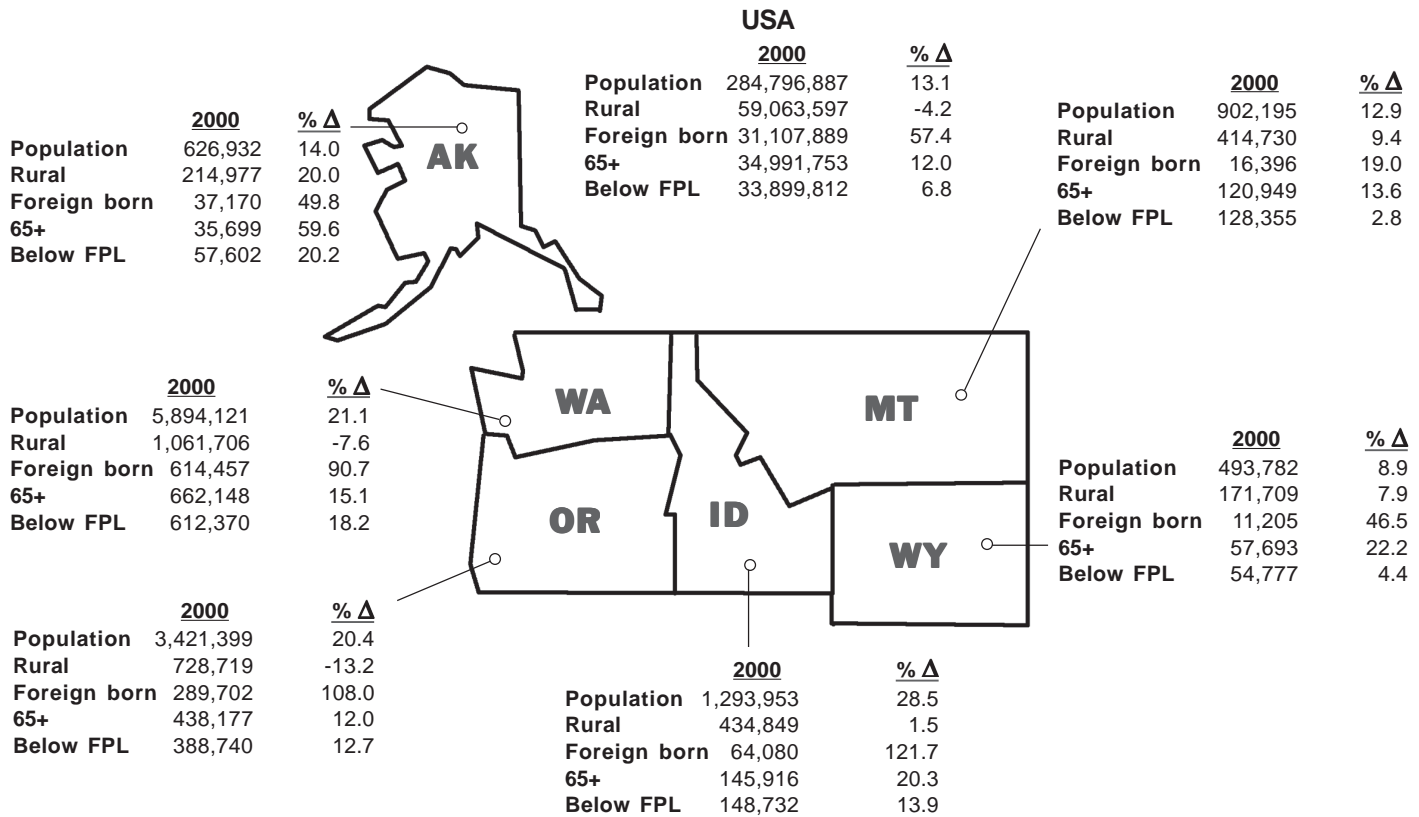


Northwest Region at a Glance

Changes from 1990 to 2000 in Selected Demographics



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

Note: The Census Bureau changed how it classified *urbanized areas*, *urban clusters*, and *rural* in 2000 so the percentage change in *rural* reflects changes due to both population and classification. % Δ = percentage of change from 1990 to 2000; FPL= federal poverty level.

The Complexity of Rural/Urban Classification

The size of rural populations can vary significantly based on how *rural* is defined. Many ways exist to classify a population or area as rural or urban, for example, by population size, density, or commuting relationships between two areas. The table below illustrates the range of rural population size in the six northwestern states.

