

# OREGON OUTLOOK

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## OREGON'S POPULATION CHANGE: 1990-2000

### *This report reviews*

- Oregon's Population Growth
- Age Composition
- Race and Hispanic Origin
- Policy Implications

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Oregon's population increased at a rate nearly double the national average during the 1990s. The fastest growing counties were scattered throughout the state with some rapidly growing counties in the Willamette Valley and the southern, central, and eastern areas. Population growth became part of the landscape for much of Oregon during the past decade.

Demography may not be destiny because other things matter too. But it is certainly important, and its effects endure longer, and have wider impacts, than most other social and economic changes. These Oregon Outlook reports, including this one, are based on the no-

tion that more attention should be paid to population. This report describes population changes in Oregon's counties during the 1990s. The first section compares county differences in births, deaths, and net migration. The second section discusses variations in age composition. The third section reviews county-level trends in racial and ethnic composition. Finally, the report ends with some implications of the main demographic trends for Oregon's counties.

This report may be freely downloaded from the Population Research Center website, [www.upa.pdx.edu/CPRC/](http://www.upa.pdx.edu/CPRC/).

## OREGON'S POPULATION CHANGE: 1990-2000

By Qian Cai, Population Research Center

### Population Growth

Census 2000 enumerated 3,421,399 people in Oregon, an increase of 579,078 or 20 percent from 2,842,321 in Census 1990. Oregon ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> fastest growing state in the country.

Figure 1 shows the geographic distributions of the 2000 Oregon population, as indicated by population per square mile of land area by county. The state average was 36 persons per square mile of land area, but the corresponding figures for the counties varied tremendously. Oregon's population was heavily concentrated in 10 metropolitan counties, with Multnomah County being the most populous, averaging 1,518 persons per square mile of land area. Washington County, with its population density of 615, ranked the second. Population on the eastside of cascades was very sparse, mostly

under 10 persons per square mile. Lake County, Wheeler County and Harney County were less than 1 person per square mile.

Population growth consists of natural increase (births minus deaths), and net migration (people moving into the state minus people leaving the state). Between April 1, 1990 and April 1, 2000, a natural increase of 155,574 was registered in Oregon, accounting for 27 percent of the total growth. Net migration, in the amount of 423,504, accounted for the remaining population growth. Migration reflects population movements associated with economic opportunities in Oregon. During the peak growth period in the mid-1990s, annual net migration was more than triple the gains due to natural increase. As the state's economy slowed down in the late 1990s, migration flows slowed, and

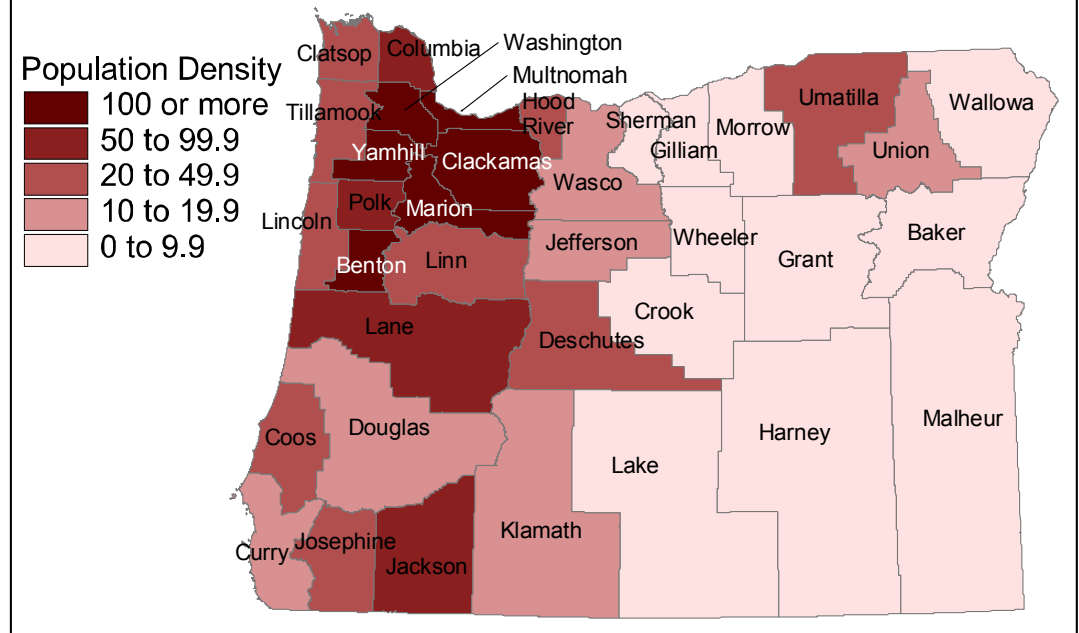
natural increase contributed a greater portion of annual population growth.

Oregon's metropolitan areas on average grew at a faster pace than the state. Population in metropolitan counties increased from 1,947,167 in 1990 to 2,502,366 in 2000. Not all metropolitan areas outpaced the state, though. The Eugene-Springfield metropolitan area trailed behind, with a growth rate of 14.2 percent. Portland PMSA expanded from four Oregon's counties

(Clackamas, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill) in 1990 to Portland-Vancouver PMSA in 2000, which consisted of five Oregon's counties (Clackamas, Columbia, Multnomah, Washington and Yamhill) and one Washington's county (Clark). On June 30, 1999, Corvallis, which consists of Benton County, became Oregon's fifth metropolitan area. Its population reached 78,300 on April 1, 2000.

