

Wallowa County

Major findings

According to the US Census, the poverty rate and the number of people in poverty decreased in Wallowa County between 1989 and 1999. The poverty rate during this period remained above the state and national average due to increases between 1979 and 1989.

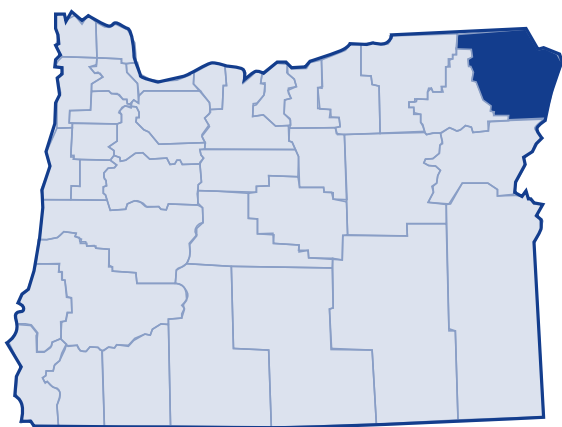
Of those living in poverty, 41 percent earned 50 percent or less of the poverty threshold.

Wallowa County's children, families and minorities were most likely to experience poverty in 1999.

Families with one adult who earned median income in Wallowa could not afford the basic family budget.

Unemployment rates rose from 8.6 in 2000 to 10.9 in 2003.

In 2003, 18.4 percent of Wallowa 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 Wallowa 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
- **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 Center 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, Wallowa County grew 4.6 percent from 1989 to 1999. The US Census Bureau determined the poverty status of 7,161 county residents and found that 14 percent (1,002 people) lived below the poverty threshold. This is a decrease of 7.1 percent in the number of persons living in poverty (1,078 people) in 1989. The overall percent of Wallowa County's population living in poverty also decreased from 1989 to 1999.

20-year trend

In the 20 years since 1979, the poverty rate in Wallowa County increased from 11.2 percent of the population to 14 percent. The number of persons in poverty rose from 807 people to 1,002 people. Wallowa County's poverty rates were higher than the state and national poverty rates due to increases from 1979 to 1989.

Poverty and age

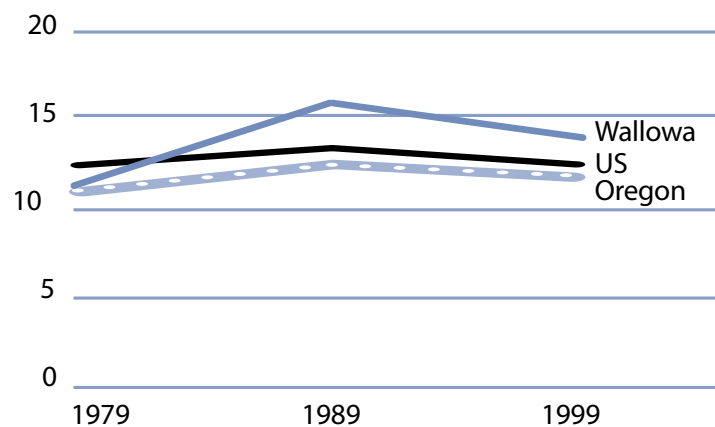
In the 2000 Census, among all age categories examined, children 5 years of age and younger experienced the highest rate of poverty at 28.6 percent. Children younger than 18 years of age experienced poverty at 19.6 percent. People 65 and older experienced the lowest rate at 11.4 percent. Over the 20-year 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
Wallowa County	1,078 (15.8%)	1,002 (14.0%)	(rate difference) -7.1% (-1.8%)
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%)

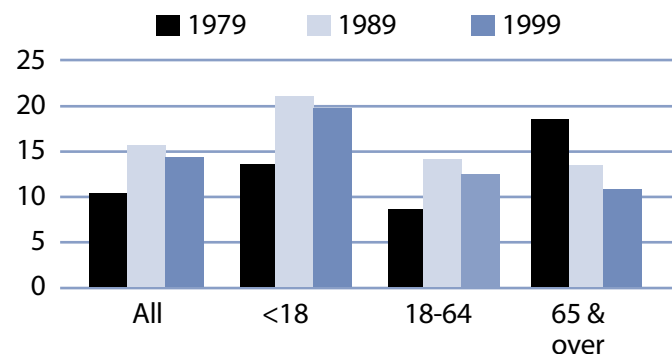
Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

Poverty rates 1979-1999



Source: US Census.

