

## Major findings

According to the 2000 US Census, the overall percent of people living in poverty in Polk County decreased although the number of people in poverty did not. The county poverty rate paralleled state and national rates.

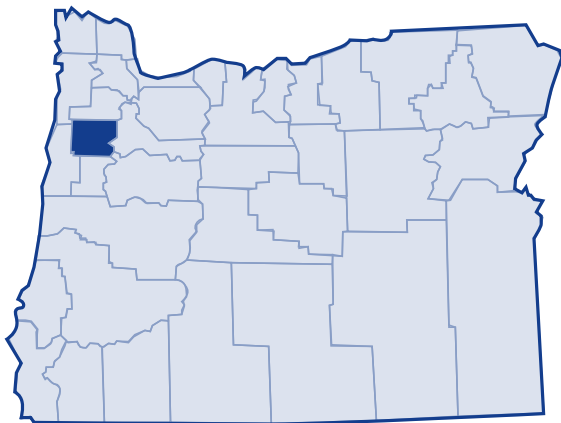
The percent of families living in poverty in Polk County decreased, although the number of those living in poverty did not. This was true for all family types, including those headed by a single mother.

Minorities experienced higher rates of poverty in Polk County, with 31 percent of Black living in poverty.

Among Polk County renters, nearly half reported spending at least 30 percent of their income on rent.

To qualify for public assistance programs, a person's income must be no more than 185 percent of the federal poverty level. Of Polk County residents, 26.6 percent fell below 185 percent of federal poverty threshold. Of those who were in poverty in 1999, 47.2 percent earned 50 percent or less of the federal poverty threshold.

In 2003, 20.9 percent of Polk county residents received services from the Department of Human Services.<sup>1</sup>



## Low-income needs

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency prioritized the needs of the low-income population in Polk County as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- Increase resources to address homeless issues, particularly emergency shelter beds, transitional housing, and case management. Also, provide rental assistance to allow homeless families to access permanent housing
- Address food insecurity including longer-term emergency food assistance
- Increase affordable and low-income housing stock; provide tenant training so that homeless families with poor rent histories can access permanent housing, heating assistance, and rental assistance
- Serve youth by establishing after-school programs in Polk County middle schools and a shelter program for runaway and homeless youth
- Improve support for families at risk for child abuse and neglect such as mental health, respite, crisis intervention, and crisis nursery services
- Increase free and low-cost mental health services, including access to medication and medication management
- Increase the number of Head Start slots and establish an Early Head Start program
- Increase the number of free and reduced cost detox and inpatient services
- Increase the number of affordable childcare slots for low-income working parents
- Energy Assistance

# Polk County

## Growth

According to the 2000 Census, Polk County grew 25.9 percent between 1989 and 1999. The US Census Bureau determined the poverty status of 60,526 county residents and found that 11.5 percent (6,943 people) lived below the poverty threshold. This is an increase of 7.2 percent in the number of persons living in poverty (6,475 people) in 1989. The overall percent of Polk County's population living in poverty decreased from 1989 to 1999, but the number of people living in poverty did not.

## 20-year trend

In the 20 years after 1979, the poverty rate in Polk County remained relatively constant from 12 percent of the population to 11.5 percent. The number of persons in poverty rose from 5,267 people to 6,943 people. Polk County's poverty rates were equal to the state and national poverty rates throughout this period.

## Poverty and age

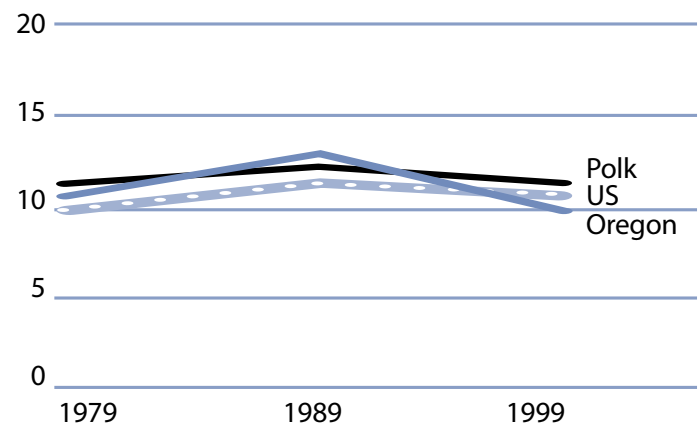
In the 2000 Census, among all age categories examined, children 5 years of age and younger experienced the highest rate of poverty at 17.1 percent. Children younger than 18 years of age experienced poverty at 13 percent. People 65 and older experienced the lowest rate at 5.5 percent. Over the 20-year period from 1979 to 1999, the rate of poverty was consistently highest for children younger than 18.

