

## PART II

## Population

Where Washington's People Live

Because of the influences of topography, climate, accessibility, and recent industrialization, Washington's population is distributed unevenly throughout the state. Over two-thirds of the people live in the western portion, concentrated largely in the industrial cities of Puget Sound. The Olympic Mountains and Willapa Hills of the Coast Range and the Cascade Mountains stand out as sparsely populated areas in western Washington. The Willamett-Puget Sound Lowland, extending from Vancouver on the Columbia River northward to Bellingham near the Canadian border, is the major population belt of the state. It contains a fairly well-distributed rural population on its river deltas and rolling, glacial drift plains.

The mountains, hills, plateaus, irrigable valleys, and dry climatic conditions cause a generally clustered pattern of population settlement in eastern Washington. Mountainous areas including the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, the Okanogan Highlands, the Blue Mountains, and the Selkirks have but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as large portions of the Waterville Plateau, the Channelled Scablands, and the hills of Yakima County, are thinly settled. Both rural and urban population is concentrated in the irrigated Yakima, Kittitas, Wenatchee, Okanogan and Walla Walla Valleys and in the Pasco and Quincy Basins. In the far eastern section--the Palouse Hills--the uniform soil, topography and moderate rainfall permits a more evenly distributed population. The industrialized Spokane metropolitan area and the rich agricultural Yakima Valley are the major population clusters of eastern Washington.

Growth of Population

Washington was explored by Spanish, Russian, British, and American expeditions between 1592 and 1805, but no settlement occurred until 1810. Ownership of the area was disputed by America and Great Britain. A compromise, the Joint Occupancy Treaty of 1818, permitted both American and British fur traders and settlers to live north of the Columbia River. British interests (the Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company) established fur trading posts at Spokane and Walla Walla in 1810 and 1818. American claims were strengthened by the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1805) and by the settlements at Fort Spokane, Okanogan, and Astoria by the Pacific Fur Company. The British increased their influence as they established agricultural settlements at Fort Vancouver and Fort Misqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company which desired to maintain its fur trade monopoly.

A growing tide of American land settlers over the Oregon Trail during the 1840's changed the balance of control in favor of the United States. Most of the Americans settled in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Unhindered by the British, several hundred American settlers moved northward across the Columbia into the Puget Sound country and soon outnumbered the British fur traders.

The conflict of interests was solved by the Oregon Treaty of 1846, which gave the United States the present area of Washington and established the Canadian boundary as it exists today. Oregon Territory (including all of the present state of Washington) was created in 1848 by Congress, with its capitol in Salem, Oregon. Settlers north of the Columbia met in 1851 at the Monticello Convention in present Longview, Washington, and asked for a separate territorial government. Washington Territory was created March 2, 1851, with a capitol at Olympia on Puget Sound. Isaac I. Stevens was appointed as Governor.

Population growth was slow before 1860. Lack of roads, the long distance from the East, and the difficulty of clearing the dense forests of the Puget Sound country kept immigration to a minimum. Indian hostility prevented settlement in most of eastern Washington prior to 1858, and that tended to slow movement into the Puget Sound Basin. The Washington population was only 11,594 according to the 1860 Census.

In 1863, the Washington territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines by the creation of Idaho Territory. The Census of 1870 was the first to follow the present boundaries, and it enumerated a population of 23,995.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1890. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The completion of the Union Pacific to the Columbia River brought new settlers into southeastern Washington. When the Northern Pacific reached Spokane in 1880 and was continued on toward Puget Sound, settlers occupied the Palouse and Big Bend wheat lands and the Yakima Valley. In 1883, six new counties were created in eastern Washington. Expansion of coastwise shipping and lumbering built up the cities on Puget Sound and at Grays Harbor. Washington Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1889. The population at that time was 350,000.

The period 1900-1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the state gained 624,000 persons, more than doubling to 1,141,990. Two other railroads, Great Northern and Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul, reached Puget Sound in 1893 and 1909, respectively. The lumber industry and agriculture supported more people; large volumes of lumber and wheat were being exported by ship and rail. Many land and timber seekers homesteaded free public domain lands in the mountainous areas. The Alaskan gold rush doubled Seattle's population within a decade. Railroads and ships brought large numbers of people from Europe, who took up lumbering, fishing, mining, and agriculture. Ranked numerically according to the 1920 Census, the largest foreign-born groups in the state were Canadians (42,000), Swedes (35,000), Norwegians (34,000), English (23,000), Germans (22,000), Italians (18,000), Finns (12,500), Russians (11,000), and Irish (9,000).

