

CHAPTER 1

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

LANETTE DIAZ

OVERVIEW

Missoula County's demographics have changed considerably in the last forty years, particularly in terms of the number of people living here. Fairly low per capita income and poverty have had a significant presence as well. These and related issues are explored in this chapter.

Missoula County has experienced a 21.8% rise in population between 1990 and 2000. The population growth has not had any significant effect on the distribution of ethnicity. Whites are still the largest ethnic group representing 94% of the population. Hispanics, American Indians, Blacks and Asians represent a small percentage of the population.

In 1999, Missoula County's per capita income was \$17,808 and the median household income was \$34,454. The per capita income and median household income for Missoula County are lower than the national average. Also, nearly 15% of the population in 2000 lived below the poverty line.

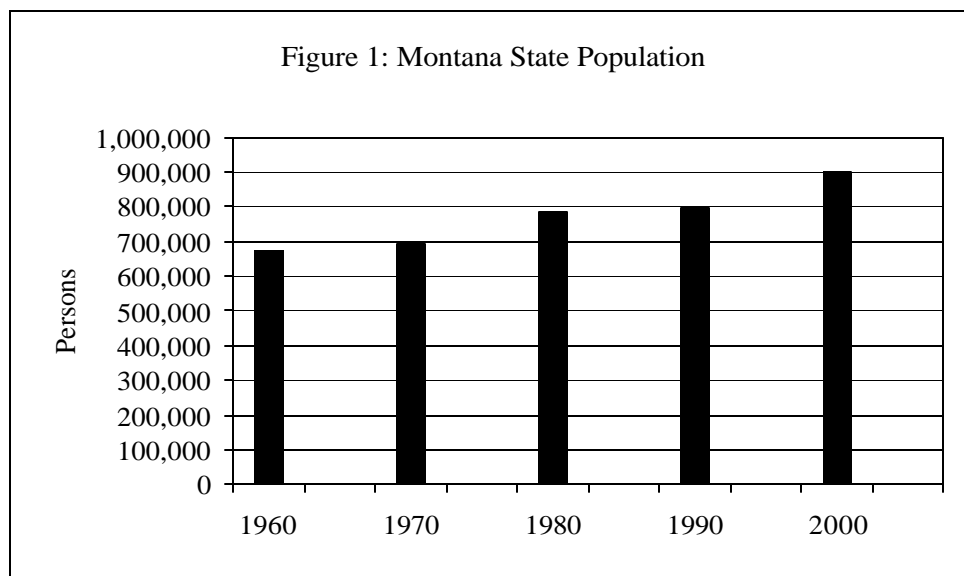
As Missoula County's population increases, agricultural land is being used for development (although it is important to note that not all land designated agricultural is used for food production). Yet the increase in population provides an optimal market for locally produced farm products. A sustainable food system, however, must provide food that is accessible, affordable and integrated into the programs and services for the poor.

POPULATION

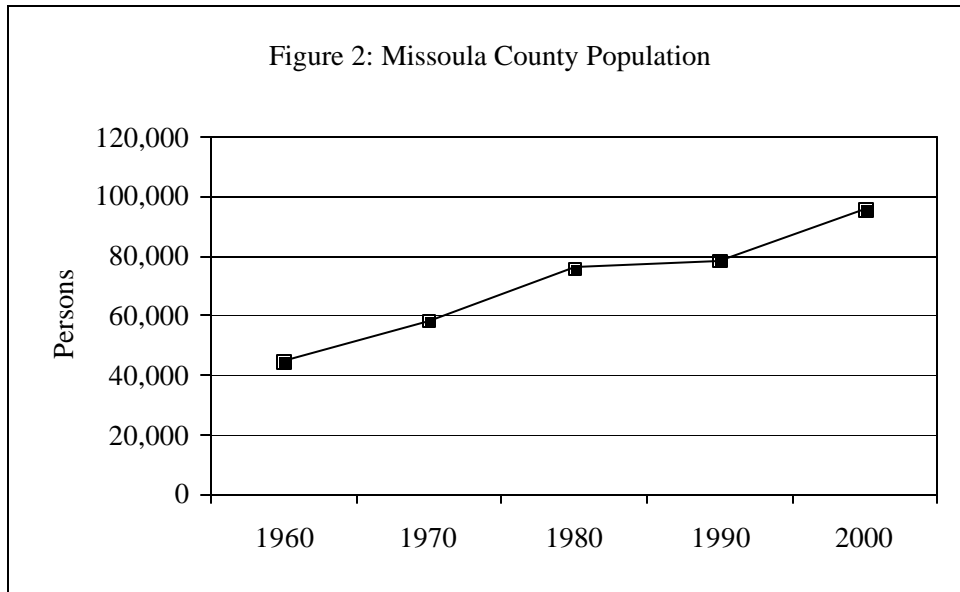
The trends.