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

	1989	1999	Percent Change
Polk County	6,475 (13.6%)	6,943 (11.5%)	(rate difference) 7.2% (-2.1%)
Oregon Statewide	344,867 (12.4%)	388,740 (11.6%)	12.7% (-0.8%)
United States	31,742,864 (13.1%)	33,899,812 (12.4%)	6.8% (-0.7%)

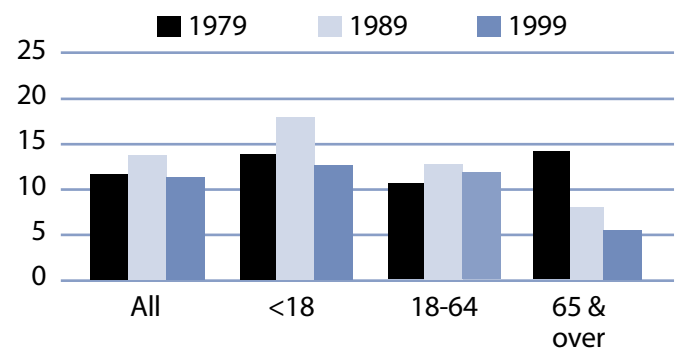
Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

**Poverty rates 1979-1999**



Source: US Census.

**Rate of poverty by age**



Source: US Census.

## Poverty and Polk County families

In 1999, 1,028 Polk County families lived in poverty (6.3 percent). Of the families in poverty, 61.9 percent (636 families) had a worker and 13.1 percent (135 families) had a full-time year-round worker.

The poverty rate was higher for families with children. Families with at least one child under 18 experienced poverty at a rate of 11.2 percent. Families with a child 5 years and younger experienced poverty at a higher rate of 15.5 percent. The rate for families with children headed by single mothers was 35.7 percent and even higher with younger children (less than 5 years) at 63.7 percent.

The poverty rate for married couples with children under 18 was lower at 5.6 percent. From 1979 to 1999, the number of female-headed households with children (no husband present) who lived in poverty increased from 376 families in 1979 to 487 families in 1999, but the overall percent decreased.

## Poverty and race/ethnicity

Among racial/ethnic groups,<sup>3</sup> White residents comprised the majority of people in poverty at 80.7 percent. When examining poverty based on race/ethnicity, however, the poverty rate among White was 10.4 percent. Black experienced disproportionately higher rates of poverty for a rate of 31 percent. Between 1989 and 1999, poverty improved for most racial/ethnic categories, except American Indian.

## Polk County families in poverty

Number Below Poverty Level (poverty rate)				% Change
	1979	1989	1999	1979-99 (rate difference)
All Families	1,000 (8.2%)	1,093 (8.4%)	1,028 (6.3%)	2.8% (-1.9%)
With Children under 18	723 (11.4%)	864 (13.0%)	881 (11.2%)	21.9% (-0.2%)
Female-headed with Children under 18	376 (44.2%)	453 (41.2%)	487 (35.7%)	29.5% (-8.5%)

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

## Polk 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% (54,057)	80.7% (5,602)	10.4%	12.3%
Black	0.3% (168)	0.7% (52)	31.0%	53.0%
American Indian	1.6% (958)	3.0% (209)	21.8%	14.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.2%/0.2% (741/136)	1.5%/0.1% (102/6)	13.8%/4.4%	23.0%*
Other	4.6% (2,776)	10.7% (743)	26.8%	38.1%
2 or More Races	2.7% (1,690)	3.3% (229)	13.6%	NA
Hispanic Origin	9.0% (5,421)	22.4% (1,557)	28.7%	36.6%

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

# Polk County

## County income

On a per capita basis, Polk County's personal income was \$25,241 in 2002, about 88 percent of the state average of \$28,792, and 82 percent of the national average, \$30,906. Per capita income in Polk County rose 2.6 percent between 2001 and 2002. The 10-year trend, from 1992 to 2002, in per capita income shows average annual growth of 4.4 percent. Average earnings per job for 2001 were \$24,884 in Polk County compared to \$33,063 for the state.<sup>4</sup>

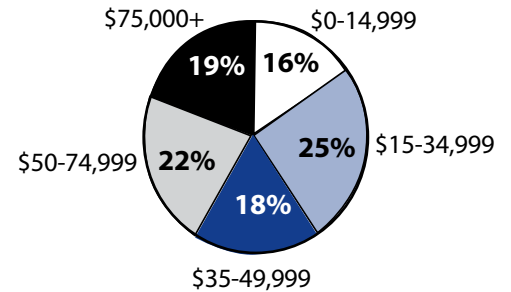
## Poverty thresholds

Segmenting census data by income reveals more detail about the people experiencing poverty in Polk County. The 2000 Census showed that 3,279 people or 47.2 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, 26.6 percent of Polk County's population, or 16,113 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, 815 households or 3.5 percent of all households in Polk County reported public assistance income. The average amount of public assistance income for 1999 was \$2,580. The 20-year trend showed a decrease in households that reported receiving public assistance income, from 1,072 households or 6.5 percent of all households in 1979.

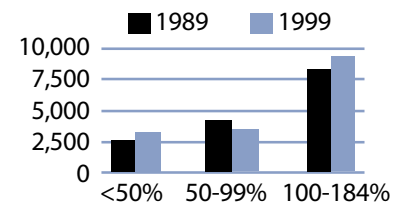
**1999 household income distribution—Polk County**



Source: US Census.

