

Wheeler County

Major findings

According to the US Census, the poverty rate and the number of those in poverty decreased in Wheeler County between 1989 and 1999, but the rate remained above the state and national average.

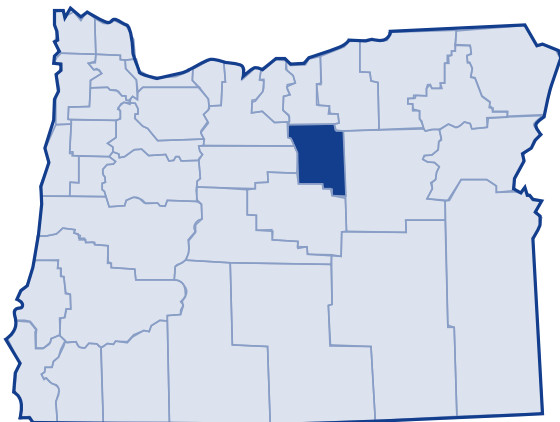
From 1989 to 1999, median household income rose from \$15,224 to \$28,750. The unemployment rate fell from 8.5 in 2000 to 8.3 in 2003.

Poverty rates for families, including families with children, decreased from 1989 to 1999, although the overall percent for families with children living in poverty remained relatively constant. In 1999, 39 percent of families headed by a single mother lived in poverty.

Seventy-nine percent of families living in poverty had a householder who worked. Only families with two working adults and one child could afford the basic family budget.

Over 50 percent of those who identified themselves as Other and/or Hispanic Origin in Wheeler County lived in poverty in 1999.

In 2003, 16.1 percent of Wheeler county residents received services from the Department of Human Services.¹



Low-income needs

Community Action Program East Central Oregon prioritized the needs of the low-income population in Wheeler County as follows:²

- Emergency rental/transitional housing opportunities for households who are homeless or at risk of losing housing
- Maintain access to Emergency Food Boxes and promote hunger awareness in the community
- Continue providing access to energy assistance funds during the high-cost winter months
- Increase access to low-cost medical care via the Oregon Health Plan; retain local medical services
- Provide assistance for Emergency Lodging / Emergency Shelter for homeless households
- Continue the programs that promote Early Childhood Education
- Retain and improve transportation programs to help serve those residing in rural communities
- Provide access to quality childcare and voucher assistance
- Promote the development of low-income housing and create safe housing opportunities for community members
- Access to job training opportunities to help households obtain living wage jobs
- Expand opportunity for area residents to receive weatherization services thus providing safe and healthy living environments
- Assist households in obtaining adequate clothing suitable for the seasonal weather conditions
- Improve and expand counseling/family case management for households in crisis to help them become self-reliant

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Growth

According to the 2000 Census, Wheeler County grew 10.8 percent between 1989 and 1999. The US Census Bureau determined the poverty status of 1,534 county residents and found that 15.6 percent (239 people) lived below the poverty threshold. This is a decrease of 17.9 percent in the number of persons living in poverty (291 people) in 1989. The overall percent of Wheeler 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 Wheeler County decreased from 18.2 percent of the population to 15.6 percent. The number of persons in poverty fell from 274 people to 239 people. Wheeler County's poverty rates remained higher than the state and national poverty rates throughout this period.

Poverty and age

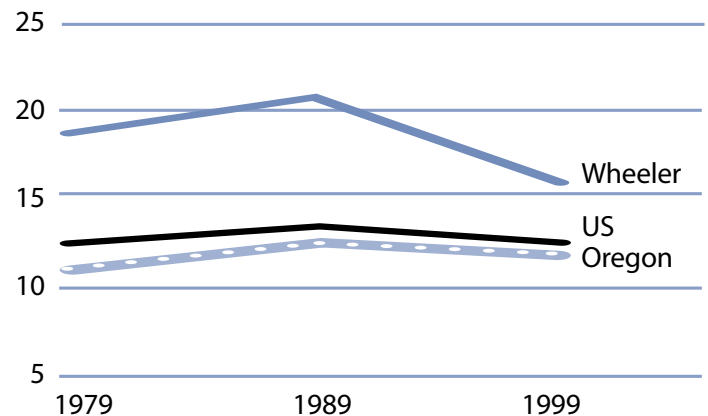
In the 2000 Census, among all age categories examined, children 5 years of age and younger experienced the highest rate of poverty at 25.3 percent. Children younger than 18 years of age experienced poverty at 24.7 percent. People 65 and older experienced the lowest rate at 4.2 percent. Over the 20-year 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
Wheeler County	291 (20.9%)	239 (15.6%)	-17.9% (rate difference) (-5.3%)
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%)

