

# Wasco County

## Major findings

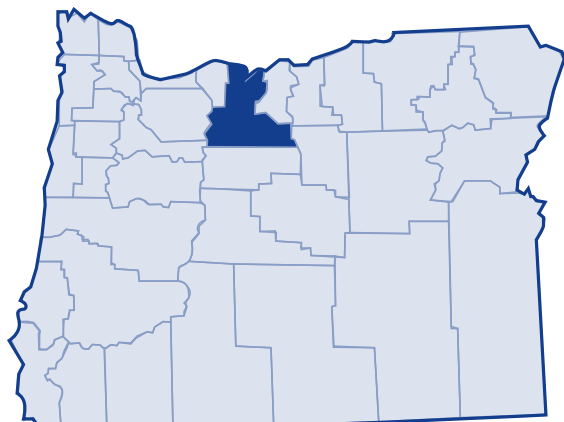
According to the US Census, the poverty rate decreased slightly in Wasco County between 1989 and 1999, although the number of people in poverty increased slightly. From 1979 to 1999, Wasco County's poverty rate matched state and national averages.

Between 1989 and 1999, median household income rose in Wasco County from \$24,908 to \$35,959.

In 1999, poverty affected children, families and minorities more than other groups. The poverty rate for families and the number, including families with children, increased between 1989 and 1999. In 1999, more than half of families in poverty had a householder who worked.

Families with one adult who earned Wasco County's median income or average wage could not afford the basic family budget.

In 2003, 29.5 percent of Wasco County residents received services from the Department of Human Services.<sup>1</sup>



## Low-income needs

Mid-Columbia Community Action Council prioritized the needs of the low-income population in Wasco County as follows:<sup>2</sup>

- Employment and jobs
- Rent/mortgage assistance
- Case management or follow up for recipients of assistance programs
- Transitional housing, including services for those with mental health issues and those who have been recently released from prison or drug/alcohol treatment centers
- Utility assistance
- Quality child care centers
- Public transportation available to everyone with cost based on a sliding scale (buses, medical vans, etc.)
- Renter education for low income tenants with poor rental history
- Safe homes for victims of domestic violence

# Wasco County

## Growth

According to the 2000 Census, Wasco County grew 9.7 percent between 1989 and 1999. The US Census Bureau determined the poverty status of 23,369 county residents and found that 12.9 percent (3,023 people) lived below the poverty threshold. This is an increase of 6 percent in the number of persons living in poverty (2,851 people) in 1989. The overall percent of Wasco County's population living in poverty remained relatively constant 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 Wasco County increased from 10.1 percent of the population to 12.9 percent. The number of persons in poverty rose from 2,175 to 3,023 people. Wasco County's poverty rates equaled state and national poverty rates in 1979 but were slightly lower in 1989 and 1999.

## Poverty and age

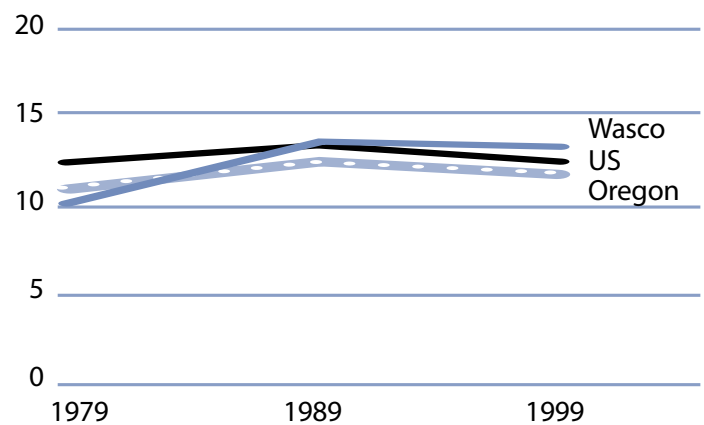
In the 2000 Census, among all age categories examined, children 5 years of age and younger experienced the highest rate of poverty at 20.7 percent. Children younger than 18 years of age experienced poverty at 17.8 percent. People 65 and older experienced the lowest rate at 7.3 percent. Over the 20-year 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 (rate difference)
Wasco County	2,851 (13.4%)	3,023 (12.9%)	6.0% (-0.5%)
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%)

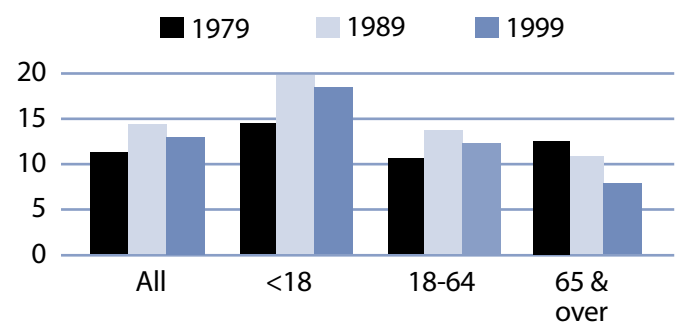
Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

**Poverty rates 1979-1999**



Source: US Census.