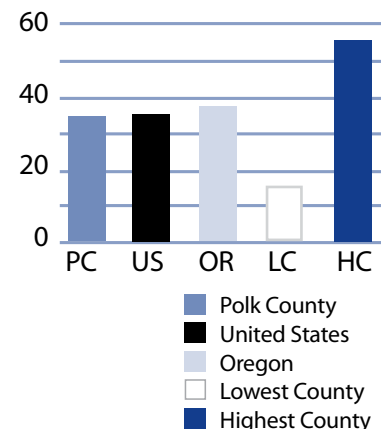
Note: The median household income in Polk County was \$42,311 in 1999 compared to \$26,292 in 1989 (60.9 percent increase).

**Number of persons in poverty Threshold percentiles**



Source: US Census.

**Public assistance in Oregon Rate per thousand population**



Source: US Census.

## 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. This chart outlines typical expenses for four family types in Polk County and the corresponding income those families would need to meet their expenses.

Families with one adult earning Polk County's median income could not afford the basic family budget.

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

## What the poverty threshold buys

Families at the poverty level in Polk County could afford 40 to 42.4 percent of this basic family budget.

## Wages

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Polk County is \$458.36. The federal government had the highest weekly average of \$849.99 and the retail trade industry had the lowest weekly average of \$260.45.

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

Only families with two working adults and one child could afford the basic family budget if they earned average Polk County wages.

**Polk 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	\$568	\$782	\$568	\$782
Food	\$230	\$489	\$388	\$647
Child Care	\$405	\$876	\$405	\$876
Transportation	\$170	\$170	\$240	\$240
Health Care	\$245	\$245	\$293	\$293
Other Necessities	\$247	\$394	\$296	\$443
Taxes	\$394	\$579	\$458	\$669
<b>Basic Family Budget Needed/Monthly</b>	<b>\$2,259</b>	<b>\$3,535</b>	<b>\$2,648</b>	<b>\$3,950</b>
Basic Family Budget Total/Annual	\$27,107	\$42,421	\$31,777	\$47,395
Median Annual Income (Census 2000)	\$23,624	\$23,624	\$55,815	\$55,815
Median Family Income as % of Basic Budget	87.0%	56.0%	176.0%	118.0%

**Poverty and Polk 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	42.4%	40.0%	42.2%	41.9%

**Polk County wages and the basic budget**

	1 Worker 1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Worker 1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Workers 2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Workers 2 Adults/ 3 Children
Average Monthly Wage (AMW)*	\$1,971	\$1,971	\$3,942	\$3,942
Self Sufficiency Wage (SSW)**	\$2,259	\$3,535	\$2,648	\$3,950
Difference (SSW-AMW)	-\$288	-\$1,564	\$1,294	-\$8
Wage as % of Self Sufficiency	87.3%	55.8%	148.9%	99.8%

\* Source: 1999 Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls.  
\*\* Based on Basic Family Budget for Polk County.

# Polk County

Polk County Poverty Measures	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population	49,541 <sup>1</sup>	62,380 <sup>2</sup>	63,715	64,743	65,995
% of People Living Below Poverty Level	13.6% <sup>1</sup>	11.5% <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Median Income	\$26,292 <sup>1</sup>	\$42,311 <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Unemployment Rate	3.9	4.9	5.9	6.3	6.9
8th Grade Drug Use	23.4% <sup>3</sup>	18.9%	NA	23.1%	NA
HS Dropout	6.5% <sup>4</sup>	5.9%	4.7%	4.7%	NA
Teen Pregnancy per 1,000 Ages 10-17	15.5	7.8	11.4	8.5	NA
Prenatal Care	83.7%	81.2%	78.9%	79.5%	NA
Child Care Available per 100 Children Under 13	17.5	17	17.2	17.9	NA
Homeownership Rate	66.4% <sup>1</sup>	68.4% <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
% Renters with 30% or More Rental Burden	44.7% <sup>1</sup>	49.3% <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Polk County Services	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
One Night Shelter Count	33	64	68	181	151
# of New Units Created with OHCS Funding	39	12	40	1	0
OHCS Funding for Subsidized Housing	\$634,561	\$361,300	\$365,860	\$414,000	\$0
# Home Loans for Low-Income Households	23	8	16	14	13
\$ Home Loans for Low-Income Households	\$2.0 m	\$699,510	\$1.4 m	\$1.3 m	\$1.3 m
# Households Receiving Energy Assistance	NA	912	722	817	681
% of Population Enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan	NA	NA	NA	17.0%	13.6%
# Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	2,272	2,428	2,458	2,630	2,789
% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	35.0%	37.3%	38.0%	41.6%	43.9%
% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	NA	NA	NA	13.8%	12.8%
% of Population Receiving TANF	NA	NA	NA	2.6%	1.8%
% of Population Receiving DHS Services	NA	NA	21.2%	22.0%	20.9%

<sup>1</sup> 1990 Census data, year is 1989  
<sup>2</sup> 2000 Census data, year is 1999  
<sup>3</sup> 1998  
<sup>4</sup> 1996  
 NA=Not Available

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Oregon Department of Human Services Integrated Client Database.

<sup>2</sup> Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency Community Services Block Grant Work Plan for 2003-05.

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

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Economic Analysis: Regional Economic Accounts.