



7. Summary of Poverty Indicators and Statistical Data in Eastern Idaho

7.1 Introduction

The 16 county region of Eastern Idaho is diverse, not only in terms of population, but in the different types of economies that fuel economic development. These include everything from extractive economies such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and mining, to manufacturing and service based economies. In recent years much of the region suffered due to the loss of the extractive economic base, which paid higher wages, and the failure to adequately secure a replacement with manufacturing and service based industries that pay comparably. Consequently, many of the counties of Eastern Idaho have high unemployment rates and subsequent poverty.

Although there are many definitions of poverty and many different units of analysis by which to study it, P4P used Census 2000 data to develop a definition of poverty for people in the lowest economic quartile of the Eastern Idaho region.¹

**Quantitative Definition of Poverty for the
Lowest Economic Quartile in Eastern Idaho**

Any household in Eastern Idaho that earns a total of \$19,999 or less annually, regardless of household size.

P4P used the following formula to achieve the definition of poverty for people in the lowest economic quartile:

- The income range in Eastern Idaho is from less than \$10,000 annually to \$200,000 or more.
- The Census divides the range of incomes into 16 increments such as \$0 to \$9999.²
- The number of Eastern Idaho households in each increment was totaled.
- The 16 increments were then divided by 4 to obtain the number of households in each economic quartile.
- Households in the lowest economic quartile were analyzed to determine the range of incomes.
- Using this process, P4P determined that the Lowest Economic Quartile for Eastern Idaho includes households that make less than \$19,999 annually, regardless of household size.

Table 7-1 outlines the combined general demographic findings for the 16 county region.³

¹ United States Census 2000

² Income categories were determined by the United States Census 2000

³ The category for Hispanic/Latino does not distinguish between foreign born or US born Hispanics. It also does not adequately address the changing migrant and seasonal Hispanic population.



Category	Percent
Mean population under age 18	31.6
Mean population age 18 to 64	56.8
Mean population age 65 and over	11.6
Male	50.4
Female	49.6
White	91.5
African American	.2
Native American	1.5
Asian	.4
Pacific Islander	.1
Other	5.0
Multiple Races	1.3
Hispanic/Latino (Ethnicity)	8.1
Total Population in Poverty	13.6
White (Only) Population in Poverty	13.0
Hispanic/Latino Population in Poverty	25.1
American Indian Population in Poverty	29.0
Female Householders (Children U18) in Poverty	38.7
Adults Over Age 65 in Poverty	8.0

Despite the fact that research shows rural poverty rates are higher and more severe than their urban/metropolitan counterparts, many of the policy initiatives target urban poverty over rural poverty.⁵ The same research provides evidence that rural adults have less formal education, face higher unemployment rates, and lower average earnings, than adults living in urban areas.⁶ Because of these findings, P4P divided the 16 counties into five clusters, characterized by their population size. This was an effective method for comparing the similarities and differences of specific counties and their unique rural poverty issues.⁷ Community characteristics and education data from the five groups were also compared to data from the Fort Hall Indian Reservation.

Both Reservation and Hispanic/Latino population data presented challenges for P4P. Reservation data is collected and categorized differently for Native Americans living on the Reservation than for Native Americans living off the Reservation. Therefore data for Native Americans living outside Reservation borders is included in the group data. The data for Native Americans living on the Reservation is included with the Fort Hall data but non-Natives are also included in the Fort Hall data if they live in Fort Hall. The existing data is often contradictory and difficult to understand because some sources only

⁴ United Way Idaho Community Count, 2003/United States Census 2000

⁵ Joint Center for Poverty Research website

⁶ Id

⁷ For the remainder of the analysis the counties will be referred to by their respective group numbers.



count Native Americans living in Fort Hall and other sources include all people living in Fort Hall, whether Native American or not. Finally, the Fort Hall data could not be compared to the other group data for employment, housing, food security, crime and safety, and health due to the differences in available data.

