



# **Poverty in Clark County**

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**Clark County Department of Community Services  
Community Action Program**

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Department of Community Services



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## **Executive Summary**

Poverty is a critical concern in Clark County as an increasing number of people struggle to live on incomes below the poverty threshold set by the US Census following the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14. Over 48,225 Clark County residents face daily hardship and challenges in meeting basic needs, such as adequate food, health and shelter. People in Clark County are slipping into poverty due to high unemployment rates, increasing utility rates, and increased food and housing costs.

### **Method**

This profile of poverty relies principally on available poverty-related data from the 2000 US Census and the Census Bureau's American Community Survey 2005-2010 reports. Such data is viewed from various demographic perspectives such as age, gender and race. Also considered is data from other diverse populations, information from the Office of Financial Management collected in the State of Washington, the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State and the Clark County Aging Readiness Plan.

### **Numbers of People Living in Poverty**

The proportion of the Clark County population living below the poverty level increased from 9.0 percent in 2000 to 11.6 percent in 2010. At the same time, the County's total population in raw numbers grew rapidly so that the actual number of County residents living below the standard Federal poverty line increased from 31,027 to 48,225 persons; a rise of close to 64 percent. Clark County ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> out of the 39 Washington State counties when evaluated by the percentage of the total population of people living in poverty. In dramatic contrast, it ranks 6<sup>th</sup> highest in number of actual persons living in poverty.

### **Characteristics of Poverty in Clark County in 2010**

- Age
  - ♦ Forty-nine percent of the persons living in poverty are younger than 25 years of age;
  - ♦ Persons between the ages of 18 and 44 comprise the largest group in census data categories; and
  - ♦ The second largest age category is six to 17 years of age.
- Race
  - ♦ Clark County's poverty challenged population is comprised predominantly of persons of color;
  - ♦ African Americans constitute more than 20 percent of this population; and
  - ♦ Persons identifying themselves as "white" constitute approximately eight percent.
- Gender
  - ♦ More females than males live in poverty; and
  - ♦ The Female Householder, No Husband Present category has the highest household population living below poverty.

- Family Groups
  - ◆ Female Householder, No Husband Present families with children under 18 years of age constitute the largest family group subsisting under the poverty line;
  - ◆ Married-Couple Families with children under 18 years of age ranked second highest; and
  - ◆ Married-Couple Families with children under five years of age are the fastest growing family group living below poverty standards.
- Work and Public Assistance
  - ◆ Clark County households subsisting below the poverty line may be characterized as among the nation's "working poor;"<sup>1</sup>
  - ◆ A majority of these "working poor" households are headed by a male householder with no spouse;
  - ◆ Households headed by women are more likely to be receiving income from public assistance, possibly because of the need to care for children under age 18;
  - ◆ Working members of families and households below the poverty line generally work part-time; and
  - ◆ A total of 3,789 families, or 60 percent of the families below the poverty level, did not receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or other public assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> The term "working poor" is applied to those persons and households who participate in the economic system of a community, but do not achieve sufficient remuneration to pay for basic necessities such as housing, food and health care.

Clark County Department of Community Services  
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## I. Defining Poverty

The concept of poverty refers to living in a state of economic deprivation; not having enough money to take care of basic needs such as food, clothing and housing. Irrespective of race, culture, gender, religion, sexual orientation, beliefs and/or values or other variables, all people living in poverty experience a chronic suppression of their living standards. Economic growth can help a community to drive down absolute levels of poverty, but:

On the other hand, the market economy often exerts a contrary effect on poverty levels. To maximize profits, businesses usually seek to pay low wages to workers, which increase inequality and poverty. People may be laid off from work and have trouble finding employment during times of recession or economic transition...<sup>2</sup>

Conceptualizing poverty is challenging. It is a multi-faceted reality in the lives of over 15 percent of persons living in the United States and encompasses more than the lack of ability to meet an absolute economic standard. Harvard Professor of Economics John Kenneth Galbraith observed:

In part, [poverty] is a physical matter... But...it is wrong to rest everything on absolutes. People are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community.<sup>3</sup>

There are two types of poverty: situational poverty and generational poverty. Generational poverty occurs in families where two or more generations are born into poverty. Studies indicate that poverty often perpetuates more poverty, as those who grow up in economically marginalized families are more likely to live in poverty themselves as adults.

Situational poverty occurs when individuals experience some form of loss, such as a loss of job, loss of housing or lack of funds. The condition is temporary because they have the tools and skill sets needed to determine a way out of the crisis. Those who experience situational poverty often have to quickly learn the skills those in generational poverty already know, such as how to apply for public benefits, work through housing barriers or access resources.

Both absolute and relative factors contribute to the experience of poverty. Hardships that typically accompany poverty often dramatically reduce an individual's physical and psychological well-being. Several studies have demonstrated that children raised in families living in poverty are less healthy and are at-risk for reduced cognitive development, school achievement and emotional well-being. People living in poverty are also statistically more likely to experience family instability, achieve low levels of education, experience chronic health problems and have reduced life spans.<sup>4</sup>

Monitoring poverty and its influence in Clark County helps to promote ongoing understanding and awareness among policy makers, programs and citizens so that the community can more effectively respond to concerns raised socio-economic inequality. Furthermore, the poverty in

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<sup>2</sup> Iceland, John: Poverty in America; 2003: University of California Press, page 143.

<sup>3</sup> Galbraith, J.K., The Affluent Society, Reprint, 1964: New American Library, page 251.

<sup>4</sup> Hill, Ronald Paul; Surviving in a Material World: The Lived Experience of People in Poverty; 2011: University of Notre Dame Press, page 167.

Clark County report can serve as a resource; helping to structure planning and establish projects that support programs geared to improving quality of life, housing stability and community well-being for residents.

## II. US Census Poverty Measure and Threshold Level

The Census Bureau employs an absolute measure, a money income threshold that varies by family size and composition, to define who is considered living in poverty. When a family's total income is less than that family's designated poverty threshold, that family, and every individual in it, is considered to be living in poverty. US Census Bureau poverty thresholds are updated annually for inflation with the Consumer Price Index and do not vary geographically.

The original definition of poverty provided a range of income thresholds adjusted by such factors as family size, sex of the head of household, number of children under 18 years of age and farm-non-farm residence. At the core of this definition of poverty was the economy food plan; the least costly of four nutritionally adequate food plans designed by the Department of Agriculture. Since 1964, the poverty threshold has been revised twice, first in 1969, and again in 1981.

Historically, the poverty guideline estimated thresholds have been calculated using annual income measured against family unit size, summarized in Table 1. These US Census data average poverty thresholds were derived by increasing the average thresholds by a factor that reflects the percent change in the average annual Consumer Price Index.

**Table 1**  
**Census Bureau Poverty Threshold by Family Size**

Size of Family Unit	2000 \$/Year	2005 \$/Year	2010 \$/Year
1 Person (unrelated individual)	\$8,794	\$9,973	\$11,139
Two Persons	11,239	12,755	14,218
Three Persons	13,738	15,277	17,324
Four Persons	17,603	19,806	22,314
Five Persons	20,819	23,307	26,439
Six Persons	23,528	26,096	29,897

Source: US Census Bureau, Poverty Data, 2000-2010

Per the US Census Bureau (accessed at: <http://www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/povdef.html>), income for use in Federal Poverty Level calculations is defined as pre-tax money that includes:

- Wage/Salary Earnings;
- Unemployment Compensation;
- Workers' Compensation;
- Social Security;
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- Public Assistance;
- Veterans' Payments;
- Survivor Benefits;
- Pension or Retirement Income;
- Interest;
- Dividends;
- Rents;
- Royalties;
- Income from Estates;
- Trusts;
- Educational Assistance;
- Alimony;
- Child Support;
- Assistance from Outside the Household; and
- Other miscellaneous sources.

