

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 Willamette-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 settlements 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 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 Nisqually between 1824 and 1833. Settlement by Americans north of the Columbia, although permitted by treaty, was discouraged by the Hudson 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 this 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; 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.

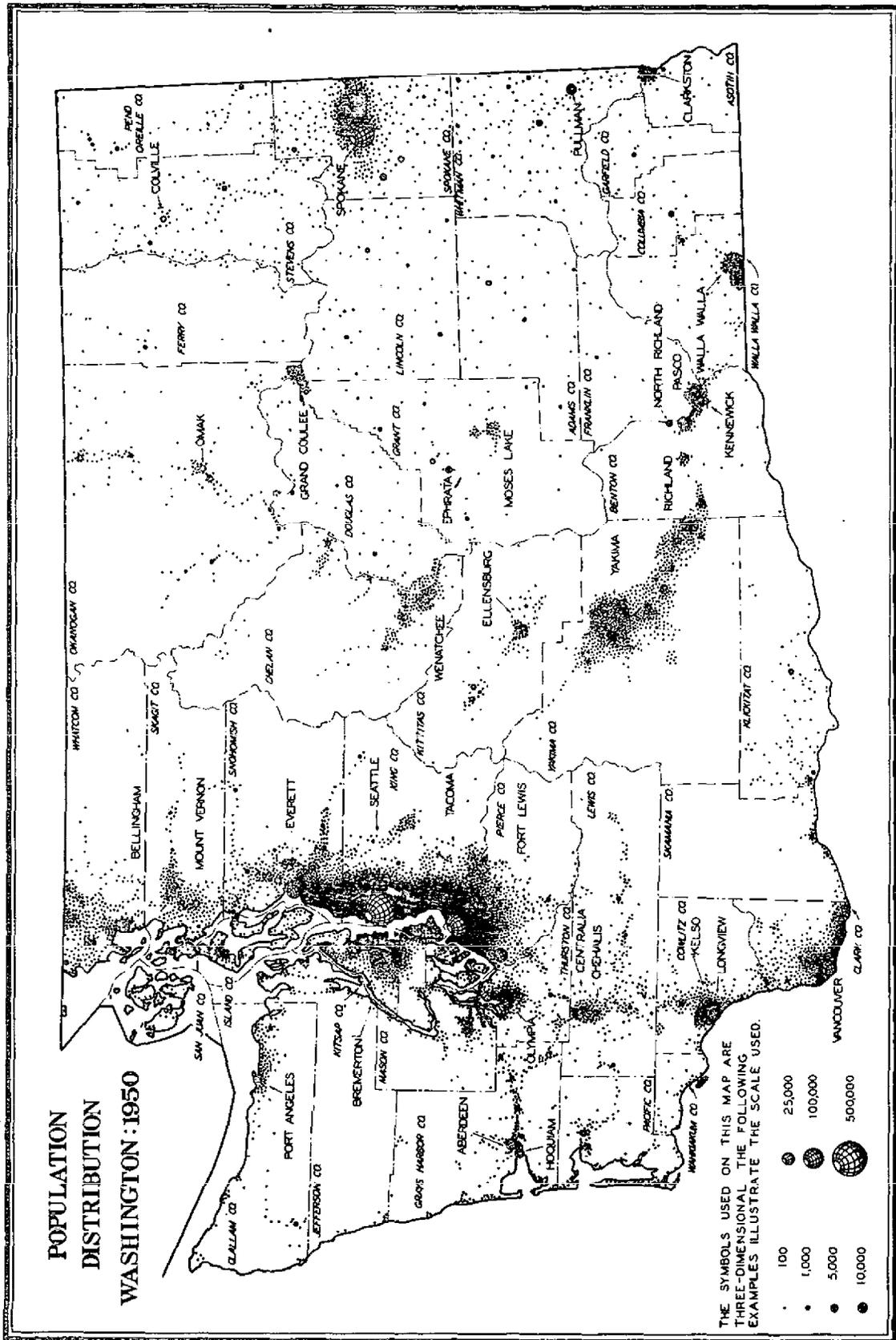
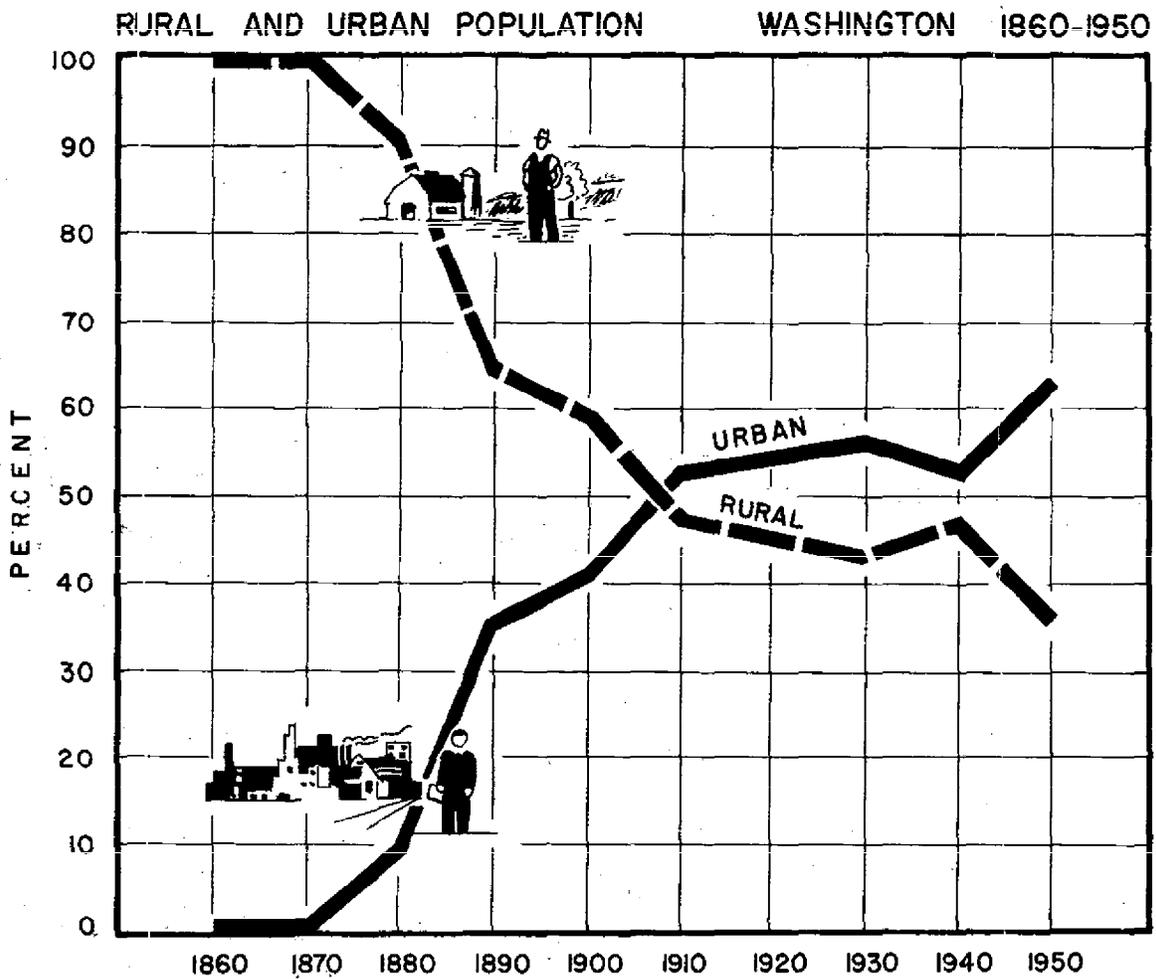
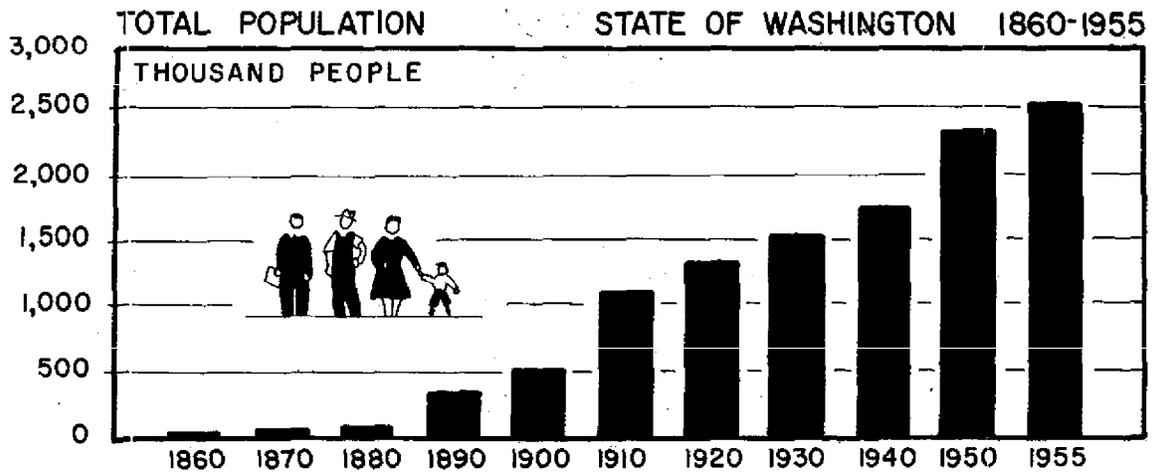