The growth patterns among Oregon's 36 counties varied considerably, with growth rate from 0.8 percent in Sherman County to 53.9 percent in Deschutes County. During the ten year period, Central Oregon became the fastest growing region in the state. In addition to Deschutes County, Jefferson County grew by 39 percent and Crook County grew by 36 percent. The growth was largely contributed by migration. Deschutes County, for example, had a net migration of 35,784 between 1990-2000, while its natural increase was only 4,625 during the same period. Crook County also had a net migration more than nine times of its natural increase. Counties along the I-5 corridor experienced large population increases (see chart 1). Washington County ranked top, adding 133,788 people in ten years, followed by Multnomah County (76,599), Clackamas County (59,541), and Marion County

**Figure 1. Population per Square Mile by Oregon County, 2000**



(56,351). Again, migration was the primary force driving the population increases in these counties. Of all 423,504 people moving to Oregon between 1990-2000, nearly 23 percent moved to Washington County, 10 percent moved to Clackamas County, 10 percent moved to Multnomah County, and 9 percent moved to Marion County. In other words, more than half of the migrants concentrated in these four counties.

While 13 Oregon counties grew faster than the state average, the remaining 23 experienced slower growth. Sherman, Grant, Lake, Union, and Coos were the bottom five in terms of the growth rate. Ten counties witnessed the negative natural increase during the ten-year period, i.e., there were more deaths than births. They were Baker, Coos, Curry, Gilliam, Josephine, Lincoln, Sherman, Tillamook, Wallowa, and Wheeler. Migration to those counties was also sparse. Grant was the only county in the state that experienced a negative net migration of 60 people (see chart 2).

As migration played a leading role in Oregon's population growth, it is important to understand why people migrated. Although there are a number of causes of migration, economic benefits are the foremost reason. People moved to Oregon primarily in response to the good employment opportunities in the 1990s. Oregon's economy was traditionally

known for its natural resource based industries, such as agriculture, forestry and fishery. In recent decades, however, Oregon's economy has become more diverse. Its economic base also includes high technology, food processing, primary and fabricated metals, and transportation equipment manufacturing. High technology manufacturing, specifically, grew rapidly in many of the state's metropolitan areas throughout much of the 1990s. The booming job opportunities in high tech manufacturing industry "pulled" many people from neighboring states to Oregon. The soaring demands for educated and skilled labor in high tech area also attracted nationwide and worldwide professionals to Oregon's metropolitan areas. In the meantime, horticulture, agriculture and food processing industry have attracted a large number of cheap Mexican immigrant labors into Oregon.

While the new industries were booming along the Interstate I-5, the old traditional industries, such as lumbering and fishery, experienced serious stagnation and downturn due to global competition. Counties whose economy continued to rely heavily on those industries witnessed slow population growth, with very few people moving in and some of their young moving out to seek job opportunities elsewhere.

In addition to the economic reasons, there are non-economic factors contributing to population movement as well. Environmental amenities and moderate weather, for example, have enticed retirees and outdoor-recreation-minded young adults moving to Central Oregon counties.

Migration creates ripple effects on receiving area's economy. The need for housing, road and transportation, schools, health facilities, just to name a few, means more infrastructures, services and jobs. It can be a strain in the short term, but in the long run, it may further stimulate local economy.

### **Age Composition**

Age is a pivotal characteristics of the population. Difference in the age composition affects dozens of other social and economic characteristics. As inherent properties of individuals, age does not determine marital status, education, or other characteristics. But many other characteristics are often linked to the

age profiles of a population. A community with primarily elderly residents will have greater needs for health facilities, for example, compared to a community with mainly younger adults who may have greater needs for educational facilities.

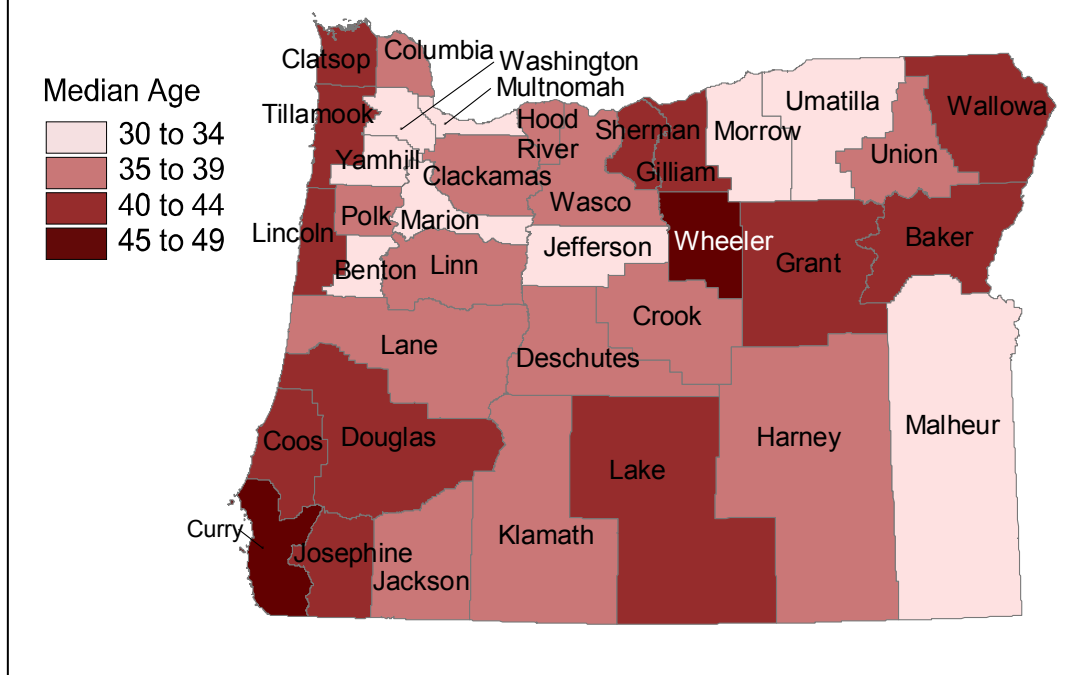
The median age of Oregon population in Census 2000 was 36.3, which means half of the population were older than 36.3 and the other half were younger than 36.3. This was one year older than the national average. Due to the longer life expectancy among women than men, the median age for Oregon women was 37.5, while the median age for Oregon men was 35.1.

