



POPULATION BRIEF

Trends in the Western U.S.

The State of Montana

By Don E. Albrecht

Overview

Rural development is the process by which the lives of individuals and families living in rural areas are improved. Effective rural development necessarily involves several components that include 1) good jobs that provide individuals and families the opportunity to earn and maintain a livable income; 2) a chance to complete an education and have lifelong opportunities to learn and improve one's circumstances; 3) and the opportunity to live a reasonably long and healthy life. Communities that effectively meet these conditions are likely to retain existing residents and attract new residents and thus experience population growth.

Additionally, effective rural development means that opportunities to obtain high-quality employment, complete an education, and live a long and healthy life must be available to all residents of the community, rather than only to certain segments of the population.

The first step in advancing an effective rural development program is to carefully assess baseline conditions. In response, the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is providing a set of population briefs that provide some of this baseline information. Each population brief will assess one of the components of rural development listed above. This brief examines population changes in Montana. Each brief will explore overall conditions, and then examine the extent to which opportunities are available to all segments of the population by making comparisons on race/ethnicity, gender, family structure or geography. The geographic component will provide comparisons between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas and will compare

the west with the remainder of the United States. Further, population briefs for each of the 13 states comprising the western region are developed that provide more detailed information on rural development issues. Data for these population briefs are obtained from the United States Census.

Growth in Montana

The State of Montana experienced steady population growth from 786,690 residents in 1980 to 944,632 residents in 2006, an increase of 20.1 percent (see Figure 1). The population growth rate in Montana was substantially lower than was typical of other states in the Western Region where the growth rate for this time period was 60.5 percent. Only Wyoming had a slower growth rate and a smaller increase in the total number of inhabitants.

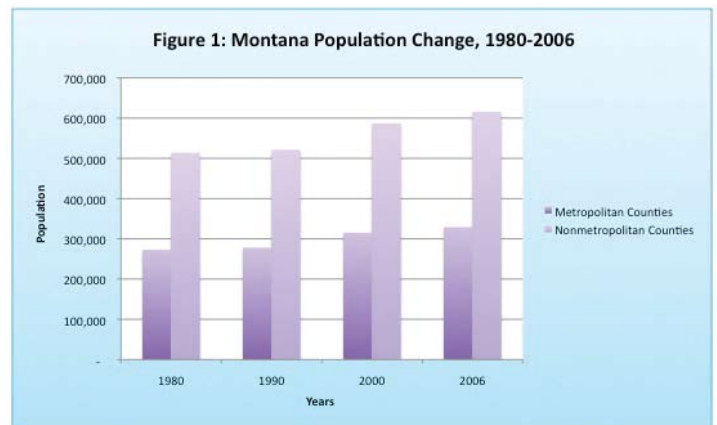
Uniquely, in an urban dominated nation, nearly two-thirds of Montana residents live in nonmetropolitan counties. Demographic patterns were very similar in metropolitan counties (20.6 percent growth) and nonmetropolitan counties (19.8 percent growth). There was, however, extensive variation in different parts of the state. Figure 2 shows those counties in the eastern or plains portion of the state generally experienced population declines, while counties in the western or mountain portions of the state tended to experience population growth. In eastern Montana, few alternatives have been found to replace declining employment in agriculture and the natural resource

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industries, while amenity-related growth has been paramount in mountainous areas of western Montana. Of the 56 counties in the state, 31 had smaller populations in 2006 than in 1980, while the other 25 counties had experienced population increases. Figure 3 shows that a majority of Montana counties are sparsely populated.

Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan

Of Montana's three metropolitan areas, Missoula (Missoula County) experienced a 33.4 percent population increase between



1980 and 2006; Billings (Yellowstone and Carbon Counties) experienced a 27.5 percent increase while Great Falls (Cascade County) experienced a slight population decrease. Thirty nonmetropolitan counties experienced population declines, while 22 had population increases. In six nonmetropolitan counties (Flathead, Gallatin, Jefferson, Lake, Ravalli, and Stillwater), the population grew by more than 50 percent. In all cases, the growth was largely amenity related. The county with the most extensive population growth was Gallatin County (Bozeman) where the population increased from 42,865 in 1980 to 80,921 in 2006, an increase of 88.8 percent (see Table 1).

Minority Population Growth

Even though over 90 percent of Montana residents were White in 2000 in recent decades, population growth has been more extensive among minorities. Between 1980 and 2000, the White population increased by 10 percent, the Black population increased by 29.5 percent, the Hispanic population increased by 83.1 percent, the Native American population increased by 46 percent, and the Asian population increased by 51.7 percent. In 2000, the most numerous minority groups in Montana were Native Americans (53,811) and Hispanics (18,490; Figure 4).