Non-cash benefits, such as food stamps and housing subsidies, are not considered. In addition, calculated income excludes capital gains or losses.

Calculation of family income is based on the aggregation of incomes from all family members, although non-relatives, such as housemates, are not considered.

### **Federal Poverty Measure Shortcomings**

The current federal poverty measure does not reflect changes in consumption patterns, household composition and American parents' changing labor force participation patterns which have occurred since the 1960s. Further, this measure ignores the rising costs associated with health insurance coverage and health status on the well-being of individuals and families. Finally, it does not provide an accurate picture of the impact of in-kind governmental transfers or tax benefits on poverty, because the official measure of poverty does not count these benefits as part of the measurable pool of family resources.

The method of using a multiplier approach does not, by itself, solve all difficulties related to the federal poverty standard. Since the official poverty measure was first developed and implemented in the early 1960s, it has been updated only to reflect inflation; its basic structure has not, and cannot, be modified to incorporate emerging needs. This inability to account for new or different needs results from two methodological problems. First, the federal poverty measure is based on the cost of a single item; food. Second, it assumes a fixed ratio between food and all other needs (for example, housing, clothing, utilities and child care). The fixed ratio structure does not permit some costs to rise faster than the cost of food. Finally, there is no way to increase the amount allotted for food as a means of taking into account new nutritional standards.

In addition to outdated nutritional standards and the limited basic needs package, the demographic model (the two-parent family with a stay-at-home wife) has also changed significantly since the measure's inception. Particularly for households with two working parents—of whom there are many more today than in the 1960s—new needs associated with employment, such as transportation, taxes and child care, have emerged.

Finally, the poverty measure does not distinguish between those families in which the adults are employed and those in which the adults do not work outside the home. At the time that the poverty measure was first implemented, taxes were minimal for families who are low-income and transportation was inexpensive. Most important, the majority of workers with children had a nonworking spouse who provided childcare. Today, taxes, even for families who are low-income, are substantial; transportation can be costly and many families do not have “free” childcare available.

Public programs have recognized the failure of the one-size-fits-all poverty measure to capture differences in need. Different responses from various programs have led to some improvement. For example, instead of using the poverty measure, federal housing programs assess need using local area median income as a way to take into account significant differences in cost of living among locales. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program takes into account variations in costs associated with housing and childcare when considering benefits.

### **American Community Survey**

The primary purpose of the American Community Survey (ACS) is to measure the changing social and economic characteristics of the US population. The decennial census, on the other hand, is used for the purpose of congressional apportionment and legislative redistricting.

The ACS conducts “period” estimates for single-year, 3-year and 5-year increments that represent data collected over a period of time (as opposed to “point-in-time” estimates, such as the decennial census, that approximate the characteristics of an area on a specific date). The primary advantage of using multi-year estimates is the increased statistical reliability of the data for less populated areas and small population sub-groups. Table 2 shows the differences between each of the estimates.

The 2010 American Community Survey universe is limited to the household population and excludes the population living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters. Data based on a sample is subject to sampling variability.

The majority of data used in this report comes from the American Community Survey 3-year estimates. However, there are a few tables based on 5-year estimates due to small sub-populations rendering 3-year estimates unreliable.

**Table 2**  
**Distinguishing Features of ACS 1-Year, 3-Year and 5-Year Estimates**

<b>1-Year Estimates</b>	<b>3-Year Estimates</b>	<b>5-Year Estimates</b>
12 months of collected data	36 months of collected data	60 months of collected data
Data for areas with populations of 65,000+	Data for areas with population 20,000+	Data for all areas
Smallest sample size	Larger sample size than 1-year	Largest sample size
Less reliable than 3- or 5-year	More reliable than 1-year, less reliable than 5-year	Most reliable
Most current data	Less current than 1-year estimates, more current than 5-year	Least current
<b>Best Used When</b>	<b>Best Used When</b>	<b>Best Used When</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currency is more important than precision</li> <li>• Analyzing large populations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More precise than 1-year, more current than 5-year</li> <li>• Analyzing smaller populations</li> <li>• Examining smaller geographies because 1-year estimates are not available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precision is more important than currency</li> <li>• Analyzing very small populations</li> <li>• Examining tracts and other smaller geographies because 1-year estimates are not available</li> </ul>

Source: Census Guidance for Data Users, 2012

### III. Other Poverty Measures and Guidelines

#### HHS Poverty Guidelines

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has developed alternative poverty guidelines based on the original version of the federal poverty measure. These guidelines are updated annually, but, unlike the US Census, draws no age distinction. HHS statistics vary from the US Census data poverty thresholds and are not used in connection with determining poverty population figures from the American Community Survey 2010 data. Although poverty guidelines are sometimes loosely referred to as the “federal poverty level” (FPL), this phrase is ambiguous and should be avoided, especially in situations (e.g. legislative and administrative) where precision is important. For more information, visit <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty>.

HHS guidelines are not calculated on census data, but are a simplification of poverty thresholds designed for administrative purposes—as, for example, in determining financial eligibility for certain federal programs, such as Head Start, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the National School Lunch Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Children’s Health Insurance Program. Public assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI), do not use the HHS poverty guidelines in determining eligibility. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program also does not use the poverty guidelines for eligibility purposes.

A sample of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines are shown in the table below:

**Table 3**  
**Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines**

<b>Year</b>	<b>First Person</b>	<b>Each Additional Person</b>	<b>4-Person Family</b>
2012	\$11,170	\$3,960	\$23,050
2011	10,890	\$3,820	\$22,350
2010	10,830	3,740	22,050
2005	9,570	3,260	19,350
2000	8,350	2,900	17,050

Source: Health and Human Services, Poverty Guidelines, 2000-2012

#### The Self-Sufficiency Standard Measure

Self-sufficiency is defined as the ability to maintain a decent standard of living, including not having to choose between basic necessities.<sup>5</sup> The Self-Sufficiency Standard, unlike the federal poverty standard and HHS guidelines, charts the actual cost to live and work in each county of Washington State (and certain other states), including Clark County. Location data enable policy makers and citizens to better gauge income adequacy. This standard is based on the assumption that all adults in a household work full time and also takes into account taxes and tax credits in its calculations. The measure estimates how much a family must earn to pay for housing, food,

<sup>5</sup> Pearce, D, and Brooks, J.; The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State; 2001: University of Washington.

transportation, childcare, taxes, healthcare and other basic necessities. Because the measure is based on the number and ages of children in each household, Earned Income Tax Credits, childcare tax credits and child tax credits are considered.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard documents the cost of living that families of different sizes must meet to live independently, without public or private assistance. The Self-Sufficiency Standard demonstrates that, for most families, earnings above the official poverty level or high enough to disqualify recipients from TANF, are, nevertheless, far below the actual dollars required to meet their families' basic needs.