Rate of poverty by age



Source: US Census.

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Poverty and Wallowa County families

In 1999, 206 Wallowa County families lived in poverty (9.8 percent). Of the families in poverty, 72.8 percent (150 families) had a worker and 20.9 percent (43 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 17.2 percent. Families with a child 5 years and younger experienced poverty at a higher rate of 29 percent. The rate for families with children headed by single mothers was 44.0 percent and the rate was even higher with younger children (younger than 5 years) at 63.3 percent.

The poverty rate for married couples with children under 18 was lower at 11 percent. From 1979 to 1999, families with children who lived in poverty increased from 9.6 percent in 1979 to 17.2 percent in 1999.

Poverty and race/ethnicity

Among racial/ethnic groups,³ White comprised the majority in poverty at 96.6 percent. When examining poverty based on race/ethnicity, however, the poverty rate among White was 13.8 percent. Pacific Islander and Hispanic Origin experienced disproportionately higher rates of poverty. Between 1989 and 1999, poverty for White and American Indian fell.

Wallowa County families in poverty

Number Below Poverty Level (poverty rate)				% Change
	1979	1989	1999	1979-99 (rate difference)
All Families	151 (7.3%)	238 (11.9%)	206 (9.8%)	36.4% (2.5%)
With Children under 18	95 (9.6%)	167 (17.8%)	158 (17.2%)	66.3% (7.6%)
Female-headed with Children under 18	44 (45.4%)	79 (59.0%)	73 (44.0%)	65.9% (-1.4%)

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

Wallowa 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	97.8% (7,002)	96.6% (968)	13.8%	15.6%
Black	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	NA	0.0%
American Indian	0.4% (26)	0.4% (4)	15.4%	51.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%/0.1% (2/4)	0.0%/0.4% (0/4)	NA/100.0%	20.0%*
Other	0.2% (17)	0.0% (0)	NA	0.0%
2 or More Races	1.5% (110)	2.6% (26)	23.6%	NA
Hispanic Origin	0.8% (54)	1.8% (18)	33.3%	24.0%

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

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County income

On a per capita basis, Wallowa County's personal income was \$25,076 in 2002, about 87 percent of the state average of \$28,792, and 81 percent of the national average, \$30,906. Per capita income in Wallowa County rose 11.3 percent between 2001 and 2002. The 10-year trend, from 1992 to 2002, in per capita income shows average annual growth of 4.1 percent. Average earnings per job for 2001 were \$25,006 in Wallowa County compared to \$33,063 for the state.⁴

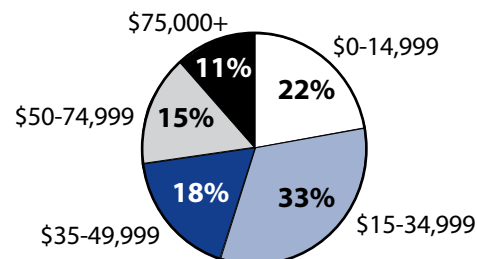
Income levels and poverty thresholds

Segmenting census data by income reveals more detail about the people experiencing poverty in Wallowa County. The 2000 Census showed that 409 people or 40.8 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 more than 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, 33.3 percent of Wallowa County's population, or 2,387 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, 82 households or 2.7 percent of all households in Wallowa County reported public assistance income. The average amount of public assistance income for 1999 was \$2,566. The 20-year trend showed a decrease in households that reported receiving public assistance income, from 132 households or 4.8 percent of all households in 1979.

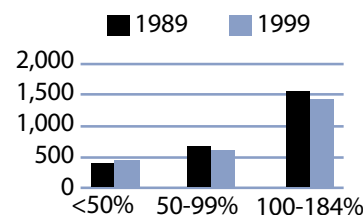
1999 household income distribution—Wallowa County



Source: US Census.