Population data for Montana and for Missoula County are readily accessible. Population counts were taken as far back as 1890 and are current through 2000. The data presented here starts at 1960, because some pre-1960 demographic data are not comparable to later figures, due to the questions being changed.

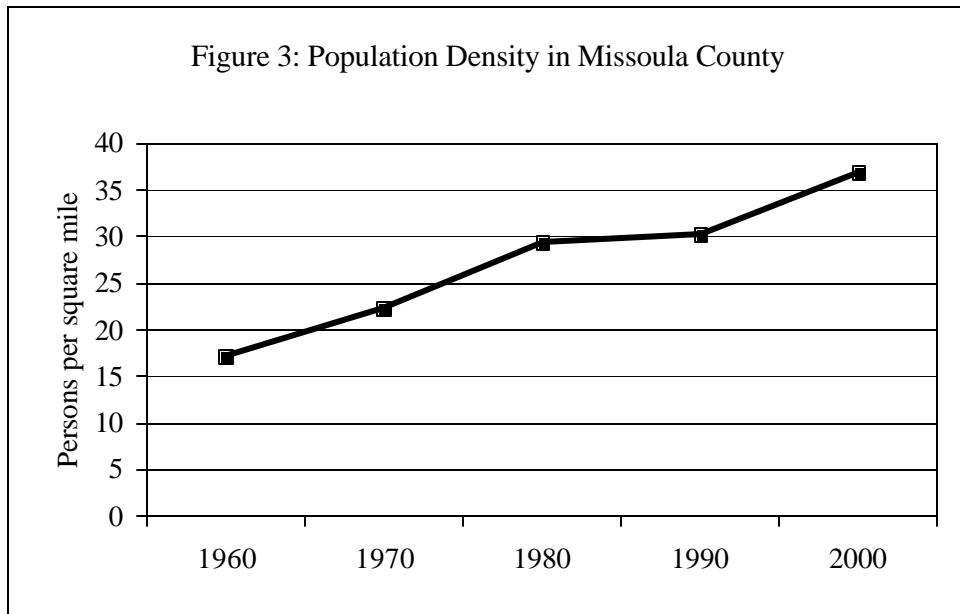
Montana's population rose by 33.7% (227,428 people) from 1960 to 2000. Montana's population grew the most between 1970 and 1980 with a growth of 13.3% (92,281 people), and between 1990 and 2000 with a growth of 12.9% (103,130 people) (see Figure 1).



Missoula County's population growth showed large increases in population between 1960 and 1970 with a growth of 29.1% (13,600 people), between 1970 and 1980 growing by 30.4% (17,753 people), and between 1990 and 2000 growing by 21.8% (17,115 people). Overall, between 1960 and 2000 Missoula County's population grew by 114% (51,139 people) (see Figure 2).



Given that Missoula County’s population increased overall from 1960 to 2000, other demographic data mirror those changes. For example, the number of persons per square mile in Missoula County increased from 17.1 in 1960 to 36.9 in 2000, or by 19.8 persons per square mile (see Figure 3).