The Self-Sufficiency Standard guidelines were developed by Diana Pearce, PhD, who currently teaches at the University of Washington, School of Social Work. The Standard has been used in several states, including Michigan and Pennsylvania, to evaluate economic development proposals, the impact of proposed policy changes and as a benchmark for evaluation. In some cases, e.g. New York State, it has been used as a tool for assisting individuals and families work toward their economic goals.

The table below is the Self-Sufficiency Standard developed specifically for Clark County, 2011.

**Table 4**  
**2011 Self-Sufficiency Standard for Clark County**

Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult + Pre-schooler	Adult + Infant Pre-schooler	Adult + Preschooler + School-age	Adult + School-age + Teenager	2 Adults + Infant	2 Adults + Pre-schooler + School-age	2 Adults + Infant, Pre-schooler + School-age
Housing	786	908	908	908	908	908	908	1,323
Child Care	0	789	1,510	1,255	466	721	1,255	1,976
Food	218	331	436	497	576	530	683	756
Transportation	271	279	279	279	279	532	532	532
Health Care	113	373	384	394	422	430	451	462
Miscellaneous	139	268	352	333	265	312	383	505
Taxes	263	529	709	649	409	541	678	999
Earned Income Tax Credit (-)	0	0	0	0	-84	0	0	0
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	0	-55	-100	-100	-60	-50	-100	-100
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-83	-167	-167	-167	-83	-167	-250
<b>Self-Sufficiency Wage in Dollars (\$):</b>								
Hourly (\$)	10.17	18.97	24.48	23.00	17.13	10.19	13.13	17.62
							Per Adult	Per Adult
Monthly (\$)	1,790	3,338	4,309	4,048	3,015	3,840	4,623	6,203
Annual (\$)	21,476	40,060	51,710	48,580	36,177	48,580	55,479	74,432

Source: Workforce Development Council of Seattle-King County; 2011; The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State, <http://selfsufficiencystandard.org>

### National Reduced Price School Lunch Program

The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches is often used as an indicator of children's economic well-being. The National School Lunch Program provides reduced cost or free lunches to students, with eligibility based on a students' family size and income. Children

from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. The percentage is calculated by dividing the number of eligible students by the number of students fitting lunch program criteria and enrolled in schools participating in the program.

The percentage of children getting free or reduced lunches in Clark County varies between school districts from 20 to 52 percent. Table 5 lists percentages for participating school districts in Clark County during the 2005-2006 and 2010-2011 school years.

**Table 5**  
**Percentage of Children on Reduced Price School Lunch Program**

<b>School District</b>	<b>2005-2006 School Year %</b>	<b>2010-2011 School Year %</b>
Vancouver School District 037	38.6%	52.0%
Evergreen School District 114	34.9	45.2
Green Mtn. School District 103	24.1	41.4
Washougal School District 112	34.5	42.0
La Center School District 101	19.8	28.4
Ridgefield School District 122	26.6	33.1
Battle Ground School District 119	28.2	38.0
Camas School District 117	16.1	20.0
Hockinson School District 098	13.7	24.5
<b>Clark County School District Average Percent</b>	<b>26.2</b>	<b>36.1</b>

Source: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, WA State Report Card, 2010-2011

### **Supplemental Poverty Measure**

The Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) is collected by the Census Bureau in collaboration with the Bureau of Labor Statistics. This measurement was created in 2009 as a complement to the official poverty guidelines which have been in use since the 1960's. The SPM does not replace the official poverty rate which is still used to determine eligibility for various assistance programs. The new measure is based on: all people in a household, related and unrelated; uses consumer expenditure data for food, clothing, shelter and utilities costs; considers geography adjustments for cost of housing; and is based on gross cash income, near-money federal in-kind benefits, minus income and payroll taxes and non-discretionary expenses such as out-of-pocket medical costs and child care.

The SPM takes into account facts that are obvious to advocates, but have previously not been reflected in poverty measurements. Families receiving housing subsidies or SNAP food benefits should have more money to spend on other necessities than those that do not receive those benefits. Going to work increases a family's income, but payroll and income taxes and the cost of child care and other work-related expenses reduce the ability for that family to afford other necessities. For people with health insurance, out-of-pocket medical costs such as premiums,

deductibles and co-payments add up and may leave people who are low-income without the money needed to pay other bills.

When comparing the national poverty rate to the SPM, there are notable differences.

Using the SPM, 2010 poverty rate decreased for the populations below:<sup>6</sup>

- Total population: 16% or 49 million were in poverty compared to 15.1% or 46.2 million in poverty according to the official poverty rate;
- Children: 18.2% compared to 22% using the official poverty rate; and
- African-Americans: 25.4% compared to 27.5% using the official poverty rate.

The populations below saw an increase in 2010 poverty rates due to the SPM:<sup>7</sup>

- Asian: 16.7%, an increase from the official rate of 12.1%;
- Hispanic: 28.2% compared to 26.7% using the official rate;
- Non-Hispanic White: 11.1% in comparison to the official rate of 10%; and
- Seniors (65+): 15.9%, which saw the greatest increase compared to all identified populations over the official poverty rate of 9%.

The official 2010 poverty rate for a family of four is \$22,113, in comparison the SPM poverty rate of \$24,343. The SPM has been deemed a more effective measure to illustrate how specific governmental benefits are, or are not moving people out of poverty. It also helps identify a more accurate number of people who are experiencing poverty and what type of additional support may be needed to actually move families out of poverty.

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<sup>6</sup> Short, Kathleen, The Research: Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2010, United States Census Bureau, November 2011,

<sup>7</sup> Short, Kathleen, The Research: Supplemental Poverty Measure: 2010, United States Census Bureau, November 2011,

## IV. Profile of Poverty in Clark County

Poverty is a serious concern that continues to impact Clark County. The poverty rate increased 55.4 percent between 2000 and 2010, while the general population increased 20.9 percent. As the population expanded, the actual number of people living in poverty climbed from 31,027 people in 2000 to a total of 48,225 individuals in 2010. The table below summarizes Clark County population by age groups for people living in poverty in 2000 compared to 2010.

