

Benton County

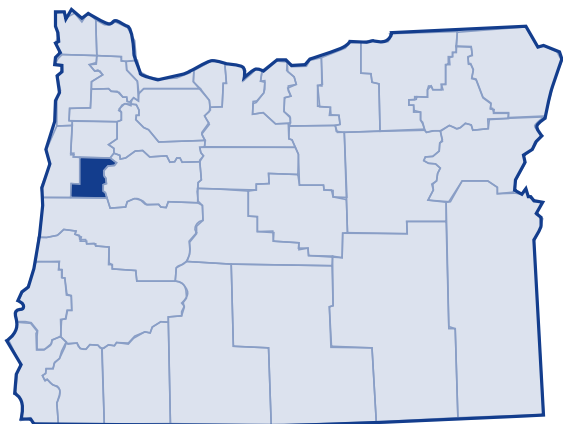
Major findings

Benton County's poverty rates were higher than the state and national average from 1979 to 1999. The large number of college students in Benton County likely contributed to its higher poverty rate. Half of those living below the federal poverty threshold earned 50 percent or less of the threshold for their family type.

According to the 2000 Census, slightly over half of the county population owned their own home. Of all Oregon counties, only Multnomah County residents were less likely to be homeowners. More than 50 percent of Benton County renters spent more than 30 percent of their income on rental costs.

Families with one worker who earned median income in Benton County could not afford the basic family budget.

In 2003, 15.7 percent of Benton County residents received services from the Department of Human Services.¹



Low-income needs

Community Services Consortium prioritized the needs of the low-income population in Benton County as follows:²

- Assist households to save energy and improve their living conditions through home weatherization, energy education, house diagnostics, and efficiency testing of appliances
- Provide transitional housing and case management services to help households move toward self-sufficiency
- Provide energy conservation education to enable households to reduce their energy burden and increase resources for other needs
- Improve housing conditions for low- and moderate-income families within the community
- Prevent hunger by soliciting, transporting, storing and distributing food
- Educate homeless households in skills and strategies needed to obtain and maintain housing
- Provide youth education and employment and adult and dislocated worker employment and training
- Continue to integrate, improve and evaluate the delivery of services in our county
- Provide information and referral services for medical, dental, alcohol and drug treatment, and other basic needs
- Aid in transportation costs such as gas, car repairs, and public transportation
- Provide new affordable housing opportunities, community facilities, and grant management services
- Plan for, allocate, and monitor homeless funding to local service providers

Benton County

Growth

According to the 2000 Census, Benton County grew by 10.4 percent from 1989 to 1999. The US Census Bureau determined the poverty status of 73,237 county residents and found that 14.6 percent (10,665 people) lived below the poverty threshold in 1999. This was an increase of 6.6 percent in the number of people living in poverty (10,005 people) since 1989. The overall percent of Benton County's population in poverty decreased from 1989 to 1999, but the number of people in poverty did not.

20-year trend

In the 20 years after 1979, the poverty rate in Benton County increased from 13.6 percent of the population to 14.6 percent. The number of persons in poverty rose from 8,273 people to 10,665 people. Benton County's poverty rates remained higher than the state and national poverty rates throughout this period.

Poverty and age

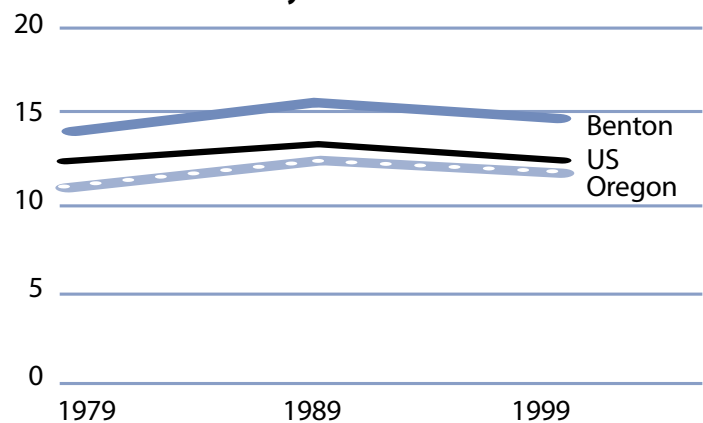
In the 2000 Census, among all age categories examined, those 18 to 64 years of age experienced the highest rate of poverty at 17.1 percent. People 65 and older experienced the lowest rate at 4.9 percent. Over the 20-year period from 1979 to 1999, the rate of poverty was consistently lowest for those 65 and older and highest for those aged 18 to 64.

