

PART II

YAKIMA COUNTY POPULATION

Geographically, the population of Yakima County is very unequally distributed. Over 90 percent of the people live in the rich agricultural Yakima Valley, concentrated largely in the City of Yakima and the other 13 municipalities of the area. This population belt of the county extends from Naches southeastward to Grandview. Mountainous terrain, such as the eastern Cascade Mountain slope, has but few people. Dryland and upland areas which cannot be irrigated, such as the Horse Heaven Hills, Rattlesnake Hills and the Yakima Folds, are also thinly settled.

Population Growth

The growth of Yakima County was slow before 1870. Lack of roads and the long distance from the East 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 area. The Yakima County population was only 432, according to the 1870 Census.

Population grew rapidly from 1870 to 1900. New transcontinental railroads brought large waves of immigrants from the East and Europe. The extension of the Union Pacific through the Yakima Valley brought new settlers and encouraged rapid expansion. By the turn of the century, the county population was 13,462.

The period 1900 to 1910 was a decade of rapid growth in which the county gained 28,247 people, increasing more than threefold to ~~41,709~~. There was rapid settlement of the irrigated lands developed by Federal irrigation projects and the construction of several canals. Railroads brought large numbers of people from Europe, who took up lumbering and agriculture. With the increase in irrigation, agriculture was able to support more people.

Between 1910 and 1940, the population grew at a slower but steady rate. The increase averaged about 1,910 per year. Reduced employment and a growing scarcity of land were reflected in the slower rate of population growth. During the 1930's, however, many farmers from the Great Plains drought areas moved overland to Washington seeking farming opportunities. The population by 1940 was 99,019.

The 1940-50 decade brought the greatest rate of increase in Yakima County history. Primarily related to the growth of food processing, marketing of farm products and to the expansion of land under irrigation, it resulted in an increase of 36,704 people in ten years, raising the county population to 135,723 in 1950. The rate of population increase for the decade was 37 percent. Most of the new growth occurred in the cities and towns of Yakima, Wapato, Toppenish, Sunnyside and Grandview. By 1960 the total population of Yakima County (145,112) was more than ten times that of 1900, making up 5.8 percent of the state's total population of 2,853,214.

Urban and Rural Population

In 1870 the entire population of Yakima County was living in rural areas either in villages or on farms. Of Yakima's population in 1900, 76.6 percent was