Between 1910 and 1940 population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase was about 20,000 per year. The lumber industry began to decline after 1929. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in a slower rate of population growth. However, during the 1930's, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities.

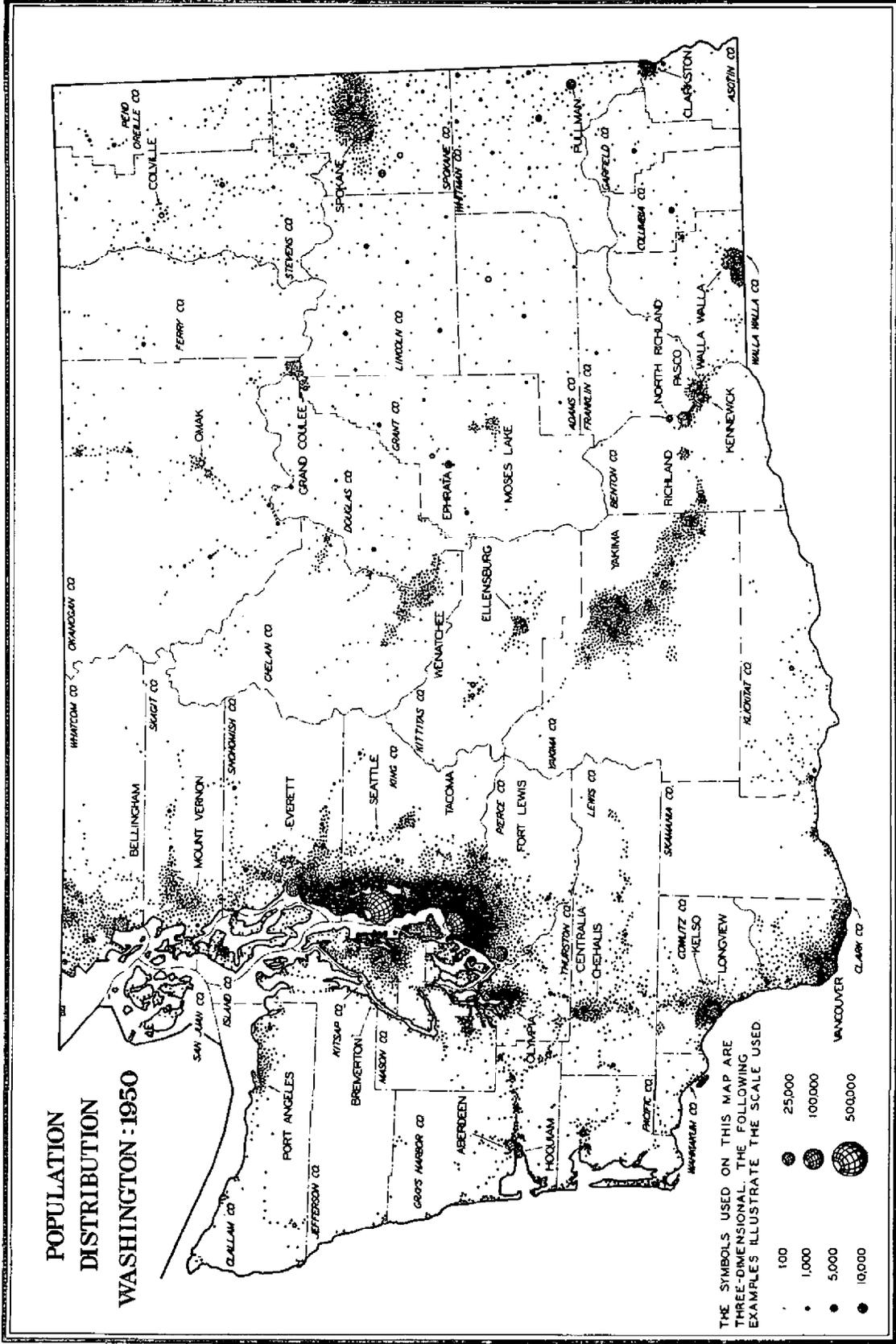
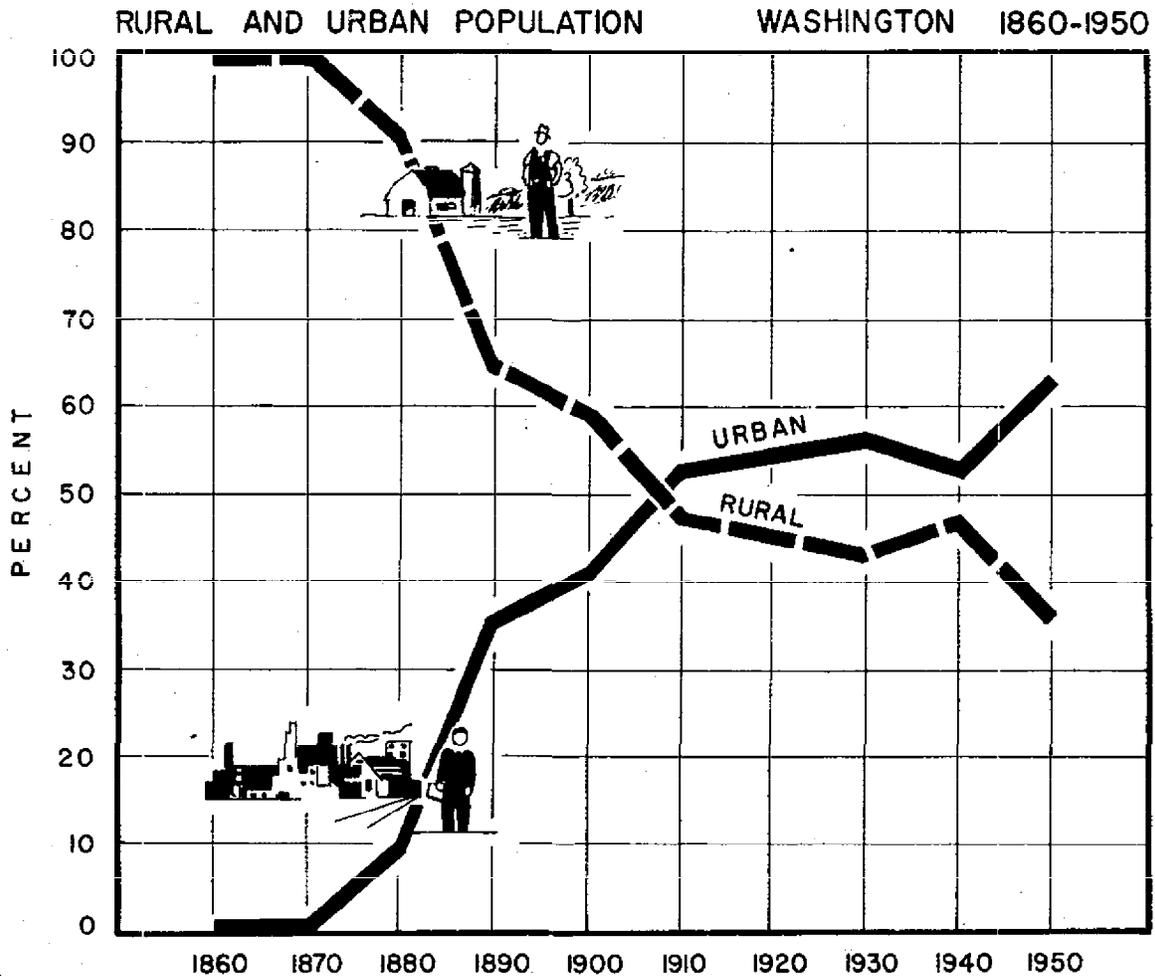
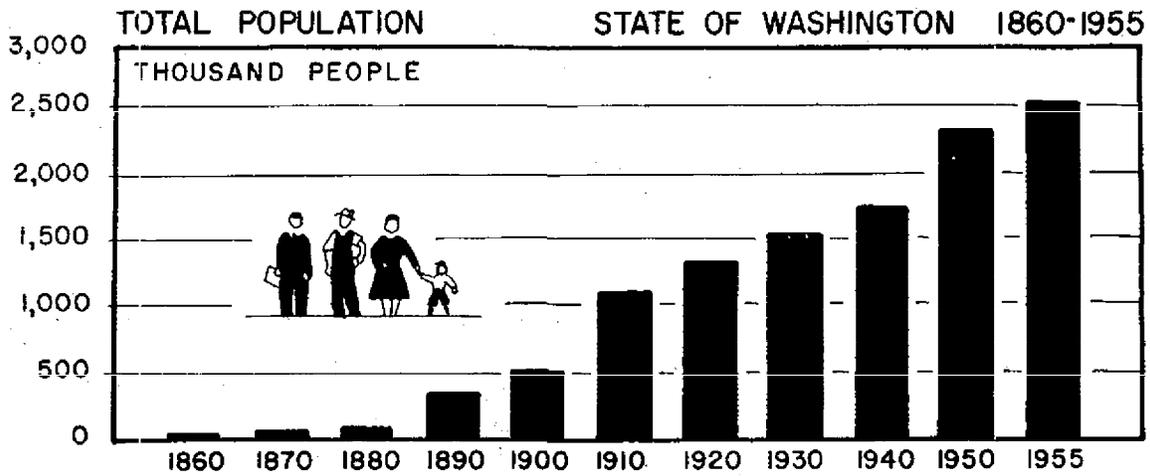