Figure 6.- DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN WASHINGTON, 1950 (Map by courtesy of Population Research Office, Washington State Census Board).



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

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 Okanogan County

Because of its large mountainous area, Okanogan County is sparsely populated. Estimated 1955 population was 29,700, and while it ranked first in geographical area, it only stood 19th in population among Washington counties. Population density is less than 6 persons per square mile. The inhabitants, however, tend to be concentrated on irrigated valley plains and in towns and cities along the Okanogan, Methow and Columbia Rivers. With the exception of some mining settlements, the Okanogan highlands surrounding the valleys have only a small portion of the inhabitants. A vast area within the Colville Reservation has only 1,400 inhabitants.

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),

Since the first Census in 1890, Okanogan County has gained population with each 10-year Census. Growth was quite rapid between 1890 and 1910 because of mining and irrigation developments. Continued irrigation development, expansion of fruit growing and expansion of lumbering caused rapid growth between 1930 and 1950.

Table 2.- Population of Okanogan County
1890-1955

Census Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1890	1,467	100	0
1900	4,689	100	0
1910	12,887	100	0
1920	17,094	100	0
1930	18,519	86.2	13.8
1940	24,546	88.1	11.9
1950	29,131	86.9	13.1
1955 ^{1/}	29,700	86.8	13.2

^{1/} 1955 figures are estimates of
Washington State Census Board

Source: U.S. Census, Population

As the Okanogan County economy has expanded, twelve incorporated towns and cities have been established. Six of these cities have increased in size. Omak in the Okanogan Valley--a lumbering center--has grown rapidly since 1920

Table 3.- Population of Incorporated Places
Okanogan County, 1910-1956

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1956 ^{1/}
Brewster	296	394	413	447	851	1,100
Concomully	357	270	102	187	141	120
Elmer City	-	-	-	-	513	289
Nespelem	-	-	-	300	425	431
Okanogan	611	1,015	1,519	1,735	2,013	2,125
Omak	-	525	2,547	2,918	3,791	4,025
Oroville	495	1,013	800	1,206	1,500	1,580
Pateros	-	412	486	484	866	717
Riverside	-	209	218	192	149	200
Tonasket	-	-	513	643	957	1,000
Twisp	227	289	335	477	776	773
Winthrop	-	-	270	365	396	378

^{1/} Populations for 1956 are estimates of the Washington State Census Board, April 1, 1956.

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

and has become the largest city. Okanogan, the county seat, is the second largest city. Croville and Tonasket, other Okanogan Valley cities, have grown because of the agricultural and lumbering industries. Brewster, in an orchard district on the Columbia River, has expanded nearly two-fold since 1940.

