POPULATION BRIEF
Trends in the Western U.S.
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Montana

The population of the State of Montana grew by 87,220 persons in the first decade of the 21st century, an increase of 9.7 percent. This was the lowest population growth rate of the 13 states in the western region. In the three decades from 1980, Montana experienced a 25.8 percent population growth. Population change patterns varied widely from one part of Montana to another (Table 1). The population of Gallatin County more than doubled between 1980 and 2010, growing from 42,865 to 89,513 residents. Gallatin County also had the highest rate of population growth in the state from 2000 to 2010 at 32 percent. The greatest numerical increases from 1980 to 2010 were in Gallatin (46,648), Yellowstone (39,937), Flathead (38,962) and Missoula (33,283) Counties. These same four counties also had the biggest numerical increases from 2000 to 2010. At the other extreme, 29 Montana counties had smaller populations in 2010 than in 1980. In seven of these counties (Carter, Daniels, McCone, Powder River, Prairie, Sheridan, and Wibaux), population declines exceeded 30 percent. These seven counties are all nonmetropolitan counties in the eastern part of the state.

Figure 1 shows that just over one-third of the Montana population lived in one of the three metropolitan areas in the state that comprise four counties (Billings – Carbon and Yellowstone Counties; Great Falls – Cascade County; and Missoula – Missoula County). In 2010, 16.5 percent lived in eastern Montana nonmetropolitan counties and 48.3 percent in western Montana nonmetropolitan counties. This figure shows that the proportion of residents living in the western nonmetro counties has increased substantially while the proportion living in the eastern nonmetro counties has decreased. The reason for this is evident by looking at Figure 2. Between 1980, the nonmetro counties in the western part of the state had a 46.4 percent population increase while the nonmetro counties in the eastern part of the state had a 13 percent population decline. In comparison, the population of the metro counties increased by 27.8 percent.

Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Montana Population

As shown in Table 2, 87.8 percent of the Montana population was White in 2010. Montana has a smaller proportion of minority residents than any other state in the western region. The proportion of the population that is minority has steadily increased from 6.6 percent in 1980 to 12.2 percent in 2010 (Figure 3). Native Americans are the largest minority group in the state representing 6.3 percent of the total population. The population in 43 Montana counties is more than 90 percent White. On the other hand, in three counties (Big Horn, Glacier and Roosevelt), the population is more than 50 percent Native American. Blaine, Chouteau, Hill, Lake, and Rosebud Counties also have substantial Native American populations.

Educational Attainment in Montana

Over 90 percent of Montana residents' age 25 and older had at least a high school degree in 2010, while 27 percent of these individuals had at least a college degree (Table 3). Only Wyoming and Alaska had a higher proportion of high school graduates that Montana. In six western states, the proportion of adults with a college degree is greater than in Montana. In 24 Montana counties, more than 90 percent of adults have a high school degree, while this proportion is only 73.5 percent in Liberty County. In Gallatin County, 44.5 percent of adults have a college degree. In comparison, in 9 Montana counties less than 15 percent of adults have a college degree.

Educational attainment varies widely for different segments of the Montana population. Especially significant are variations by race/ethnicity. Figure 4 shows that 93.2 percent of White adults have completed high school, compared to only 76.6 percent of Native Americans. Also, 33.3 percent of Asians, 27.6 percent of Whites and 25 percent of Blacks have a college degree compared to 13 percent of Native Americans. Figure 5 shows that differences in educational attainment by metro or nonmetro residence are not extensive in Montana.

Income and Poverty in Montana

The median household income in Montana in 2009 was $42,222 (Table 3). This was lower than any other state in the western region. Incomes varied widely by county. In four counties (Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, Richland, and Stillwater) the median household income was greater than $50,000, while it was $29,941 in Glacier and $28,730 in Wheatland County. Table 3 also shows that 15 percent of Montana residents were living in poverty in 2009. This proportion was higher than all of the western states with the exception of Arizona and New Mexico. Again, there were substantial variations in poverty rates by county. While less than 10 percent of the population was living in poverty in Fallon, Jefferson and Stillwater Counties, this proportion was greater than 30 percent in Glacier and Roosevelt Counties. Table 3 also shows that the median value of owner-occupied home in Montana was $162,100 in 2009. This was lower than in all of the states in the western region except New Mexico. Median home values ranged from $266,200 in Gallatin County to $53,200 in Wibaux County.