7.1.1 Hispanic/Latino Population Data

It is difficult to adequately count poverty in the Hispanic/Latino population of Eastern Idaho.⁸ Current data does not address the diversity within the Hispanic population such as foreign born versus U.S. born, migrant and seasonal residents versus permanent residents, undocumented residents (illegal) versus documented residents, and finally cultural differences among and between Hispanic groups. The Hispanic population is more diverse than any other population in Eastern Idaho and categorizing all Hispanic people together does not paint the true picture of poverty or the various circumstances that different groups within the Hispanic population face. At the same time it would be inappropriate to ignore the existing data, however inadequate it may be. P4P recognizes the gaps in data and the overall lack of sufficient data to analyze poverty in the Hispanic population.⁹

P4P included Hispanic population data within the county data presented throughout this analysis. However, it is also important to analyze the data alone in order to understand specific problem areas.¹⁰ Total poverty for the Hispanic/Latino population in the region ranges from 20% to 30% compared to the total population range of 10% to 20%. In the region, 37% of the Hispanic population is found to be in severe poverty. Of the aggregate income deficit in the Other Families category, Hispanic female householders assume 86%.

Figure 7-1 indicates that children, adults and elderly people have poverty rates over 15% and in some cases the percentage of the population residing below the poverty threshold averages 30%. This is considerably higher than the population taken as a whole. The Hispanic population over 65 is considerably smaller in some counties than the population over 65 in the region as a whole. This could be attributed to the fact that many older people do not participate in the census due to the language and literacy barriers or even a distrust of the data collection process.

⁸ One of the issues P4P encountered was in the term "Hispanic," which references culture more than nationality. Many people prefer to be called Latinos or Mexican Americans. For the purposes of this study P4P will respectfully use the term Hispanics while acknowledging that there are some groups who prefer different terms.

⁹ P4P will continue to research poverty issues in the Hispanic population and promote a more realistic approach to data collection and analysis and the policies that are based on inadequate data.

¹⁰ The table shows there are outliers in Groups 4 and 5 for female householders with children and in Group 1 for adults over 65. This is due to the fact that the over 65 population size of Custer and Oneida counties in Group 1 is much smaller than the other counties. Female householders with children in Madison county (Group 4) is also considerably smaller than the other counties. Group 5 appropriately reflects the actual poverty within Bannock and Bonneville counties.

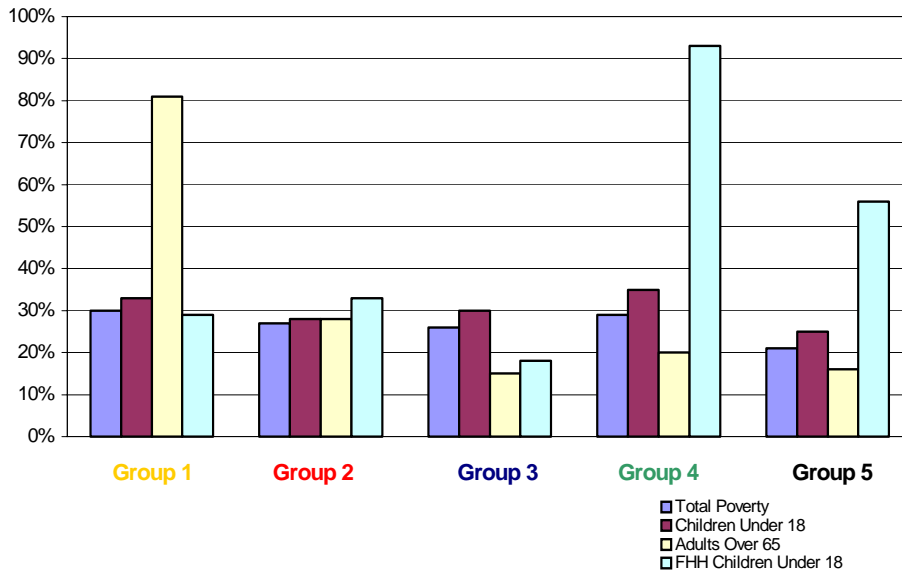


Figure 7-1. Hispanic/Latino Poverty by Group and Category.

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7.2 County Clusters

Counties are considered rural if they do not include a city with a population of at least 50,000 and are they also referred to as non-metropolitan counties.¹¹ Using this definition, fourteen of the sixteen counties in Eastern Idaho are considered rural. Only two counties, Bonneville and Bannock, have cities with populations that exceed 50,000. In addition, some counties proved to be anomalies within their group, and the discrepancies will be discussed separately. Table 7-2 shows the mean population by cluster or group, and denotes each by color for reference throughout this section.