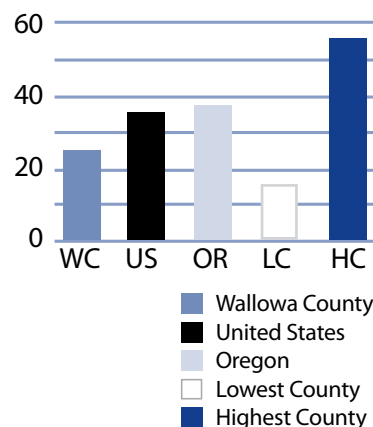
Note: The median household income in Wallowa County was \$32,129 in 1999 compared to \$21,300 in 1989 (50.8 percent increase).

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

Families with one worker earning Wallowa County's median income could not afford this basic family budget.

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 could afford 44.3 to 48.6 percent of the Wallowa County basic family budget.

Wages

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Wallowa County is \$416.75. The federal government had the highest weekly average of \$669.85 and the retail trade industry had the lowest weekly average of \$267.59.

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

Two adults working full-time at Wallowa County's average wage could afford the basic family budget for themselves and one child. Families with two working parents with three children could afford 99.7 percent of the budget.

Wallowa 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	\$343	\$771	\$343	\$771
Transportation	\$197	\$197	\$277	\$277
Health Care	\$245	\$245	\$293	\$293
Other Necessities	\$219	\$355	\$268	\$404
Taxes	\$259	\$475	\$397	\$545
Basic Family Budget Needed/Monthly	\$1,970	\$3,189	\$2,443	\$3,594
Basic Family Budget Total/Annual	\$23,635	\$38,262	\$29,317	\$43,131
Median Annual Income (Census 2000)	\$16,417	\$16,417	\$46,283	\$46,283
Median Family Income as % of Basic Budget	69.5%	42.9%	157.9%	107.3%

Poverty and Wallowa 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	48.6%	44.3%	45.7%	46.1%

Wallowa County wages and the basic budget

	1 Worker	1 Worker	2 Workers	2 Workers
Average Monthly Wage (AMW)*	\$1,792	\$1,792	\$3,584	\$3,584
	1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Adults/ 3 Children
Self Sufficiency Wage (SSW)**	\$1,970	\$3,189	\$2,443	\$3,594
Difference (SSW-AMW)	-\$178	-\$1,397	\$1,141	-\$10
Wage as % of Self Sufficiency	91.0%	56.2%	146.7%	99.7%

* Source: 1999 Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls.

** Based on Basic Family Budget for Wallowa County.

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Wallowa County Poverty Measures	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population	6,911 ¹	7,226 ²	7,176	7,081	7,082
% of People Living Below Poverty Level	15.8% ¹	14.0% ²	NA	NA	NA
Median Income	\$21,300 ¹	\$32,129 ²	NA	NA	NA
Unemployment Rate	10.6	8.6	10.8	9.7	10.9
8th Grade Drug Use	17.3% ³	14.0%	NA	34.3%	NA
HS Dropout	0.8% ⁴	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	NA
Teen Pregnancy per 1,000 Ages 10-17	10.7	4.5	2.3	6.3	NA
Prenatal Care	91.0%	87.1%	85.0%	89.3%	NA
Child Care Available per 100 Children Under 13	23.1	12.4	13.5	15	NA
Homeownership Rate	69.2% ¹	71.8% ²	NA	NA	NA
% Renters with 30% or More Rental Burden	32.1% ¹	47.8% ²	NA	NA	NA
Wallowa County Services	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
One Night Shelter Count	10	19	12	12	13
# of New Units Created with OHCS Funding	11	0	0	28	0
OHCS Funding for Subsidized Housing	\$456,749	\$0	\$0	\$595,949	\$0
# Home Loans for Low-Income Households	3	1	1	1	3
\$ Home Loans for Low-Income Households	\$175,990	\$90,000	\$152,179	\$58,400	\$236,400
# Households Receiving Energy Assistance	NA	318	282	278	262
% of Population Enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan	NA	NA	NA	14.6%	11.2%
# Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	678	562	427	423	390
% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	53.6%	46.9%	38.6%	41.1%	40.9%
% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	NA	NA	NA	11.8%	10.5%
% of Population Receiving TANF	NA	NA	NA	1.1%	1.0%
% of Population Receiving DHS Services	NA	NA	23.4%	21.1%	18.5%
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.