Incomes and poverty levels also varied widely for people with different characteristics in Montana. Figure 6A show that while the median household income was $42,939 for Whites, it was $27,144 for Native Americans. Similarly, Figure 6B shows that while only 9.1 percent of Whites were in poverty, the poverty was greater than 20 percent for all minority groups. Finally, Figures 7A and 7B reveals that incomes were lower and poverty rates higher for nonmetro residents as opposed to metro residents.

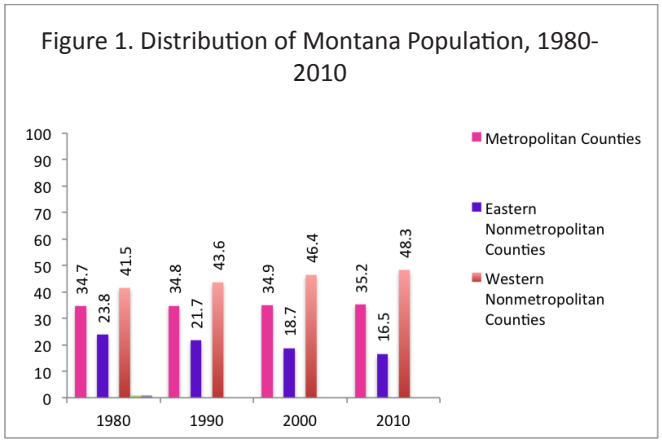


Figure 1. Distribution of Montana Population, 1980-2010
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
34.7
23.8
41.5
34.8
21.7
43.6
34.9
18.7
46.4
35.2
16.5
48.3
1980
1990
2000
2010
Metropolitan Counties
Eastern Nonmetropolitan Counties
Western Nonmetropolitan Counties

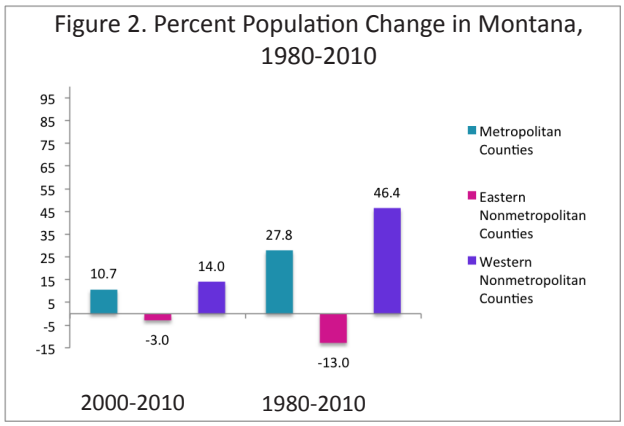


Figure 2. Percent Population Change in Montana, 1980-2010
95
85
75
65
55
45
35
25
15
5
-5
-15
10.7
-3.0
14.0
27.8
-13.0
46.4
2000-2010
1980-2010
Metropolitan Counties
Eastern Nonmetropolitan Counties
Western Nonmetropolitan Counties

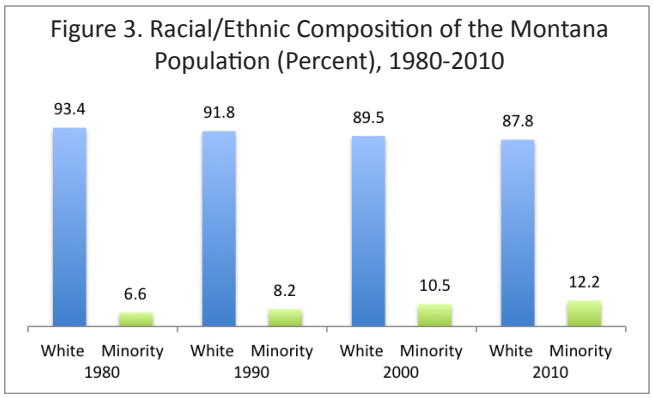


Figure 3. Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Montana Population (Percent), 1980-2010
93.4
6.6
91.8
8.2
89.5
10.5
87.8
12.2
White
Minority
1980
White
Minority
1990
White
Minority
2000
White
Minority
2010