Poverty in selected communities
Number of persons below poverty level
(poverty rate)

	1989	1999	Percent Change (rate difference)
Benton County	10,005 (15.5%)	10,665 (14.6%)	6.6% (-1.0%)
Oregon Statewide	344,867 (12.4%)	388,740 (11.6%)	12.7% (-0.7%)
United States	31,742,864 (13.1%)	33,899,812 (12.4%)	6.8% (-0.8%)

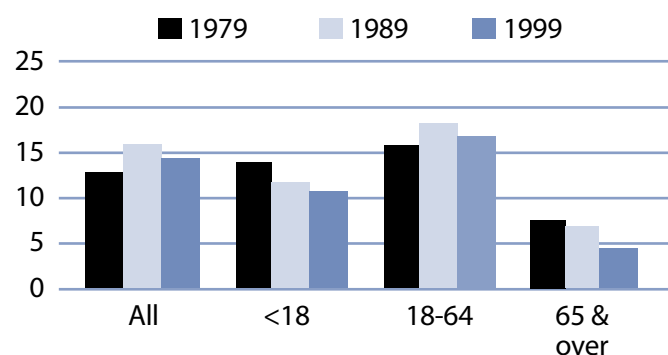
Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

Poverty rates 1979-1999



Source: US Census.

Rate of poverty by age



Source: US Census.

Benton County

Poverty and Benton County families

In 1999, 1,252 Benton County families lived in poverty (6.8 percent). Of the families in poverty, 75.2 percent (941 families) had a worker and 8.5 percent (106 families) had a full-time year-round worker.

The poverty rate was higher for families with children. Families with at least one child younger than 18 experienced poverty at a rate of 9.9 percent. Families with a child younger than 5 years experienced poverty at the higher rate of 13.5 percent. The rate for families with children headed by single mothers was 31.3 percent and the rate was even higher for single mothers with younger children (younger than 5 years) at 45.2 percent.

The poverty rate for married couples with children younger than 18 was lower at 4.8 percent. The number of female-headed households with children (no husband present) who lived in poverty increased from 323 families in 1979 to 483 families in 1999.

Poverty and race ethnicity

Among racial/ethnic groups,³ White residents comprised the majority of people in poverty at 79.7 percent. The poverty rate among White was 13 percent. Most minorities experienced a disproportionately higher rate of poverty above 20 percent. From 1989 to 1999, all racial and ethnic categories experienced improvements in poverty rates.

Benton County families in poverty

Number Below Poverty Level (poverty rate)				% Change
	1979	1989	1999	1979-99 (rate difference)
All Families	1,151 (7.5%)	1,311 (7.9%)	1,252 (6.8%)	8.8% (-0.7%)
With Children under 18	817 (10.0%)	970 (11.8%)	887 (9.9%)	8.6% (-0.1%)
Female-headed with Children under 18	323 (29.3%)	501 (38.6%)	483 (31.3%)	49.5% (2.0%)

Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

Benton County poverty and race/ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	% Total 1999 Population (population)	% Poverty 1999 Population (poverty population)	Poverty Rate by Race 1999	Poverty Rate by Race 1989
White	89.3% (65,377)	79.7% (8,504)	13.0%	13.4%
Black	1.0% (732)	1.6% (173)	23.6%	36.2%
American Indian	0.7% (510)	0.7% (75)	14.7%	28.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1%/0.1% (2,986/73)	0.5%/0.4% (1,146/8)	38.4%/11.0%	45.5%*
Other	1.8% (1,302)	2.6% (272)	20.9%	34.4%
2 or More Races	3.1% (2,257)	4.6% (487)	21.6%	NA
Hispanic Origin	4.7% (3,408)	8.1% (865)	25.4%	30.1%

* Asian and Pacific Islander were not separate categories in the 1990 Census.

