



# POPULATION BRIEF

Trends in the Western U.S.

## The State of Nevada

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 Nevada. 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 Nevada: Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan

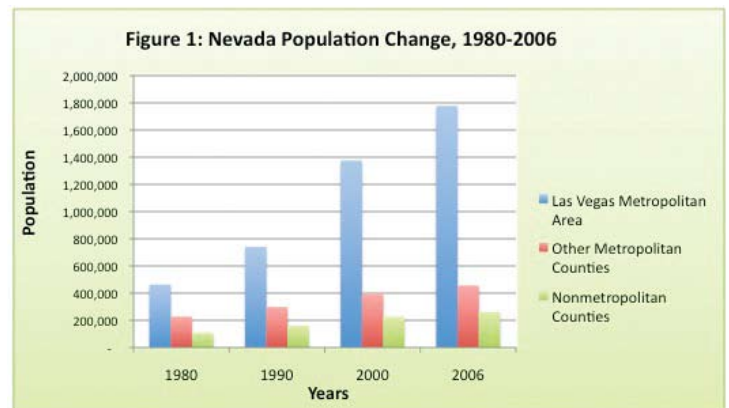
The State of Nevada was the fastest growing state in the nation between 1980 and 2006. The population increased from 800,493 in 1980 to 2,495,529 in 2006, an increase of 211.7 percent. Population growth was especially rapid in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Area (Clark County), where the population grew from 463,087 in 1980 to 1.8 million in 2006 an increase of 283.8 percent. The other metropolitan counties in the state also experienced significant population growth. In Carson City (Carson City County) the population grew by 73 percent, from 32,022 to 55,289, while the population of the Reno-Sparks Metropolitan Area (Washoe and Storey Counties) more than doubled from 195,126 in 1980 to 400,560 in 2006 (Figure 1).

In 2006, 71.2 percent of Nevada residents lived in the Las Vegas Metro Area, and 87.3 percent lived in either the Las Vegas Metropolitan Area or the Reno-Sparks Metropolitan Area. The population of the state's nonmetropolitan counties also grew rapidly, increasing from 110,258 to 262,141, a 137.8

percent increase. In four nonmetropolitan counties (Douglas, Elko, Lyon, and Nye), the population in 2006 was more than double the 1980 population. Especially prominent, in Lyon County, the population increased from 13,594 in 1980 to 51,231 in 2006 and in Nye County, the population increased from 9,048 in 1980 to 42,693 in 2006 (see Table 1).

From Figure 2 it is apparent that the Nevada population was concentrated in the Las Vegas and Reno areas, with sparse population throughout the remainder of the state. Figure 3 illustrates that extensive population growth was widespread

**Population growth was especially rapid in the Las Vegas Metropolitan Area (Clark County), where the population grew from 463,087 in 1980 to 1.8 million in 2006 for an increase of 283.8 percent.**



throughout the state, with only one county (Mineral County) experiencing population declines.

### Minority Population Growth

Not only did Nevada experience extensive population growth but the population became much more diverse (Figure 4). Most prominently, the Hispanic population increased by an amazing 627 percent between 1980 and 2000. In 1980, there were 54,130 Hispanics living in Nevada; by 2000 this number had increased to 393,539. In 1980, the Nevada population was 6.8 percent Hispanic; by 2000 this

proportion had increased to 20.3 percent. There were also very rapid increases among other minority groups including Asians (509.9 percent increase) and Blacks (155.7 percent increase). In 1980, the population of Nevada was 83.4 percent White; by 2000, this proportion had declined to 67 percent.

