



POPULATION BRIEF

Trends in the Western U.S.

The State of Colorado

By Don E. Albrecht

Overview

Rural development is the process by which the lives of individuals and families living in rural areas are improved. Effective rural development necessarily involves several components that include 1) good jobs that provide individuals and families the opportunity to earn and maintain a livable income; 2) a chance to complete an education and have lifelong opportunities to learn and improve one's circumstances; 3) and the opportunity to live a reasonably long and healthy life. Communities that effectively meet these conditions are likely to retain existing residents and attract new residents and thus experience population growth.

Additionally, effective rural development means that opportunities to obtain high-quality employment, complete an education, and live a long and healthy life must be available to all residents of the community, rather than only to certain segments of the population.

The first step in advancing an effective rural development program is to carefully assess baseline conditions. In response, the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is providing a set of population briefs that provide some of this baseline information. Each population brief will assess one of the components of rural development listed above. This brief examines population changes in Colorado. Each brief will explore overall conditions, and then examine the extent to which opportunities are available to all segments of the population by making comparisons on race/ethnicity, gender, family structure or geography. The geographic component will provide comparisons between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas and will compare

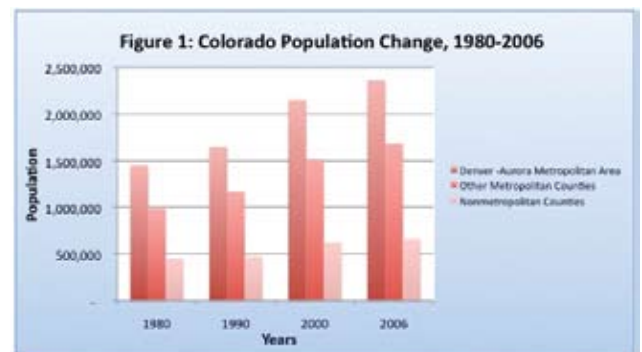
the west with the remainder of the United States. Further, population briefs for each of the 13 states comprising the western region are developed that provide more detailed information on rural development issues. Data for these population briefs are obtained from the United States Census.

Growth in Colorado: Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan

Between 1980 and 2006, Colorado was the eighth fastest growing state in the nation in terms of percent population growth and the ninth fastest by total increase in the number of inhabitants. During this 26-year period, the population grew from about 2.9 million to 4.7 million, an increase of 1.8 million people or 63 percent. Throughout this time period, about one-half of the residents of the state lived in the ten-county Denver/Aurora Metropolitan Area, where the population increased from 1,450,768 in 1980 to 2,363,781 in 2006, an increase of over 900,000 people or 63 percent. In regards to percentage, population growth was even more rapid in the state's other six metropolitan areas (Boulder, Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins, Grand Junction, Greeley, and Pueblo), where the population increased by 70 percent, from just below one million to 1.7 million. Nonmetropolitan counties also experienced population growth, but at a slower rate. In the state's 47 nonmetropolitan counties, the population increased from 451,989 in 1980 to 662,848 in 2006, an increase of 47 percent (Figure 1).

The variation in Colorado's population distribution and change patterns is extensive. The population is concentrated along the Front Range and is

relatively sparse in other parts of the state (Figure 2). The counties in the eastern or Great Plains portion of the state tended to have declining or slowly growing populations, while the counties in the aesthetic mountain portion of the state tended to experience rapid population growth (Figure 3). All of the state's 17 metropolitan counties experienced growth in their populations. Numerically, the greatest population increases were in El Paso County (Colorado Springs), Arapahoe County (Denver-Aurora) and Douglas County (Denver-Aurora), all of which had population increases of over 200,000. Percentage growth was greatest in Douglas County, where the population increased from 25,153 in 1980 to 263,621 in 2006, an incredible 948.1 percent increase. The population more than doubled in four other metropolitan counties (Teller, Elbert, Gilpin, and Park), between 1980 and 2006. All of these counties had relatively small populations in 1980 but experienced rapid growth as they became a part of the suburban fringe. There was also great variation in population patterns in nonmetropolitan counties. Twelve counties experienced population declines, while eight counties had population growth of more than 100 percent. The counties with declining populations tended to be Great Plains counties in the eastern portion of the



state, while the rapidly growing counties were all situated in the mountain counties popular for their natural amenities (see Table 1).