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



SOURCES OF DATA: U.S. Census 1860-1950; Washington State Census Board, Estimate - 1955

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The 1940-1950 decade brought the greatest increase in Washington history. Primarily an overland movement of laborers to new defense industries, it resulted in an increase of 642,772 in ten years, raising the state population to 2,378,963 in 1950. Most of the new growth was in the industrial metropolitan districts in King, Pierce, Kitsap, Clark, and Spokane Counties and at the Federal atomic works in Benton County.

### Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Washington was living in rural areas--in villages and on farms. By 1900, 211,477 of the population of Washington, or 40.8 percent, were living in urban areas. In 1950, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 1,503,166 persons, or 63.2 percent, were living in urban areas. And over 52 percent lived in three standard metropolitan areas comprised of Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane and their surrounding suburban cities and towns. This trend follows the national pattern.

Table 1.- Population of Washington  
1860-1955

Year	Population
1860	11,594
1870	23,955
1880	75,116
1890	357,232
1900	518,103
1910	1,141,990
1920	1,356,621
1930	1,563,396
1940	1,736,191
1950	2,378,963
1955	2,580,000

Sources: U.S. Census, Population;  
Washington State Census  
Board, April 1, 1955  
Estimate.

Bellingham (35,700), Everett (34,100), Bremerton (32,200), Walla Walla (25,400), and Longview (23,500).

### Population of King County

In 1955, King County ranked first among Washington counties with an estimated population of 773,200. Population has grown steadily since the Census of 1860. With considerable industry and commerce concentrated at Seattle, Renton, Auburn, and Enumclaw, and a large suburban settlement pattern on Lake Washington adjacent to Seattle, the population is over three-fourths urban. In 1955 an estimated 600,000 persons were living within cities of 2,500 and larger. Only 22 percent, or about 169,000 were classified as rural, living in towns and villages, along highways and on farms. The rural-farm population, even though it is second largest among Washington counties, was only 20,521.

The rural population is predominantly rural nonfarm, consisting of 602,026 persons who live in the country, but do not operate farms. The rural farm population decreased about one-fifth between 1940 and 1950, and numbered only 273,771, or 11.5 percent of the state's total 1950 population of 2,378,963. As a result of the farm-to-city trend in Washington, about one person in ten is living on a farm and about six persons out of ten are living in a town or city larger than 2,500.

According to the 1955 estimates of the Washington Census Board, the ten leading cities of Washington ranked as follows: Seattle (555,000), Spokane (182,000), Tacoma (156,000), Yakima (43,000), Vancouver (41,950),

Table 2.- Population of King County  
1860-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1860	302	100	0
1870	2,120	100	0
1880	6,910	100	0
1890	63,989	33.1	66.9
1900	110,053	26.7	73.3
1910	284,638	15.7	84.3
1920	389,273	17.3	82.7
1930	463,517	19.4	80.6
1940	504,980	24.3	75.7
1950	732,992	31.8	68.2
1955 1/	773,200	22.4	77.6

1/ 1955 data are estimates of Washington State Census Board.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population, 1860-1950.  
Washington State Census Board, 1955 estimates.