The primary factors affecting population change have to do with the difference between births and deaths and between people moving into and out of the county. Census data indicated that 83% of Missoula County’s population resides within the Missoula urban area. However, areas outside the urban portion of the county had a greater percentage increase in population over the past ten years than did the urban area. These rural sub-areas including Lolo, Ninemile, Frenchtown, Potomac, Seeley, and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal lands saw a 46% increase.¹

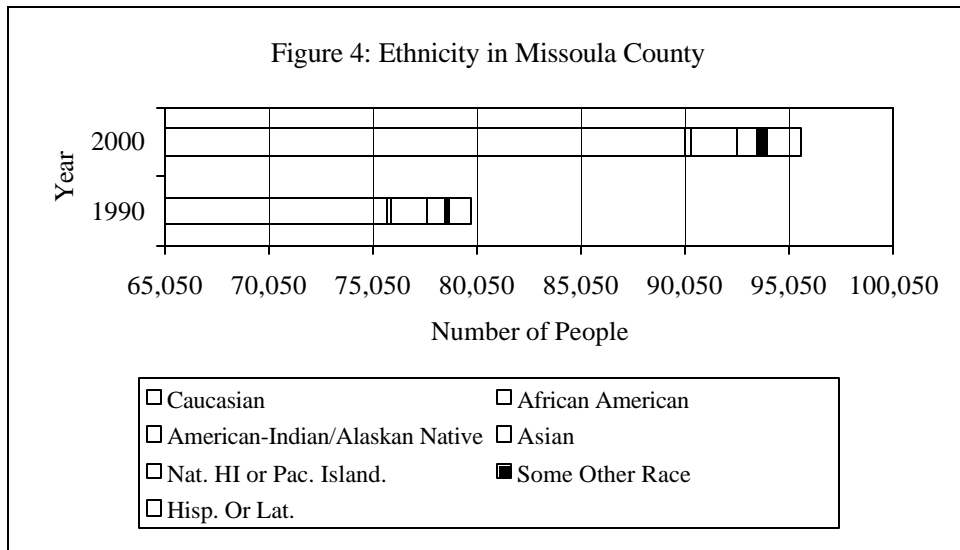
Why is this important?

Population growth in Missoula County has an impact on agricultural land. “Most of the County is constrained for development due to steep terrain, difficult access, distance from services, and the locations of rivers and streams. As a result, much of the subdivision and development activity in Missoula County has occurred in the valleys, near existing communities and in areas that were previously in agricultural production” (pp. 2-6).¹ With the increasing population of Missoula County and the consequent development pressures, Missoula County must consider the value of preserving land for agriculture in order to meet local food needs, as well as to preserve open space and rural life.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

The trends.

In 2000, 94% of Missoula County’s population were white; in 1990, 96% of the population were white. Hispanics, American Indians, Blacks, and Asians represent a small percentage of the population (see Figure 4).²



Why is this important?

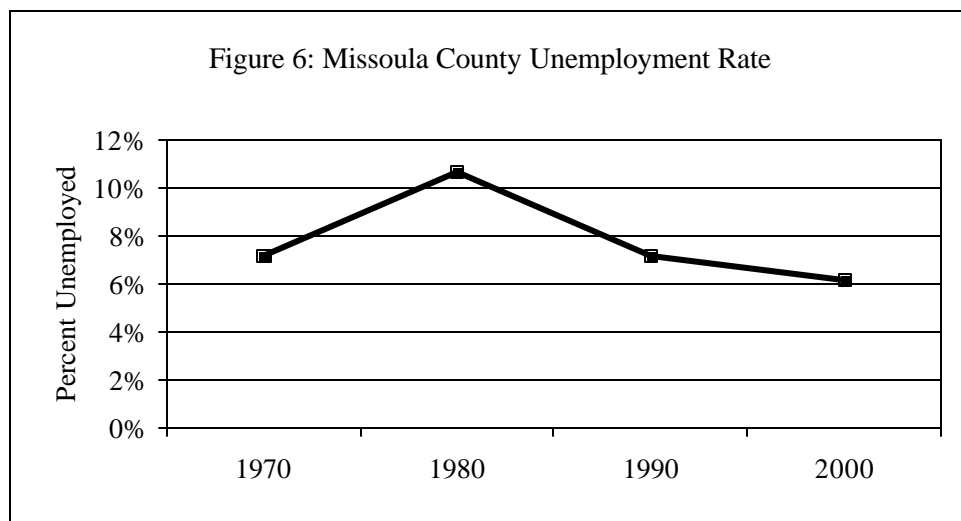
Any study must ensure that it makes an effort to include the perspectives and experiences of all social groups, not just the majority group. It would be easy to survey or ask the opinions of the majority about food security, neglecting minority concerns.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