### Income, Poverty and Education

Median household incomes in Nevada are significantly higher than the national average. Among states in the Western Region, only Alaska and California had higher median household incomes in 2000. There are, however, some important differences for various population categories (Figure 5). On average, Nevada households in metropolitan counties earn about \$4,000 more than nonmetropolitan households. Also, White households earn substantially higher incomes than minority households, especially in nonmetropolitan counties. The proportion of Nevada households living in poverty was lower than any state in the Western Region in 2000. Figure 6 shows that there are also major differences

in poverty levels for various groups. Specifically, White households, especially in metropolitan counties, are much less likely to be in poverty than minority households. Thus, 7.1 percent of White households in metropolitan counties were in poverty in 2000, compared to 9.4 percent of White households in nonmetropolitan counties, 15.1 percent of minority households in metropolitan counties and 21.2 percent of minority households in nonmetropolitan counties. Differences by household structure are even more pronounced (Figure 7). While less than 6 percent of the married-couple households are in poverty, about 20 percent of the female-headed households in metropolitan counties and 33 percent of the female-headed households in nonmetropolitan counties are in poverty.

**The Hispanic population increased by an amazing 627 percent between 1980 and 2000. In 1980, there were 54,130 Hispanics living in Nevada; by 2000 this number had increased to 393,539.**

Over 80 percent of adults in Nevada are high school graduates (Figure 8). The proportion of adults who are high school graduates is lower in Nevada than all but four of the states in the Western Region (Arizona, California, Hawaii and New Mexico). Also, only 14.6 percent of Nevada

