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.
Population Trends in the Western U.S.

**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

**Figure 5.** Educational Attainment by Residence in Washington, 2009

**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
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.

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