

Union County

Major findings

According to the US Census, the poverty rate and the number of those in poverty decreased in Union County between 1989 and 1999. The 1999 rate matched state and national averages.

Union County's median income rose from \$22,484 in 1989 to \$33,738 in 1999 for a 50 percent increase.

Poverty rates improved for all racial and ethnic categories during this same period. At 6.5 percent, Union County's unemployment was lower than the state average.

The poverty rate for all families headed by single mothers decreased from 49.8 percent to 39.6 percent although the number increased. The picture is significantly different for single mothers with children younger than 5 years of age; poverty for these families was 60 percent.

Families with one adult earning either median income or average wages in Union County could not afford the basic family budget.

In 2003, 25.8 percent of Union county residents received services from the Department of Human Services.¹



Low-income needs

Community Connection of Northeast Oregon (CCNO) prioritized the needs of the low-income population in Union County as follows:²

- **Energy Assistance**—Assist households in paying winter heating bills and those facing shut-off notices
- **Emergency Assistance**—Rental assistance for at-risk households
- **Weatherization/Housing Repair**—Eliminate general heat waste in client's homes, completing priority weatherization measures such as insulating, repairing or replacing doors/windows, etc. Continue rehabilitation projects by completing structural, electrical and plumbing repairs to improve and preserve the area's housing stock
- **Tenant Based Assistance**—Offer six months assistance with rent while clients move towards self-sufficiency
- **Food Bank**—Maintain current food delivery systems with local food banks and access to hunger resources
- **Transportation**—Transport senior citizens, people with disabilities, low-income and the public to doctor appointments, shopping, mealsites, recreation and field trips
- **Kids Club**—Serve the community with safe, affordable quality childcare for children 5 to 12 years of age while their parents work or attend school
- **Health Clinics**—Increase client's ability to access health clinics within senior centers
- **Tax and Legal Assistance**—Continue to refer clients to Legal Aid and Oregon Law Centers at senior centers; train volunteers to assist clients in preparing their income taxes
- **Telephone Reassurance**—Call clients to ensure their safety and to make sure they have taken needed medication

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Growth

According to the 2000 Census, Union County grew 4 percent between 1989 to 1999. The US Census Bureau determined the poverty status of 23,795 county residents and found that 13.8 percent (3,281 people) lived below the poverty threshold. This is a decrease of 9.5 percent in the number of person's living in poverty (3,627 people) in 1989. The overall percent of Union County's population living in poverty decreased from 1989 to 1999, as did the number of people living in poverty.

20-year trend

In the 20 years after 1979, the poverty rate in Union County increased from 12.7 percent of the population to 13.8 percent. The number of persons in poverty rose from 2,973 people to 3,281 people. Union County's poverty rates were higher than state and national rates through most of this period.

Poverty and age

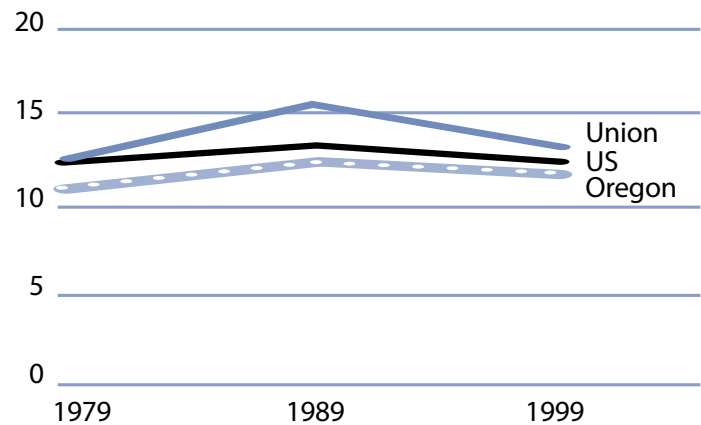
In the 2000 Census, among all age categories examined, children 5 years of age and younger experienced the highest rate of poverty at 19.1 percent. Children under 18 years of age experienced poverty at 14.4 percent. People 65 and older experienced the lowest rate at 9.5 percent. Over the 20-year period from 1979 to 1999, the rate of poverty improved for people 65 and older.