Income, Poverty and Education

The median household income in the average Montana county was \$30,116 in 2000, which was the lowest of the 13 western states. In 2000, 16.8 percent of households were living in poverty, which was higher than the western average, but lower than New Mexico, Arizona and Hawaii. Figures 5 through 9 present information showing the extent to which incomes, poverty and education attainment levels are distributed among the various segments of the population. Figure 5 shows that, on average, metropolitan households earn about \$4,000 more per year than nonmetropolitan households. In metropolitan counties, White households earn about \$12,000 more than

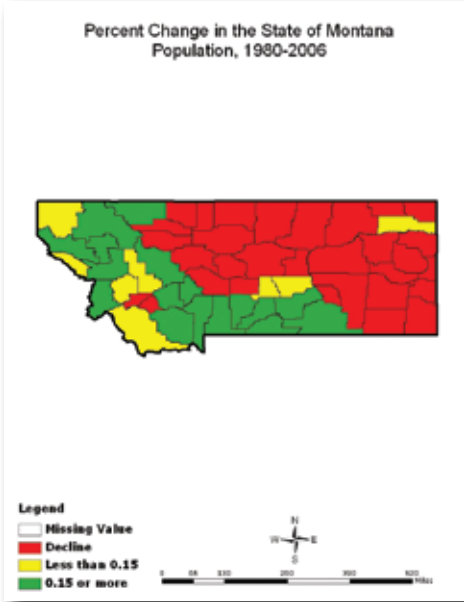


Figure 2

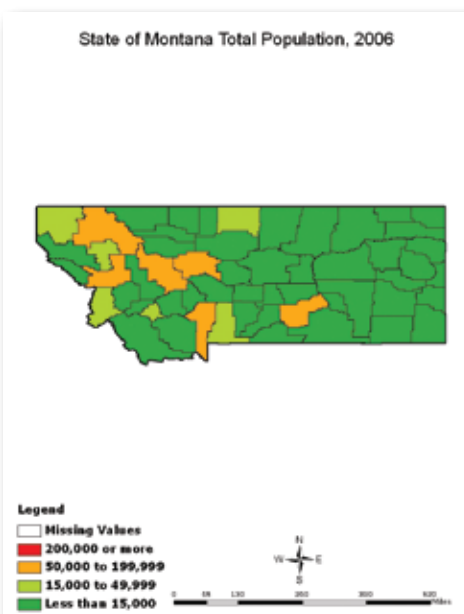


Figure 3

Table 1: Population change for Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Counties in Montana, 1980 - 2006