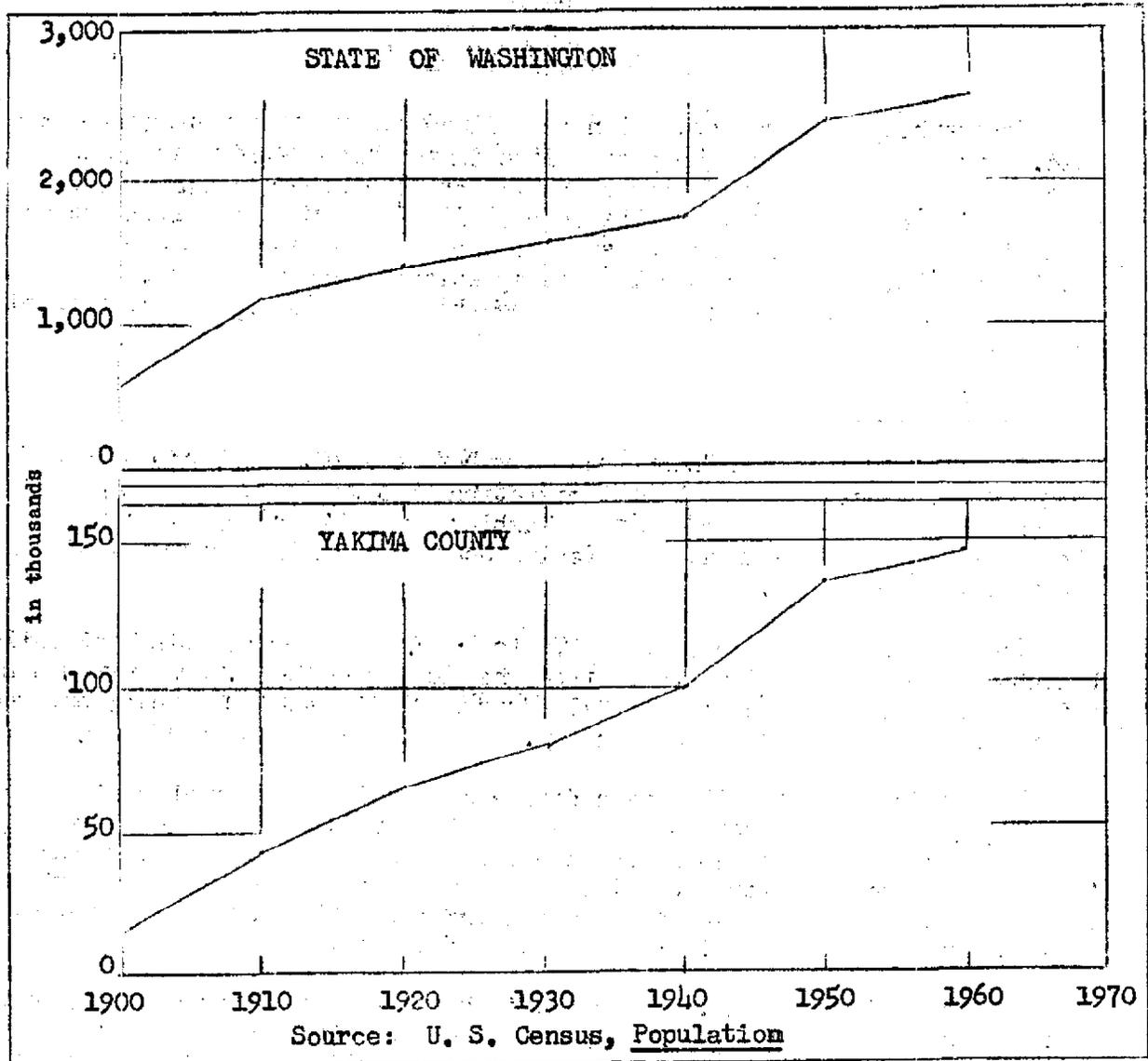


Figure 1. Population Trends: 1900-1960

Table 1. Population of Yakima County, 1870-1960

Year	Population	Percent Rural	Percent Urban
1870	432	100	0
1880	2,811	100	0
1890	4,429	100	0
1900	13,462	76.6	23.4
1910	41,709	66.2	33.8
1920	62,710	66.0	34.0
1930	77,402	67.9	32.1
1940	99,019	68.8	31.2
1950	135,723	62.3	37.7
1960	145,112	48.8	51.2

Source: U. S. Census, Population

rural and only 23.4 percent was urban. After 1900, the percentage of rural population decreased and urban population (persons living in incorporated places of 2,500 or more) grew steadily. With the development of industry, farm people began their migration to urban and suburban places in search of employment opportunities. This increasing tendency for the people of Yakima County to live in cities and towns follows the state and national pattern. It wasn't until 1960, however, that the Census figures for the county's urban population exceeded the rural, revealing the fact that the population became more urban some time during the period from 1950 to 1960. In 1960, according to the Census definition of "urban" which includes residents of towns of 2,500 and larger, 74,250 persons or 51.2 percent, were living in urban areas. Rural population thus decreased to 48.8 percent.

The rural population is predominantly rural-nonfarm, consisting of 44,890 persons who live in the country but do not operate farms. Rural-farm population actually has decreased in the last ten years. Persons living on farms numbered 31,620 in 1930, 32,963 in 1950, and then dropped to 25,972 in 1960. Yakima County, however, contains the largest farm population of any Washington county.

While the county's total population continues to increase, the trend in farm population, as indicated above, is clearly downward. The U. S. Census in 1960 counted 6,991 fewer people on farms than in 1950, a decline of 21 percent. Both farms and people living on farms are becoming fewer, whereas the production of farm products continues to increase. Yakima County agriculture finds itself in a new period in which technology fashions vast economic and social changes.

Table 2. Population of Incorporated Cities and Towns,
Yakima County, 1910-1960

Incorporated City or Town	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Grandview	320	1,011	1,085	1,449	2,503	3,336
Granger	453	412	568	752	1,164	1,424
Harrah	--	--	--	--	297	284
Mabton	666	547	423	485	831	958
Moxee City	--	--	283	335	543	499
Naches	--	--	423	536	633	680
Selah	--	--	767	1,130	2,489	2,824
Sunnyside	1,379	1,809	2,113	2,368	4,194	6,208
Tieton	--	--	--	--	620	479
Toppenish	1,598	3,120	2,774	3,683	5,265	5,677
Union Gap	263	332	586	976	1,766	2,100
Wapato	400	1,128	1,222	1,483	3,185	3,137
Yakima	14,082	18,539	22,101	27,221	38,486	43,284
Zillah	--	647	728	803	911	1,059