**Table 6**  
**Clark County Population by Age**  
**Living Below Poverty Level: 2000-2010**

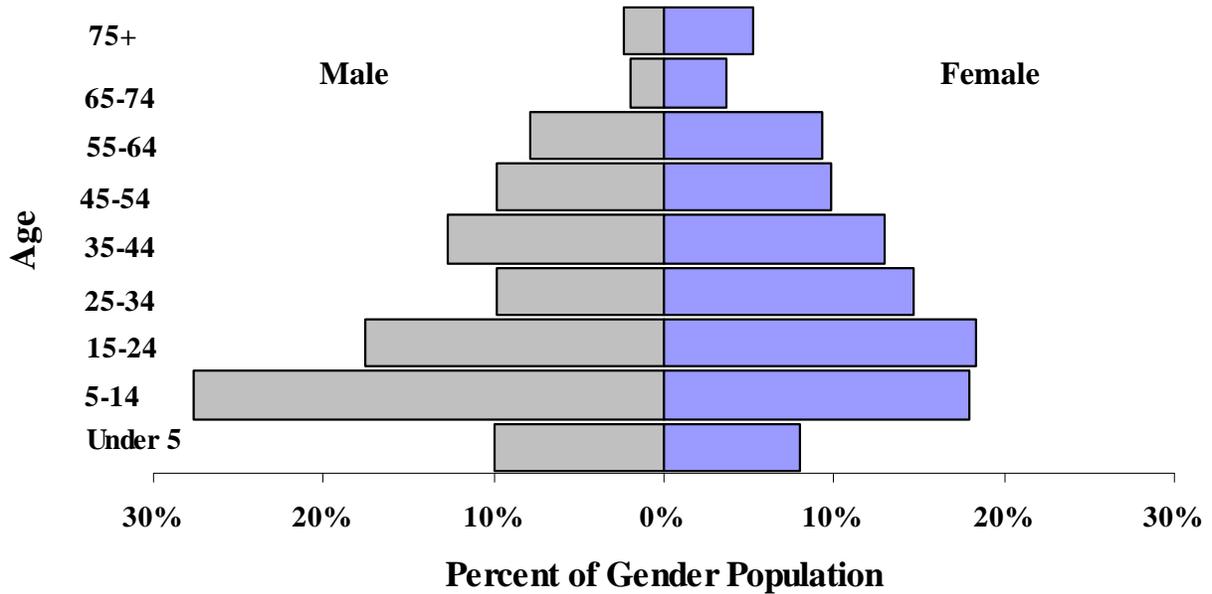
	2000	2010	2000-2010 % Change
Total Population	345,240	417,423	20.9%
Total Below Poverty Level	31,027	48,225	55.4
5 Years and Under	4,441	4,854	9.3
6 to 17 Years	7,365	13,349	81.2
18 to 44 Years	13,022	17,724	36.1
45 to 74 Years	5,015	10,353	106.4
75 Years and Over	1,187	1,945	63.9

Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

- According to American Community Survey data, Clark County’s total population of 417,423 persons in 2010 was the fifth highest of Washington State’s 39 counties;
- In 2010, Clark County ranked as the sixth highest county in total population of individuals living in poverty and 32<sup>nd</sup> in the percentage of the total population living below poverty;
- The poverty rate for people 18 to 44 years reflected a 36.1 percent increase between 2000 and 2010;
- The poverty rate for people 45 to 74 years old reflected a 106.4 percent increase between 2000 and 2010; and
- The population aged 75 and over increased 63.9 percent between 2000 and 2010.

The chart below illustrates the age distribution of the county population living below poverty.

**Chart 1**  
**Age Distribution of Clark County Population**  
**Living Below Poverty: 2010**



Source: American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

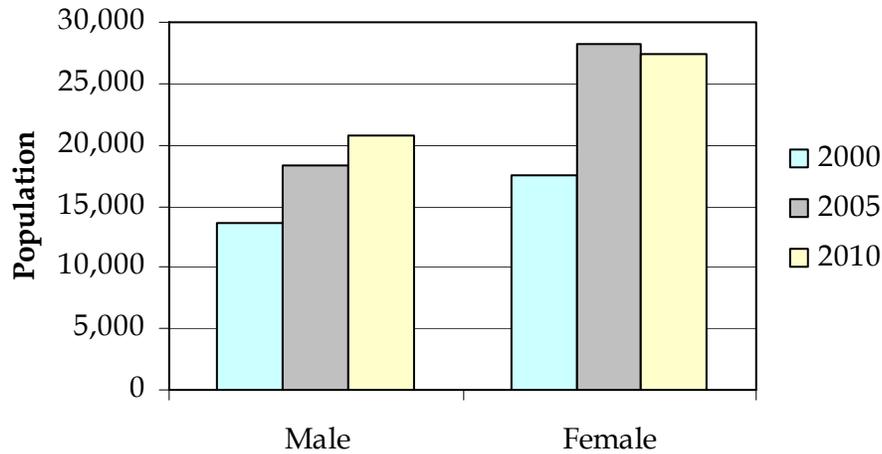
In summary:

- Forty-nine percent of all people living in poverty are younger than 25 years;
- Seven percent of those living in poverty are over 64 years of age; and
- Twenty-eight percent of the people living in poverty are between the family formation ages of 25 to 44 years.

## Poverty by Gender

American Community Survey reports indicate that females continue to outnumber males among people living in poverty. The chart below compares 2000, 2005 and 2010 poverty populations by gender.

**Chart 2**  
**Population by Gender Living Below Poverty Level in Clark County: 2000-2010**



Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2005 and 2010

**Table 7**  
**Summary of Change in Poverty Population**  
**by Age and Gender in Clark County**

Age Group	2000		2010		Percent Change	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
5 Years and Under	2,381	2,061	2,074	2,181	-12.9%	5.5%
6 to 17 Years	3,000	3,502	7,140	6,808	58.0	48.6
18 to 64 Years	6,603	10,437	10,682	15,982	38.1	34.7
65 to 74 Years	331	662	419	994	21.0	33.4
75 Years and Over	370	817	494	1,451	25.1	43.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,548</b>	<b>17,479</b>	<b>20,809</b>	<b>27,416</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>36.2</b>

Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

In summary:

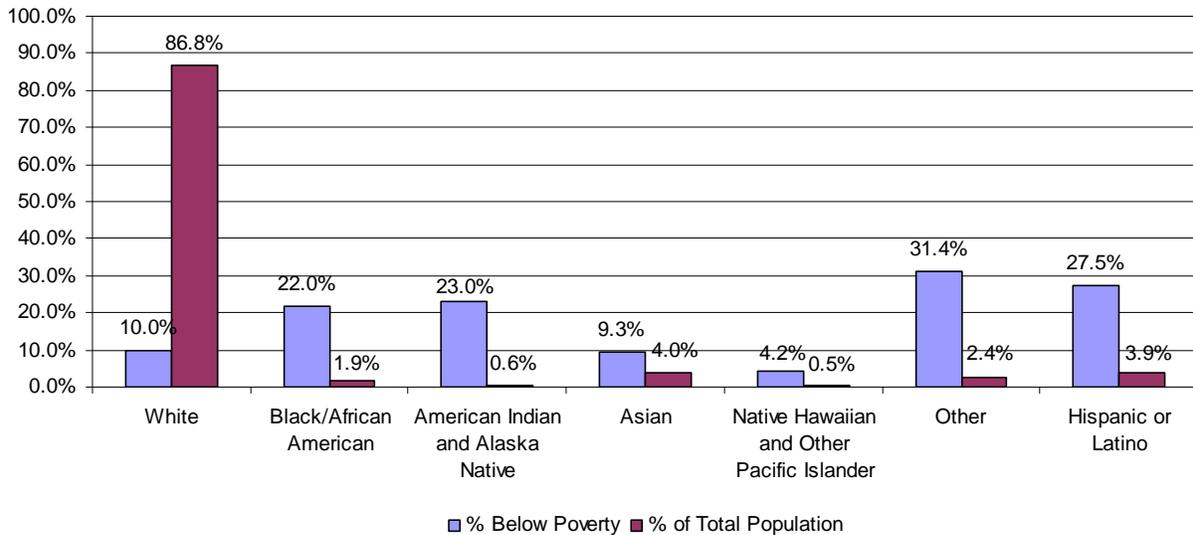
- Overall, the number of males living in poverty increased from 43.7 percent from 2000 to 2010, while the female population increased 36.2 percent; and
- The number of females age 75 and over, living in poverty, increased by 43.7 percent from 2000 to 2010, while the male population in this category increased by only 25.1 percent.