**Rate of poverty by age**



Source: US Census.

# Wasco County

## Poverty and Wasco County families

In 1999, 674 Wasco County families lived in poverty (10.3 percent). Of the families in poverty, 57.4 percent (387 families) had a worker and 13.9 percent (94 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 15.9 percent. Families with a child 5 years and younger experienced poverty at a higher rate of 19.2 percent. The rate for families with children headed by single mothers was 42.7 percent and was even higher with younger children (less than 5 years) at 46.9 percent.

The poverty rate for married couples with children under 18 was lower at 6.6 percent. From 1979 to 1999, families with children who lived in poverty increased from 10.5 percent in 1979 to 15.9 percent in 1999.

## Poverty and race/ethnicity

Among racial/ethnic groups,<sup>3</sup> White residents comprised the majority of people in poverty at 74.9 percent. When examining poverty based on race/ethnicity, however, the poverty rate among White was 11.2 percent. Pacific Islander experienced disproportionately higher rates of poverty. The poverty rate among Pacific Islander was 33.3 percent. Poverty among American Indian, Other and Hispanic Origin exceeded 21 percent. From 1989 to 1999, poverty did not improve for Asian and Pacific Islander.

## Wasco County families in poverty

Number Below Poverty Level (poverty rate)	1979			1989		1999		% Change 1979-99 (rate difference)
	1979	1989	1999	1979	1989	1999	1999	
All Families	522 (8.4%)	627 (10.3%)	674 (10.3%)					29.1% (1.9%)
With Children under 18	338 (10.5%)	482 (16.1%)	496 (15.9%)					46.7% (5.4%)
Female-headed with Children under 18	209 (44.0%)	281 (54.2%)	273 (42.7%)					30.6% (-1.3%)

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

## Wasco 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	86.5% (20,211)	74.9% (2,264)	11.2%	11.9%
Black	0.4% (105)	0.3% (9)	8.6%	63.7%
American Indian	3.6% (839)	6.7% (203)	24.2%	27.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.8%/0.1% (186/12)	0.7%/0.1% (21/4)	11.3%/33.3%	7.2%*
Other	6.0% (1,394)	9.7% (293)	21.0%	45.6%
2 or More Races	2.7% (622)	7.6% (229)	36.8%	NA
Hispanic Origin	9.3% (2,166)	17.8% (537)	24.8%	43.3%

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

# Wasco County

## County income

On a per capita basis, Wasco County's personal income was \$24,008 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 Wasco County rose 2.2 percent between 2001 and 2002. The 10-year trend, from 1992 to 2002, in per capita income shows average annual growth of 3.2 percent. Average earnings per job for 2001 were \$27,446 in Wasco County compared to \$33,063 for the state.<sup>4</sup>

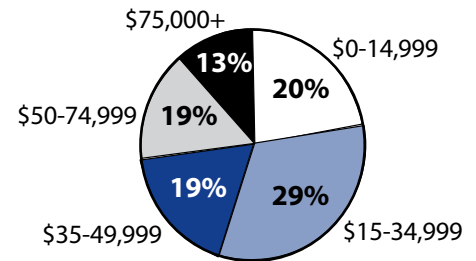
## Poverty thresholds

Segmenting census data by income reveals more detail about the people experiencing poverty in Wasco County. The 2000 Census showed that 1,462 people or 48.4 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, 31.3 percent of Wasco County's population, or 7,322 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, 397 households or 4.2 percent of all households in Wasco County reported public assistance income. The average amount of public assistance income for 1999 was \$2,441. The 20-year trend showed a slight decrease in households that reported receiving public assistance income, from 405 households or 4.9 percent of all households in 1979.

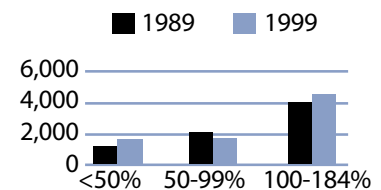
**1999 household income distribution—Wasco County**



Source: US Census.