Benton County had the youngest population in the state, with median age of 31.1. It was largely due to the college student population in Corvallis. Washington County ranked the second, with median age of 33. As discussed in the first section, Washington County absorbed the largest number of migrants to the state during the ten-year period. Migrants not only tend to be young themselves, but also tend to have families with young children, which contribute to the younger median age of the population. Consistent with the median age, Washington County and Benton County were also found to have the lowest percentages of population aged 65 and over, 8.84 and 10.27 percent, respectively.

Communities with younger populations have greater needs for schools and programs that deal with children and young adults. These may increase local burdens for education spending but may be offset by having less spending required for facilities and programs for the elderly.

There were 13 counties with median age of the population older than 40 (see Figure 2). Most of them were the slowly-growing counties and the counties experiencing the negative natural increase. They also tended to have higher percentages of elderly population. In Curry County, for example, more than a quarter of the population were 65 and above (see Chart 6, page 12). With median age of 48.8, it was the oldest county in the state. Its population under 15 years of age, on the other hand, accounted for only 15.5 percent, the lowest among all 36 counties. Located in less developed Eastern and Southern Oregon, these "older" counties appeared to keep a closed population without much in and out movement. As a

**Figure 2. Median Age of the Total Population by Oregon County, 2000**



other counties, such as Deschutes, Morrow and Washington, experienced a rapid growth of more than 40 percent. The growth of elderly population aged 65 and over was present in all but one county. Multnomah was the only county which had fewer elderly in 2000 than in 1990. Each of the 36 counties gained population aged 15-64 between 1990 and 2000, with growth rates varying from 1.3 percent for Grant to 59.1 percent for Deschutes.

Like the U.S. population, Oregon's popu-

lation is slowly aging and will continue to become older, on average, in coming decades. Some counties have been aging more and have relatively higher proportions of elderly. Some counties, which have been experiencing heavy in-migration of younger people, have fairly young populations and have relatively low proportion of elderly. Counties face different social and economic challenges because of differences in age composition. Counties with large, increasing elderly population may face such needs as:

(a) transportation to handle the special needs of individuals who may no longer have use of private automobiles, (b) housing to match the needs of a greater number of elderly who live alone or need special housing, (c) social services to assist a larger number of elderly who need health services.

result, their populations became older and aged faster. Chart 3, 4 and 5 show the percent population in selected age groups by county in 2000. Comparing the age composition of Oregon's population in 2000 to that in 1990, population aged 15-64 rose from 64.68 percent in 1990 to 66.75 percent in 2000, while population aged 65 and over dropped from 13.77 percent to 12.81 percent. Large number of migrants, mostly attracted to the high-tech industries in Oregon in early and mid-1990s, seemed to not only boost the working age group but also "younger" Oregon population.

Between 1990 and 2000, population aged 15-64 grew from 1,838,436 to 2,283,645, or 24 percent, which was about 4 percentage points higher than the total population growth. In contrast, the 65 years and over population grew only 12 percent, and population under 15 years grew 14 percent. Elderly population was the slowest growing age group among the three in Oregon.

Although each of the three age groups for the state population experienced growth, there were no consistent patterns for every county. Fourteen counties of Oregon witnessed a net loss of their younger population aged 0-14 from 1990 to 2000, while some

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### Race and Hispanic Origin

America is becoming more diverse. After noting evidence of increasing numbers of children from interracial unions and the need to measure the increased diversity in the United States, The Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1997 revised the guidelines for data by race. The question on race for census 2000 therefore was different from the one for the 1990 census. "Asian or Pacific Islander" in 1990

was split into two separate categories in 2000: "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander." "American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut" in 1990 became "American Indian and Alaska Native" in 2000. More notably, respondents were given the option of selecting one or more race categories to indicate their racial identities in Census 2000. With permission from the OMB, the Census Bureau included the category "Some other Race" on the Census 2000 questionnaire. Due to the different categorizing, the Census 2000 data on race are not directly comparable with data from the 1990 census. In the 2000 Census tabulations, there are race alone categories as well as race in combination categories.

According to the 2000 Census, ninety-seven percent of Oregon population was single race. Three percent was multiracial, compared to 2.4 percent in the U.S. population. White was the predominant race in Oregon. While three quarters of population nationwide reported themselves white alone in Census 2000, 86.56 percent of Oregonians identified themselves so, far above the national average. Asian alone population took the second place in Oregon. With a share of 2.96 percent, it exceeded Black or African American alone population, which only accounted for 1.63 percent. Oregon was historically a destination for Chinese and Japanese back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Chinese men came to become railroad workers or miners and Japanese men fished along the coast. The geographic proximity to Asia and historical connections continue to make Oregon home for many people of Asian origin today. Asian became the largest minority race in Oregon. While Black or African American alone counted for 12.3 percent in the U.S. population, its share in Oregon was much lower.

Two other minority races, although not as visible as Asian or Black, also have significant standing in Oregon's racial mosaic. 1.32 percent of Oregonians in the 2000 Census reported themselves American Indian and Alaska Native alone, and 0.23 percent reported Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone. Both figures were above the national averages, which were 0.9 and 0.1 percent, respectively.

The racial composition varied considerably across Oregon's counties. Gilliam, Wallowa, Grant, and Baker all had white alone population accounting for more than 95 percent of their total populations,

while each of other races only took a tiny fraction. In contrast, Multnomah County, being the most racial-diversified county in the state, had 79 percent White, 5.67 percent Black, 5.7 percent Asian and 4.07 percent two or more races. Some other counties stood out with one minority race significantly more visible than other minority races. Jefferson County, for example, had the highest percent American Indian and Alaska Native of the total population (15.68 percent), followed by Klamath County (4.19 percent) and Harney County (3.97 percent). In Washington County, Asian was the largest minority race group in the total population, accounting for 6.68 percent.