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

	1989	1999	Percent Change
Union County	3,627 (15.8%)	3,281 (13.8%)	-9.5% (rate difference) (-2.0%)
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%)

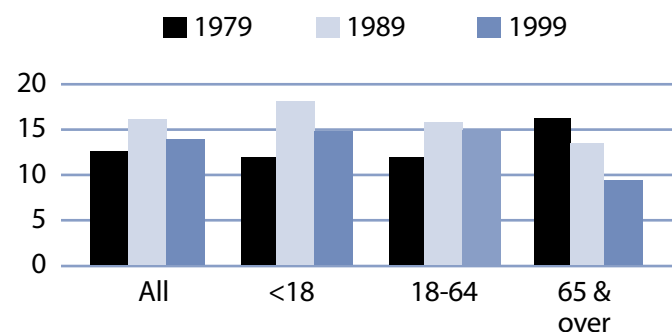
Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

Poverty rates 1979-1999



Source: US Census.

Rate of poverty by age



Source: US Census.

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Poverty and Union County families

In 1999, 561 Union County families lived in poverty (8.5 percent). Of the families in poverty, 61.3 percent (344 families) had a worker and 21.9 percent (123 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 12.3 percent. Families with a child 5 years or younger experienced poverty at a higher rate of 18.8 percent. The rate for families with children headed by single mothers was 39.6 percent and was even higher with younger children (younger than 5 years) at 60 percent.

The poverty rate for married couples with children younger than 18 was lower at 5.9 percent. From 1979 to 1999, the number of female-headed households with children (no husband present) who lived in poverty increased from 166 families in 1979 to 218 families in 1999.

Poverty and race/ethnicity

Among racial/ethnic groups,³ White residents comprised the majority of people in poverty at 91.7 percent. When examining poverty based on race/ethnicity, however, the poverty rate among White was 13.3 percent. Pacific Islander experienced disproportionately higher rates of poverty. The poverty rate among Pacific Islander was 35.4 percent. From 1989 to 1999, all racial categories experienced improvements in poverty rates.

Union County families in poverty

Number Below Poverty Level (poverty rate)	Number Below Poverty Level			% Change 1979-99 (rate difference)
	1979	1989	1999	
All Families	633 (9.8%)	684 (10.7%)	561 (8.5%)	-11.4% (-1.3%)
With Children under 18	384 (10.9%)	475 (14.9%)	382 (12.3%)	-0.5% (1.4%)
Female-headed with Children under 18	166 (41.4%)	230 (49.8%)	218 (39.6%)	31.3% (-1.8%)

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

Union 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	94.8% (22,556)	91.7% (3,008)	13.3%	14.8%
Black	0.3% (74)	0.5% (18)	24.3%	38.6%
American Indian	0.5% (129)	0.8% (27)	20.9%	32.6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.9%/0.5% (210/130)	1.0%/1.4% (34/46)	16.2%/35.4%	68.9%*
Other	1.5% (347)	1.9% (61)	17.6%	33.0%
2 or More Races	1.5% (349)	2.7% (87)	24.9%	NA
Hispanic Origin	2.2% (532)	3.9% (129)	24.2%	27.7%

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

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County income

On a per capita basis, Union County's personal income was \$24,007 in 2002, about 83 percent of the state average of \$28,792, and 78 percent of the national average, \$30,906. Per capita income in Union County rose 3.5 percent between 2001 and 2002. The 10-year trend, from 1992 to 2002, in per capita income shows average annual growth of 4.2 percent. Average earnings per job for 2001 were \$25,903 in Union County compared to \$33,063 for the state.⁴

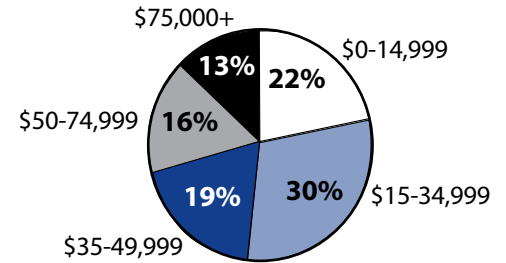
Poverty thresholds

Segmenting Census data by income reveals more detail about the people experiencing poverty in Union County. The 2000 Census showed that 1,415 people or 43.1 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, 32.2 percent of Union County's population, or 7,668 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, 410 households or 4.2 percent of all households in Union County reported public assistance income. The average amount of public assistance income for 1999 was \$2,863. The 20-year trend showed public assistance remained constant in households at 410 households (4.7 percent of all households) in 1979.

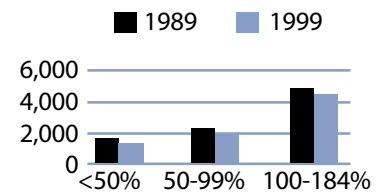
1999 household income distribution—Union County



Source: US Census.