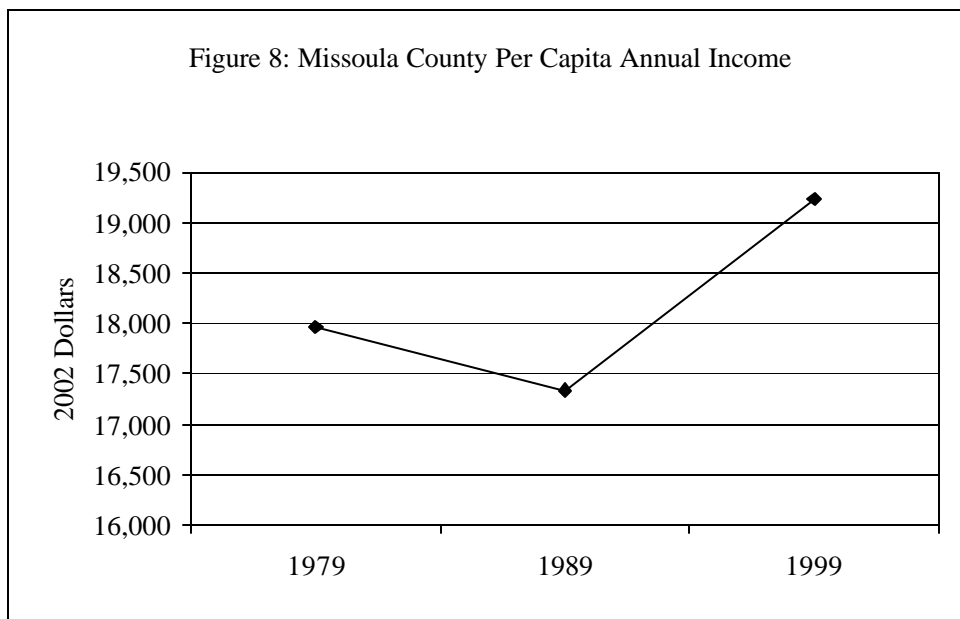
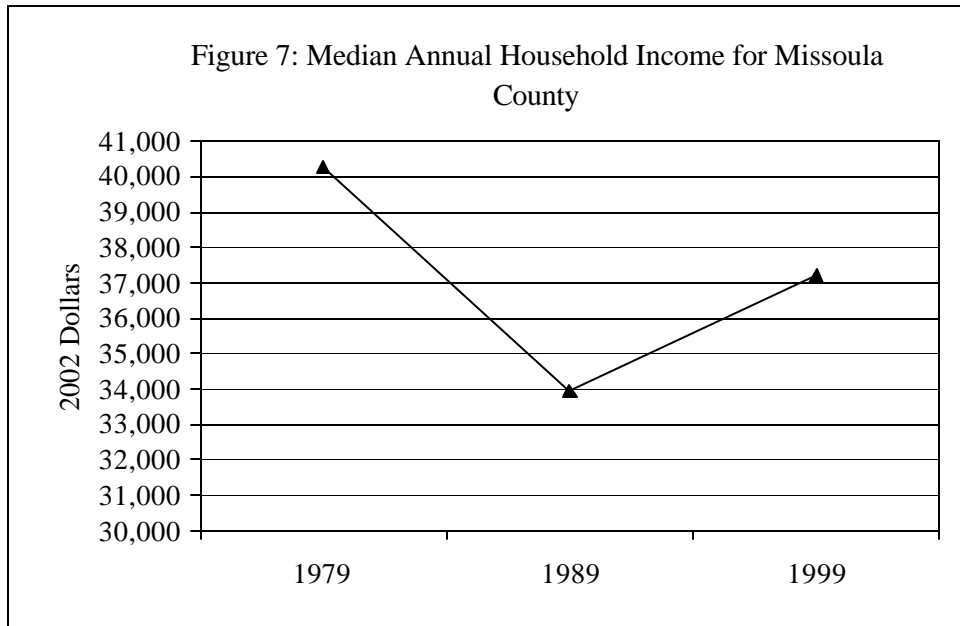
The trends.