Groups	Mean Population of Counties
1. Butte, Clark, Custer, Oneida (Yellow)	3,082
2. Bear Lake, Caribou, Lemhi, Power, Teton (Red)	7,047
3. Franklin, Fremont, Jefferson (Blue)	14,330
4. Bingham, Madison (Green)	34,831
5. Bannock, Bonneville (Black)	77,473
Fort Hall (Brown)	5,759

¹¹ Salant p. 2



7.3 Findings of Groups by Poverty Indicator

Defining poverty for the lowest economic quartile is only one way of measuring poverty within the region. In order to fully understand the issues that people in poverty face it is necessary to analyze the groups using the indicators that emerged from the analysis:¹²

- Community Characteristics
- Employment
- Housing
- Education
- Health
- Crime and Safety
- Food Security

In addition, P4P analyzed technology and transportation regionally due to the limited amount of data available to explore these indicators using county clusters.

7.3.1 Community Characteristics

Community Characteristics were analyzed using the following variables:

General Poverty Demographics¹³

- Total poverty (percent of the total population, children under 18, and adults over the age of 65 below the poverty threshold) (Figure 7-2)
- Ratio of Income to Poverty Level (under .50 of the Poverty Line is considered Severe Poverty) (Figure 7-3)
- Poverty Status of Families with children under 18 (female householders, no husband present, with children under 18 compared to male householders, no wife present, with children under 18) (Figure 7-4)
- Aggregate Income Deficit (the aggregate amount in dollars that female householders assume compared to the amount male householders assume) (Figure 7-5)

7.3.1.1—Total Poverty. Total poverty is measured by analyzing the five groups and Fort Hall in terms of 1) the total population in poverty, 2) children under the age of 18 in poverty, and 3) adults over the age of 65 in poverty. Figure 7-2 indicates that five of the six groups are above the national (11.3%) and state (11.8%) averages of poverty. Fort

¹² Fort Hall data is included with the community characteristics and education indicators.

¹³ United States Census 2000.

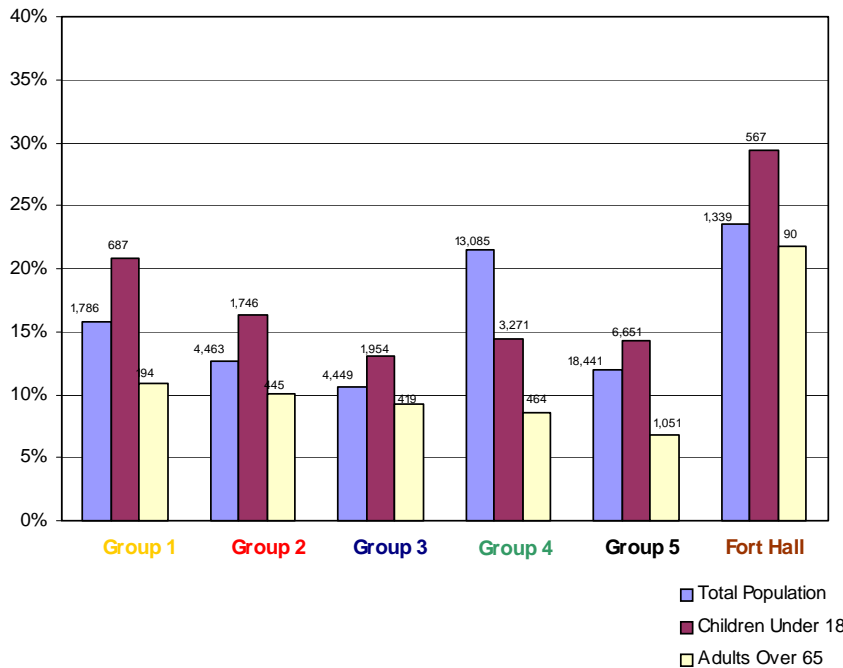


Figure 7-2. Total Poverty By Group.

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Hall has the highest percentage of poverty with a rate twice the national and state averages. Group 4 also shows a rate of almost twice the national and state averages.¹⁴

A significant number of children under 18 fall below the poverty level in Group 1. These are the smallest counties in the region. This is significant because rural families often lack access to health care and other services due to distance from urban service centers.

Elderly poverty is significant in Fort Hall with a rate of 21.8%, more than twice the average of the other five groups. In all the groups, elderly poverty tends to be lower than the rates for total poverty and children in poverty. This may indicate the success of programs aimed at the over 65 age group and the impact these programs have on the elderly population.