Classification Method	Percentage of population that is rural					
	Alaska	Idaho	Montana	Oregon	Washington	Wyoming
Census Bureau¹						
<i>Non-urbanized areas</i>	55.7	53.3	74.1	42.3	27.0	74.5
<i>Rural</i>	34.3	33.6	46.0	21.3	18.0	34.8
Rural Urban Commuting Area (RUCA) ²	51.3	58.8	64.8	31.6	17.1	70.3
OMB Non-Metropolitan Counties	35.0 ³	37.6 ⁴	65.1 ⁵	26.8 ⁶	16.8 ⁷	69.9 ⁸
Revised OMB—Outside Core Based Statistical Area	26.0 ³	14.8 ⁴	36.3 ⁵	4.3 ⁶	5.8 ⁷	28.5 ⁸

¹U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov. 2000 Census data. ²WWAMI Rural Health Research Center. State 1998 population percents across area types. www.fammed.washington.edu/wwamirhrc/. ³HPAP correspondence with Alice Rarig, Alaska Office of Rural Health. July 2003. 2002 data used. ⁴HPAP correspondence with Andrea Fletcher, Idaho Office of Rural Health and Primary Care. August 2003. 2000 data used. ⁵HPAP correspondence with David Young, Montana Office of Rural Health. July 2003. 2000 data used. ⁶HPAP correspondence with Emerson Ong, Oregon Office of Rural Health. July 2003. 2002 data used. ⁷Schueler, V. (WA Department of Health). The changing face of rural Washington: 1990 to 2000 and beyond. Presentation June 2003. 2000 data used. ⁸HPAP correspondence with Wenlin Liu, Wyoming Department of Administration and Information. July 2003. 2002 data used.

(Continued on page 5)

Defining Rural

Rural definitions are used to determine eligibility for federal and state programs and funding. Some programs use one specific classification method to determine program eligibility, but others use a variation on a classification method, an alternative method, or provide a choice of methods. Included with the definitions, below, are some of the programs using that definition to determine eligibility.

Census Bureau Non-Urbanized Areas: Non-urbanized areas (including rural areas) are defined as areas that are not urbanized. An urbanized area has a population of 50,000 or more and is comprised of a continuously built-up area with a density greater than 1,000 people per square mile and adjacent areas with a density greater than 500 people per square mile.¹ The non-urbanized designation determines eligibility for Rural Health Clinics.²

Census Bureau Rural: The definition of rural areas excludes both urbanized areas and urban clusters, which have the same density requirements as urbanized areas but have populations between 2,500 and 49,999.¹

Rural Urban Commuting Area (RUCA): RUCA is a 10-tiered classification scheme that can be collapsed in many ways. The RUCA method classifies each census tract based on population and commuting patterns. The data presented on page 4 includes Large Rural City/Town Focused, Small Town Focused, and Isolated Small Rural Town Focused. It includes communities with populations below 49,999 and the areas that commute to them. It excludes communities in which 30 to 50 percent of residents commute to a Census Bureau defined urbanized area.³ Another method of combining RUCA categories is used for the U.S. Office of Rural Health Policy's rural outreach and networking grants.²

OMB Non-Metropolitan Counties: Non-metropolitan counties are counties that are not designated as metropolitan. Metropolitan counties have urbanized areas with more than 50,000 people and can include outlying counties using a complex method based on commuting patterns and population density.⁴ This definition was developed for statistical purposes,⁵ but is the designation most frequently used by the federal government,⁷ including for determining Medicare reimbursement levels.² Since the OMB classifies each county as metropolitan or non-metropolitan, it can obscure differences within a county.

Revised OMB Outside Core Based Statistical

Areas: This designation replaces the OMB Metropolitan/Non-Metropolitan designation and was released in June 2003. Outside Core Based Statistical Areas are areas not designated as a Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA). CBSAs include metropolitan areas, which have more than 50,000 people, and micropolitan areas, which have between 10,000 and 49,999.⁶ CBSAs include outlying counties in which 25 percent of residents commute to the central county of the CBSA or 25 percent of the jobs in the outlying county are held by people living in the central county.⁸

Footnotes

¹U.S. Census Bureau. *Census 2000 Urban and Rural Classification*. www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/ua-2k.html. (June 2003).

²Ehri D and Schuler V. Washington State Department of Health. *Rural definitions for reimbursement and program eligibility*. July 2003. www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/ocrh/har/Rural%20%20Definitions%20RHPU.doc. (July 2003).

³WWAMI Rural Health Research Center. *RUCA data and information*. www.fammed.washington.edu/wwamirhrc/. (July 2003).

⁴Washington State Department of Health. *Guidelines for using rural-urban classification systems for public health assessment*. 2002. www.doh.wa.gov/Data.Guidelines/RuralUrban.htm. (June 2003).

⁵U.S. Office of Management and the Budget. Bulletin No. 03-04. June 6, 2003. www.whitehouse.gov/omb/bulletins/b03-04.html. (July 2003).

⁶U.S. Census Bureau. *Metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas*. July 2003. www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/metroarea.html. (July 2003).

⁷U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Health Resources and Services Administration. *One department serving rural America: HHS rural task force report to the secretary*. July 2002. http://rural.health.hrsa.gov/PublicReport.htm. (July 2003).

⁸U.S. Office of Management and the Budget. Standards for defining metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas; notice. *Federal Register* 2002; 65(249). www.census.gov/population/www/estimates/00-32997.pdf. (August 2003).

The Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area Standards do not equate to an urban-rural classification... Programs that base funding levels or eligibility on whether a county is included in a Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area may not accurately address issues or problems faced by local populations, organizations, institutions, or governmental units.

—U.S. Office of Management and the Budget. Bulletin No. 03-04.

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