Employment data is comparable from 1970 to 2000.³ Employment in Missoula County has gone up steadily from 1970 to 2000 with a 268% increase. Employment rose the most between 1970 and 1980 by 155.9% (22,712) and between 1990 and 2000 by 34.3%

(13,731) (see Figure 5). Civilian unemployment is also comparable from 1970 to 2000 (see Figure 6).



Missoula's median household income and per capita income are comparable between 1980 and 2000 Census reports, which actually give income levels for 1979, 1989, and 1999. Both the per capita income and median household income fell between the 1980 and 1990 Census, and then rose between the 1990 and 2000 Census. Figure 7 shows the median household income for Missoula County in 1979, 1989, and 1999 *adjusted for inflation* to reflect 2002 dollars. Figure 8 indicates per capita income also based on 2002 dollars.



Finally, when compared with the other 56 counties in Montana, Missoula County has a relatively high per capita income for Montana. In 1980 Missoula County ranked 4th out of 56 counties, in 1990 it was 8th, and in 2000 it was 7th. Although per capita income in Missoula County is higher than most other Montana counties, it is still below the national per capita income level (see footnote 1).

Why is this important?

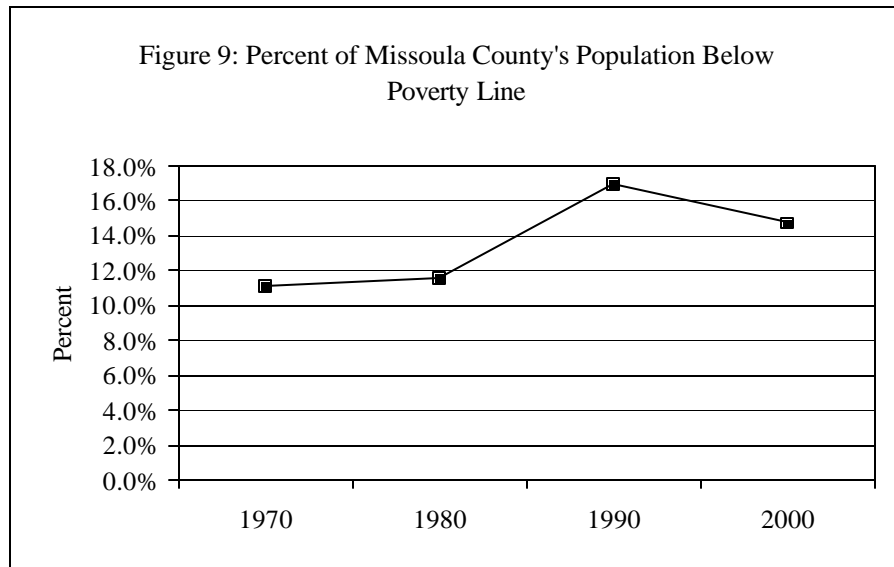
With respect to the food system, tracking employment and income is important because these factors directly affect people’s ability to obtain an adequate and nutritious diet. Large numbers of people unemployed and receiving a lower per capita income may not

be able to afford food. A sustainable food system must consider various ways to make local food accessible to poorer individuals and families.