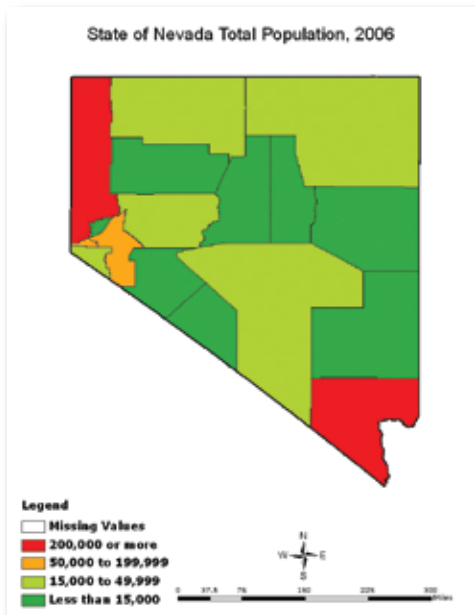


Figure 2

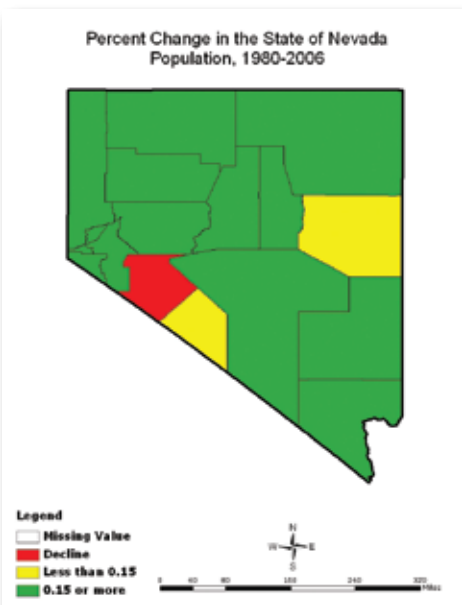


Figure 3

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

	1980	1990	2000	2006	Change 1980 - 2006	
					Total	Percent
State Total	800,493	1,201,833	1,998,257	2,495,529	1,695,036	211.7
<b>Metropolitan Areas</b>						
Total	690,235	1,039,095	1,771,107	2,233,388	1,543,153	223.6
<b>Las Vegas</b>						
Clark County	463,087	741,459	1,375,765	1,777,539	1,314,452	283.8
<b>Carson City</b>						
Carson City County	32,022	40,443	52,457	55,289	23,267	72.7
<b>Reno - Sparks</b>						
Total	195,126	257,193	342,885	400,560	205,434	105.3
Washoe County	193,623	254,667	339,486	396,428	202,805	104.5
Storey County	1,503	2,526	3,399	4,132	2,629	174.9
<b>Nonmetropolitan Counties</b>						
Total	110,258	162,738	227,150	262,141	151,883	137.8
Churchill County	13,917	17,938	23,982	25,036	11,119	79.9
Douglas County	19,421	27,637	41,259	45,909	26,488	136.4
Elko County	17,269	33,530	45,291	47,114	29,845	172.8
Esmeralda County	777	1,344	971	790	13	1.7
Eureka County	1,198	1,547	1,651	1,480	282	23.5
Humboldt County	9,434	12,844	16,106	17,446	8,012	84.9
Lander County	4,076	6,266	5,794	5,272	1,196	29.3
Lincoln County	3,732	3,775	4,165	4,738	1,006	27.0
Lyon County	13,594	20,001	34,501	51,231	37,637	276.9
Mineral County	6,217	6,475	5,071	4,868	-1,349	-21.7
Nye County	9,048	17,781	32,485	42,693	33,645	371.9
Pershing County	3,408	4,336	6,693	6,414	3,006	88.2
White Pine County	8,167	9,264	9,181	9,150	983	12.0

adults are college graduates, which is the lowest percentage of any western state. Additionally, there are major differences when comparing the educational attainment levels of White and minority individuals. While over 85 percent of White individuals have a high school degree, only 64 percent of metropolitan minority and 57.6 percent of nonmetropolitan minority adults have completed high school. An examination of Figure 9 shows that the proportion of adults living in metropolitan counties with a college degree (19.4) is significantly greater than the proportion of nonmetropolitan residents who have completed college (13.1). While 20.8 percent of White residents of metropolitan counties have completed college, only 6.2 percent of

the minority residents of nonmetropolitan counties are college graduates.

**Health**

Other significant problems facing Nevada are that the proportion of practicing physicians, especially in the vast spaces of rural Nevada, is very low, and more than one in four Nevada residents does not have health insurance, which is one of the highest rates in the nation.