Minority Population Growth

In addition to brisk population growth, there was extensive change in the composition of the Colorado population. In particular, the Hispanic population grew from 341,435 in 1980 to 735,099 in 2000, an increase of 115 percent. Additionally, the Asian population increased by 177 percent, from 34,257 to 95,042. There were also substantial increases in Black and Native American populations. As a result of rapid minority population

growth, the White population declined from 83 percent of all residents in 1980 to 76 percent of all residents in 2000 (Figure 4).

Income, Poverty, Education

On many measures of human economic development, the residents of Colorado are doing very well. Only three western states (Alaska, Colorado and Nevada) had higher

Table 1: Population change for Metropolitan and Nonmetropolitan Counties in Colorado, 1980 - 2006

	1980	1990	2000	2006	Change 1980 - 2006	
					Total	Percent
State						
Total	2,889,964	3,294,394	4,301,261	4,708,271	1,818,307	62.9
Metropolitan Areas						
Total	2,437,975	2,819,463	3,676,685	4,045,423	1,607,446	65.9
Boulder						
Boulder County	189,625	225,339	291,288	282,304	92,679	48.9
Colorado Springs						
Total	317,458	409,482	537,484	599,127	281,669	88.7
El Paso County	309,424	397,014	516,929	576,884	267,460	86.4
Teller County	8,034	12,468	20,555	22,243	14,209	176.9
Denver -Aurora						
Total	1,450,768	1,650,489	2,157,756	2,363,781	913,013	62.9
Adams County	245,944	265,038	363,857	414,338	168,394	68.5
Arapahoe County	293,621	391,511	487,967	537,197	243,576	83.0
Broomfield County	-	-	-	147	147	-
Clear Creek County	7,308	7,619	9,322	9,130	1,822	24.9
Denver County	492,365	467,610	554,636	566,974	74,609	15.2
Douglas County	25,153	60,391	175,766	263,621	238,468	948.1
Elbert County	6,850	9,646	19,872	23,181	16,331	238.4
Gilpin County	2,441	3,070	4,757	5,042	2,601	106.6
Jefferson County	371,753	438,430	527,056	526,994	155,241	41.8
Park County	5,333	7,174	14,523	17,157	11,824	221.7
Ft. Collins -Loveland						
Larimer County	149,184	186,136	251,494	276,253	127,069	85.2
Grand Junction						
Mesa County	81,530	93,145	116,255	134,189	52,659	64.6
Greeley						
Weld County	123,438	131,821	180,936	236,857	113,419	91.9
Pueblo						
Pueblo County	125,972	123,051	141,472	152,912	26,940	21.4
Nonmetropolitan Counties						
Total	451,989	474,931	624,576	662,848	210,859	46.7
Alamosa County	11,799	13,617	14,966	15,225	3,426	29.0
Archuleta County	3,664	5,345	9,898	12,386	8,722	238.0
Baca County	5,419	4,556	4,517	4,107	-1,402	-25.9
Bent County	5,945	5,048	5,998	5,551	-394	-6.6
Chaffee County	13,227	12,684	16,242	16,781	3,554	26.9
Cheyenne County	2,153	2,397	2,231	1,906	-247	-11.5
Conejos County	7,794	7,453	8,400	8,406	612	7.9
Costilla County	3,071	3,190	3,663	3,378	307	10.0
Crowley County	2,988	3,946	5,518	5,386	2,398	80.3
Custer County	1,528	1,926	3,503	3,926	2,398	156.9
Delta County	21,225	20,980	27,834	30,401	9,176	43.2
Dolores County	1,658	1,504	1,844	1,911	253	15.3
Eagle County	13,320	21,928	41,659	49,085	35,765	268.5
Fremont County	28,676	32,273	46,145	48,010	19,334	67.4
Garfield County	22,514	29,974	43,791	51,908	29,394	130.6
Grand County	7,475	7,966	12,442	13,406	5,931	79.3
Gunnison County	10,689	10,273	13,956	14,331	3,642	34.1
Hinsdale County	408	467	790	819	411	100.7
Huerfano County	6,440	6,009	7,862	7,808	1,368	21.2
Jackson County	1,863	1,605	1,577	1,406	-457	-24.5
Kiowa County	1,936	1,688	1,622	1,413	-523	-27.0
Kit Carson County	7,599	7,140	8,011	7,590	-9	-0.1
Lake County	8,830	6,007	7,812	7,814	-1,016	-11.5
La Plata County	27,424	32,284	43,941	47,936	20,512	74.8
Las Animas County	14,897	13,785	15,207	15,564	667	4.5
Lincoln County	4,663	4,529	6,087	5,458	795	17.0
Logan County	19,800	17,567	20,504	20,780	980	4.9
Mineral County	804	558	831	929	125	15.5
Moffat County	13,133	11,357	13,184	13,680	547	4.2
Montezuma County	16,510	18,672	23,830	25,217	8,707	52.7
Montrose County	24,352	24,423	33,432	38,559	14,207	58.3
Morgan County	22,513	21,939	27,171	28,109	5,596	24.9
Otero County	22,567	20,185	20,311	19,452	-3,115	-13.8
Ourray County	1,925	2,295	3,742	4,307	2,382	123.7
Phillips County	4,542	4,189	4,480	4,601	59	1.3
Pitkin County	10,338	12,661	14,872	14,798	4,460	43.1
Prowers County	13,070	13,347	14,483	13,776	706	5.4
Rio Blanco County	6,255	5,972	5,986	6,180	-75	-1.2
Rio Grande County	10,511	10,770	12,413	12,006	1,495	14.2
Routt County	13,404	14,088	19,690	21,580	8,176	61.0
Saguache County	3,935	4,619	5,917	7,006	3,071	78.0
San Juan County	833	745	558	578	-255	-30.6
San Miguel County	3,192	3,653	6,594	7,143	3,951	123.8
Sedgwick County	3,266	2,690	2,747	2,467	-799	-24.5
Summitt County	8,848	12,881	23,548	25,399	16,551	187.1
Washington County	5,304	4,812	4,926	4,630	-674	-12.7
Yuma County	9,682	8,954	9,841	9,829	147	1.5