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places  
King County, 1910-1955

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1955 1/
Auburn	957	3,163	3,906	4,211	6,497	7,250
Beaux Arts	--	--	--	--	--	300
Bellevue	--	--	--	--	--	8,901
Bothell	599	613	818	794	1,019	1,293
Carnation	--	--	--	--	--	477
Clyde Hill	--	--	--	--	--	1,334
Duvall	--	258	200	234	236	236
Enumclaw	--	1,378	2,084	2,627	2,789	2,903
Houghton	--	--	--	--	1,005	2,350
Issaquah	628	791	763	812	955	1,106
Kent	1,908	2,282	2,320	2,586	3,278	3,675
Kirkland	532	1,354	1,714	2,084	4,713	5,750
Normandy Park	--	--	--	--	--	2,112
North Bend	299	387	548	646	787	790
Pacific	413	320	347	357	755	925
Redmond	--	438	460	530	573	792
Renton	2,740	3,301	4,062	4,488	16,039	16,300
Seattle	237,194	315,312	365,583	368,302	467,591	555,000
Skykomish	238	267	562	479	497	431
Snoqualmie	279	450	752	775	806	1,070
Tukwila	361	453	424	521	800	877

1/ Populations for 1955 are estimates by the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1955.

Sources: U.S. Census, Population.  
Washington State Census Board.

Since 1920 the trend has been for more people to take up suburban and rural residences as well as farms within commuting distance of Seattle and other industrial and commercial centers. Only 3 persons out of each 100 live on farms in this urbanized county.

There are 21 incorporated places in King County, the largest number in any Washington county. Nearly all of these places have grown in population since they were incorporated. As a result of the large migration of new people to the Puget Sound area in recent years, five new suburban cities were incorporated between 1950 and 1955. Four cities--Renton, Bellevue, Kirkland and Houghton--located to the immediate east of Seattle, have more than doubled since 1940. The primary farming trade centers, Auburn, Kent, Enumclaw, Issaquah, Redmond and Carnation, have also increased in recent years. The growth and concentration of population in King County has created a large market for farm products produced throughout the state.

King County has been a melting pot of many foreign immigrants as well as a large number of settlers from midwestern, eastern and southern states. In 1890 nearly one-third of the population consisted of immigrants from Europe and Canada. Both in the cities and on the farms King County contained more foreign-born citizens than any other Washington county. The Scandinavian population leads all others, followed by Canadians, Englishmen, Germans and Italians. In addition to the nationalities in Table 4, the 1950 population, according to the

Table 4.- Foreign-Born White Population, King County, 1890, 1920 and 1950.

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales....	3,622	10,400	7,351
Scotland.....	1,061	3,757	2,734
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	98
Ireland (Eire).....	1,649	3,978	1,920
Norway.....	1,999	10,896	10,447
Sweden.....	2,365	12,842	8,559
Denmark.....	706	2,914	1,970
Netherlands.....	30	728	699
Switzerland.....	190	815	--
France.....	262	928	586
Germany.....	3,066	6,080	4,400
Poland.....	79	1,182	1,088
Czechoslovakia.....	18	--	426
Austria.....	254	2,044	1,540
Yugoslavia.....	--	867	951
Russia (.S.S.R.).....	306	3,545	2,635
Finland.....	--	3,436	2,199
Italy.....	343	4,550	3,565
Canada-French.....	--	772	1,031
Canada-Other.....	3,983	15,570	18,560
All other countries..	1,055	5,903	--
Totals	20,988	91,207	77,445
Percent foreign-born	32.8	23.4	10.6

Source: U.S. Census, Population.

Census, included 16,773 American Negroes, 6,856 American Japanese, 2,704 American Chinese and 1,269 American Indians. The Negroes nearly all live in Seattle and Renton and are employed in industry and trade. A large number of the Japanese are specialized farmers. The agriculture of the county has benefited greatly from skilled immigrants from both Europe and the Orient.

Agriculture ranked only eighth in total employment in 1950 according to the Census. There were 281,827 employed workers of which the largest group, 75,516, were working in miscellaneous services, 67,919 in retail and wholesale stores and 57,403 in manufacturing. Only 5,769 were supported by wages and salaries paid by farmers or by income from self-employment on farms.

Table 5.- Employment of the Population  
King County, 1950.

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u> .....	195,914	85,913	281,827
Agriculture.....	5,018	751	5,769
Forestry and fisheries.....	2,078	65	2,143
Mining.....	747	37	784
Construction.....	19,376	802	20,178
Manufacturing.....	47,793	9,610	57,403
Transportation.....	19,066	1,969	21,035
Retail and wholesale stores.....	43,390	24,529	67,919
Miscellaneous services.....	37,347	38,169	75,516
Public administration (government employment).....	13,314	5,232	18,546
Other employment.....	7,785	4,749	12,534

Source: U.S. Census, Population, 1950.