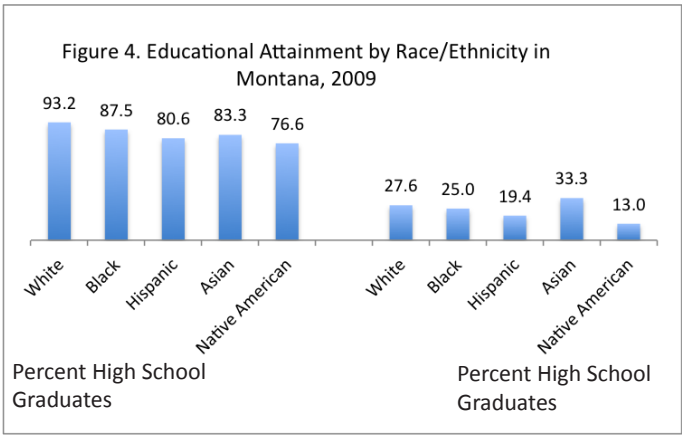


Figure 4. Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity in Montana, 2009
93.2
87.5
80.6
83.3
76.6
27.6
25.0
19.4
33.3
13.0
White
Black
Hispanic
Asian
Native American
White
Black
Hispanic
Asian
Native American
Percent High School Graduates
Percent High School Graduates

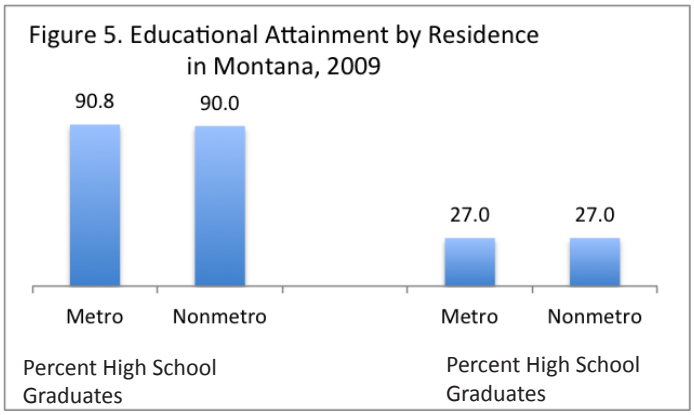


Figure 5. Educational Attainment by Residence in Montana, 2009
90.8
90.0
27.0
27.0
Metro
Nonmetro
Metro
Nonmetro
Percent High School Graduates
Percent High School Graduates

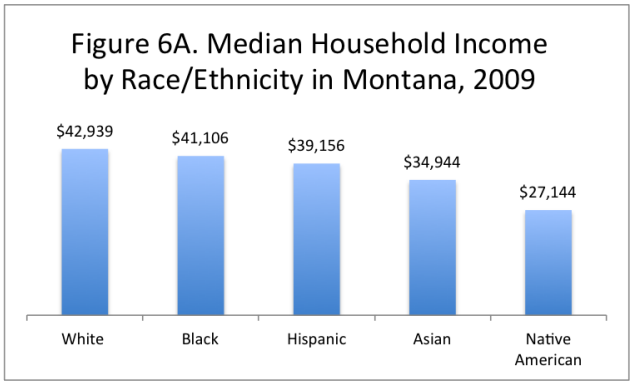
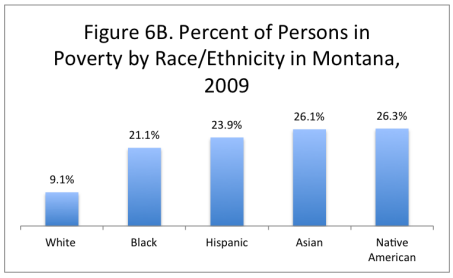


Figure 6A. Median Household Income by Race/Ethnicity in Montana, 2009
$42,939
$41,106
$39,156
$34,944
$27,144
White
Black
Hispanic
Asian
Native American