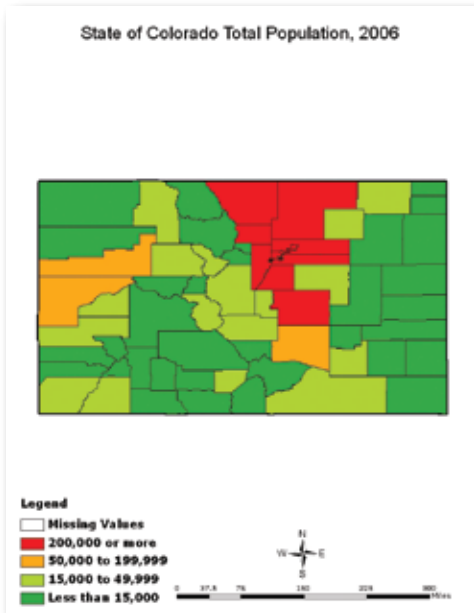


Figure 2

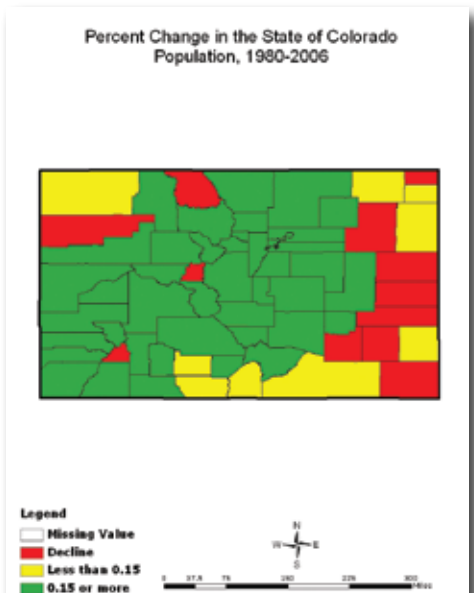


Figure 3

median household incomes than Colorado and only three states (Nevada, Utah and Wyoming) had lower poverty levels. A higher proportion of Colorado residents are college graduates than in any other western state. There is, however, extensive variation on these measures among different population subgroups. Specifically, White households in metropolitan counties tend to be doing very well, while minority households and the residents of nonmetropolitan counties are not doing nearly as well. Figure 5 shows median household income by race/ethnicity and metropolitan status. This figure shows that median household incomes in metropolitan counties (\$50,654) were significantly higher than in nonmetropolitan counties (\$35,606). In addition, incomes for White households greatly exceeded incomes for minority households (\$52,453 to \$41,699 in metropolitan counties, and \$37,112 to \$29,273 in nonmetropolitan counties).

