



# POPULATION BRIEF

Trends in the Western U.S.

## The State of Wyoming

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 Wyoming. 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 Wyoming

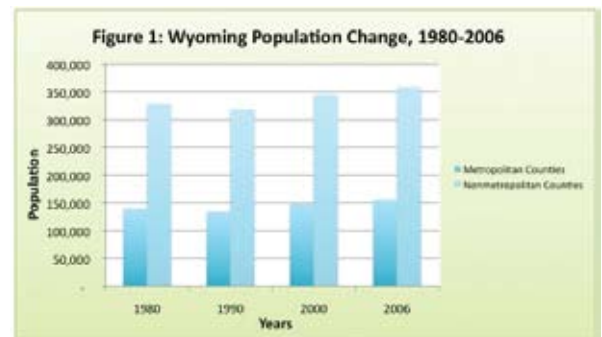
Between 1980 and 2006, the population in the State of Wyoming increased from 469,557 to 515,004, an increase of 45,447 people or 9.7 percent (Figure 1). Of the 13 states in the Western Region, Wyoming has the smallest population, had the smallest numerical population growth and also had the lowest percent population increase.

### Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan

Wyoming is unique in that the nonmetropolitan population is much larger than the metropolitan population. Population change patterns were similar in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties in Wyoming. The metropolitan population increased by 10.9 percent, while the nonmetropolitan population increased by 9.2 percent. Population patterns varied extensively in different parts of the state. Figure 2 shows that population density is relatively sparse throughout the state, and only two counties have more than 50,000 residents. Figure 3 indicates that 11 of the state's 23 counties experienced population declines. Declining counties tended to be in the central and eastern part of the state, while the more rapidly growing counties were in the aesthetic west or in the energy-rich counties in the northeast portion of the state. Of the state's

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two metropolitan areas, one (Cheyenne located in Laramie County) had a population increase of 24 percent, while the other (Casper located in Natrona County) had a slightly declining population. Of the nonmetropolitan counties, 11 had growing populations while ten had population decreases. In four nonmetropolitan counties (Campbell, Sublette, Teton, and Uinta) the population increased by more than 50 percent. The county with the greatest numerical increase was Laramie County (Cheyenne Metropolitan Area) where the population increased by 16,735, while Teton County had the greatest percent increase. The Teton County population more than doubled from 9,355 in 1980 to 19,288 in 2006 an increase of 106 percent (Table 1).



### Minority Population Growth

Wyoming has experienced a transition in the composition of the population in recent decades (Figure 4). The White population was virtually stable, increasing by only 1.6 percent between 1980 and 2000. Meanwhile the Hispanic population increased by 28 percent, the Native American population by 34 percent, and the Asian population by 51 percent. Despite the growth of minority populations, over 90 percent of Wyoming residents were White from 1980 to 2000.

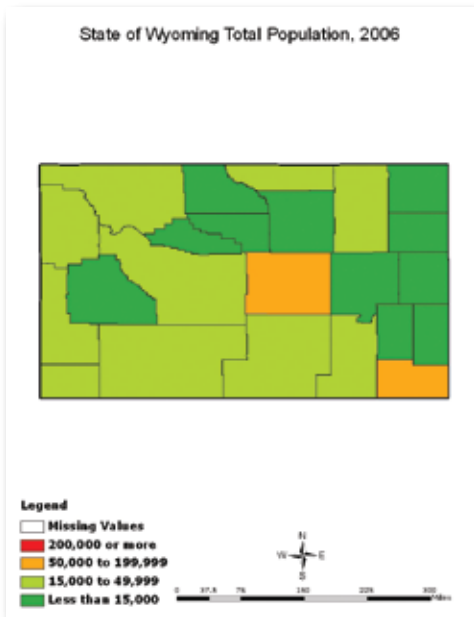


Figure 2



Figure 3

### Income, Poverty, Education

In 2000, the median household income in Wyoming was \$37,126. Unlike most states, the income gap between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan residents in Wyoming was relatively small. The median household income in metropolitan counties was \$38,113 compared to \$37,031 in nonmetropolitan counties (Figure 5). In only four western states (Arizona, New Mexico, Idaho, and Montana) was the median metropolitan income lower than Wyoming. On the other hand, in only two states (Alaska and Nevada) was the median nonmetropolitan income higher than in Wyoming. The income gap between White households and minority households, however, was substantial. In nonmetropolitan counties, median minority household incomes were only 80.7 percent as high as median White

household incomes, while in metropolitan counties, the average minority household earned only 74.5 percent as much as the average White household.