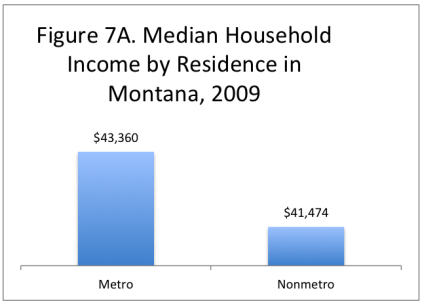


Table 1. Population Change in Montana Counties, 1980-2010

County	1980	1990	2000	2010	Change 2000 - 2010 Total	Change 2000 - 2010 Percent	Change 1980 - 2010 Total	Change 1980 - 2010 Percent
Beaverhead	8,186	8,424	9,202	9,246	44	0.5	1,060	12.9
Big Horn	11,096	11,337	12,671	12,865	194	1.5	1,769	15.9
Blaine	6,999	6,728	7,009	6,491	-518	-7.4	-508	-7.3
Broadwater	3,267	3,318	4,385	5,612	1,227	28.0	2,345	71.8
Carbon	8,099	8,080	9,552	10,078	526	5.5	1,979	24.4
Carter	1,799	1,503	1,360	1,160	-200	-14.7	-639	-35.5
Cascade	80,696	77,691	80,357	81,327	970	1.2	631	0.8
Chouteau	6,092	5,452	5,970	5,813	-157	-2.6	-279	-4.6
Custer	13,109	11,697	11,696	11,699	3	0.0	-1,410	-10.8
Daniels	2,835	2,266	2,017	1,751	-266	-13.2	-1,084	-38.2
Dawson	11,805	9,505	9,059	8,966	-93	-1.0	-2,839	-24.0
Deer Lodge	12,518	10,278	9,417	9,298	-119	-1.3	-3,220	-25.7
Fallon	3,763	3,103	2,837	2,890	53	1.9	-873	-23.2
Fergus	13,076	12,083	11,893	11,586	-307	-2.6	-1,490	-11.4
Flathead	51,966	59,218	74,471	90,928	16,457	22.1	38,962	75.0
Gallatin	42,865	50,463	67,831	89,513	21,682	32.0	46,648	108.9
Garfield	1,656	1,589	1,279	1,206	-73	-5.7	-450	-27.2
Glacier	10,628	12,121	13,247	13,399	152	1.1	2,771	26.1
Golden Valley	1,026	912	1,042	884	-158	-15.2	-142	-13.8
Granite	2,700	2,548	2,830	3,079	249	8.8	379	14.0
Hill	17,985	17,654	16,673	16,096	-577	-3.5	-1,889	-10.5
Jefferson	7,029	7,939	10,049	11,406	1,357	13.5	4,377	62.3
Judith Basin	2,646	2,282	2,329	2,072	-257	-11.0	-574	-21.7
Lake	19,056	21,041	26,507	28,746	2,239	8.4	9,690	50.9
Lewis and Clark	43,039	47,495	55,716	63,395	7,679	13.8	20,356	47.3
Liberty	2,329	2,295	2,158	2,339	181	8.4	10	0.4
Lincoln	17,752	17,481	18,837	19,687	850	4.5	1,935	10.9
Madison	5,448	5,989	6,851	7,691	840	12.3	2,243	41.2
McCone	2,702	2,276	1,977	1,734	-243	-12.3	-968	-35.8
Meagher	2,154	1,819	1,932	1,891	-41	-2.1	-263	-12.2
Mineral	3,675	3,315	3,884	4,223	339	8.7	548	14.9
Missoula	76,016	78,687	95,802	109,299	13,497	14.1	33,283	45.6
Musselshell	4,428	4,106	4,497	4,538	41	0.9	110	2.5
Park	12,660	14,562	15,694	15,636	-58	-0.4	2,976	23.5
Petroleum	655	519	493	494	1	0.2	-161	-24.6
Phillips	5,367	5,163	4,601	4,253	-348	-7.6	-1,114	-20.8
Pondera	6,731	6,433	6,424	6,153	-271	-4.2	-578	-8.9
Powder River	2,520	2,090	1,858	1,743	-115	-6.2	-777	-30.8
Powell	6,958	6,620	7,180	7,027	-153	-2.1	69	1.0
Prairie	1,836	1,383	1,199	1,179	-20	-1.7	-657	-35.8
Ravalli	22,493	25,010	36,070	40,212	4,142	11.5	17,719	78.8
Richland	12,243	10,716	9,667	9,746	79	0.8	-2,497	-20.4
Roosevelt	10,467	10,999	10,620	10,425	-195	-1.8	-42	-0.4
Rosebud	9,899	10,505	9,383	9,233	-150	-1.6	-666	-6.7
Sanders	8,675	8,669	10,227	11,413	1,186	11.6	2,738	31.6
Sheridan	5,414	4,732	4,105	3,384	-721	-17.6	-2,030	-37.5
Silver Bow	38,092	33,941	34,606	34,200	-406	-1.2	-3,892	-10.2
Stillwater	5,598	6,536	8,195	9,117	922	11.3	3,519	62.9
Sweet Grass	3,216	3,154	3,609	3,651	42	1.7	435	13.5
Teton	6,491	6,271	6,445	6,073	-372	-5.8	-418	-6.4
Toole	5,559	5,046	5,267	5,324	57	1.1	-235	-4.2
Treasure	981	874	861	718	-143	-16.6	-263	-26.8
Valley	10,250	8,239	7,675	7,369	-306	-4.0	-2,881	28.1
Wheatland	2,359	2,246	2,259	2,168	-91	-4.0	-191	-8.1
Wibaux	1,476	1,191	1,068	1,017	-51	-4.8	-459	-31.1
Yellowstone	108,035	113,419	129,352	147,972	18,620	14.4	39,937	37.0
Yellowstone National Park	275	52	-	-	-	-	-275	-
State Total	786,690	799,065	902,195	989,415	87,220	9.7	202,725	25.8