### Poverty and Race/Ethnicity

According to American Community Survey indicators, persons who identified themselves as a member of a race other than white constituted 13.3 percent of the total population of Clark County in 2010, compared to 22.7 percent of the total in Washington State and 22.6 percent in the nation. Minorities residing in Clark County include a diverse mix of people: African Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, Asians, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, Russians and Eastern Europeans. Although American Community Survey data research has been slow to count specific race and ethnic groups that reflect this breadth of variety, it is still possible to gain a sense of these populations living below the poverty level.

The chart below compares each race/ethnic group by percentage living at or below the poverty level. Whereas 10 percent of whites live at or below the poverty level, 22 percent of the African American population, 23 percent of the American Indian and Alaska Native population and 27.5 percent of Hispanic or Latino live at challenging income levels.

**Chart 3**  
**Percent Race/Ethnic Groups Living in Poverty: 2010**



Source: American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

## **Poverty by Household Type**

The US Census Bureau has defined a household as follows:

- Household includes all persons who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. Households are classified by type according to the sex of the householder (see below) and the presence of relatives;
- Householder is the person, or one of the people, in whose name the home is owned, being bought or rented. If there is no such person present, any household member 15 years old and over can serve as the householder. Two types of householders are distinguished, a family householder and a non-family householder:
  - ♦ A family householder is a householder living with one or more people related to him/her or by birth, marriage or adoption. The householder and all people in the household related to him/her are family members; and
  - ♦ A non-family householder is a householder living alone or with non-relatives only.
- Family is a group of two or more people who reside together and who are related by birth, marriage or adoption.

The majority of Clark County households experiencing poverty are “family households” as opposed to unrelated individuals or single-person households which are listed as an “Other” category in US Census terms.

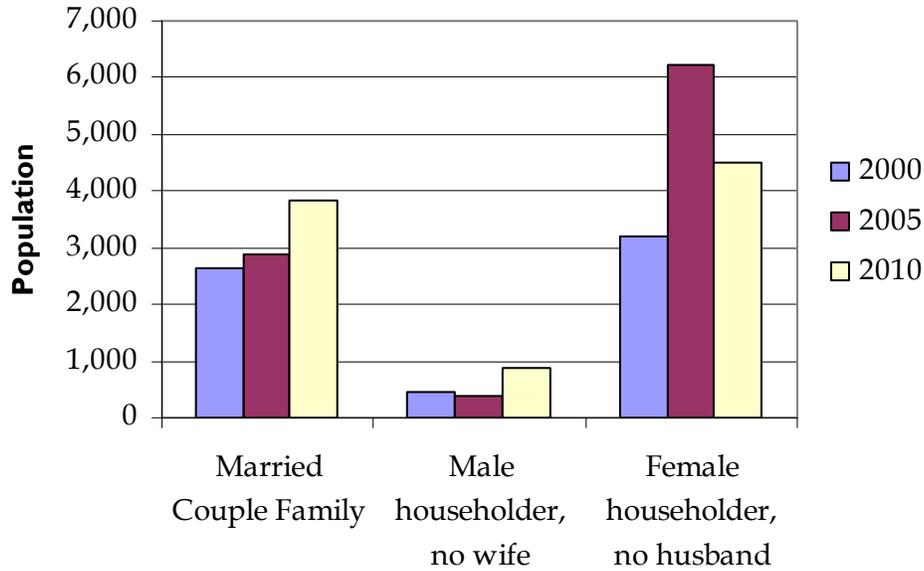
In summary:

- In 2010, the number of people 75 and over living in households experiencing poverty increased 63.9 percent (1,945 households) over 2000;
- Female Householder, No Husband Present with related children under 18 years increased by 171 percent between 2000 and 2010 (8,132 households); and
- Married-Couple Families with related children under 18 years increased 45 percent between 2000 and 2010.

## **Families with Children Living Below the Poverty Level**

The 2010 American Community Survey reports there are 9,202 families living below the poverty threshold in Clark County. Of these families, 2,586 (45%) included related children under the age of 18, an increase of 45 percent over 2000. The following chart illustrates the growth of families in poverty between 2000 and 2010.

**Chart 4**  
**Families Living in Poverty with Children Under 18**  
**Clark County: 2000-2010**



Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2005 and 2010

Census and American Community Survey data indicate that:

- The number of families living in poverty overall increased over 2000 levels by 46 percent in 2010;
- There are significantly more single female than single male headed families with children under 18 or Married-Couple Families;
- Female Householder, No Husband Present increased 171 percent, in the decade between 2000 and 2010, while the number of children aged five and under decreased 29 percent, and children aged five to 17 increased by 45 percent; and
- The number of Male Householder, No Wife Present with children under 18 years increased by 75 percent by the year 2010.

**Table 8**  
**Clark County Families Living Below Poverty**  
**with Children Under 18: 2000-2010**

	2000	2005	2010	2000-2010 % change
<b>Married-Couple Family:</b>				
<i>With Related Children Under 18 Years:</i>	1,787	2,120	2,586	45%
Under 5 Years Only	396	314	280	-29
5 to 17 Years Only	709	1,158	1,030	45
Under 5 Years and 5 to 17 Years	682	648	1,276	87
<i>No Related Children Under 18 Years</i>	840	775	1,239	48
<b>Other Family:</b>				
<i>Male Householder, No Wife Present:</i>				
With Related Children Under 18 Years:	456	252	797	75%
Under 5 Years Only	94	0	126	34
5 to 17 Years Only	207	168	106	-49
Under 5 Years and 5 to 17 Years	113	84	565	400
<i>No Related Children Under 18 Years</i>	42	144	68	62
<i>Female Householder, No Husband Present:</i>				
With Related Children Under 18 Years:	3,006	6,239	8,132	171%
Under 5 Years Only	708	2,059	1,277	80
5 to 17 Years Only	1,492	3,186	1,006	-33
Under 5 Years and 5 to 17 Years	806	994	5,849	626
<i>No Related Children Under 18 Years</i>	202	199	4,177	1,968
<b>Total Families Living in Poverty</b>	<b>6,291</b>	<b>9,727</b>	<b>9,202</b>	<b>46</b>

Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2005 and 2010

### Poverty and Work Status

American Community Survey 2010 data indicate that of the 9,202 families living at or below poverty level, only 1,144 of the households have at least one full-time, year-round working adult.

- Only 6 percent of Married-Couple Families reported at least one member working full-time year-round;
- Of Married-Couple Families, 1,280 did not report any family member working (14 percent of the total families living below poverty);
- Of the Male Householder, No Wife Present, 237 (2.5%) did not work in the past 12 months.
- Of the Female Householder, No Husband Present, 2,101 (22.8%) did not work in the past 12 months; and
- Roughly 17 percent of the total families below poverty reported at least one member working full-time year-round.