The geographic distributions of each race group were uneven, with heavy concentration in metropolitan counties. More than two-thirds of Black resided in Multnomah County in 2000, followed by Washington County (9.2 percent) and Lane County (4.5 percent). Thirty-seven percent of Asian lived in Multnomah County, followed by Washington County (29.36 percent) and Clackamas County (8.18 percent). Fifteen percent of American Indian and Alaska Native resided in Multnomah County, followed by Marion County (9.09 percent) and Lane County (8.06 percent). More than a quarter of multiracial population lived in Multnomah County, followed by Washington County (13.49 percent) and Lane County (10.24 percent).

The question on Hispanic origin for Census 2000 was similar to the 1990 census question, therefore, the data from the two censuses are comparable. Census 2000 enumerated 275,314 Oregonians of Hispanic or Latino, accounting for 8 percent of the total population. This number was below the national level of 12.5 percent. More than half of the Hispanic population (54 percent) in Oregon lived in just three counties in 2000: Washington, Multnomah and Marion. Malheur County, however, had the highest percent Hispanic in the county total population (25.6 percent), followed by Hood River County (25 percent). Between 1990 and 2000, Hispanic population in Oregon grew by 162,607, or 144 percent, compared to the national average of 57.9 percent. Washington County experienced the largest growth of Hispanics, increasing from 14,401 in 1990 to 49,735 in 2000. Figure 3 shows Hispanic population as a percent of total population by county in

2000.

### Implications

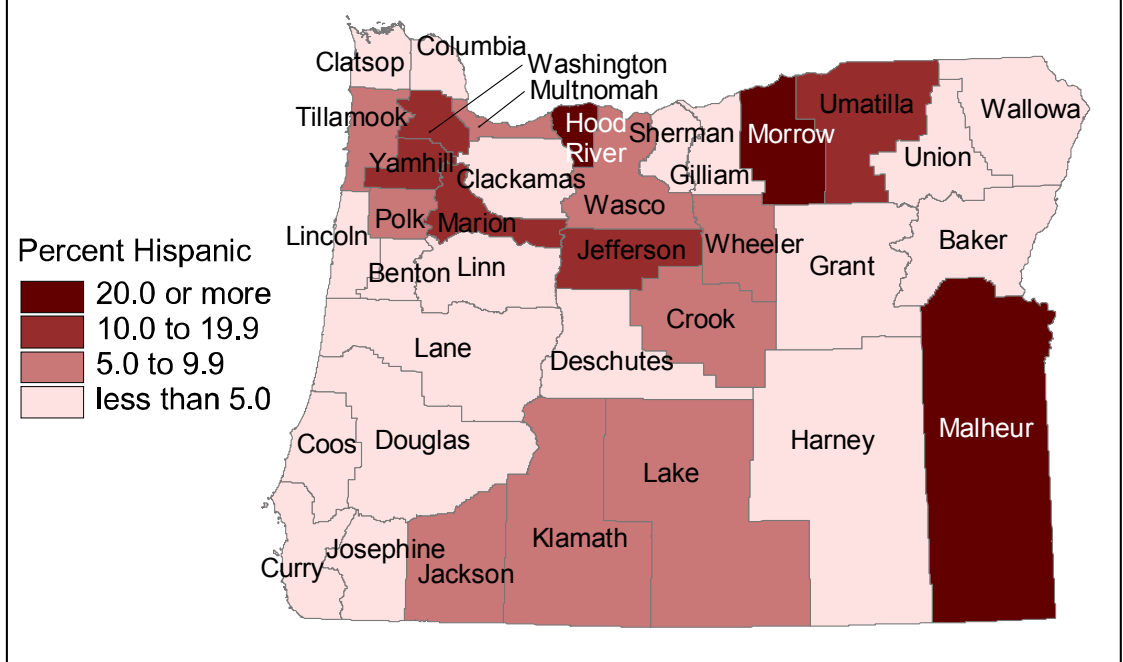
Population growth in Oregon in the 1990s was mainly driven by the state economic expansions and contractions. When the economy was good, such as during the early and mid-1990s when the high-tech industries boomed in Oregon, large number of migrants were attracted to the state for good job opportunities. When the economy slowed down, such as in the late 90s, the migration flows slowed down as well.

With the economic recession nationwide starting March 2001, Oregon took a heavy toll. Its unemployment rates topped the nation. Population growth, as a result, slowed down considerably and is not expected to accelerate any time soon. Looking into the 2000s, as natural increase tends to stabilize at its current level, the state economy will continue to be the locomotive for the future population change.

The population growth in Oregon in the 1990s varied notably across the regions. Central Oregon increasingly became an attractive destination, and counties along the I-5 corridor continued to experience large population increases. In contrast, Eastern and Southern Oregon witnessed much slower growth. While 62 percent of Oregonians lived in incorporated cities and towns in 1990, the figure went up to 67 percent in 2000. With the limits of urban growth boundary and the saturation of already populous counties, the future population growth would have to further spread out to suburb and unincorporated areas, creating more need for housing, road, transportation, school, business and services in these areas.

Oregon's population as a whole did not become older during 1990 to 2000, largely due to the net migration of working age group. Counties, however, displayed diverse pictures. The population aged 65

**Figure 3. Hispanic Population as a Percent of Oregon's County Population, 2000**



and over ranged from as low as 8.8 percent in Washington County to as high as 26.6 percent in Curry County. Counties with an aging population will need to consider investing more on facilities and services catering to the elderly, such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities. They may also consider creating economic incentives to attract working-age population moving to the area, vitalizing the local economy and population.

Oregon has not been a highly racial-diversified state, and is not expected to be so in the near future. Minority races will continue to count for only a small proportion of the total population. Hispanic population will probably keep growing at a faster pace than other minority race groups. In the 2000 Census, race and Hispanic origin distribution in the state was quite uneven. Asian, Black, American Indian and Alaska Natives, and Hispanics appeared to concentrate in only a few metropolitan counties. This pattern is not expected to change much in the near future. The diverse population enriches the culture and supplements the labor force to the local economy. It also creates special needs for facilities and services, such as affordable housing for Hispanic immigrant families and bi-lingual school programs for immigrant children.