¹⁴ While the two counties show a total poverty rate of two times the national average it is important to point out the characteristics that are unique to one of the counties in this group. Madison County is the home of Brigham Young University-Idaho, and students account for a sizable percentage of the population in that county. Most of the students use student loans for living expenses during the school year and find part time work for the rest of the year. Student loans are not counted as income; therefore students claim a very low annual income. Many of the students are married and support families on student loans and part time incomes. While these circumstances may skew the numbers slightly, they do not negate the fact that many of these students, even with loans, are living below the poverty threshold during their time in college.



7.3.1.2—Ratio of Income to Poverty. The most compelling category in income ratio is severe poverty. (See Figure 7-3) Households in this category report an annual income of less than 50% of the poverty level of \$17,603, or under \$8,801 annually.¹⁵ All of the groups reflect severe poverty rates above 25%, with Group 4 and Fort Hall exceeding 45%.

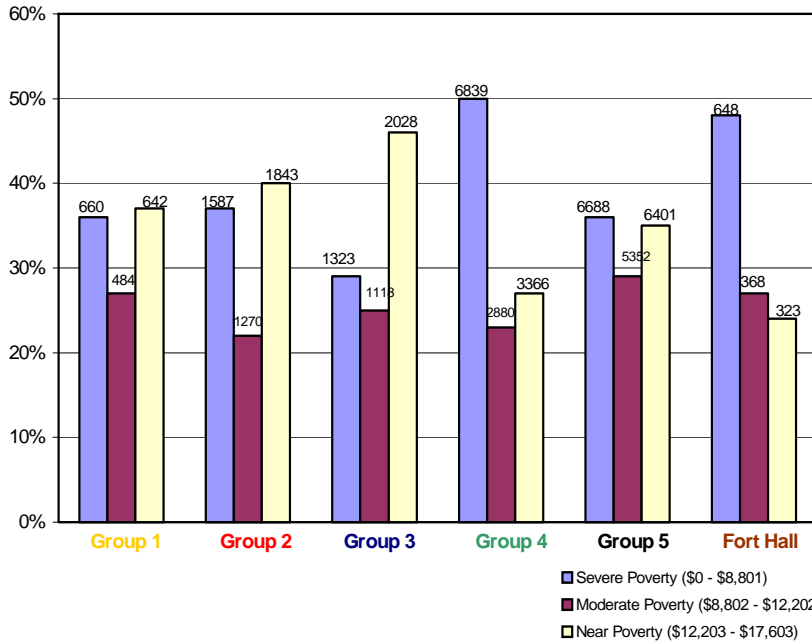


Figure 7-3. Ratio of Income to Poverty Level by Severity

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Of the remaining households that fall below the poverty level in each group, close to 25% fall into the moderate poverty category. This means that households report an annual income between \$8,802 and \$12,202 annually. Almost 50% of households in all groups report an annual income of less than \$12,202 annually.

7.3.1.3—Female Householders, Children under 18. Female householders, with no husband present and male householders, with no wife present, are a category within the U.S. Census category of Other Families. Within the subset are categories of single headed households that have children under the age of 18 present in the home. Figure 7-4 indicates that female householders, no husband present and children under 18, are more than twice as likely to be in poverty than are their male counterparts. In the majority of the groups, more than 40% of the female householders with minor children have an annual income below the poverty threshold. Rural counties have the most female householders living in poverty.

¹⁵ United States Census 2000.

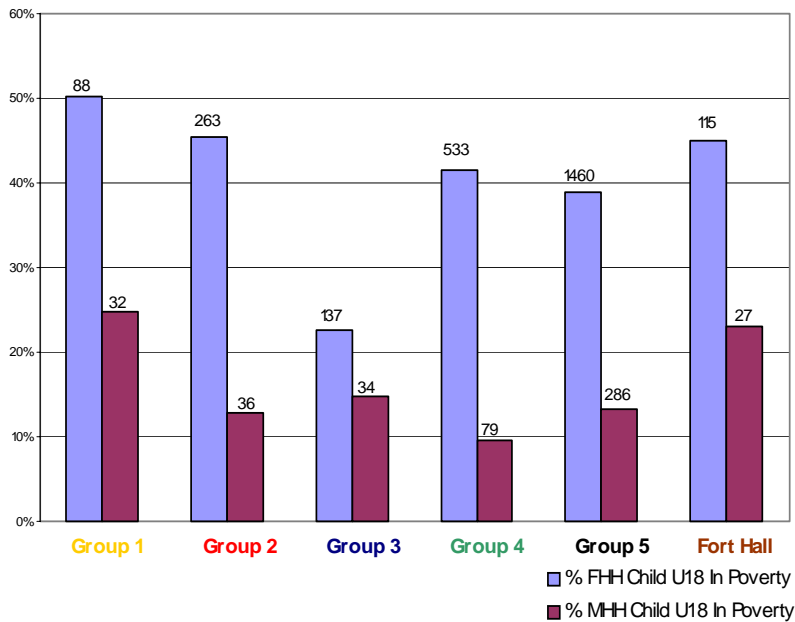


Figure 7-4. Poverty Status of Families with Children Under 18.