**Table 9**  
**Type of Work and Experience of Householder and Spouse**  
**Comparison in Clark County: 2000-2010**

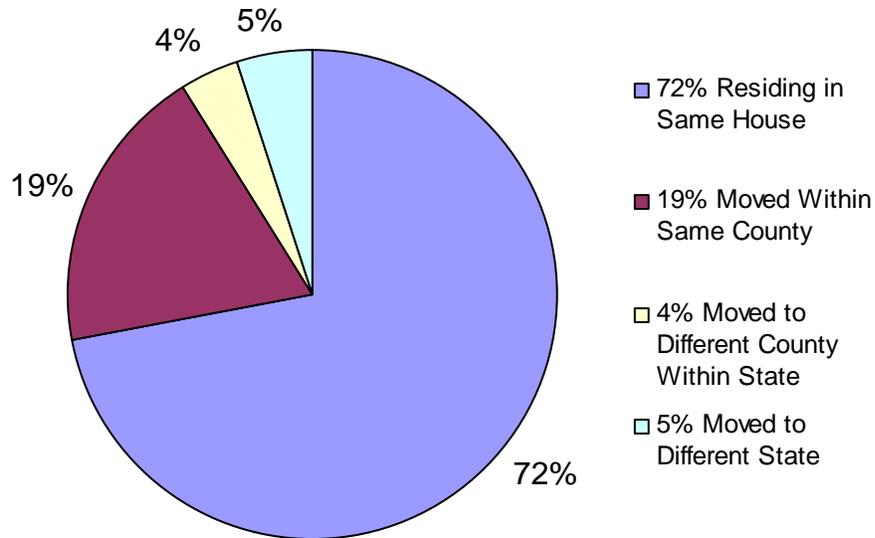
	2000	2010
<b>Total Number of Families Living Below Poverty Level</b>	<b>6,291</b>	<b>9,202</b>
<b>Married Couple Family</b>	<b>2,627</b>	<b>3,825</b>
<i>Householder Worked FT, YR</i>	516	590
Spouse Worked FT, YR	37	0
Spouse Worked Less Than FT, YR	147	129
Spouse Did Not Work in Past 12 Months	332	461
<i>Householder Worked Less Than FT, YR</i>	1,008	1,298
Spouse Worked FT, YR	76	204
Spouse Worked Less Than FT, YR	394	415
Spouse Did Not Work in Past 12 Months	538	679
<i>Householder Did Not Work in Past 12 Months</i>	1,103	1,937
Spouse Worked FT, YR	75	208
Spouse Worked Less Than FT, YR	194	449
Spouse Did Not Work in Past 12 Months	834	1,280
<b>Other Family</b>	<b>3,664</b>	<b>5,377</b>
<i>Male Householder (HH), No Wife Present</i>	456	865
HH Worked FT, YR	63	194
HH Worked Less Than FT, YR	260	434
HH Did Not Work in Past 12 Months	133	237
<i>Female Householder (HH), No Husband Present</i>	3,208	4,512
HH Worked FT, YR	307	360
HH Worked Less Than FT, YR	1,755	2,021
HH Did Not Work in Past 12 Months	1,146	2,101
(FT = Full Time, YR = Year Round, HH = Household)		

Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

### Geographical Mobility in the Past Year

Some assume that people living below the poverty level moved to Clark County from another county or state. Data indicates that 91 percent of those living in poverty in Clark County lived in Clark County the previous year, as shown below.

**Chart 5  
Geographical Mobility in the Past Year of  
Individuals Living Below Poverty: 2010**



Source: American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

### Poverty and Public Assistance

Of the 9,202 families living in poverty, a significant number receive no Social Security income, no Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and no public assistance.

- Social Security Income includes pensions and survivor's benefits, disability insurance and railroad retirement insurance, but does not include Medicare;
- SSI is a nationwide assistance program administered by the Social Security Administration that guarantees a minimum level of income for needy, aged, blind or disabled individuals; and
- Public assistance income includes general assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) TANF.

**Table 10**  
**Poverty Status in 2010 of Families by Family Type by Social Security Income by Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Public Assistance**

	Clark County	
	Families	% Total
<b>Number of Families Living Below Poverty Level</b>	<b>9,202</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Married-Couple Family:</b>	<b>3,825</b>	<b>41.6</b>
With SSI Income	577	6.3
With SSI and/or Public Assistance Income	94	1.0
Without SSI or Public Assistance Income	483	5.2
Without Social Security Income	3,248	35.3
With SSI and/or Public Assistance Income	616	6.7
Without SSI or Public Assistance Income	2,632	28.6
<b>“Other Families”</b>	<b>5,377</b>	<b>58.4</b>
<b>Male Householder, No Wife Present:</b>	<b>865</b>	<b>9.4</b>
With SSI Income	57	0.6
With SSI and/or Public Assistance Income	20	0.2
Without SSI or Public Assistance Income	37	0.4
Without Social Security Income	808	8.8
With SSI and/or Public Assistance Income	193	2.1
Without SSI or Public Assistance Income	615	6.7
<b>Female Householder, No Husband Present:</b>	<b>4,512</b>	<b>49.0</b>
With SSI Income	321	3.5
With SSI and/or Public Assistance Income	158	1.7
Without SSI or Public Assistance Income	163	1.8
Without Social Security Income	4,191	45.5
With SSI and/or Public Assistance Income	1,547	16.8
Without SSI or Public Assistance Income	2,644	28.7

Source: American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

Poverty and assistance findings based on American Community Survey 2010 data suggest that:

- Of the 3,825 Married-Couple Families in Clark County who are living in poverty, 2,632 (about 29 percent) do not receive any income assistance as described above;
- Seven percent of Male Householders, No Wife Present receive none of the aid described above; and
- Nearly 29 percent of Female Householders, No Husband Present do not receive any of the described assistance.

### **Poverty and Educational Attainment**

American Community Survey data on educational attainment is limited to persons aged 25 years old and over. More than 24,585 Clark County residents living below the poverty level fit into this age category. Nearly 24 percent did not earn a high school degree.

**Table 11**  
**Adults (ages 25+) Living Below Poverty Level and Education**  
**in Clark County: 2010**

	People	Percent
Adults Living Below Poverty Level	24,585	
Adults Who Did Not Complete High School	5,628	23.9%

Source: American Community Survey, 3-year estimate, 2010

**Poverty and Disabilities**

According to American Community Survey 2010 data, more than 49,977 people experienced some form of disability (these data do not include those persons and non-civilians residing in institutionalized settings). The table below reports American Community Survey 2010 data pertaining to the 9,752 people with disabilities living below the poverty line (20 percent of the overall population living below poverty level).

**Table 12**  
**Poverty and Disabilities in Clark County: 2010**

Age Groups	People	Percent of Total Disability Population
Under 5	27	>1%
5-17	1,494	3.0
18-34	1,652	3.3
35-64	4,778	9.6
65+	1,804	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,752</b>	<b>19.5*</b>

\*Percentage of total Clark County population living with a disability (49,977).

Source: American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

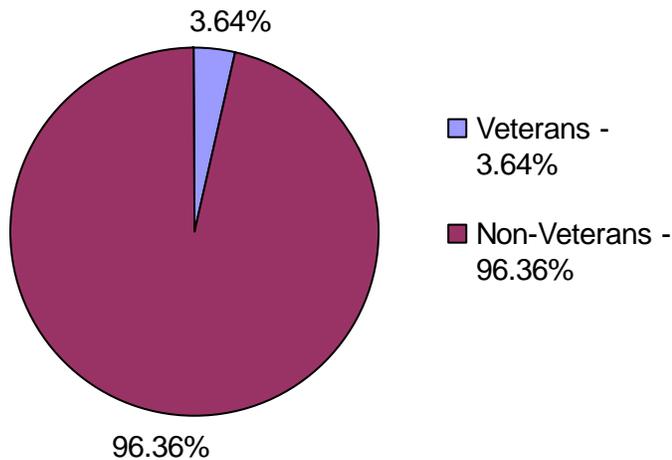
In summary:

- Of the people in this group, more than 1,521 were children under the age of 18 (about four percent);
- The majority, or 12.9 percent of the population with disabilities living below poverty, fell into the 18 to 64 year age group; and
- The 65+ population was comprised of 3.6 percent of the overall population of people with disabilities who were also in poverty.

