1	0.9
Columbia	89.5	0.3	6.2	0.6	1.4
Cowlitz	85.8	0.6	7.8	1.5	1.5
Douglas	67.8	0.3	28.7	0.7	1.1
Ferry	75.0	0.3	3.4	0.7	16.7
Franklin	43.2	1.9	51.2	1.8	0.7
Garfield	92.8	0.0	4.0	1.7	0.3
Grant	57.3	1.1	38.3	0.9	1.2
Grays Harbor	81.4	1.1	8.6	1.4	4.6
Island	83.1	2.2	5.5	4.4	0.8
Jefferson	89.3	0.8	2.8	1.6	2.3
King	64.8	6.2	8.9	14.6	0.8
Kitsap	79.1	2.6	6.2	4.9	1.6
Kittitas	86.1	0.9	7.6	2.0	1.0
Klickitat	83.8	0.2	10.7	0.6	2.4
Lewis	86.0	0.5	8.7	0.9	1.4
Lincoln	93.6	0.3	2.3	0.4	1.6
Mason	82.9	1.1	8.0	1.2	3.7
Okanogan	68.3	0.4	17.6	0.6	11.4
Pacific	84.6	0.4	8.0	2.0	2.3
Pend Oreille	89.8	0.4	3.0	0.6	3.8
Pierce	70.3	6.8	9.2	6.0	1.4
San Juan	90.2	0.3	5.4	1.1	0.7
Skagit	76.7	0.7	16.9	1.8	2.2
Skamania	89.6	0.4	5.0	0.9	1.6
Snohomish	74.3	2.5	9.0	8.9	1.4
Spokane	86.7	1.7	4.5	2.1	1.5
Stevens	87.9	0.3	2.7	0.5	5.5
Thurston	78.9	2.7	7.1	5.2	1.4
Wahkiakum	92.5	0.3	2.7	0.6	1.3
Walla Walla	74.2	1.8	19.7	1.3	1.0
Whatcom	81.9	1.0	7.8	3.5	2.8
Whitman	82.1	1.7	4.6	7.8	0.7
Yakima	47.7	1.0	45.0	1.1	4.3
State Total	72.5	3.6	11.2	7.2	1.5

Table 3. Economic Conditions and Education for Washington Counties, 2009

County	Median Household Income	Percent of Persons in Poverty	Median Value of Owner-Occupied Homes	Percent of Persons 25+ with High School Degree	Percent of Persons 25+ with College Degree
Adams	$43,088	18.2	$120,700	66.7	13.6
Asotin	$41,190	15.0	$148,600	89.7	18.4
Benton	$57,603	11.3	$162,700	87.6	27.1
Chelan	$48,086	13.0	$224,700	83.1	23.9
Clallam	$43,533	14.3	$231,600	90.4	23.4
Clark	$56,351	11.8	$258,600	90.7	25.5
Columbia	$41,090	14.1	$135,200	88.8	20.8
Cowlitz	$45,839	16.0	$183,500	85.7	14.4
Douglas	$47,430	14.6	$184,300	79.9	18.0
Ferry	$34,802	19.9	$133,500	87.7	15.6
Franklin	$47,719	17.3	$142,000	68.1	14.4
Garfield	$41,305	14.3	$113,500	89.4	19.4
Grant	$45,183	18.6	$131,900	73.0	13.6
Grays Harbor	$37,637	19.3	$151,100	84.4	14.1
Island	$55,394	7.8	$295,500	94.1	28.2
Jefferson	$48,176	13.7	$296,800	93.8	35.9
King	$67,706	9.8	$398,600	91.8	44.8
Kitsap	$60,673	8.4	$278,600	92.3	28.1
Kittitas	$41,563	20.6	$246,100	89.9	31.0
Klickitat	$41,191	18.0	$186,900	87.4	17.4
Lewis	$42,365	15.1	$179,400	84.6	15.4
Lincoln	$44,899	14.2	$130,400	90.2	21.3
Mason	$49,440	15.9	$208,200	87.3	19.3
Okanogan	$38,363	18.6	$146,800	82.5	17.5
Pacific	$38,177	17.9	$160,300	85.6	16.5
Pend Oreille	$39,288	18.7	$186,200	86.6	17.4
Pierce	$55,941	12.3	$262,400	89.7	23.3
San Juan	$52,158	9.9	$487,500	94.9	44.7
Skagit	$54,335	11.1	$266,100	86.5	22.9
Skamania	$51,407	12.4	$225,700	88.0	18.2
Snohomish	$64,677	9.7	$330,400	90.5	27.9
Spokane	$44,799	14.8	$179,000	91.5	27.2
Stevens	$40,770	16.0	$168,300	87.7	18.3
Thurston	$58,533	11.1	$248,700	92.2	31.2
Wahkiakum	$44,503	13.0	$195,200	92.3	16.3
Walla Walla	$43,144	17.8	$182,700	85.7	23.4
Whatcom	$47,490	15.5	$288,500	90.3	31.7
Whitman	$36,767	25.6	$168,500	95.2	44.8
Yakima	$41,055	22.0	$143,200	71.1	15.7
State Total	$56,479	12.3	$277,600	89.4	30.8

WESTERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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About the WRDC

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four regional centers competitively funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture to strengthen the capacity of local citizens to guide the future of their rural communities. Each of the four Centers link the research and extension capacity of regional land-grant universities with local decision-makers to enhance rural prosperity, create thriving communities, and support a sustainable and competitive agricultural system.

The WRDC is hosted by Utah State University and receives financial support from Cooperative Extension, and the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station. Additional one-time financial support provided by Colorado State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, Montana State University Extension, New Mexico State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, Oregon State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, Colorado State University Extension, University of Alaska Fairbanks Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, University of Arizona Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, University of California Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, University of Hawaii Extension, University of Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension, and Washington State University Extension.