

POVERTY STATUS IN PUGET SOUND REGION

Sample data from the 2000 Census shows no clear trends in poverty status changes in the central Puget Sound region over the past decade. Several measures of poverty have improved since 1990, but the percent of individuals living in poverty has increased slightly, from 8.5% to 8.6%. Despite this increase, the proportion of families in poverty has dropped from 6% to 5.8%.

The poverty data comes from Summary File 3 and were derived from the Census long-form questionnaire, the same questions used to derive household income data. The Census Bureau uses the federal government's official poverty definition originally developed in 1964, and revised in 1969 and 1980.

This trend looks at three measures of poverty:

- Poverty by age, here grouped into "Under 18", "18 to 64" and "65 and over";
- Ratio of household income to the poverty level; and
- Poverty status by family type, the focus here being on families with a single female householder and with related children under 18.

The number of persons living in households whose 1999 income fell below the official poverty line increased at about the same rate as the population or 20% since 1990. However, fewer young and elderly people are living in poverty. King and Snohomish counties have seen small increases in the percent of persons falling below the poverty level, mostly among adults 18 to 64.

Three of the five major cities in the four counties recorded increases in the percentage of total population residing in households with income below the poverty line. Bremerton in particular has nearly one-fifth of its population below the poverty level, compared to 18% in 1990, primarily among those 18 to 64 years old, while Everett has seen its population in poverty go from 12 to 13%, mostly among the elderly.

Single parent families make up a higher percentage of all families in 2000 than they did in 1990, but they are less likely to fall below the poverty level. They are now 20.7% of all families in the region, up from 18.2%, but only 16.4% of them are in poverty compared to 20.9% in 1990. Families headed by a female with no husband present have increased slightly as a percentage of all families in the region, but 5% fewer are living below the poverty level. Twenty-five percent of families headed by a female with no husband present and who is responsible for children under the age of 18 are living in poverty, compared to 33% in 1990. This rate of poverty is over four times that of all families.

Bremerton has shown some unusual characteristics. The number of families headed by a male who is responsible for children under 18 and no wife present has tripled,

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TABLE 1. Population by Age and Poverty Status

COUNTY/ CITY	YEAR	PERCENT OF POP. LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL			
		TOTAL	UNDER 18 YEARS	18 TO 64 YEARS	65 YEARS AND OVER
KING	2000	8.4%	9.9%	8.0%	7.4%
	1990	8.0%	9.8%	7.4%	7.3%
KITSAP	2000	8.8%	11.5%	8.0%	6.0%
	1990	9.4%	12.8%	8.0%	7.9%
PIERCE	2000	10.5%	13.6%	9.6%	7.2%
	1990	11.4%	15.5%	10.0%	9.1%
SNOH.	2000	6.9%	8.1%	6.2%	7.8%
	1990	6.6%	8.7%	5.6%	6.9%
REGION	2000	8.6%	10.5%	8.0%	7.3%
	1990	8.5%	11.1%	7.7%	7.7%
BELLEVUE	2000	5.7%	5.9%	5.5%	6.3%
	1990	5.6%	7.5%	5.2%	4.5%
BREMER.	2000	19.4%	26.4%	18.1%	11.4%
	1990	18.1%	27.6%	15.9%	10.4%
EVERETT	2000	12.9%	16.8%	11.4%	12.1%
	1990	12.0%	18.4%	10.1%	8.9%
SEATTLE	2000	11.8%	14.5%	11.5%	10.2%
	1990	12.4%	16.2%	12.2%	9.0%
TACOMA	2000	15.9%	21.1%	14.7%	10.9%
	1990	16.8%	23.4%	14.9%	12.3%

quadrupling the poverty rate for this family type in the city of Bremerton. Please note that the actual numbers used to determine the percentages are still quite low – less than 500 households.

While the Census Bureau uses one “official” definition of poverty to set a level under which a person or family can be said to be in poverty, others at the national, state, and local levels have set different benchmarks to determine if an individual or family meets requirements for assistance programs. Often that benchmark is set at incomes less than twice federally-established poverty level. Table 3 shows the percent of persons by age group whose living situations are such that incomes in 1999 are either below the poverty level or are a certain ratio above that level. All major areas have seen at least a small increase in the percent of the population at two times the poverty level.

HOW POVERTY STATUS IS DETERMINED

Poverty status was determined for all people except institutionalized people, people in military group quarters, people in college dormitories, and unrelated individuals under 15 years old. They are considered neither “poor” nor “nonpoor”.