Chart 1. Population Change by County, 1990-2000

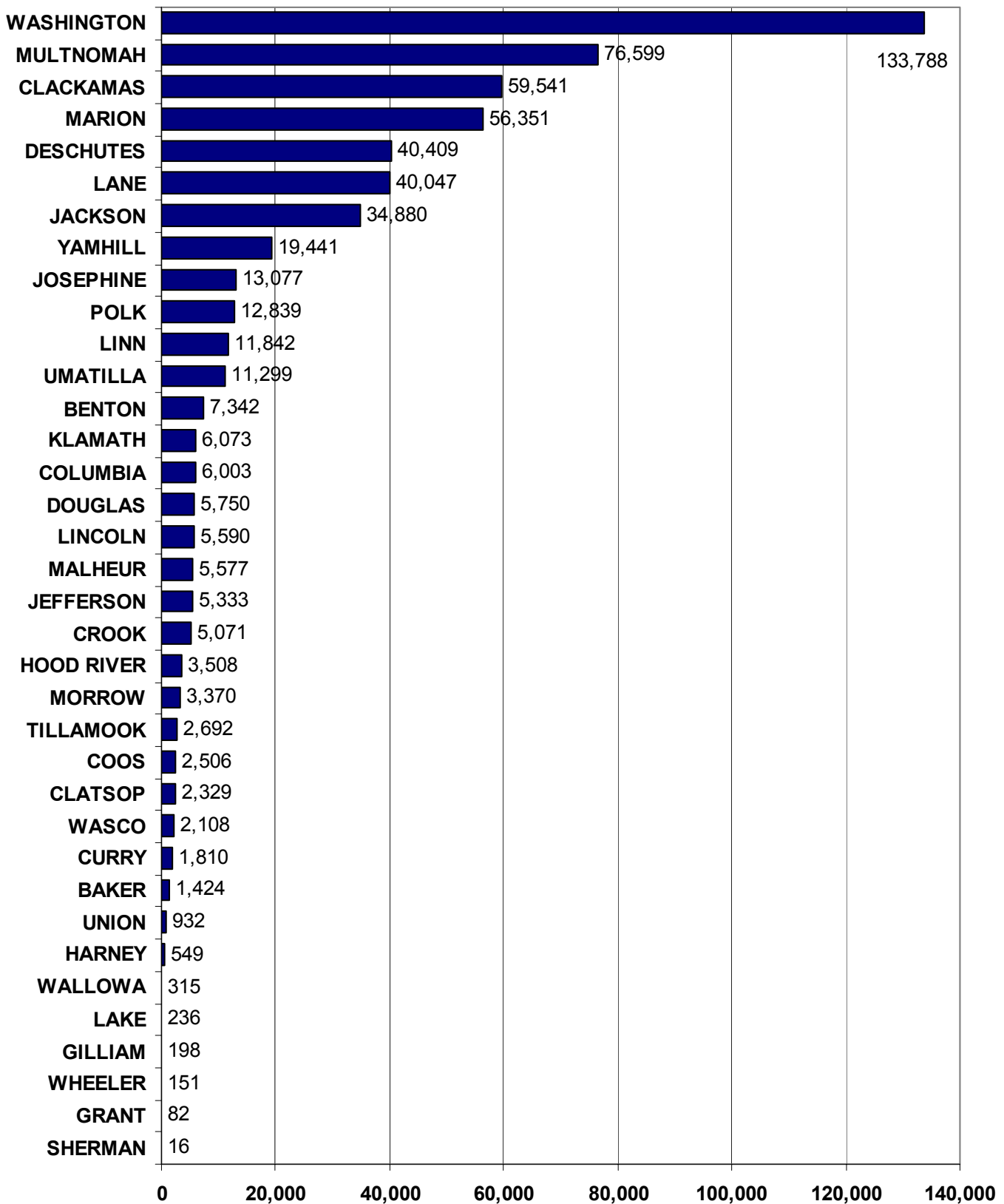


Chart 2. Net Migration Rates for Oregon's Counties, 1990-2000