Only two states (Nevada and Utah) have lower poverty rates than Wyoming. Given the race/ethnicity income gap, however, it is not surprising that poverty levels are much higher among minority households than among White households. Figure 6 shows that in 2000, 9.4 percent of White households in metropolitan counties and 10.5 percent of White households in nonmetropolitan counties were in poverty. In comparison, minority poverty rates were 21.7 percent in metropolitan counties and 22.5 percent in nonmetropolitan counties (Figure 6). There are also major differences in poverty levels by household structure in

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	1980	1990	2000	2006	Change 1980 - 2006	
					Total	Percent
<b>State</b>						
Total	469,557	453,588	493,782	515,004	45,447	9.7
<b>Metropolitan Areas</b>						
Total	140,505	134,368	148,140	155,785	15,280	10.9
<b>Cheyenne</b>						
Laramie County	68,649	73,142	81,607	85,384	16,735	24.4
<b>Casper</b>						
Natrona County	71,856	61,226	66,533	70,401	-1,455	-2.0
<b>Nonmetropolitan Counties</b>						
Total	329,052	319,220	345,642	359,219	30,167	9.2
Albany County	29,062	30,797	32,014	30,360	1,298	4.5
Big Horn County	11,896	10,525	11,461	11,390	-506	-4.3
Campbell County	24,367	29,370	33,698	38,934	14,567	59.8
Carbon County	21,896	16,659	15,639	15,325	-6,571	-30.0
Converse County	14,069	11,128	12,052	12,866	-1,203	-8.6
Crook County	5,308	5,294	5,887	6,255	947	17.8
Fremont County	38,992	33,662	35,804	37,163	-1,829	-4.7
Goshen County	12,040	12,373	12,538	12,129	89	0.7
Hot Springs County	5,710	4,809	4,882	4,588	-1,122	-19.6
Johnson County	6,700	6,145	7,075	8,014	1,314	19.6
Lincoln County	12,177	12,625	14,573	16,383	4,206	34.5
Niobrara County	2,924	2,499	2,407	2,253	-671	-22.9
Park County	21,639	23,178	25,786	27,094	5,455	25.2
Platte County	11,975	8,145	8,807	8,588	-3,387	-28.3
Sheridan County	25,048	23,562	26,560	27,673	2,625	10.5
Sublette County	4,548	4,843	5,920	7,359	2,811	61.8
Sweetwater County	41,723	38,823	37,613	38,763	-2,960	-7.1
Teton County	9,355	11,172	18,251	19,288	9,933	106.2
Uinta County	13,021	18,705	19,742	20,213	7,192	55.2
Washakie County	9,496	8,388	8,289	7,819	-1,677	-17.7
Weston County	7,106	6,518	6,644	6,762	-344	-4.8

Wyoming. For married-couple households, only 5.1 percent of metropolitan households and 6.3 percent of nonmetropolitan households were in poverty in 2000. In comparison, 30.5 percent of the female-headed households in metropolitan counties and 35.3 in nonmetropolitan counties were in poverty (Figure 7).

The proportion of Wyoming adults who have completed a high school degree (88 percent) is among the highest in the nation and is the highest of the 13 states in the Western Region. Also, more than one in five Wyoming residents has at least a four-year college degree. Only Colorado, California, and Washington have a higher proportion of residents that completed college. There is, however, a substantial gap in the education

levels of White and minority residents. While about nine of every ten White adults have a high school degree, only about seven of every ten minority residents have completed high school (Figure 8). Similarly, nearly one-fourth of White adults have a college education, compared to just over 10 percent of minority adults (Figures 8).