Similarly, Figure 6 shows that poverty levels are low in Colorado, but they are especially low among White households in

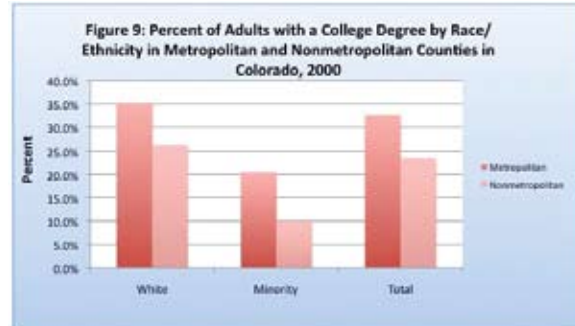
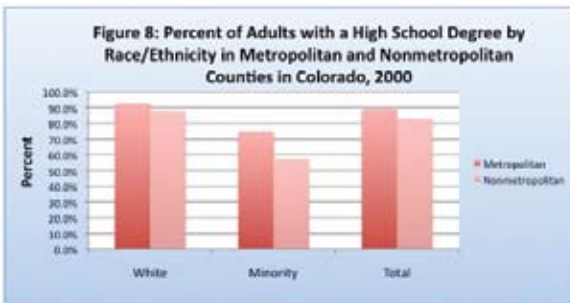
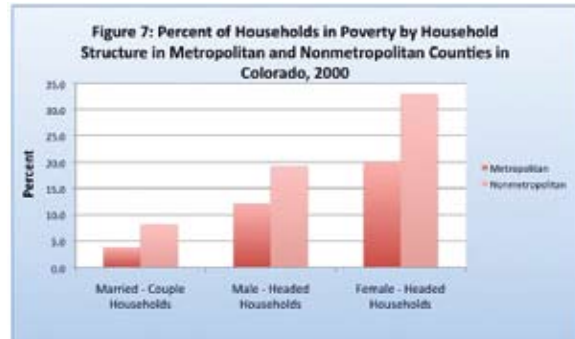
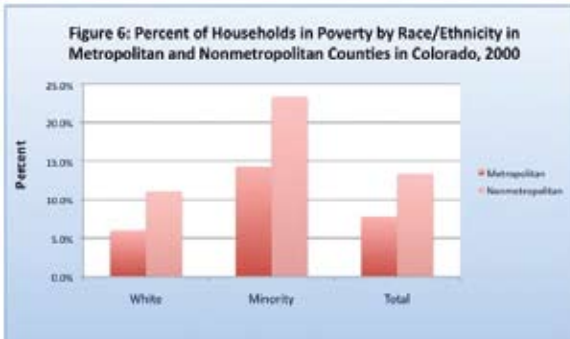
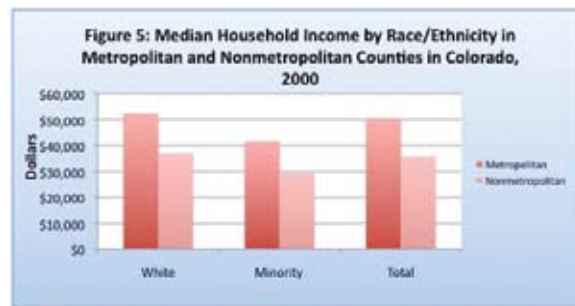
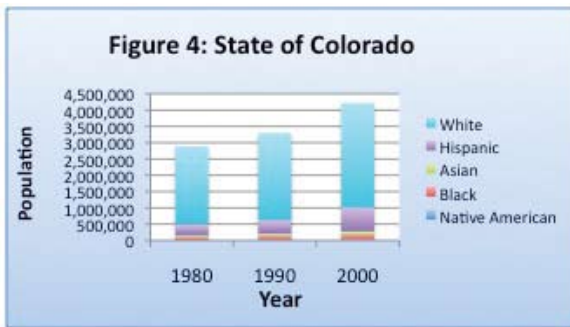
metropolitan areas. Only 6 percent of White households in metropolitan counties were in poverty in 2000, compared to 11 percent of White households in nonmetropolitan counties, 14 percent of minority households in metropolitan counties, and 23 percent of minority households in nonmetropolitan counties. Poverty rates were even more varied when explored by household structure (see Figure 7). Only 3.9 percent of married-couple households in metropolitan counties were in poverty, compared to 8.3 percent of married-couple households in nonmetropolitan counties, 20 percent of female-headed households in metropolitan counties, and one out of three female-headed households in nonmetropolitan counties.