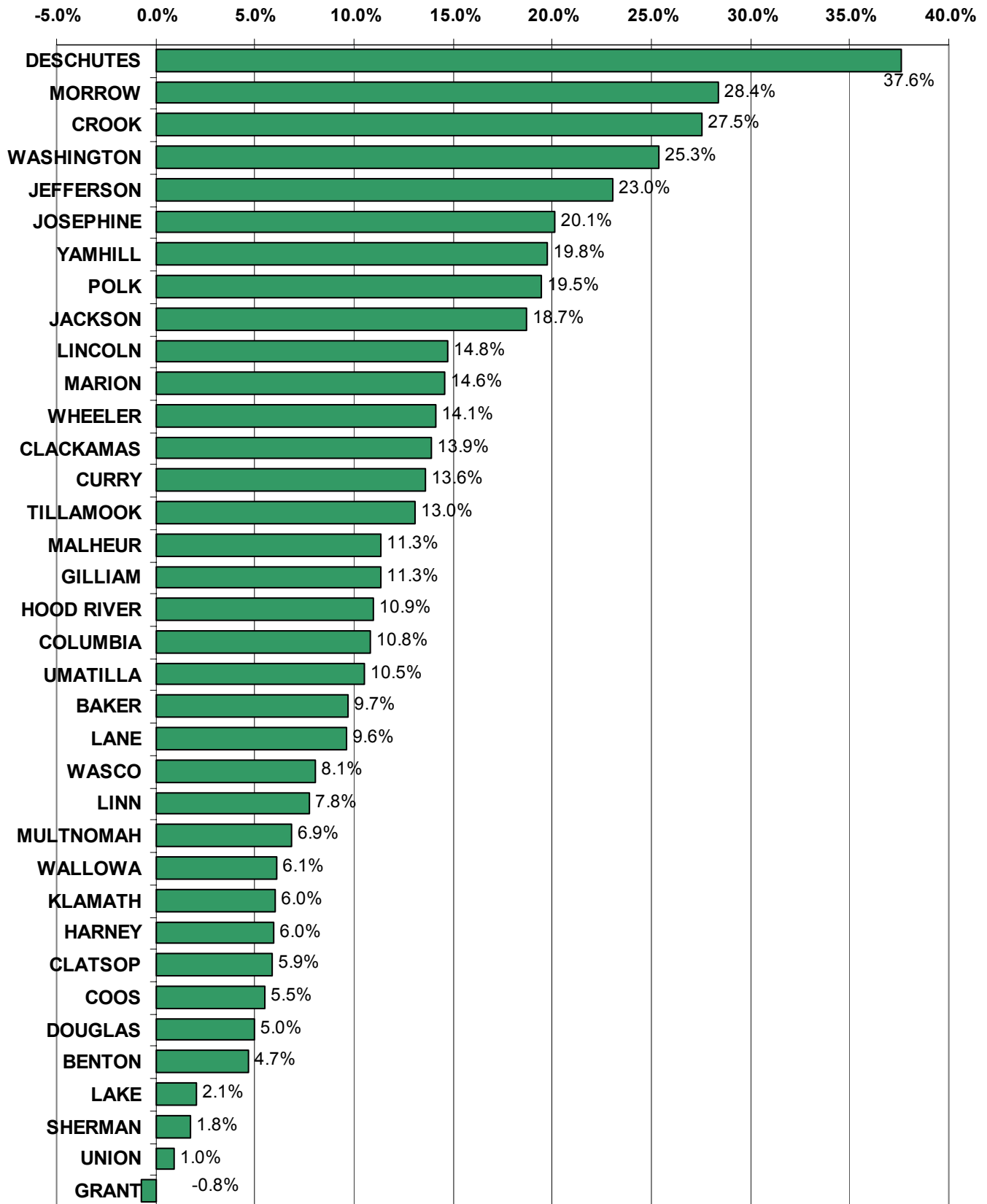


Chart 3. Percent Population under Age 15 by County, 2000

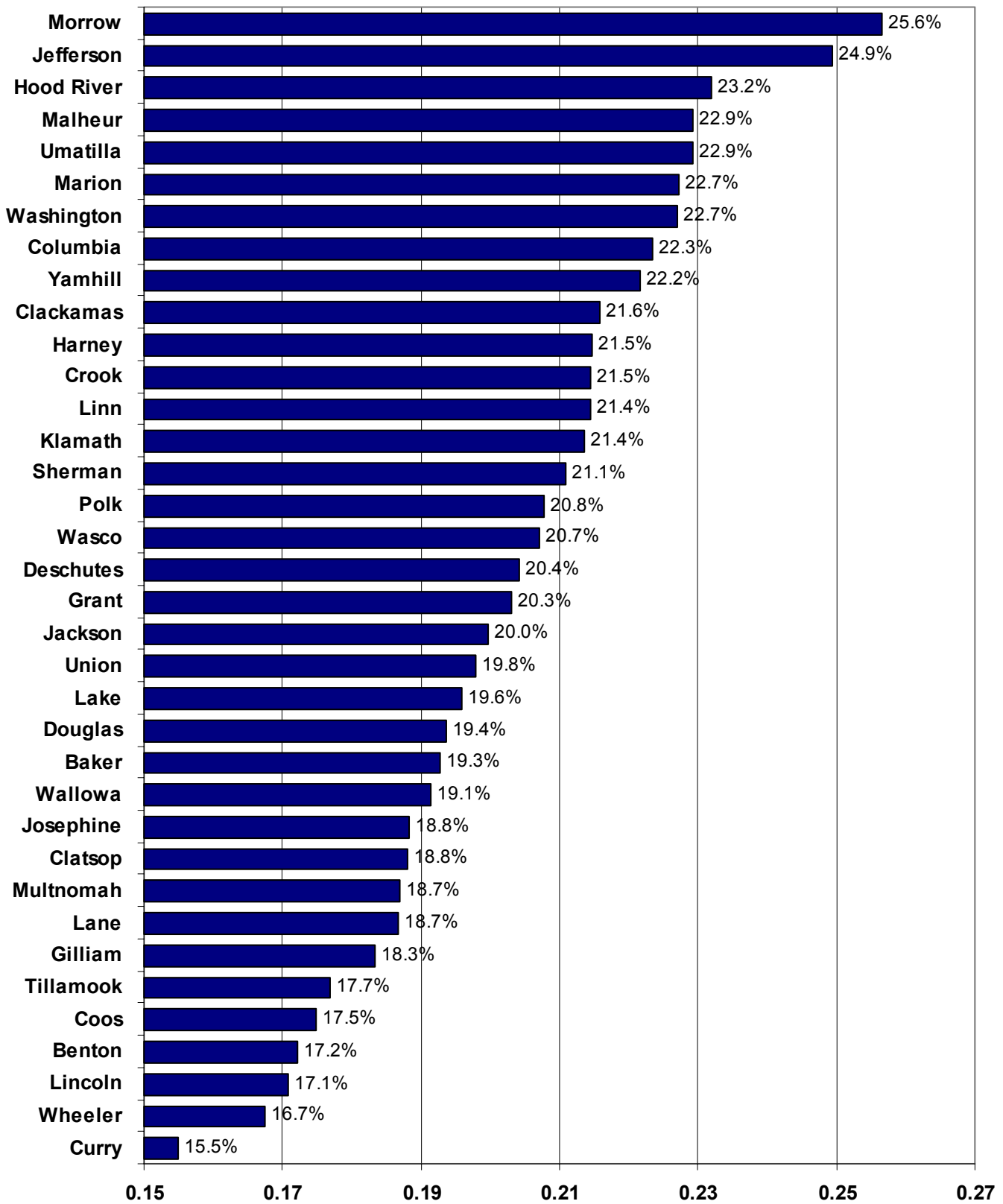