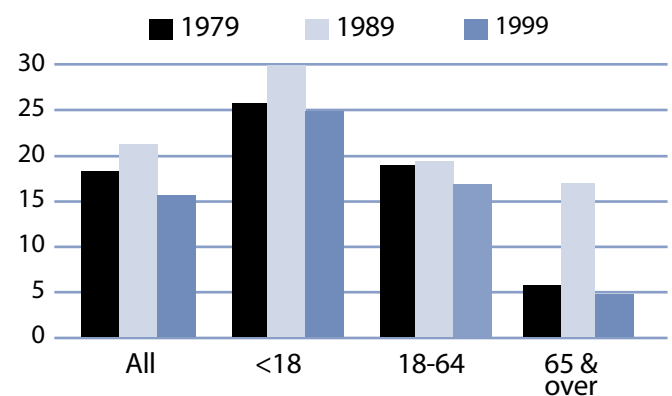
Source: US Census. County numbers have been rounded and, therefore, may not add exactly to totals.

Poverty rates 1979-1999



Source: US Census.

Rate of poverty by age



Source: US Census.

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Poverty and Wheeler County families

In 1999, 56 Wheeler County families lived in poverty (12.7 percent). Of the families in poverty, 78.6 percent (44 families) had a worker and 13.6 percent (22 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 22.7 percent. Families with a child 5 years and younger experienced poverty at a higher rate of 28.8 percent. The rate for families with children headed by single mothers was 39.3 percent and was even higher with younger children (less than 5 years) at 81.8 percent.

The poverty rate for married couples with children younger than 18 was lower at 18.1 percent. From 1979 to 1999, the number of families with children who lived in poverty decreased from 46 families (1979) to 35 families (1999), although the percent of families with children living in poverty remained relatively constant (22 percent).

Poverty and race/ethnicity

Among racial/ethnic groups,³ White residents comprised the majority of people in poverty at 87.9 percent. When examining poverty based on race/ethnicity, however, the poverty rate among White was 14.4 percent. Other and Hispanic Origin experienced disproportionately higher rates of poverty: 55.6 percent for Other and 59.6 for Hispanic Origin. From 1989 to 1999, poverty increased for both groups.

Wheeler County families in poverty

Number Below Poverty Level (poverty rate)	Year			% Change 1979-99 (rate difference)
	1979	1989	1999	
All Families	66 (14.2%)	75 (17.8%)	56 (12.7%)	-15.2% (-1.5%)
With Children under 18	46 (22.4%)	54 (32.5%)	35 (22.7%)	-23.9% (0.3%)
Female-headed with Children under 18	10 (43.5%)	17 (70.8%)	11 (39.3%)	10.0% (-4.2%)

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

Wheeler 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	95.2% (1,460)	87.9% (210)	14.4%	20.9%
Black	0.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	NA	0.0%
American Indian	0.5% (8)	0.0% (0)	NA	33.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.0%/0.0% (0/0)	0.0%/0.0% (0/0)	NA/NA	0.0%*
Other	1.8% (27)	6.3% (15)	55.6%	0.0%
2 or More Races	2.4% (37)	5.9% (14)	37.8%	NA
Hispanic Origin	3.4% (52)	13.0% (31)	59.6%	0.0%

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

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County income

On a per capita basis, Wheeler County's personal income was \$19,736 in 2002, about 69 percent of the state average of \$28,792, and 64 percent of the national average, \$30,906. Per capita income in Wheeler County rose 2.4 percent between 2001 and 2002. The 10-year trend, from 1992 to 2002, in per capita income shows average annual growth of 3.3 percent. Average earnings per job for 2001 were \$18,098 in Wheeler County compared to \$33,063 for the state.⁴

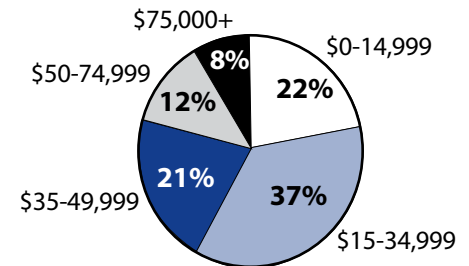
Poverty thresholds

Segmenting census data by income reveals more detail about the people experiencing poverty in Wheeler County. The 2000 Census showed that 80 people or 33.5 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, 41.9 percent of Wheeler County's population, or 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, 18 households or 2.8 percent of all households in Wheeler County reported public assistance income. The average amount of public assistance income for 1999 was \$1,406. The 20-year trend showed a decrease in households that reported receiving public assistance income, from 28 households or 4.6 percent of all households in 1979.