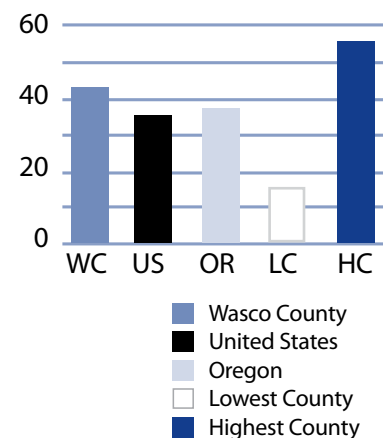
Note: The median household income in Wasco County was \$35,959 in 1999 compared to \$24,908 in 1989 (44.4 percent increase).

**Number of persons in poverty Threshold percentiles**



Source: US Census.

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



Source: US Census.

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

Families with one adult earning Wasco County's median income could not afford the basic expenses.

*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 Wasco County could afford 41.7 to 44.5 percent of this basic family budget.

## Wages

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Wasco County is \$449.63. The federal government had the highest weekly average of \$898.96 and agriculture, forestry and fish had the lowest weekly average of \$219.29.

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

Families with one adult who works full-time at Wasco County's average wage cannot afford the basic family budget.

## Wasco 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	\$524	\$714	\$524	\$714
Food	\$230	\$489	\$388	\$647
Child Care	\$377	\$836	\$377	\$836
Transportation	\$197	\$197	\$277	\$277
Health Care	\$245	\$245	\$293	\$293
Other Necessities	\$234	\$373	\$283	\$422
Taxes	\$345	\$535	\$439	\$629
<b>Basic Family Budget Needed/Monthly</b>	<b>\$2,152</b>	<b>\$3,389</b>	<b>\$2,58</b>	<b>\$3,818</b>
Basic Family Budget Total/Annual	\$25,828	\$40,666	\$30,968	\$45,820
Median Annual Income (Census 2000)	\$19,110	\$19,110	\$50,324	\$50,324
Median Family Income as % of Basic Budget	74.0%	47.0%	162.5%	109.8%

## Poverty and Wasco 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	44.5%	41.7%	43.3%	43.4%

## Wasco County wages and the basic budget

	1 Worker	1 Worker	2 Workers	2 Workers
Average Monthly Wage (AMW)*	\$1,933	\$1,933	\$3,867	\$3,867
	1 Adult/ 1 Child	1 Adult/ 3 Children	2 Adults/ 1 Child	2 Adults/ 3 Children
Self Sufficiency Wage (SSW)**	\$2,152	\$3,389	\$2,581	\$3,818
Difference (SSW-AMW)	-\$219	-\$1,456	\$1,286	\$49
Wage as % of Self Sufficiency	89.8%	57.0%	149.8%	101.3%

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

# Wasco County

Wasco County Poverty Measures	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population	21,683 <sup>1</sup>	23,791 <sup>2</sup>	23,714	23,579	23,591
% of People Living Below Poverty Level	13.4% <sup>1</sup>	12.9% <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Median Income	\$24,908 <sup>1</sup>	\$35,959 <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
Unemployment Rate	7	6.6	10	9.8	10.7
8th Grade Drug Use	23.9% <sup>3</sup>	16.2%	NA	22.2%	NA
HS Dropout	5.8% <sup>4</sup>	6.6%	6.5%	3.4%	NA
Teen Pregnancy per 1,000 Ages 10-17	16.5	20.8	15.3	7.1	NA
Prenatal Care	78.5%	85.2%	84.5%	85.1%	NA
Child Care Available per 100 Children Under 13	10	16.2	19.5	21.4	NA
Homeownership Rate	65.1% <sup>1</sup>	68.4% <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	NA
% Renters with 30% or More Rental Burden	39.3% <sup>1</sup>	47.6% <sup>2</sup>	NA	NA	
Wasco County Services	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
One Night Shelter Count	29	21	29	19	41
# of New Units Created with OHCS Funding	8	79	24	0	0
OHCS Funding for Subsidized Housing	\$475,000	\$1.3 m	\$2.0 m	\$400,000	\$0
# Home Loans for Low-Income Households	0	1	1	0	0
\$ Home Loans for Low-Income Households	\$0	\$120,970	\$81,478	\$0	\$0
# Households Receiving Energy Assistance	NA	1,127	793	1,142	882
% of Population Enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan	NA	NA	NA	22.7%	18.9%
# Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	1,452	1,549	1,631	1,714	1,930
% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	38.0%	42.1%	44.8%	48.5%	55.5%
% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	NA	NA	NA	18.9%	18.4%
% of Population Receiving TANF	NA	NA	NA	2.8%	2.3%
% of Population Receiving DHS Services	NA	NA	29.8%	32.5%	29.5%

<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-Columbia Community Action Council Community Service 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.