Chart 4. Percent Population Aged 15-64 by County, 2000

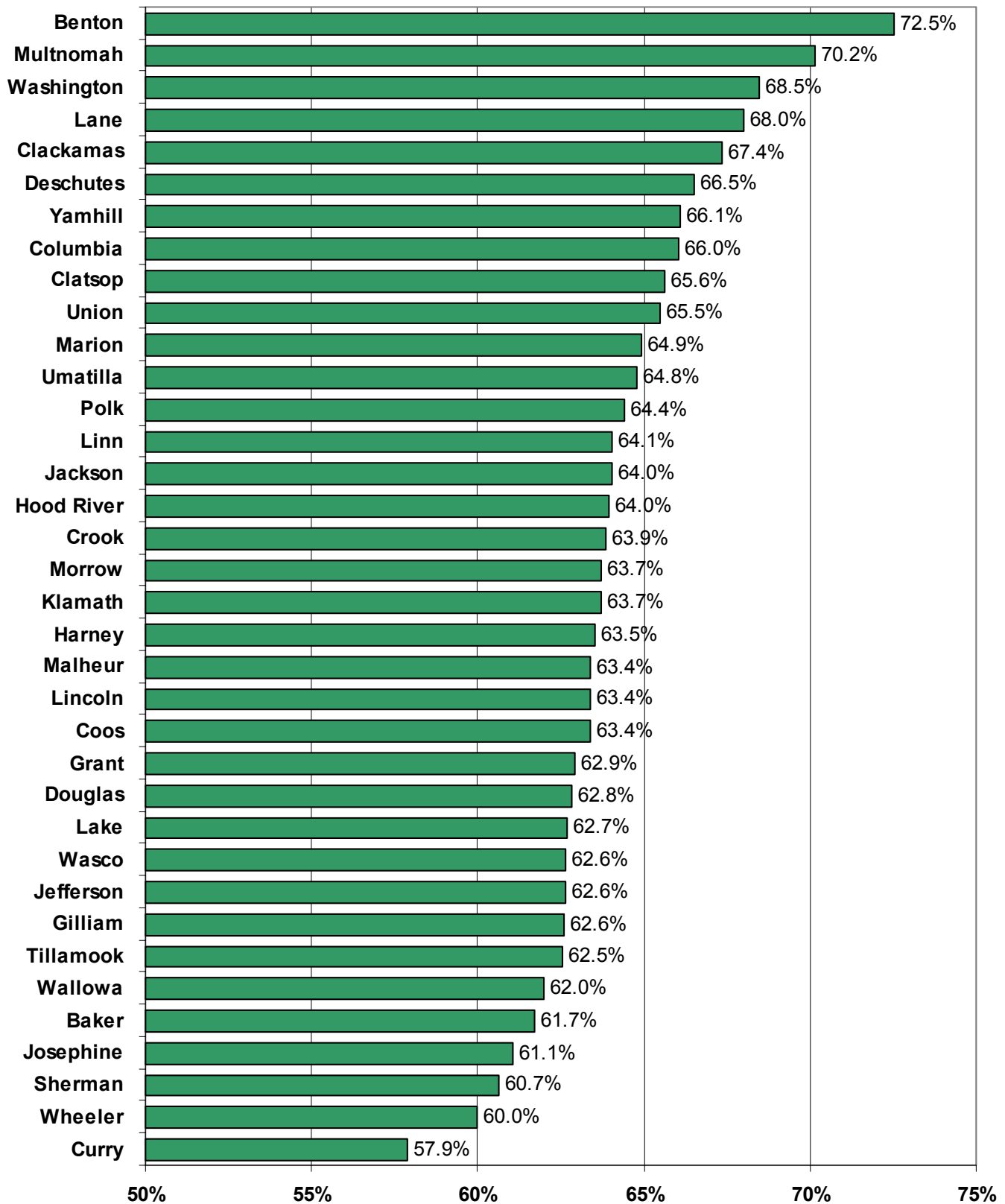
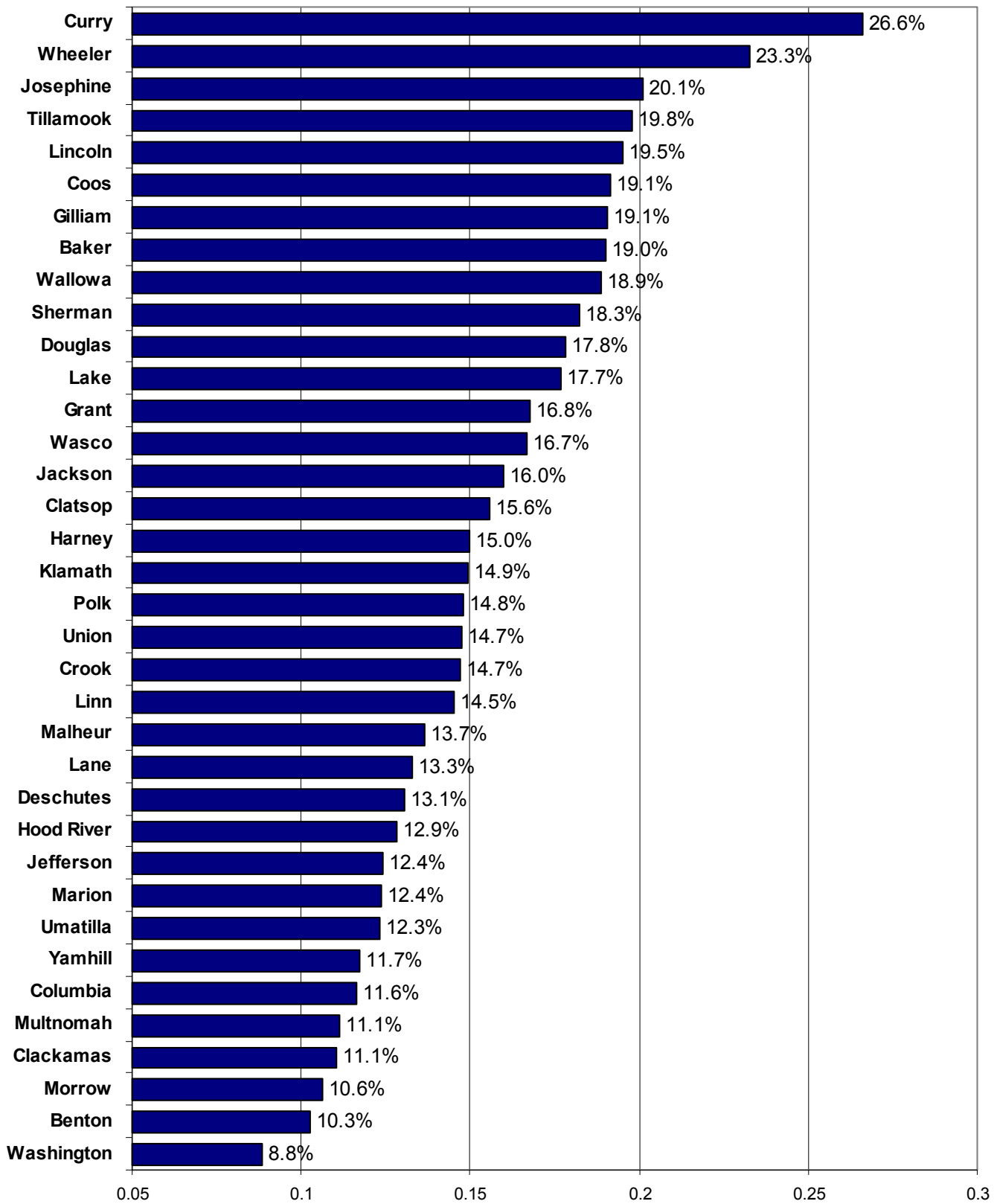
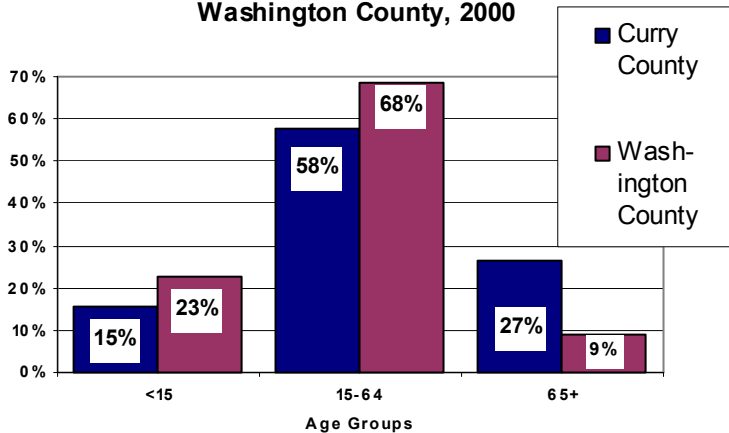