Source: U. S. Census, Population

The spectacular growth of urban population in Yakima County is related to the increase of food processing and marketing of farm products and of providing a wide array of services to persons basically employed and supported by agriculture. The city of Yakima has grown steadily from a small community to a medium-sized city

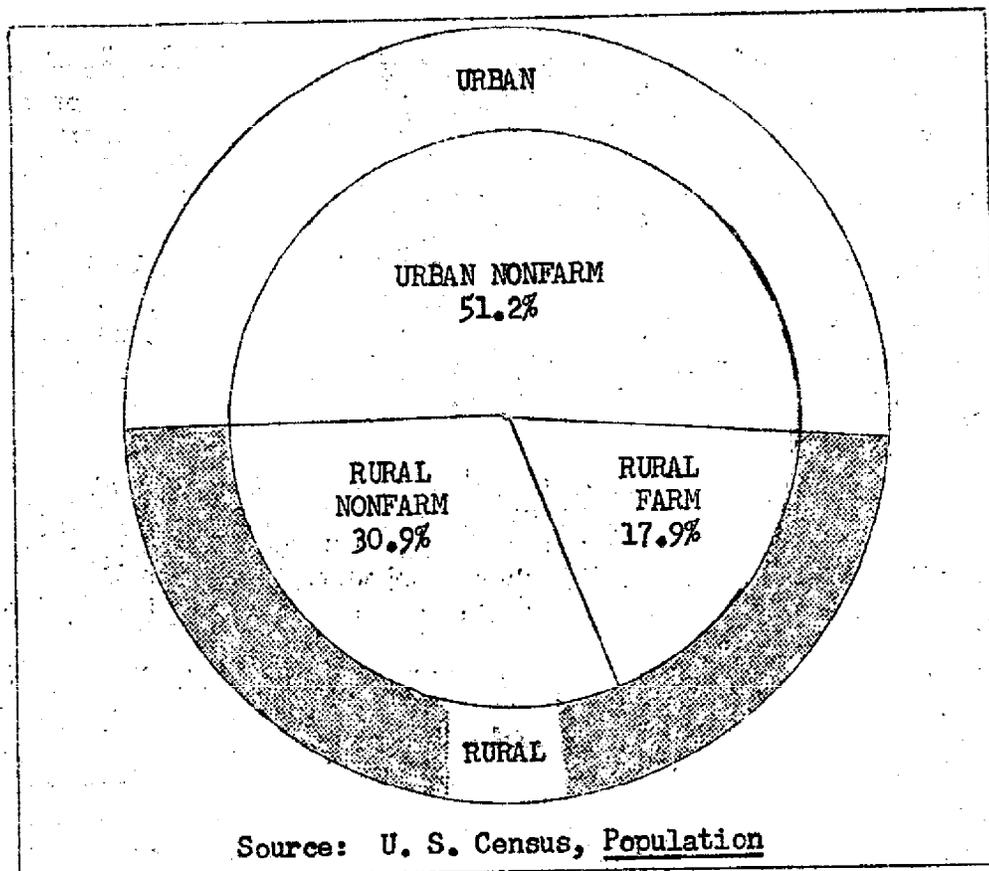


Figure 2. Urban and Rural Population, Yakima County, 1960

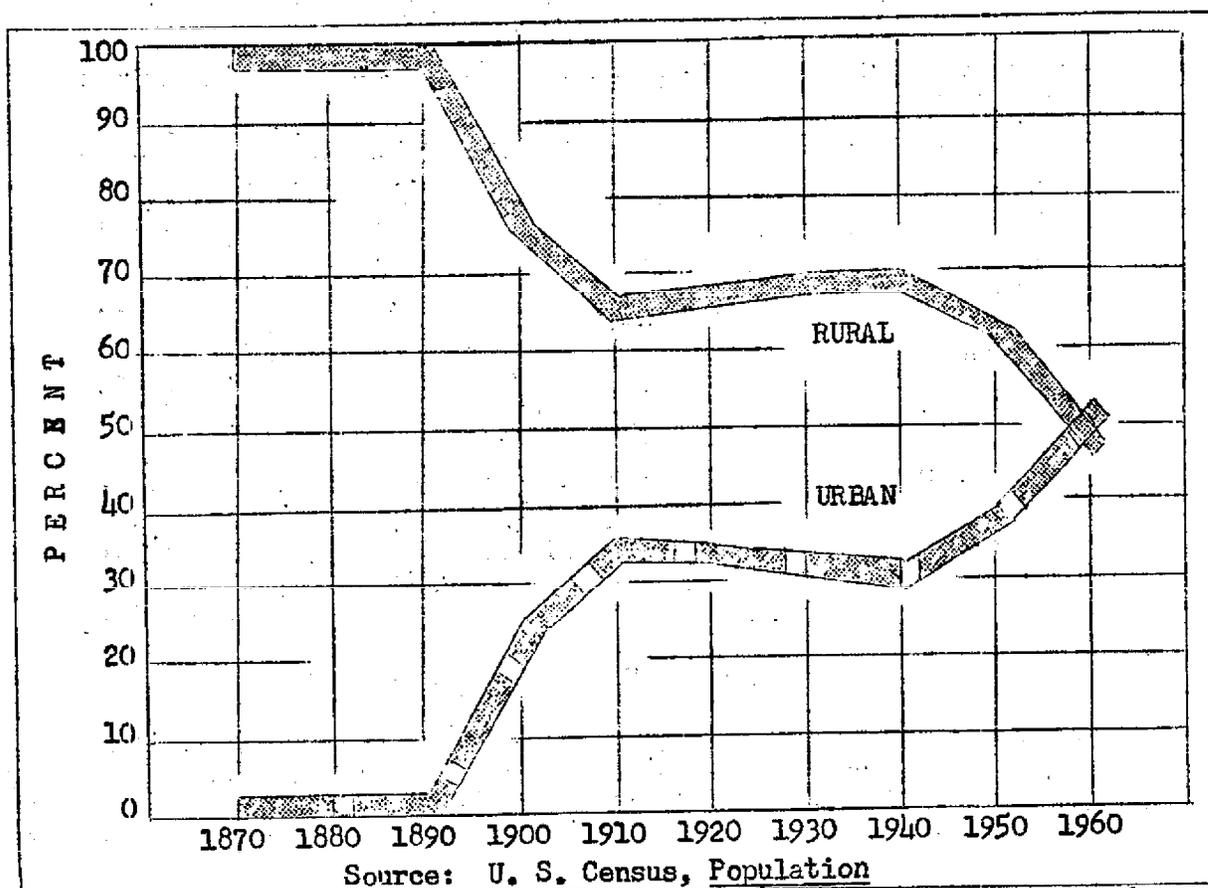


Figure 3. Rural and Urban Population Trends, Yakima County, 1870-1960

with a population of 43,284 in 1960 with the largest rate of increase occurring between 1940 and 1950 when it grew from 27,221 to 38,486. Other municipalities of Yakima County also grew substantially during the same decade. This trend, although less dynamic, continued into the 1950's with the exception of Tieton, Moxee, Harrah and Wapato, where the populations have declined slightly. The growth of cities has made serious inroads on the farm population and much farmland has disappeared in the wake of suburban expansion.

In 1910 there were eight incorporated places in Yakima County comprising a total population of 19,161. By 1960 there were 13 incorporated places with a combined population of 71,949.

Population Characteristics