Benton County

County income

On a per capita basis, Benton County's personal income was \$30,421 in 2002, about 106 percent of the state average of \$28,792, and 98 percent of the national average, \$30,906. Per capita income in Benton County rose 2.1 percent between 2001 and 2002. The 10-year trend, from 1992 to 2002, of per capita income shows average annual growth of 5.2 percent. Average earnings per job for 2002 were \$33,446 in Benton County compared to \$33,063 for the state.⁴

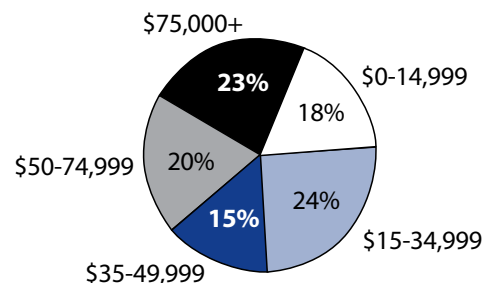
Poverty thresholds

Segmenting census data by income reveals more detail about the people experiencing poverty in Benton County. The 2000 Census showed that 5,387 people or 50.5 percent of those living below the federal poverty threshold actually earned 50 percent or less of the poverty threshold. Other segments of the population earned equal to or above the poverty level but still needed assistance. In Oregon, 185 percent of the poverty level is the income guideline used for federal food programs such as food stamps, child nutrition, and the Women, Infants, and Children program. In 1999, 28.1 percent of Benton County's population or 20,643 people earned below 185 percent of the poverty threshold.

Public assistance

Participation in public assistance programs serves as an indirect measure—or indicator—of the extent of poverty and the measures taken to serve the public. According to the 2000 Census, 609 households or 2 percent of all households in Benton County reported public assistance income. The average amount of public assistance income for 1999 was \$3,032. The 20-year trend showed a decrease in the number of households that reported receiving public assistance income, from 1,110 households or 4.6 percent of all households in 1979.

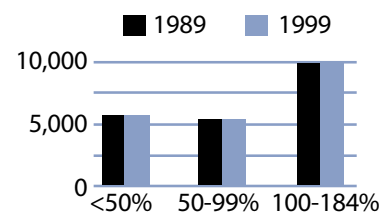
1999 household income distribution—Benton County



Source: US Census.

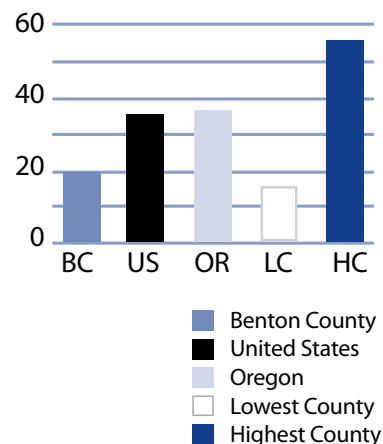
Note: The median household income in Benton County was \$41,897 in 1999 compared to \$27,295 in 1989 (53.5 percent increase).

Number of persons in poverty Threshold percentiles



Source: US Census.

Public assistance in Oregon Rate per thousand population



Source: US Census.

Benton County

Basic family budget

According to US Department of Agriculture statistics released in October 1999, about 12.6 percent of Oregon households had difficulty meeting their basic need for food. The following chart outlines typical expenses for four family types in Benton County and the corresponding income those families would need to meet their expenses. Families in which one adult earned Benton County's median family income could not afford this basic budget. Those with two earners fare better.

To learn more about this basic family budget, see Methodology and Data References section.

What the poverty threshold buys

Families with incomes at the poverty level in Benton County could afford 36.9 to 41.2 percent of this basic family budget.

Wages

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Benton County was \$648.07 in 2003. Of all sectors, the federal government had the highest weekly average of \$1,081.77 and retail trade had the lowest weekly average of \$286.31.

This chart illustrates a family's ability to be self-sufficient based on earnings of average wages for Benton County. The two-worker scenario relies on both workers earning average wages.

According to the basic family budget, an adult with three children who worked full-time at Benton County's average wage could not afford the basic family budget.