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7.3.1.4—Aggregate Income Deficit. Aggregate Income Deficit is a category used by the U.S. Census to indicate how far a county collectively falls below the poverty line in actual dollars. Within this category there are subsets of Other families, including female and male householders. Figure 7-5 shows the aggregate amount in dollars that female householders and male householders fall below the poverty threshold annually. It is crucial to note that in all five groups and Fort Hall, female householders are assuming over 75%, and in some cases over 85%, of the annual aggregate income deficit in the Other family category. This is important because of the severe financial strain it places on families with children. Close to 90% of all female householders in the five groups and on the reservation have children under the age of 18 in the home. The high percentage of women with children assuming the majority of this deficit is a compelling reason to examine policy issues that pertain to single mothers and their children.

7.3.2 Employment

Employment is measured by analyzing the structure of the local economy, the industries that employ the largest percentage of workers, and the average annual wages those industries pay.

The structure of the regional economy cannot be categorized as a single economic niche. The Eastern Idaho region is a vast area that encompasses diverse economic opportunities for the people who reside in each community. The region has three retail/trade areas covering a large geographic area. The northern counties are the largest in terms of

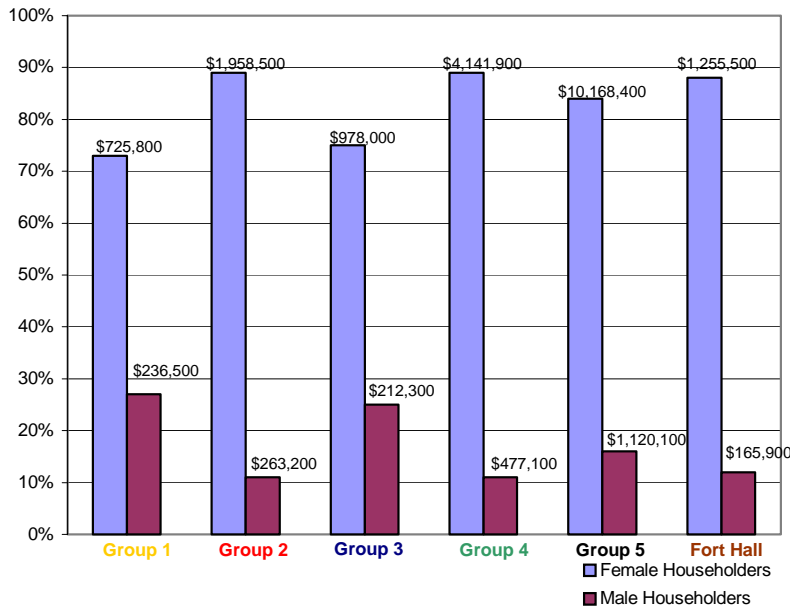


Figure 7-5. Aggregate Income Deficit

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geographic size and are serviced by the Idaho Falls trade/retail area. Most of the employment opportunities are in the areas directly surrounding Idaho Falls. The second largest trade/retail area is in Pocatello. This area serves 75% of the southern counties. The remaining southern counties are serviced by the Logan, Utah, trade/ retail area. This poses a challenge to community development because the trade/retail area originates in a neighboring state. P4P will look at community development efforts that provide an avenue within the region to accommodate the needs of the southernmost counties.

Average annual wages in the region were analyzed by examining the percentage of total workers employed in the top three industries and the average annual wages paid by the three industries. Table 7-3 indicates the average wages paid to workers in each group.¹⁶ It is important to note that the majority of wages in the five groups fall below the poverty threshold. This indicates families have limited opportunities for living wages. Since the economic structures of the individual groups are largely attributed to the service/retail areas, it will be important to explore economic development policies that will not only fit the unique characteristics of each community, but also provide opportunities for living wage jobs.¹⁷

¹⁶ Fort Hall data is not included in this analysis because the three industries do not have enough workers in Fort Hall to make an analysis or draw any conclusions.