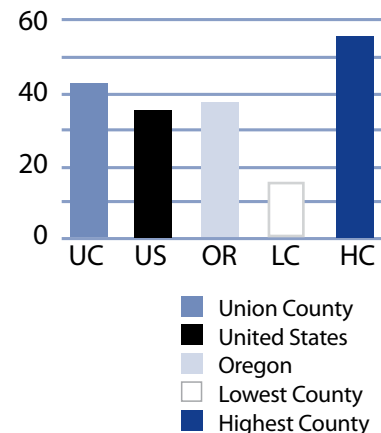
Note: The median household income in Union County was \$33,738 in 1999 compared to \$22,484 in 1989 (50.1 percent increase).

Number of persons in poverty Threshold percentiles



Source: US Census.

Public assistance in Oregon Rate per thousand population



Source: US Census.

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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 Union County and the corresponding income those families would need to meet their expenses.

Families with one adult who earned Union 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 Union County could afford 44.6 to 48.9 percent of this basic family budget.

Wages

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Union County is \$453.25. The federal government had the highest weekly average of \$734.04 and the retail trade industry had the lowest weekly average of \$284.59.

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

An adult with three children who worked full-time at Union County's average wage could afford 61.5 percent of the basic family budget.

Union 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	\$477	\$657	\$477	\$657
Food	\$230	\$489	\$388	\$647
Child Care	\$336	\$758	\$336	\$758
Transportation	\$197	\$197	\$277	\$277
Health Care	\$245	\$245	\$293	\$293
Other Necessities	\$219	\$355	\$268	\$404
Taxes	\$452	\$468	\$394	\$540
Basic Family Budget Needed/Monthly	\$1,956	\$3,169	\$2,433	\$3,576
Basic Family Budget Total/Annual	\$23,467	\$38,033	\$29,192	\$42,910
Median Annual Income (Census 2000)	\$20,305	\$20,305	\$47,246	\$47,246
Median Family Income as % of Basic Budget	86.5%	53.4%	161.8%	110.1%

Poverty and Union 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	48.9%	44.6%	45.9%	46.3%

Union County wages and the basic budget

	1 Worker	1 Worker	2 Workers	2 Workers
Average Monthly Wage (AMW)*	\$1,949	\$1,949	\$3,897	\$3,897
	1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Adults/ 3 Children
Self Sufficiency Wage (SSW)**	\$1,956	\$3,169	\$2,433	\$3,576
Difference (SSW-AMW)	-\$7	-\$1,220	\$1,464	\$321
Wage as % of Self Sufficiency	99.6%	61.5%	160.2%	109.0%

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

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Union County Poverty Measures	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population	23,598 ¹	24,530 ²	24,318	24,435	24,561
% of People Living Below Poverty Level	15.8% ¹	13.8% ²	NA	NA	NA
Median Income	\$22,484 ¹	\$33,738 ²	NA	NA	NA
Unemployment Rate	6.3	5.2	5.8	5.6	6.5
8th Grade Drug Use	23.0% ³	15.3%	NA	15.9%	NA
HS Dropout	4.4% ⁴	3.9%	3.3%	2.5%	NA
Teen Pregnancy per 1,000 Ages 10-17	11.1	8.6	8	6.1	NA
Prenatal Care	86.2%	83.7%	84.8%	79.3%	NA
Child Care Available per 100 Children Under 13	19.2	14.4	15.9	21	NA
Homeownership Rate	64.4% ¹	66.5% ²	NA	NA	NA
% Renters with 30% or More Rental Burden	42.8% ¹	49.5% ²	NA	NA	NA
Union County Services	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
One Night Shelter Count	36	9	20	28	70
# of New Units Created with OHCS Funding	101	112	0	29	48
OHCS Funding for Subsidized Housing	\$3.4 m	\$1.1 m	\$0	\$1.4 m	\$2.0 m
# Home Loans for Low-Income Households	33	24	17	11	16
\$ Home Loans for Low-Income Households	\$2.3 m	\$1.4 m	\$1.2 m	\$877,506	\$1.2 m
# Households Receiving Energy Assistance	NA	869	602	739	702
% of Population Enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan	NA	NA	NA	20.8%	17.4%
# Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	1,334	1,346	1,410	1,456	1,536
% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	30.6%	32.2%	34.8%	36.2%	38.8%
% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	NA	NA	NA	17.1%	16.1%
% of Population Receiving TANF	NA	NA	NA	3.3%	2.7%
% of Population Receiving DHS Services	NA	NA	29.0%	28.2%	25.8%

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 Connection of Northeast Oregon'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.