TABLE 2. Poverty Status by Family Type

COUNTY/ CITY	YEAR	PERCENT OF FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL BY CATEGORY			
		ALL FAMILIES	MALE-HEADED	OTHER (NON-MARRIED) HOUSEHOLDS	
				RELATED CHILD. UNDER 18	NO RELATED CHILD. UNDER 18
KING	2000	5.3%	8.4%	23.4%	5.2%
	1990	5.0%	8.7%	28.5%	5.8%
KITSAP	2000	6.3%	11.8%	30.3%	8.2%
	1990	7.5%	8.0%	47.1%	7.1%
PIERCE	2000	7.5%	11.5%	29.6%	5.2%
	1990	8.7%	11.7%	41.5%	9.0%
SNOH.	2000	4.9%	7.6%	22.1%	4.3%
	1990	4.9%	8.9%	29.6%	4.3%
REGION	2000	5.8%	9.2%	25.3%	5.2%
	1990	6.0%	9.3%	33.2%	6.3%
BELLEVUE	2000	3.8%	4.7%	20.1%	3.7%
	1990	3.4%	10.0%	20.2%	3.7%
BREMER.	2000	16.0%	24.6%	44.1%	13.1%
	1990	5.5%	7.6%	68.3%	6.9%
EVERETT	2000	10.1%	11.6%	32.8%	8.0%
	1990	9.9%	15.5%	43.9%	9.1%
SEATTLE	2000	6.9%	10.6%	26.8%	6.8%
	1990	7.4%	10.9%	34.9%	7.0%
TACOMA	2000	11.4%	15.2%	35.4%	5.3%
	1990	12.5%	17.0%	47.1%	9.6%

TABLE 3. Percentage of Population by Poverty Level to Income Ratio

	AGE GROUP	RATIO OF INCOME TO POVERTY LEVEL	KING	KITSAP	PIERCE	SNOHOMISH	REGION
2000 CENSUS	UNDER 5 YEARS	UNDER 1.00	10.6%	13.7%	15.8%	8.9%	1.7%
		1.00 TO 1.49	7.0%	12.0%	11.6%	7.1%	8.5%
		1.50 TO 1.99	7.6%	12.7%	11.8%	9.9%	9.4%
		TOTAL	25.3%	8.4%	39.2%	25.9%	29.6%
	5 TO 17 YEARS	UNDER 1.00	9.7%	10.8%	12.9%	7.8%	10.1%
		1.00 TO 1.49	6.1%	8.0%	8.7%	5.6%	6.7%
		1.50 TO 1.99	7.0%	9.4%	10.5%	7.6%	8.1%
		TOTAL	22.7%	28.2%	32.0%	20.9%	25.0%
	18 TO 64 YEARS	UNDER 1.00	8.0%	8.0%	9.6%	6.2%	8.0%
		1.00 TO 1.49	4.8%	6.0%	6.2%	4.3%	5.1%
		1.50 TO 1.99	5.1%	7.0%	7.0%	5.3%	5.7%
		TOTAL	17.9%	21.0%	22.9%	15.8%	18.7%
	65 YEARS AND OVER	UNDER 1.00	7.4%	6.0%	7.2%	7.8%	7.3%
		1.00 TO 1.49	7.5%	7.4%	8.4%	7.9%	7.8%
		1.50 TO 1.99	7.5%	8.5%	8.6%	9.5%	8.1%
		TOTAL	22.4%	22.0%	24.2%	25.1%	23.2%
TOTAL POPULATION WITH POVERTY STATUS DETERMINED	UNDER 1.00	8.4%	8.8%	10.5%	6.9%	8.6%	
	1.00 TO 1.49	5.4%	7.0%	7.3%	5.1%	5.9%	
	1.50 TO 1.99	5.8%	8.0%	8.2%	6.5%	6.6%	
	TOTAL	19.6%	23.7%	26.0%	18.4%	21.0%	
1990 CENSUS	TOTAL POPULATION	UNDER 1.00	8.0%	9.4%	11.4%	6.6%	8.5%
		1.00 TO 1.49	5.3%	7.3%	8.5%	5.5%	6.1%
		1.50 TO 1.99	6.6%	9.6%	9.7%	7.4%	7.6%
		TOTAL	19.8%	26.3%	29.6%	19.5%	22.2%

The poverty status of families and unrelated individuals in 1999 was determined using 48 thresholds (income cutoffs) arranged in a two dimensional matrix. The matrix consists of family size (from 1 person to 9 or more people) cross-classified by presence and number of family members under 18 years old (from no children present to 8 or more children present). Unrelated individuals and 2-person families were further differentiated by the age of the reference person (RP) (under 65 years old and 65 years old and over).

To determine a person 's poverty status, one compares the person 's total family income with the poverty threshold appropriate for that person 's family size and composition. If the total income of that person 's family is less than the threshold appropriate for that family, then the person is considered poor, together with every member of his or her family. If a person is not living with anyone related by birth, marriage, or adoption, then the person's own income is compared with his or her poverty threshold.

For example, the weighted average threshold for an unrelated individual is \$8,501, for two people with the householder under 65 it is \$10,869, and for 3-person families it is \$13,290.

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