¹⁷ Average annual wages are also analyzed in tandem with annual rental costs in each group (See Appendix I).



	Workers Employed*	Retail	Service	Local Government
Group 1	66%	\$9,085	\$16,188	\$17,419
Group 2	53%	\$12,755	\$16,647	\$22,590
Group 3	54%	\$11,726	\$16,768	\$21,192
Group 4	65%	\$13,577	\$19,614	\$23,156
Group 5	67%	\$15,087	\$25,267	\$27,544

*Percentage of total workers employed in the 3 industries combined.

Living Wages in Eastern Idaho

Efforts have been made in many communities across the nation to determine what constitutes a living wage. Although the approaches vary, the living wage is typically based on the “market basket” of essential goods and services such as food, housing, health care, child care, transportation, and other necessary expenses. The variables that are used to determine the basic budget include regional differences, family size, goods and services included, and allowances for the quality and availability of goods and services.

A living wage is a wage that allows families to meet their needs without relying on public assistance. It also allows them to plan ahead and deal with occasional emergencies. The wages are calculated on full time, year round work. In 2000, the Idaho Job Gap Study calculated a living wage of \$10.11 an hour for a single adult (\$21,000 annually) or \$15.83 an hour for a single adult with two children (\$33,000 annually).

The study also indicates that two occupational types account for 77% of the jobs that pay at least living wages for a single adult with two children: 1) professional, paraprofessional and technical; and 2) managerial and administrative occupations.¹⁸

Another way to examine employment is by comparing wages for experienced workers with wages for entry-level workers. Using data provided by the Idaho Department of Labor,¹⁹ an analysis shows that experienced wage jobs (jobs that require at least a bachelor’s degree or some form of technical training) pay 63% more than entry-level jobs where no formal training or degree is necessary. (See Table 7-4) This shows a direct link between the need for education and training opportunities in order to get living wage jobs. This also has a direct implication for economic development and type of businesses attracted to the area. The type of business that a community attracts depends on the available employment pool. If a community has more experienced wage workers in an employment pool, the community is more likely to attract businesses that pay experienced level wages.

¹⁸ The Northwest Job Gap Study: Searching for Work that Pays, Idaho. 2001. The Northwest Policy Center, Northwest Federation of Community Organizations, and Idaho community Action Network.

¹⁹ Labor Market Information website.



Table 7-4 Experienced Wages vs. Entry-Level Wages in Eastern Idaho

	Entry Wage	Experience Wage
Annual Wages	\$15,190	\$41,010
Hourly Wages	\$7.30	\$19.70

7.3.3 Housing

The average annual rental cost in the five groups was analyzed by comparing the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for each of the areas.²⁰ Table 7-5 indicates that people living below the poverty level in each of the groups can only afford up to a two bedroom unit when 30% of their income goes to rent. This is important because it illustrates the significance of inadequate housing conditions for people in poverty. For instance, if a family needs more space than a two bedroom unit, they will either pay more than 30% of their income for rent, neglecting other basic necessities, or they will continue to live in a unit that is too small for their needs.

Table 7-5 Average Annual Rental Costs

	0 Bedroom	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
Group 1	\$11,840	\$13,760	\$17,720	\$23,520	\$27,840
Group 2	\$12,056	\$13,560	\$17,720	\$23,616	\$27,952
Group 3	\$11,973	\$13,760	\$17,720	\$23,520	\$27,840
Group 4	\$12,240	\$13,720	\$17,220	\$23,520	\$27,840
Group 5	\$12,080	\$14,540	\$19,420	\$26,240	\$31,560

7.3.4 Education

Education as an indicator of poverty is measured by comparing the percentage of the population age 25 to 64 with 1) no high school diploma, or equivalent, 2) only a high school diploma, or equivalent, or 3) have achieved an Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate, or Professional degree.²¹ Education is an important indicator of poverty because the level of employment is closely linked to the level of educational attainment.

Figure 7-6 shows that among the five groups and Fort Hall, high school graduation rates range from 65% to 88%. Fort Hall has the lowest percentage of graduation rates at 65%. The dropout rates for the five groups range from 12% to 17%. Fort Hall also has the highest rate of non-completion of high school for people 18 to 64, at 35%. The attainment of higher education in the five groups ranges from 22% to 32%. Fort Hall's higher education attainment rate is much lower, at only 9%.