Education levels in Colorado are among the best in the country. Over 90 percent of White adults have completed high school. In comparison, 75 percent of metropolitan minority adults and only 58 percent of nonmetropolitan minorities have completed high school (Figure 8). One in four

Colorado adults have completed at least an undergraduate college degree. Again, there is extensive variation among different segments of the population. Thirty-five percent of White residents in metropolitan counties have a college degree, compared to 26 percent of White residents in nonmetropolitan counties, 20.5 percent of minority residents of metropolitan counties, and only 10 percent of the minority residents of nonmetropolitan counties (Figure 9).

Conclusion

The variety of issues facing Colorado's extension and community development specialists, community leaders and policy makers is extensive. While some communities are dealing with population declines, others are attempting to cope with extremely rapid population growth. All communities are dealing with diversifying populations and attempting to provide policies and programs to help those segments of the population facing major issues and concerns. ●



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About the Briefs

Published by the Western Rural Development Center
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The Population Briefs provide information on the population trends in the western U.S. They are intended to provide both basic information and, when combined with the data tables on the WRDC website, more detailed information for further analysis and application.

The series of Population Briefs will include population trends in the western U.S. related to minorities, natural amenities, education, employment/labor, health, fuel usage, and more. Each topic will include a regional overview and then one brief focused on each of the 13 states in the WRDC's region. The briefs will also include data, where available, related to the population trends in the four western U.S. Territories.

The Population Briefs are available in PDF format on the WRDC website (<http://wrdc.usu.edu>) under 'Publications' and in paper format through the WRDC offices via email to wrdc@usu.edu.

Data

Data for this series is obtained from the U.S. Census of Population for 1980, 1990, 2000, and, where available, 2006. Data is reported for all persons for whom race/ethnicity was reported.

Data Tables

The data tables are available in MS Excel and PDF format on the WRDC website: <http://wrdc.usu.edu>. They are listed under 'Rural Resources.'



The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four regional centers funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Services (CSREES) to strengthen the capacity of local citizens to guide the future of their rural communities. Each of the four Centers link the research and extension capacity of regional land-grant universities with local decision-makers to address a wide range of rural development issues.

The WRDC also receives substantial support from several Utah State University units including Cooperative Extension, the Agricultural Experiment Station and the College of Natural Resources.

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To access the state briefs visit 'Rural Resources' on the WRDC website at <http://wrdc.usu.edu>.

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