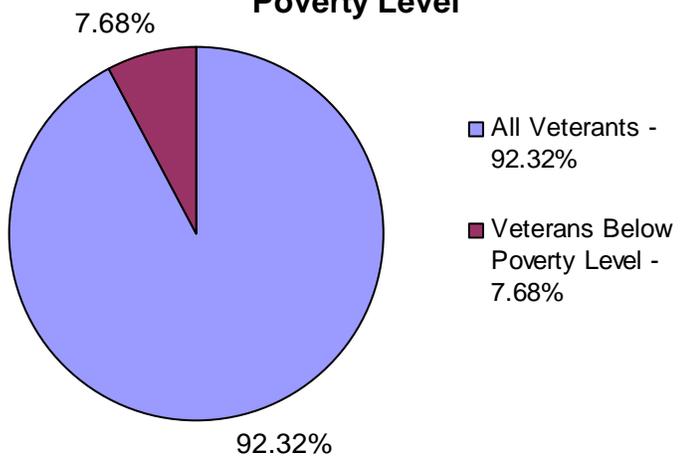
### Poverty and Veterans (Those Who Have Served in the Military)

Veterans are honored members of the community; however, make up a small portion of Clark County residents living in poverty. Only 3.6% of the total veteran population is living below the poverty limits. Conversely, 7.6% of the total population living in poverty is a veteran. In addition, veterans have higher annual incomes than nonveterans by over \$12,000.

#### Percent of All Clark County Residents Below Poverty Level



#### Percent of All Veterans in Clark County Below Poverty Level



### Poverty and Seniors

Clark County recently convened a task force to assess the needs and develop a plan for the aging population in Clark County. The Clark County Aging Readiness Plan was adopted on February 7, 2012 and recommends short-, medium- and long-term goals to address and prepare for the “silver tsunami” of baby boomers living in Clark County. About 27 percent of Clark County householders 65 and older are cost-burdened; paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing, as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Cost-burdened households may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. As adults retire, their incomes can decrease, increasing the number of cost-burdened households. The Vancouver Housing Authority has a shortfall of 1,000 units to meet the demand for elderly housing, even though the list has been closed for five years. National trends show that one in four Clark County residents will be 60 or older by 2030, an increase of 23 percent. The number of people 85 and older will increase 50 percent.

### Poverty Status by Place of Birth and Citizenship Status

According to the 2010 American Community Survey, 20 percent of those living below the poverty level were foreign-born. Of those, 16 percent are not US citizens. As the proportion of foreign-born residents increased from 2000 to 2010, the proportion of naturalized citizens also increased, as summarized in Table 13.

**Table 13**  
**Poverty Status by Place of Birth by Citizenship Status: 2000-2010**

	<b>2000</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
<b>Native</b>	<b>25,397</b>	<b>81.9%</b>	<b>38,519</b>	<b>80.0%</b>
Born in the US	25,300	81.5	38,118	79.0
Born Outside the US	97	0.4	401	0.8
<b>Foreign Born</b>	<b>5,630</b>	<b>18.1</b>	<b>9,706</b>	<b>20.0</b>
Naturalized Citizen	915	2.9	2,002	4.2
Not a Citizen	4,715	15.2	7,704	16.0
<b>Total Living Below Poverty Threshold</b>	<b>31,027</b>		<b>48,225</b>	

Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-year Estimates, 2010

### Clark County Ranking by Poverty Status in Washington State

American Community Survey 2010 reports indicate that Clark County ranked sixth highest among Washington State counties in the raw number of people living below poverty level. This population represented 11.6 percent of Clark County's total population. When the data are viewed as a proportion of total population, Clark County ranks 33<sup>rd</sup>, which means that the County is near the bottom of all Washington counties in the percent of people living in poverty calculated based on total population. Table 15 enumerates counties ranking higher than Clark County in actual number of people in poverty, and Table 16 shows the percent poverty rate ranking of the lowest 10 counties.

**Table 14**  
**Ranking of Washington Counties with**  
**Population Living Below Poverty Level: 2010**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Population Below Poverty</b>
1	King County	188,539
2	Pierce County	88,421
3	Spokane County	62,847
4	Snohomish County	57,584
5	Yakima County	50,608
<b>6</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>44,669</b>
7	Whatcom County	28,618
8	Thurston County	24,782
9	Kitsap County	22,734
10	Benton County	20,962

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2010

**Table 15**  
**Ranking of Counties by Percent Living Below Poverty Level**  
**in Washington State: 2010**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Population Below Poverty</b>	<b>Percent of Population Living in Poverty in 1999</b>
1	Whitman County	10,431	27.6%
30	Pierce County	88,421	11.6
31	Chelan County	8,046	11.5
<b>32</b>	<b>Clark County</b>	<b>44,669</b>	<b>10.9</b>
33	Thurston County	24,782	10.3
34	King County	188,539	10.2
35	San Juan County	1,554	10.1
36	Kitsap County	22,734	9.4
37	Skamania County	1,014	9.4
38	Snohomish County	57,584	8.4
39	Island County	6,053	8.0