Decline in mining and construction activity were factors which have caused the towns of Conconully and Elmer City to lose population. Conconully was an early mining town and Elmer City grew near Coulee Dam when it was being constructed.

Okanogan County is over four-fifths rural according to the classification of the United States Census. It has only one city, Omak, which has over 2,500 and which can be classified as urban. In the 1950 Census the rural non-farm population--persons living in towns of less than 2,500 or in the country but not farming--was the largest classification. Rural non-farm people numbered 13,376, nearly half of the total. Rural farm population--persons living on and deriving all or part of their livelihood from agriculture--numbered 9,358 or slightly more than one-third of the total.

Typical of many mining, lumbering and farming regions of the western United States, Okanogan has been a melting pot of immigrants from many foreign lands. In 1890 nearly one-fifth of the population consisted of European and Canadian

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

Country of Birth	1890	1920	1950
England and Wales.....	39	165	92
Scotland.....	12	57	33
Northern Ireland.....	--	--	--
Ireland (Eire).....	42	68	17
Norway.....	11	110	48
Sweden.....	8	139	59
Denmark.....	4	60	25
Netherlands.....	1	11	11
Switzerland.....	2	27	--
France.....	8	12	5
Germany.....	45	237	104
Poland.....	1	18	6
Czechoslovakia.....	--	--	5
Austria.....	--	29	22
Yugoslavia.....	--	20	10
Russia (U.S.S.R.).....	--	25	15
Finland.....	--	16	4
Italy.....	--	39	13
Canada-French.....	--	31	9
Canada-Other	71	294	462
All other countries...	7	62	81
Totals	251	1,520	1,021
Percent foreign-born	17.0	8.9	3.5

Source: U.S. Census, Population

immigrants who had come to work in mines and take up homestead lands. By 1920 there were more immigrants, but they made up a smaller proportion of the total population. After 1920 many people left the area and with fewer immigrants coming to America in the last 30 years, the foreign-born citizens decreased to less than 4 percent by 1950. Canadian immigrants are the most numerous, resulting from the border location of the county. German, Swedish and Norwegian immigrants were also prominent in the population between 1890 and 1920. Canadian and European immigrants who took up land have played an important part in agricultural development.

The American Indian population is the second largest in Washington. Living mainly in the large Colville Reservation area of southeastern Okanogan County, they numbered 1,463 in the Census of 1950. Many of the Indians raise livestock in the Nespelem River and Omak Lake districts of the Reservation. Most of the Indians are of the Okanogan, Nespelem and San Poil groups of northeastern Washington and southeastern British Columbia.

Agriculture is the leading field of gainful employment. Based on occupations of its working population, Okanogan County is over 27 percent agricultural. Self-employment and wage earning on farms was supporting 2,763 workers in 1950, according to the Census. Assuming that each worker supported a household of 4 persons, agriculture was sustaining over 11,000 people or well over one-third of the population. Construction, involving work on hydro-electric dams, irrigation systems, highways and other public works, was second in importance in 1950. Miscellaneous service trades including education, professional services and auto servicing, was second. Work in wholesale and retail stores was third, and basic manufacturing employment in lumber, minerals and processed foods was fourth. Employment fields as a whole are diversified and are not mainly dependent on one or two specialized industries.

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

Types of Employment	Male Workers	Female Workers	Total Workers	Percent of Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	8,243	1,879	10,122	100.0
Agriculture.....	2,586	177	2,763	27.3
Forestry and fisheries.....	79	5	84	.8
Mining.....	46	1	47	.4
Construction.....	1,775	45	1,820	18.0
Manufacturing.....	1,145	74	1,219	12.0
Transportation.....	248	34	282	3.0
Retail and wholesale stores.....	838	467	1,305	12.9
Miscellaneous services.....	717	770	1,487	14.7
Public administration (government employment).....	386	180	566	5.6
Other employment.....	423	126	549	5.3

Source: U.S. Census, Population