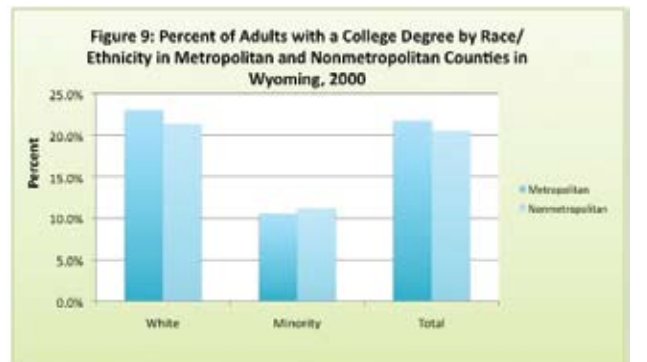
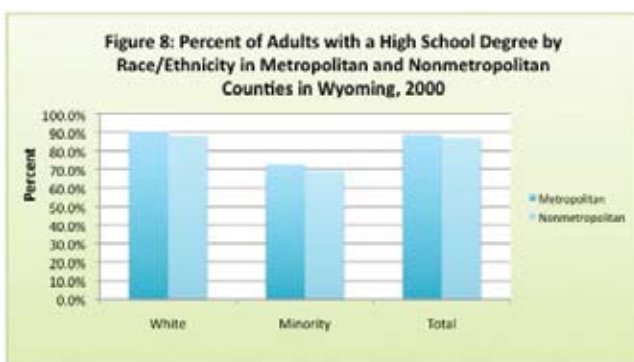
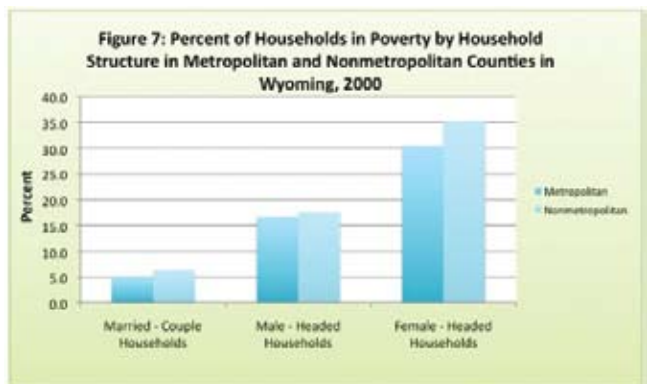
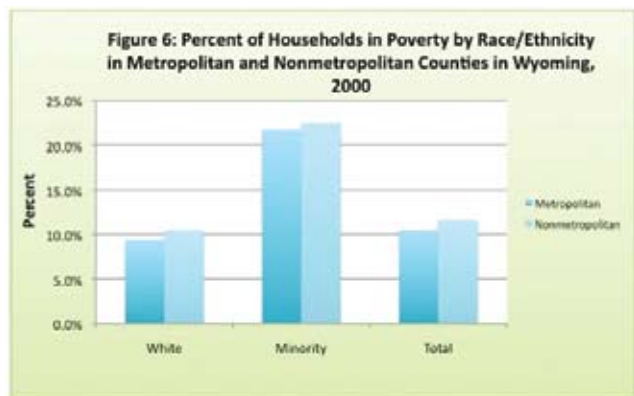
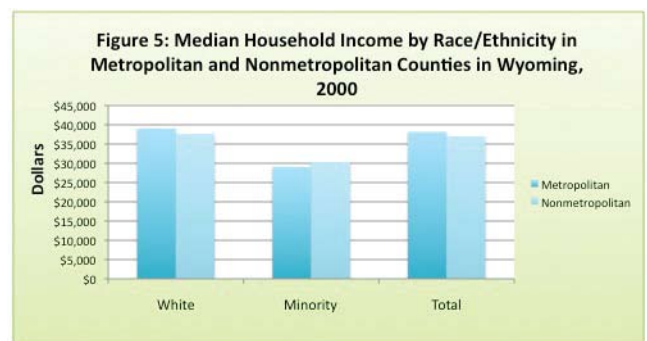
A factor that will be of great benefit in years to come is that Wyoming residents are relatively well educated. ●

**About the Author**

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**Conclusions**

Policy makers and community development specialists in Wyoming face a host of divergent problems. Some communities are dealing with a declining population; some communities are experiencing amenity-related population growth; while other communities are experiencing population growth resulting from energy development.



## 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](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.

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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>.

State Briefs are available for:

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