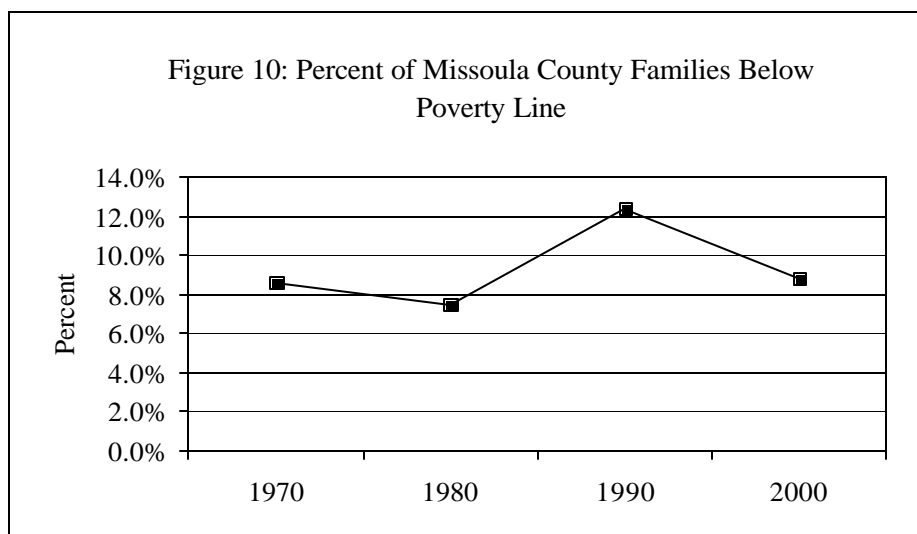
POVERTY

The trends.

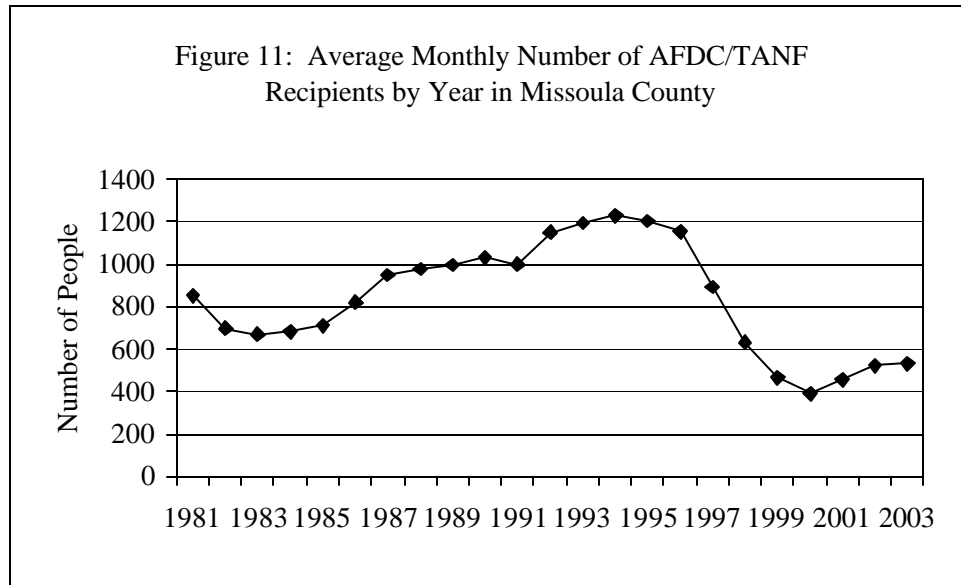
Overall the number of *people* living below the poverty line in Missoula County has risen steadily over the past 20 years.⁴ In 1990 the percent of people living in poverty peaked at 17% (13,376 people). However, in 2000 the percent of people living in poverty decreased to 14.8% (14,178 people) (see Figure 9).



The number of *families* living in poverty in Missoula County also has risen and fallen over the last 30 years. The percentage of families living in poverty in 1970 was 8.6%, in 1980 it was 7.5%, in 1990 it was 12.4%, and in 2000 it was 8.8% (see Figure 10).