Benton County's basic family budget

Basic Family Budget/Monthly	1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Adults/ 3 Children
Housing	\$610	\$918	\$610	\$918
Food	\$230	\$489	\$388	\$647
Child Care	\$413	\$900	\$413	\$900
Transportation	\$158	\$158	\$222	\$222
Health Care	\$245	\$245	\$293	\$293
Other Necessities	\$260	\$436	\$309	\$485
Taxes	\$416	\$685	\$477	\$749
Basic Family Budget Needed/Monthly	\$2,332	\$3,831	\$2,712	\$4,214
Basic Family Budget Total/Annual	\$27,986	\$45,968	\$32,545	\$50,568
Median Family Income (Census 2000)	\$23,287	\$23,287	\$64,005	\$64,005
Median Family Income as % of Basic Budget	83.2%	50.7%	196.7%	126.6%

Poverty and Benton County's basic family budget

Basic Family Budget/Monthly	1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Adults/ 3 Children
Poverty Threshold	\$11,483	\$16,954	\$13,410	\$19,882
% of Basic Budget	41.0%	36.9%	41.2%	39.3%

Benton County wages and the basic budget

	1 Worker	1 Worker	2 Workers	2 Workers
	1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Adults/ 3 Children
Average Monthly Wage (AMW)*	\$2,787	\$2,787	\$5,574	\$5,574
Self Sufficiency Wage (SSW)**	\$2,332	\$3,831	\$2,712	\$4,214
Difference (SSW-AMW)	\$455	-\$1,044	\$2,862	\$1,360
Wage as % of Self Sufficiency	119.5%	72.7%	205.5%	132.2%
* Source: 1999 Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls.				
** Based on Basic Family Budget for Benton County.				

Benton County

Benton County Poverty Measures	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population	70,811 ¹	78,153 ²	78,346	78,874	79,335
% of People Living Below Poverty Level	15.5% ¹	14.6% ²	NA	NA	NA
Median Income	\$27,295 ¹	\$41,897 ²	NA	NA	NA
Unemployment Rate	2.2	2.4	3	3.7	4.2
8th Grade Drug Use	18.4% ³	14.0%	NA	13.4%	NA
HS Dropout	4.9% ⁴	3.1%	2.4%	2.8	NA
Teen Pregnancy per 1,000 Ages 10-17	10.5	6.3	3.5	7	NA
Prenatal Care	84.1%	86.8%	88.4%	87.7%	NA
Child Care Available per 100 Children Under 13	24.7	21.9	21	19.6	NA
Homeownership Rate	55.1% ¹	57.3% ²	NA	NA	NA
% Renters with 30% or More Rental Burden	51.6% ¹	52.7% ²	NA	NA	NA
Benton County Services	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
One Night Shelter Count	96	135	96	115	103
# of New Units Created with OHCS Funding	54	181	0	0	53
OHCS Funding for Subsidized Housing	\$2.3 m	\$3.8 m	\$0	\$75,000	\$925,000
# Home Loans for Low-Income Households	26	12	6	12	9
\$ Home Loans for Low-Income Households	\$2.7 m	\$1.2 m	\$688,211	\$1.4 m	\$964,667
# Households Receiving Energy Assistance	NA	1,356	1,302	1,310	1,486
% of Population Enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan	NA	NA	NA	11.4%	9.47%
# Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	2,332	2,038	2,289	2,366	2,611
% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	23.5%	20.4%	23.3%	24.3%	27.5%
% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	NA	NA	NA	10.2%	10.4%
% of Population Receiving TANF	NA	NA	NA	1.9%	1.5%
% of Population Receiving DHS Services	NA	NA	15.8%	17.3%	15.7%

¹ 1990 Census data, year is 1989

² 2000 Census data, year is 1999

³ 1998

⁴ 1996

NA=Not Available

Endnotes

¹ Oregon Department of Human Services Integrated Client Database.

² Community Services Consortium's Community Services Block Grant Work Plan for 2003-05.

³ Please see Methodology and Data References section for information on Census Race/Ethnicity Categories.

⁴ Bureau of Economic Analysis: Regional Economic Accounts.