	1980	1990	2000	2006	Change 1980 - 2006	Percent
State Total	786,690	799,065	902,195	944,632	157,942	20.1
Metropolitan Areas						
Metropolitan Total	272,846	277,877	315,063	328,918	56,072	20.6
Billings						
Total	116,134	121,499	138,904	148,116	31,982	27.5
Carbon County	8,099	8,080	9,552	9,903	1,804	22.3
Yellowstone County	108,035	113,419	129,352	138,213	30,178	27.9
Great Falls						
Cascade County	80,696	77,691	80,357	79,385	-1,311	-1.6
Missoula						
Missoula County	76,016	78,687	95,802	101,417	25,401	33.4
Nonmetropolitan Counties						
Total	513,844	521,188	587,132	615,714	101,870	19.8
Beaverhead County	8,186	8,424	9,202	8,743	557	6.8
Big Horn County	11,096	11,337	12,671	13,035	1,939	17.5
Blaine County	6,999	6,728	7,009	6,615	-384	-5.5
Broadwater County	3,267	3,318	4,385	4,572	1,305	39.9
Carter County	1,799	1,503	1,360	1,321	-478	-26.6
Chouteau County	6,092	5,452	5,970	5,417	-675	-11.1
Custer County	13,109	11,697	11,696	11,151	-1,958	-14.9
Daniels County	2,835	2,266	2,017	1,774	-1,061	-37.4
Dawson County	11,805	9,505	9,059	8,624	-3,181	-26.9
Deer Lodge County	12,518	10,278	9,417	8,888	-3,630	-29.0
Fallan County	3,763	3,103	2,837	2,717	-1,046	-28.0
Fergus County	13,076	12,083	11,893	11,496	-1,580	-12.1
Flathead County	51,966	59,218	74,471	85,314	33,348	64.2
Gallatin County	42,865	50,463	67,831	80,921	38,056	88.8
Garfield County	1,656	1,589	1,279	1,244	-412	-24.9
Glacier County	10,628	12,121	13,247	13,578	2,950	27.8
Golden Valley County	1,026	912	1,042	1,150	124	12.1
Granite County	2,700	2,548	2,830	2,909	209	7.7
Hill County	17,985	17,654	16,673	16,403	-1,582	-8.8
Jefferson County	7,029	7,939	10,049	11,256	4,227	60.1
Judith Basin County	2,646	2,282	2,329	2,142	-504	-19.0
Lake County	19,056	21,041	26,507	28,606	9,550	50.1
Lewis and Clark County	43,039	47,495	55,716	59,302	16,263	37.8
Liberty County	2,329	2,295	2,158	1,863	-466	-20.0
Lincoln County	17,752	17,481	18,837	19,226	1,474	8.3
McCone County	2,702	2,276	1,977	1,760	-942	-34.9
Madison County	5,448	5,989	6,851	7,404	1,956	35.9
Meagher County	2,154	1,819	1,932	1,968	-186	-8.6
Mineral County	3,675	3,315	3,884	4,057	382	10.4
Musselshell County	4,428	4,106	4,497	4,586	158	3.6
Park County	12,660	14,562	15,694	16,084	3,424	27.0
Petroleum County	655	519	493	474	-181	-27.6
Phillips County	5,367	5,163	4,601	4,098	-1,269	-23.6
Pondera County	6,731	6,433	6,424	6,032	-699	-10.4
Powder River County	2,520	2,090	1,858	1,756	-764	-30.3
Powell County	6,958	6,620	7,180	6,997	39	0.6
Prairie County	1,836	1,383	1,199	1,074	-762	-41.5
Ravalli County	22,493	25,010	36,070	40,582	18,089	80.4
Richland County	12,243	10,716	9,667	9,295	-2,948	-24.1
Roosevelt County	10,467	10,999	10,620	10,496	29	0.3
Rosebud County	9,899	10,505	9,383	9,261	-638	-6.4
Sanders County	8,675	8,669	10,227	11,138	2,463	28.4
Sheridan County	5,414	4,732	4,105	3,447	-1,967	-36.3
Silver Bow County	38,092	33,941	34,606	32,801	-5,291	-13.9
Stillwater County	5,598	6,536	8,195	8,646	3,048	54.4
Sweet Grass County	3,216	3,154	3,609	3,760	544	16.9
Teton County	6,491	6,271	6,445	6,115	-376	-5.8
Toole County	5,559	5,046	5,267	5,073	-486	-8.7
Treasure County	981	874	861	680	-301	-30.7
Valley County	10,250	8,239	7,675	6,995	-3,255	-31.8
Wheatland County	2,359	2,246	2,259	1,959	-400	-17.0
Wibaux County	1,476	1,191	1,068	909	-567	-38.4

minority households. Minority households in nonmetropolitan counties actually earn more than minority households in metropolitan counties, but still earn about \$4,000 less than their White nonmetropolitan counterparts. Variation is more extensive for different population categories relative to poverty levels (Figures 6 and 7). Thus, 11.5 percent of White households in metropolitan counties and 15 percent of White households in nonmetropolitan counties were in poverty, compared to 32.2 percent of minority households in metropolitan counties and 27.6 percent of minority households in nonmetropolitan counties (Figure 6). The rapidly growing number of female-headed households is becoming problematic when one examines the consequences of this trend for poverty. While only 6.6 percent of married-couple households in metropolitan counties live in poverty, over 31 percent of female-headed households in metropolitan counties and