The average number of welfare recipients receiving AFDC/TANF per month in a given year dropped between 1981 and 1983. Then, from 1983 to 1994 the average number of welfare recipients rose from an average of 669 cases, to an average of 1229 cases. From 1994 to 2000 the average number of cases lowered by 840 cases to a caseload of 390 per month in 2000. From 2000 to 2003 the average number of welfare recipients rose by 140 cases per month (see Figure 11).



Why is this important?

Understanding how many families and how much of the population is living below the poverty line and receiving welfare is essential when understanding food security. When people are poor, food is often something they will skimp on because they have to pay for housing, heat, clothing, etc. Some 33 million households in the US are not sure where their next meals are coming from.⁵ How can a local food system increase the food security and availability of food for poorer families and individuals?

¹ Missoula County Growth Policy, August 2000. Office of Planning and Grants, Missoula, Mt.

² Census data on ethnic distribution and race are not always comparable, because the 1997 revised standards issued by the Office of Management and Budget led to changes in the survey question on the identification of race for Census 2000.

Also, the definition of ethnicity and race by the Census Bureau does not always match an individual’s own identity. For example, original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, and other Indian subcontinents including for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam are aggregated in the Asian category (see Appendix B Definitions of Subject Characteristics, http://ceic.commerce.state.mt.us/c2000/sf32000/subdef_%20sf3_.pdf). Therefore, the Asian category limits an individual from describing their ethnicity as solely Laotian or Chinese and the individual always has the option of marking “some other race” if they do not want to be lumped into a certain category. Another difficulty in determining race or ethnic distribution is that the census survey regarding ethnicity and race does not define for the individual taking the survey what each category means.

³ Census definitions used here include:

Employed - All civilians 16 years old and over who were either (1) “at work” — those who did any work at all during the reference week as paid employees, worked in their own business or profession, worked on their own farm, or worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers on a family farm or in a family business; or (2) were “with a job but not at work” — those who did not work during the reference week, but who had jobs or businesses from which they were temporarily absent because of illness, bad weather, industrial dispute, vacation, or other personal reasons.

Civilian unemployed - All civilians 16 years old and over were classified as unemployed if they were neither “at work” nor “with a job but not at work” during the reference week, were looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and were available to start a job. Also included as unemployed were civilians 16 years old and over who: did not work at all during the reference week, were on temporary layoff from a job, had been informed that they would be recalled to work within the next 6 months or had been given a date to return to work, and were available to return to work during the reference week, except for temporary illness.

Per capita income - Per capita income is the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child in a particular group. It is derived by dividing the total income of a particular group by the total population in that group. Per capita income is rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

Median Income - The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median. For households and families, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families including those with no income.

⁴ The census determines who lives in poverty by comparing a household’s total family income with the poverty threshold deemed appropriate for that family size and composition. If the total family income is less than the threshold deemed appropriate for that family, then the family is considered to live in poverty. If a person is not living with anyone related by birth, marriage, or adoption, then the person’s own income is compared with the poverty threshold (see Appendix B Definitions of Subject Characteristics, http://ceic.commerce.state.mt.us/c2000/sf32000/subdef_%20sf3_.pdf).

The federal government determines the poverty threshold or line by using the size of a family unit. The guideline was set in the 1960’s, and each year the levels are adjusted to take inflation into account (see Segal, E. & Brzuzy, S. (1998). *Social welfare policy, programs, and practice*. F.E. Peacock Publishers: Illinois). In 2000, the poverty threshold for one person was \$8,794. For a two-person family unit that threshold was \$11,239, for a three-person family unit it was \$13,738, and for a four-person family unit it was 17,603. The poverty threshold or line is used for calculating the number of people officially counted as poor, but it is not used to determine eligibility for all social welfare programs.

Included in the poverty section of this report is the number of welfare recipients enrolled in the welfare program called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Previous to 1996 the program was called Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Data collected on the number of AFDC/TANF recipients in Missoula County are only reported by the average number of recipients per month during a given year. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the total number of AFDC/TANF recipients in a given year.

⁵ Lieberman, T. (2003). *Hungry in America*. *The Nation*. 8(18/25): 17-21.