Chart 5. Percent Population Aged 65 and over by County, 2000



**Chart 6. Age Compositions for Curry County and Washington County, 2000**



**Notes**

1. Data sources for this report include the U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)), Portland State University's Population Research Center ([www.upa.pdx.edu/CPRC/](http://www.upa.pdx.edu/CPRC/)), and the State of Oregon's Office of Economic Analysis ([www.oea.das.state.or.us/](http://www.oea.das.state.or.us/)).
2. For additional information about Oregon's population and the U.S. population, the National Center for Health Statistics provides data on births and deaths ([www.cdc.gov/nchs/](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/)) and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service is a source for information on immigration ([www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/index.htm](http://www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/index.htm)). The Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C. is a leading provider of timely and objective information on U.S. and international population trends and their implications ([www.prb.org](http://www.prb.org)). The University of Michigan's Population Research Center's CensusScope is an easy-to-use tool for investigating U.S. demographic trends ([www.censuscope.org/](http://www.censuscope.org/)). University of Southern California's Population Dynamics Research Group is a useful source of census information on changing nature of race and ethnicity in the nation ([www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/popdynamics/](http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/research/popdynamics/)).

*The goal of the Oregon Outlook Reports is to raise public awareness of demographic information and trends to give the public and elected representatives in Oregon an informed basis for developing policies and programs.*

*The Oregon Outlook reports are based primarily on newly released census data and are authored by the Population Research Center staff and others with special expertise on the topic.*

*The Portland Multnomah Progress Board is co-sponsoring a set of reports that focus on the metropolitan Portland area, with each report highlighting the City of Portland and Multnomah County within the metropolitan Portland region.*

*The Oregon Progress Board is co-sponsoring a set of reports that deals with the State of Oregon.*

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**Population Research Center**

The Population Research Center provides a research and teaching office for the investigation of the causes and consequences of demographic change, with a special focus on Oregon and its counties and cities. The Center houses the Oregon State Data Center, the lead agency in Oregon for contact and collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and for dissemination of census data and documents. The Center is also responsible for developing state and local population estimates and projections. For more information regarding the Center, please see: <http://www.upa.pdx.edu/CPRC/>.

**Portland Multnomah Progress Board**

The Portland Multnomah Progress Board identifies, monitors, and reports on indicators (named Benchmarks) for important community-wide goals. The Board identifies major trends in the community and acts as a catalyst for government, business, and community groups to improve the performance of the benchmarks. For more information, see: <http://www.p-m-benchmarks.org>.

**Oregon Progress Board**

The founding purpose of the Oregon Progress Board is help guide Oregon into the next century. The Oregon Progress Board serves as the long-term caretaker of Oregon's strategic vision, identifies key activities that need to be undertaken, and measures progress towards the goals. For more information, see: <http://www.econ.state.or.us/opb/>.