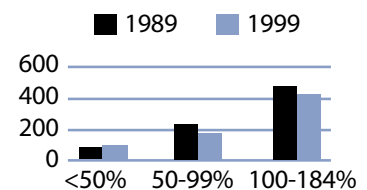
1999 household income distribution—Wheeler County



Source: US Census.

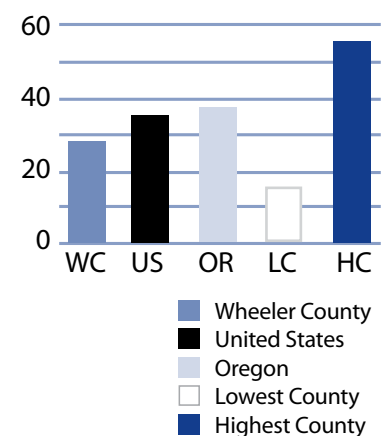
Note: The median household income in Wheeler County was \$28,750 in 1999 compared to \$15,224 in 1989 (88.8 percent increase).

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

Only families with two working adults and one child in which both adults earned Wheeler County's median income could 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 Wheeler County could afford 43.1 to 47.2 percent of this basic family budget.

Wages

According to the Oregon Employment Department, the average weekly wage in Wheeler County is \$375.76. The agriculture, forestry and fish industry had the highest weekly average of \$814.88 and transportation, communications, and utilities had the lowest weekly average of \$167.21.

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

Only families with two adults and one child and in which both adults earned the county's average wage could afford the Wheeler County basic family budget.

Wheeler 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	\$374	\$831	\$374	\$831
Transportation	\$197	\$197	\$277	\$277
Health Care	\$245	\$245	\$293	\$293
Other Necessities	\$219	\$355	\$268	\$404
Taxes	\$287	\$500	\$410	\$571
Basic Family Budget Needed/Monthly	\$2,029	\$3,274	\$2,487	\$3,680
Basic Family Budget Total/Annual	\$24,344	\$39,292	\$29,840	\$44,159
Median Annual Income (Census 2000)	\$16,250	\$16,250	\$34,375	\$34,375
Median Family Income as % of Basic Budget	66.8%	41.4%	115.2%	77.8%

Poverty and Wheeler 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	47.2%	43.1%	44.9%	45.0%

Wheeler 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)*	\$1,616	\$1,616	\$3,232	\$3,232
Self Sufficiency Wage (SSW)**	\$2,029	\$3,274	\$2,487	\$3,680
Difference (SSW-AMW)	-\$413	-\$1,658	\$745	-\$448
Wage as % of Self Sufficiency	79.6%	49.4%	130.0%	87.8%

* Source: 1999 Oregon Covered Employment and Payrolls.

** Based on Basic Family Budget for Wheeler County.

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Wheeler County Poverty Measures	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003
Population	1,396 ¹	1,547 ²	1,507	1,528	1,505
% of People Living Below Poverty Level	20.9% ¹	15.6% ²	NA	NA	NA
Median Income	\$15,224 ¹	\$28,750 ²	NA	NA	NA
Unemployment Rate	7.1	8.5	9.6	8.3	8.3
8th Grade Drug Use	17.3% ³	14.0%	NA	17.6%	NA
HS Dropout	1.8% ⁴	0.9%	0.9%	0.0%	NA
Teen Pregnancy per 1,000 Ages 10-17	0.0	11.6	11.4	0.0	NA
Prenatal Care	77.3%	100.0%	70.0%	70.0%	NA
Child Care Available per 100 Children Under 13	0	4.8	9.5	8	NA
Homeownership Rate	70.7% ¹	72.1% ²	NA	NA	NA
% Renters with 30% or More Rental Burden	54.0% ¹	55.6% ²	NA	NA	NA
Wheeler County Services	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
One Night Shelter Count	0	0	0	0	0
# of New Units Created with OHCS Funding	0	0	0	0	0
OHCS Funding for Subsidized Housing	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$179,970	\$0
# Home Loans for Low-Income Households	0	0	0	0	0
\$ Home Loans for Low-Income Households	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
# Households Receiving Energy Assistance	NA	62	57	59	53
% of Population Enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan	NA	NA	NA	16.5%	11.6%
# Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	124	141	111	135	127
% Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	51.5%	55.3%	46.6%	52.9%	51.2%
% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	NA	NA	NA	12.2%	9.3%
% of Population Receiving TANF	NA	NA	NA	1.7%	0.6%
% of Population Receiving DHS Services	NA	NA	22.0%	21.4%	16.1%

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 Action Program East Central Oregon 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.