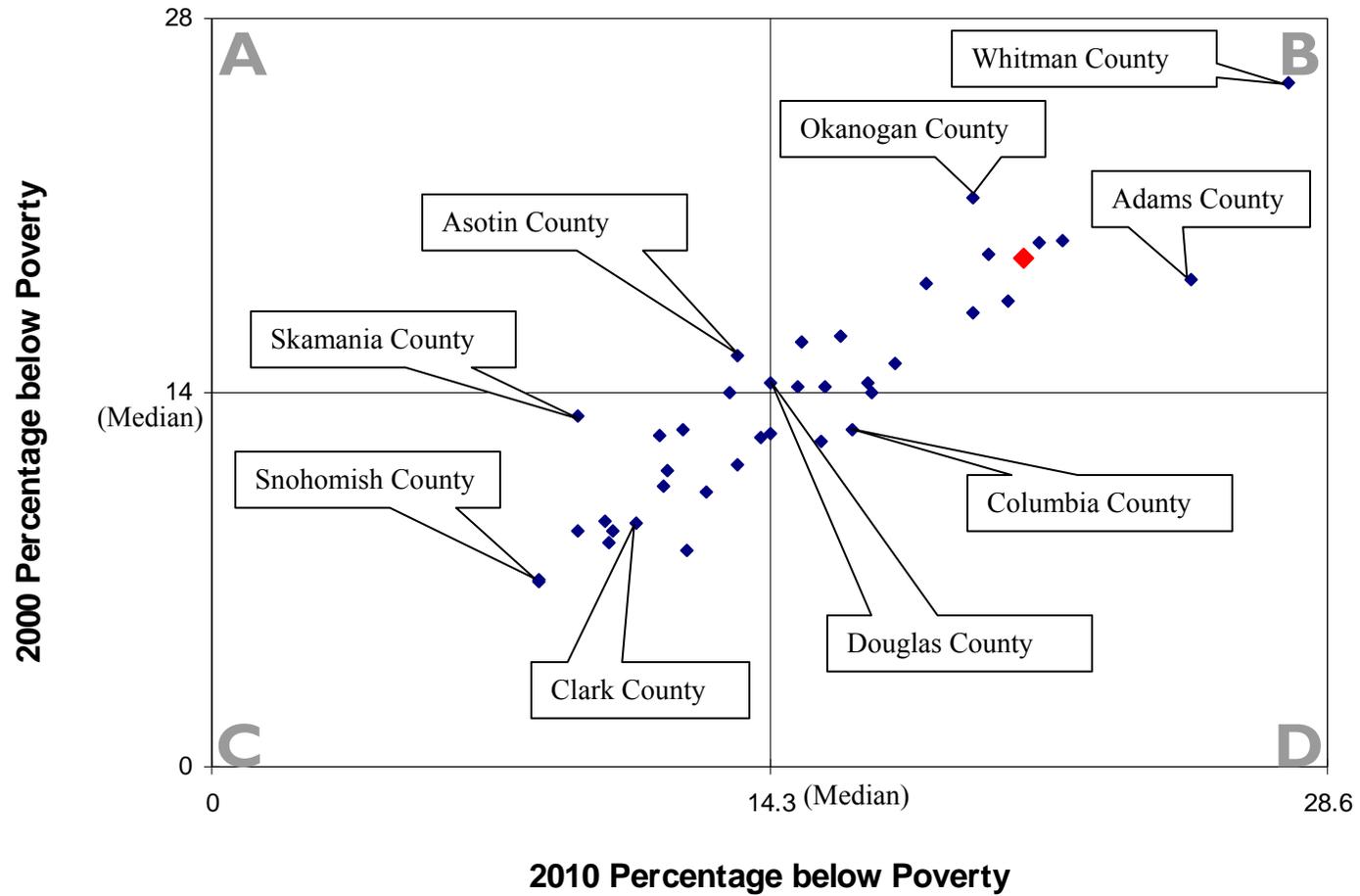
Source: American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2010

**Table 16**  
**Poverty in Washington State County Ranking: 2000-2010**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>% Population of County Living in Poverty (Poverty Rate) 2000</b>	<b>Population in County Living Below Poverty Threshold in 2010</b>	<b>% Population of County Living in Poverty (Poverty Rate) 2010</b>
1	Whitman	25.6%	10,431	27.6%
2	Adams	18.2	4,395	25.1
3	Yakima	19.7	50,608	21.8
4	Kittitas	19.6	7,942	21.2
5	Ferry	19.0	1,558	20.8
6	Grant	17.4	17,120	20.4
7	Franklin	19.2	14,000	19.9
8	Klickitat	17.0	3,865	19.5
9	Okanogan	21.3	7,781	19.5
10	Pend Oreille	18.1	2,340	18.3
11	Walla Walla	15.1	9,314	17.5
12	Cowlitz	14.0	16,953	16.9
13	Pacific	14.4	3,544	16.8
14	Columbia	12.6	646	16.4
15	Grays Harbor	16.1	11,197	16.1
16	Garfield	14.2	339	15.7
17	Mason	12.2	8,889	15.6
18	Stevens	15.9	6,480	15.1
19	Whatcom	14.2	28,618	15.0
20	Clallam	12.5	9,849	14.3
21	Douglas	14.4	5,270	14.3
22	Spokane	12.3	62,847	14.1
23	Asotin	15.4	2,856	13.5
24	Jefferson	11.3	3,893	13.5
25	Lewis	14.0	9,763	13.3
26	Benton	10.3	20,962	12.7
27	Wahkiakum	8.1	486	12.2
28	Lincoln	12.6	1,260	12.1
29	Skagit	11.1	13,407	11.7
30	Pierce	10.5	88,421	11.6
31	Chelan	12.4	8,046	11.5
<b>32</b>	<b>Clark</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>44,669</b>	<b>10.9</b>
33	Thurston	8.8	24,782	10.3
34	King	8.4	188,539	10.2
35	San Juan	9.2	1,554	10.1
36	Kitsap	8.8	22,734	9.4
37	Skamania	13.1	1,014	9.4
38	Snohomish	6.9	57,584	8.4
39	Island	7.0	6,053	8.0

Source: American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, 2010

**Chart 6**  
**Percentage of County Population Below Poverty Threshold: 2000-2010**



- A. Counties with a lower percentage of the population below the poverty level in 2010 than 2000 – **decreasing poverty**
- B. Counties with a population above the median poverty percentage in both 2000 and 2010 – **chronic poverty**
- C. Counties with a population below the median poverty percentage in both 2000 and 2010 – **lower poverty**
- D. Counties with a higher percentage of the population in poverty in 2010 than 2000 – **escalating poverty**

## V. 2010 Estimated Poverty Update for Clark County

The 2010 American Community Survey estimated that the national poverty rate was 14.4 percent in 2010. Estimates for 2010 are made from a sample database and are limited to the household population, excluding the population living in institutions, college dormitories and other group quarters.

Total population of Clark County was estimated to be 417,423 in 2010. In the past decade, 2000-2010, the estimated number of persons living below the poverty level increased from 9.0 to 11.6 percent. The table below compares the number of people living in poverty during the years 2000, 2005 and 2010.

The chart below illustrates the increase in poverty by age group for the population living below poverty level in Clark County in the years 2000, 2005 and 2010.

**Table 17**  
**Population Living Below Poverty Level**  
**County, State, National Poverty Rate: 2000-2010**

	2000		2005		2010	
	Number	Poverty Rate %	Number	Poverty Rate %	Number	Poverty Rate %
<b>Clark County</b>	31,027	9.1%	46,473	11.6%	48,225	11.6%
<b>Washington State</b>	612,370	10.6	729,470	11.9	814,499	12.5
<b>United States</b>	33,899,812	12.4	38,231,474	13.3	42,931,760	14.4

Source: US Census, 2000; American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates, 2005 and 2010

In summary, according to reports from the 2010 American Community Survey:

- 48,225 people, or 11.6 percent of the Clark County population, lived below the poverty level compared to 31,027 in 2000;
- Clark County's poverty rate was 11.6 percent; 2.5 percent above the rate in 2000; and
- Clark County's poverty rate increased at a higher rate than the national rate.

### Current 2005-2010 Unemployment Rates

The unemployment rate is a ratio of the number of persons who are unemployed as a percent of the entire labor force. People are considered unemployed if they are at least 16 years old, without a job, available for work and have recently made specific efforts to find employment. Local unemployment rates contribute to changes in county poverty levels. Clark County struggled with the third highest unemployment rate out of all Washington counties in 2010.

The table below compares Clark County unemployment rate to Washington State overall, and includes information on the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan area, Oregon State and the US national average.

**Table 18**  
**Unemployment Rates: 2005-2010**

	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>
Clark County	6.2%	13.7%
Washington State	5.5	9.6
Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area	5.8	10.6
Oregon State	6.1	10.8
United States	5.1	9.6

Source: US Dept of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Data, 2005 and 2010