Agricultural and trade opportunities in Yakima County have attracted settlers of varied origins and background. Recent overland migrants from eastern states and foreign immigrants from Europe and the Far East add to a mixture which is typical of many west coast farm counties. In 1960, there were 6,572 foreign born, amounting to 4.5 percent of the county's total population.

Yakima has more persons employed in agriculture than any other Washington county. In 1960, a total of 49,014 persons were employed in the county. According to the Census figures, 12,155 or about 24.8 percent of all self-employed and employed persons were in agriculture. The next largest field of work was in the miscellaneous services covering many trades. The manufacturing employment of 6,609 was largely in the processing of food products grown in Yakima County.

Table 3. Employment of the Population
Yakima County, 1960

Types of Employment	Total Workers
<u>Total employed workers</u>	49,014
Agriculture	12,155
Forestry and Fisheries	37
Mining	34
Construction	3,101
Manufacturing	6,069
Transportation, Communications and other Public Utilities	3,547
Retail and Wholesale Trade	10,523
Miscellaneous Services	11,025
Public Administration (govern- ment employment)	1,750
Other employment	773

Source: U. S. Census, Population

In 1960, the largest foreign immigrant group came from Mexico. Mexicans, many who are farm workers, numbered 6,266 in that year. Those from Canada made up the second largest immigrant group in Yakima County. Also prominent as farm settlers are Ukrainians, Germans and Scandinavians.