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

County	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
Beaverhead	92.7	0.2	3.7	0.4	1.4
Big Horn	30.4	0.2	4.0	0.5	64.3
Blaine	47.9	0.1	1.8	0.1	49.4
Broadwater	94.6	0.3	2.2	0.2	1.3
Carbon	95.9	0.3	1.9	0.2	0.8
Carter	97.6	0.1	0.7	0.1	0.9
Cascade	87.4	1.2	3.3	0.8	4.3
Chouteau	75.5	0.1	1.6	0.4	21.8
Custer	94.1	0.3	2.2	0.3	1.7
Daniels	94.4	0.2	1.5	0.2	2.1
Dawson	94.5	0.3	2.0	0.3	1.7
Deer Lodge	91.6	0.4	2.9	0.3	3.1
Fallon	96.6	0.1	1.2	0.6	0.4
Fergus	95.7	0.2	1.5	0.2	1.2
Flathead	94.0	0.2	2.3	0.6	1.1
Gallatin	93.3	0.3	2.8	1.1	0.9
Garfield	98.4	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.4
Glacier	30.7	0.1	1.8	0.2	65.6
Golden Valley	93.0	0.0	3.5	0.7	1.0
Granite	96.4	0.1	1.4	0.1	0.4
Hill	72.9	0.3	2.3	0.4	21.7
Jefferson	94.0	0.1	2.0	0.4	1.4
Judith Basin	97.2	0.0	1.2	0.1	0.8
Lake	68.1	0.3	3.5	0.4	22.0
Lewis and Clark	92.4	0.3	2.5	0.6	2.1
Liberty	98.0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2
Lincoln	94.2	0.1	2.3	0.3	0.9
McCone	97.4	0.2	0.7	0.1	0.4
Madison	95.4	0.2	2.4	0.3	0.5
Meagher	96.6	0.1	1.5	0.3	0.3
Mineral	93.6	0.3	1.9	0.7	1.5
Missoula	91.0	0.4	2.6	1.1	2.6
Musselshell	94.3	0.2	2.6	0.2	1.3
Park	95.2	0.1	2.1	0.3	0.8
Petroleum	98.4	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Phillips	86.2	0.0	1.9	0.2	8.3
Pondera	82.2	0.1	1.4	0.2	14.5
Powder River	94.4	0.1	1.4	0.2	1.5
Powell	91.4	1.0	1.7	0.5	4.4
Prairie	95.4	0.0	1.4	0.5	0.2
Ravalli	93.9	0.2	3.0	0.5	0.9
Richland	93.3	0.1	3.0	0.2	1.7
Roosevelt	35.6	0.1	1.3	0.4	60.4
Rosebud	60.2	0.3	3.4	0.5	34.7
Sanders	90.4	0.1	2.0	0.3	4.4
Sheridan	94.6	0.2	1.5	0.4	1.7
Silver Bow	92.1	0.3	3.7	0.5	1.9
Stillwater	95.3	0.1	2.3	0.3	0.8
Sweet Grass	95.6	0.1	1.4	0.7	0.4
Teton	95.4	0.0	1.3	0.1	1.4
Toole	90.4	0.5	2.4	0.4	4.5
Treasure	92.8	0.0	3.5	0.4	0.8
Valley	86.4	0.2	1.2	0.5	9.8
Wheatland	95.2	0.3	1.5	0.6	0.5
Wibaux	97.1	0.0	1.3	0.5	0.4
Yellowstone	88.2	0.6	4.7	0.6	4.0
State Total	87.8	0.4	2.9	0.6	6.3