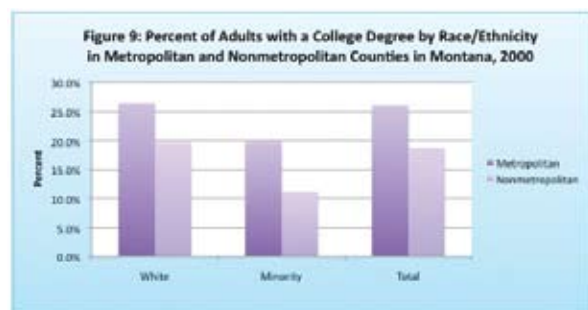
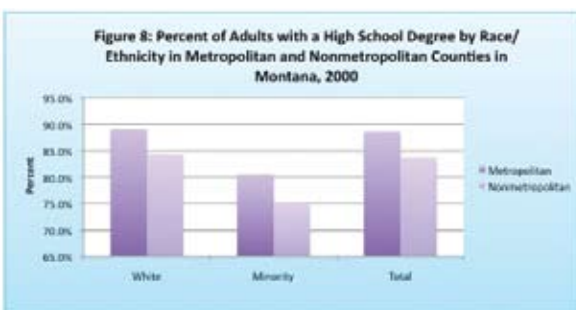
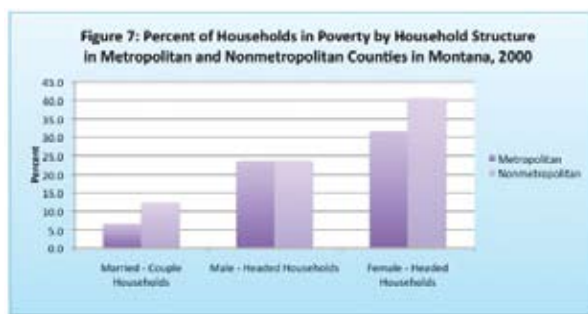
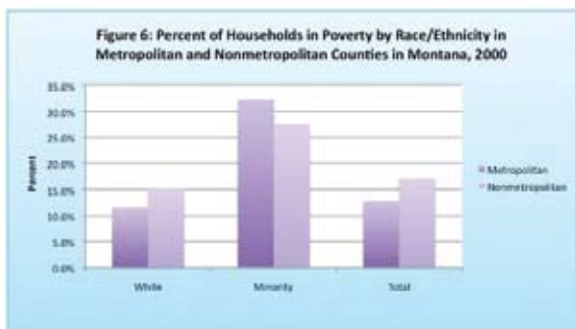
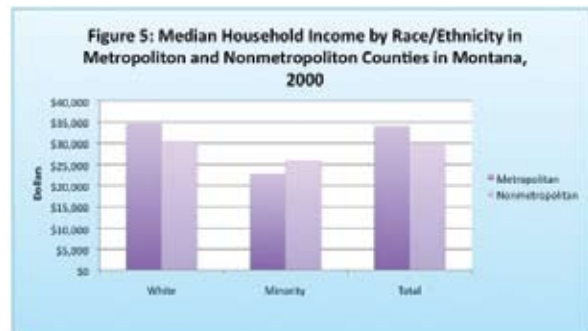
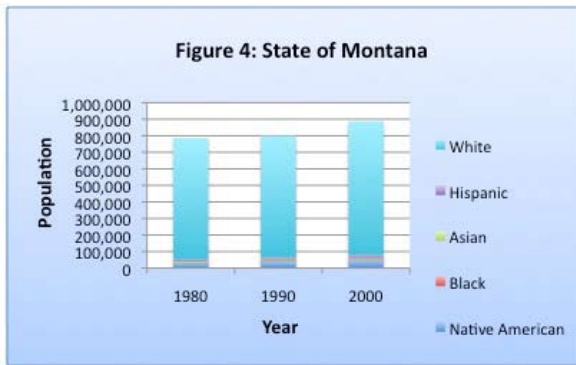
40.6 percent of female-headed households in nonmetropolitan counties are in poverty (Figure 7).

As shown in Figure 8, the vast majority (84.0 percent) of Montana adults have completed high school. Only Wyoming, Utah and Colorado have higher high school completion rates than Montana. High school completion rates are higher among metropolitan residents than among nonmetropolitan residents, and completion rates are higher for Whites than for minorities. Nearly one in five Montana adults (19.3) are college graduates. Six of the 13 western states (California, Colorado, Hawaii, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) have higher college graduation rates. More than one-fourth of White adults in metropolitan counties have a college degree, compared to 19.8 percent of minority persons living in metropolitan counties, 19.7 percent of White adults in nonmetropolitan counties,

and 11.2 percent of the minority residents of nonmetropolitan counties. Compared to other western states, Montana has relatively low birth rates and teenage fertility rates, and also has a relatively high proportion of residents who do not have health insurance.

Conclusions

The State of Montana faces some unique and challenging economic development issues in coming years. Communities in the eastern part of the state are dealing with persistent and long-term population declines, while a number of communities in the western part of the state are struggling with the challenges of very rapid population growth. Low incomes and relatively high poverty rates represent other considerable problems for Montana residents and policy makers. ●



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About the Briefs

Published by the Western Rural Development Center
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The Population Briefs provide information on the population trends in the western U.S. They are intended to provide both basic information and, when combined with the data tables on the WRDC website, more detailed information for further analysis and application.

The series of Population Briefs will include population trends in the western U.S. related to minorities, natural amenities, education, employment/labor, health, fuel usage, and more. Each topic will include a regional overview and then one brief focused on each of the 13 states in the WRDC's region. The briefs will also include data, where available, related to the population trends in the four western U.S. Territories.

The Population Briefs are available in PDF format on the WRDC website (<http://wrdc.usu.edu>) under 'Publications' and in paper format through the WRDC offices via email to wrdc@usu.edu.

Data

Data for this series is obtained from the U.S. Census of Population for 1980, 1990, 2000, and, where available, 2006. Data is reported for all persons for whom race/ethnicity was reported.



The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four regional centers funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Services (CSREES) 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 address a wide range of rural development issues.

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There is a Population Brief for each of the 13 states in the Western Region, and when available, one brief on each of the four U.S. Territories in the region.

To access the state briefs visit 'Rural Resources' on the WRDC website at <http://wrdc.usu.edu>.

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