The nonwhite population of Yakima County was 6,293, according to the Census of 1960. The county has the largest American Indian population of any Washington county. Nearly all are Yakima Indians who inhabit the large reservation in the Lower Valley. In the Census of 1960, they numbered 3,807. Active in farming are Japanese, of whom 271 were enumerated. Other races include 1,626 Negroes, 410 Filipinos and 92 Chinese, residing mainly in urban places. Over one-half, or 919, of the Negro population live in the City of Yakima.

According to the 1920 Census, there were 115 males per 100 females in Yakima County. In 1960, Yakima's population consisted of 72,442 males and 72,690 females, which was a ratio of only 99.6 males per 100 females. The number of women relative to men tends to increase as the county becomes older and more settled. Other factors such as war and industrialization also tend to increase the proportion of women. In rural-farm and rural-nonfarm areas, however, men still outnumbered the women in 1960. Of the county's rural population in 1930, 27,884 were males and 24,643 were females, a ratio of 113 men per 100 women. In 1960, rural men numbered 36,352 and rural women 34,510, a ratio of 105 males per 100 females. The exodus of women from the farm to the city continues following the state and national trend.

Yakima County's population is aging. The percentage of older people has been increasing steadily since 1870. The 1930 Census showed that only 2.3 percent of the people in the county were 65 and over, whereas in 1960, they accounted for 9.5 percent of the total. Improved health practices and greater medical knowledge have played an important part in lengthening the life span. The largest single age group is that of young people 5 to 9 years of age. Children under 5 years form the second largest group, while those from 10-14 are third. Children under 15 years of age account for over one-third of the county's population.

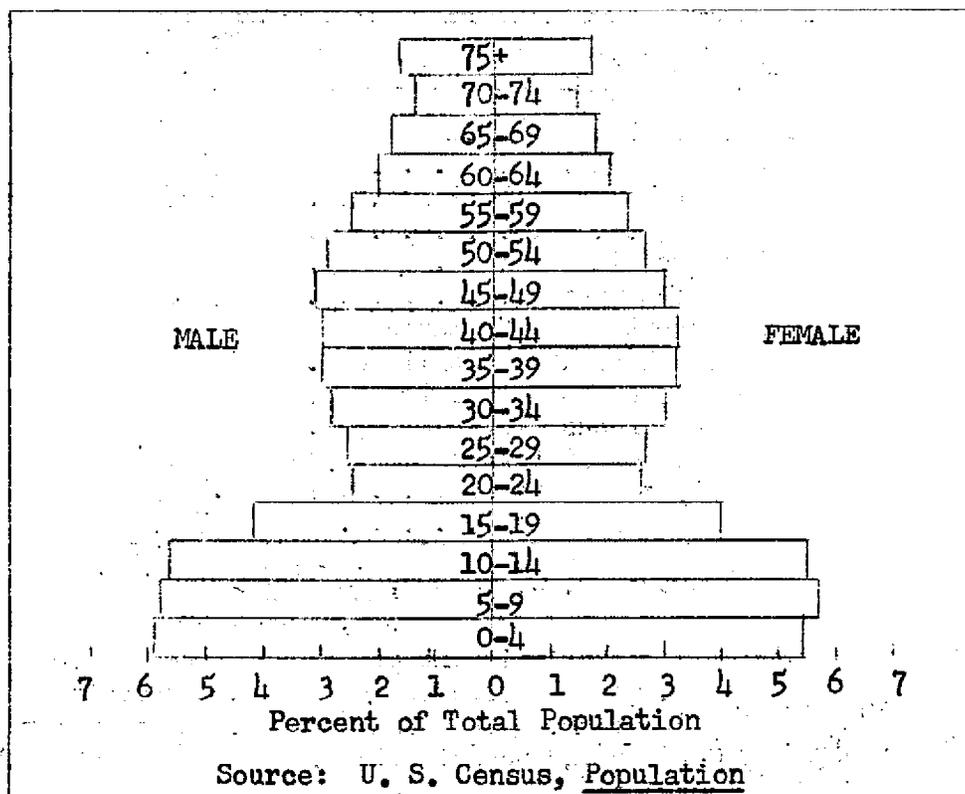


Figure 4. Age Distribution of Population, Yakima County, 1960