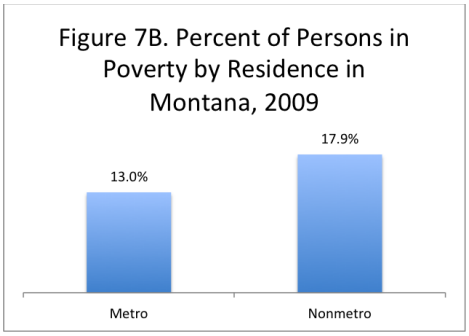


Table 3. Economic Conditions and Education for Montana Counties, 2009					
County	Median Household Income	Percent of Persons in Poverty	Median Value of Owner-Occupied Homes	Percent of Persons 25+ with High School Degree	Percent of Persons 25+ with College Degree
Beaverhead	$37,304	16.2	$149,200	90.7	30.3
Big Horn	$32,223	24.0	$80,800	82.4	11.0
Blaine	$31,541	27.6	$70,300	85.4	17.7
Broadwater	$42,823	12.1	$141,000	90.1	14.0
Carbon	$41,952	12.1	$189,800	91.1	28.2
Carter	$31,800	20.1	$83,100	91.5	13.0
Cascade	$40,434	15.1	$135,800	90.9	23.3
Chouteau	$37,945	18.1	$103,500	91.1	21.8
Custer	$38,844	14.2	$75,600	91.5	20.5
Daniels	$35,005	13.5	$72,400	94.7	20.1
Dawson	$44,847	12.6	$89,800	89.0	16.1
Deer Lodge	$32,173	17.0	$91,700	84.2	18.9
Fallon	$46,936	9.1	$88,000	88.1	12.4
Fergus	$37,402	16.3	$97,300	86.5	23.9
Flathead	$45,594	13.5	$223,800	91.0	26.4
Gallatin	$47,065	13.4	$266,200	95.7	44.5
Garfield	$32,359	17.4	$69,600	90.9	15.3
Glacier	$29,941	30.5	$76,900	79.8	17.5
Golden Valley	$30,424	21.7	$83,200	89.2	20.1
Granite	$35,806	17.4	$174,400	86.5	21.9
Hill	$40,778	19.1	$104,900	90.3	20.0
Jefferson	$54,242	8.3	$202,800	90.9	31.6
Judith Basin	$35,420	16.1	$85,000	91.9	30.8
Lake	$35,888	20.9	$185,800	88.2	22.4
Lewis and Clark	$52,317	10.1	$172,700	93.8	33.3
Liberty	$36,106	18.3	$73,200	73.5	15.8
Lincoln	$32,676	20.4	$136,000	84.8	16.1
McCone	$38,049	17.2	$72,000	91.6	19.4
Madison	$41,345	11.6	$229,600	93.3	27.5
Meagher	$32,509	19.0	$88,800	82.3	21.6
Mineral	$34,153	16.9	$161,700	83.4	14.3
Missoula	$40,130	16.9	$225,900	92.0	37.1
Musselshell	$33,382	20.5	$105,400	83.9	13.6
Park	$39,525	13.3	$191,200	87.6	30.2
Petroleum	$31,380	20.3	$95,000	91.2	12.6
Phillips	$35,182	17.0	$73,400	88.5	14.8
Pondera	$34,813	19.1	$85,500	88.1	20.7
Powder River	$35,138	13.0	$94,400	92.3	20.7
Powell	$35,848	20.3	$106,300	88.9	18.8
Prairie	$33,228	15.3	$69,800	85.8	13.9
Ravalli	$40,444	15.6	$222,800	90.6	23.3
Richland	$50,014	10.3	$92,400	85.2	15.3
Roosevelt	$30,455	30.7	$59,700	88.7	18.0
Rosebud	$45,146	17.2	$88,600	88.5	16.2
Sanders	$33,884	21.8	$165,400	85.1	15.2
Sheridan	$42,294	11.6	$62,600	84.9	17.0
Silver Bow	$40,055	14.6	$105,700	90.2	22.4
Stillwater	$53,637	9.3	$161,700	91.4	20.7
Sweet Grass	$41,993	11.5	$183,000	86.3	28.2
Teton	$36,834	15.3	$121,000	86.9	20.4
Toole	$37,238	16.5	$88,900	86.2	20.1
Treasure	$39,034	12.2	$62,300	89.7	18.4
Valley	$38,274	14.3	$77,300	86.6	17.4
Wheatland	$28,730	19.5	$82,400	87.6	19.3
Wibaux	$36,604	12.9	$53,200	80.8	20.0
Yellowstone	$47,139	11.7	$159,600	91.0	27.7
State Total	$42,222	15.0	$162,100	90.4	27.0

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.