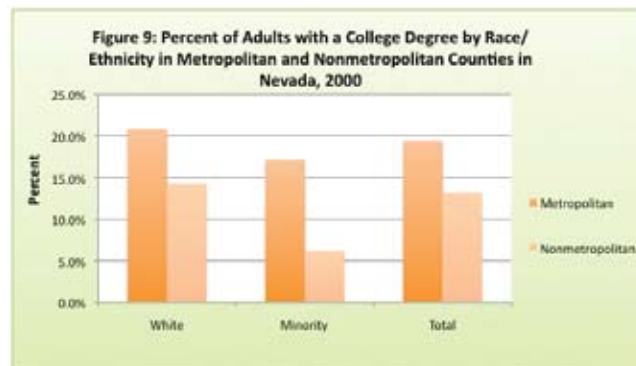
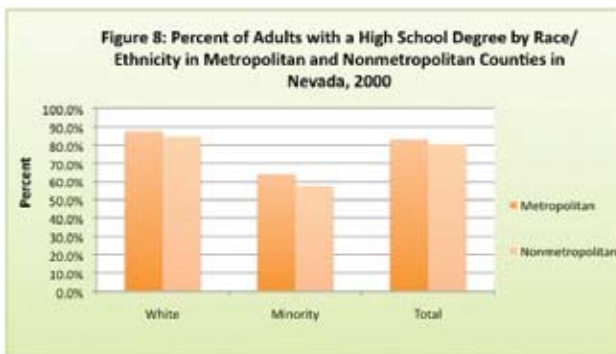
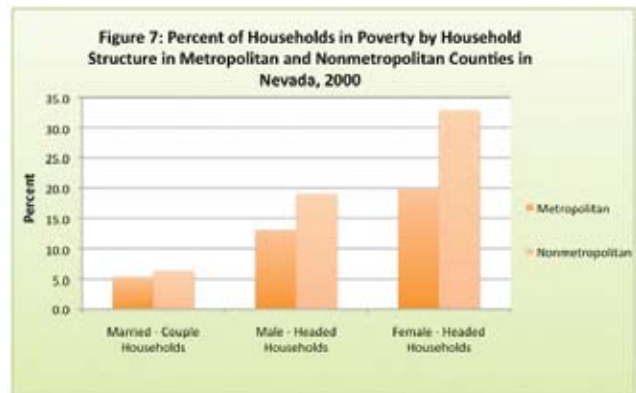
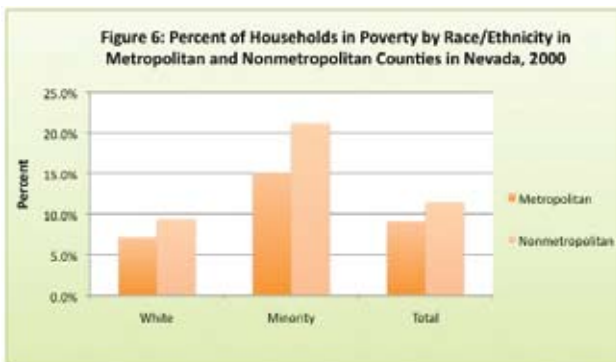
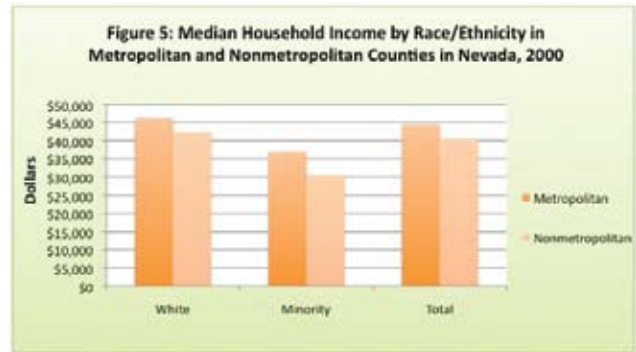
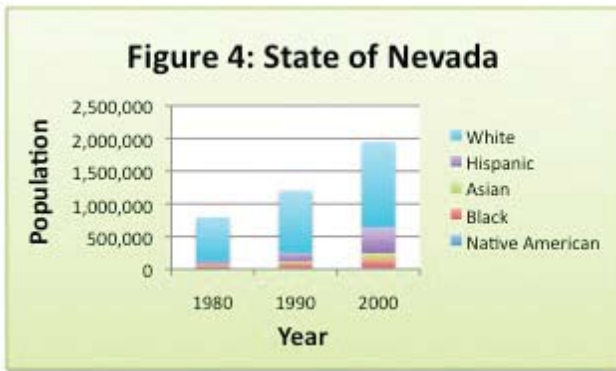
**Conclusion**

Coping with extremely rapid growth has been a significant concern for Nevada policy makers and development specialists. Providing health services to a dispersed population and coping with changing

economic and employment circumstances with a population with relatively low levels of educational attainment are among the concerns that must be dealt with in the years ahead. ●

**About the Author**

Don E. Albrecht is the Director of the Western Rural Development Center. don.albrecht@usu.edu 435.797.9732



## About the Briefs

Published by the Western Rural Development Center

Don E. Albrecht, Director

Betsy H. Newman, Publication Specialist

Trish Kingsford, Senior Staff Assistant

Whitney Mortensen, P/T Staff Assistant

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](mailto: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.

The WRDC also receives substantial support from several Utah State University units including Cooperative Extension, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the College of Natural Resources.

## Our commitment to the environment

This publication was printed on a Xerox 700 Digital Press using New Leaf Reincarnation paper that is 100% Recycled, 50% Post-Consumer Waste and processed Chlorine Free.

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>.

State Briefs are available for:

Alaska  
Arizona  
California  
Colorado  
Hawaii  
Idaho  
Montana  
Nevada  
New Mexico  
Oregon  
Utah  
Washington  
Wyoming