²⁰ National Low Income Housing Coalition.

²¹ United States Census 2000.

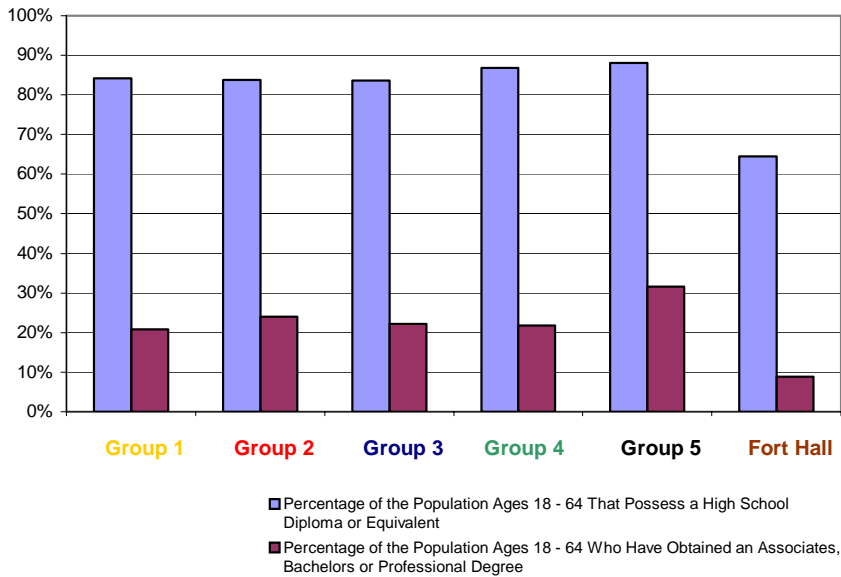


Figure 7-6. Educational Attainment

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Educational attainment can be analyzed in tandem with employment in order to understand the job opportunities in the region. Entry level wages typically require a high school diploma while experienced wage jobs require some form of higher education or technical training. The table indicates that less than 30% of people in the groups are eligible for experienced wage work. This may be one indication why the region has difficulty attracting employers and industries that pay more than poverty level wages.

7.3.5 Health

Health as an indicator of poverty is measured by examining the percentage of women who seek late or no prenatal care, the frequency of employers in the area that pay partial or full health care benefits for their employees, and the percentage of the population lacking health insurance. Access to the health care system is an important way to gauge whether people are able to obtain the care they need.

Table 7-6 illustrates these percentages of the population that lack health insurance. All five groups are above the national average of uninsured and four of the five groups have twice the national average of uninsured. This means that a great number of people in the region have little or no ability to pay for health care. Due to a lack of insurance and an inability to pay for health care, it can be assumed that a large percentage lack access to the health care system.



Group 1	25%
Group 2	27%
Group 3	24%
Group 4	16%
Group 5	26%
Idaho	17%
United States	12%

Another way to measure health is to look at the benefits employers pay within the region. According to the Idaho Department of Labor,²² 82% of employers with full time employees are paying at least part of their employee's health insurance coverage. While this may seem significant, it should be noted that a large percentage of the population is not considered to be full time employees. Table 7-7 shows the percentage of coverage for Eastern Idaho industries. Note that manufacturing, retail/trade, service, and construction are the least likely industries in the region to provide benefits. Retail, trade, and service industries employ a large percentage of workers in the five groups and many are not employed full time. This indicates that a large number of the population pays for benefits out of their own pockets.

The most compelling information shown in Table 7-7 is the fact that only 2% of full time and 3% of part time employers provide any form of child care for their employees. This indicates that child care expenses are typically paid by employees and may be one reason why female householders with children have higher poverty levels.

	Percentage Full Time	Percentage Part Time
Insurance Type		
Health Insurance	82%	27%
Dependent Health Insurance	62%	24%
Dental Plan	57%	24%
Vision Plan	44%	21%
Life Insurance	49%	22%
Disability Insurance	36%	21%
Long Term Disability Insurance	21%	3%
Miscellaneous Benefits		
Child Care	2%	3%

*Bottom 4 Industries in every category: Manufacturing, Retail/Trade, Service, Construction.

²² Labor Market Information website.



Finally, the utilization rates of prenatal care are one indicator of future health status for women and children in the region. Data from the Vital Health Statistics Survey indicates that women in smaller rural counties are less likely to seek prenatal care within the 1st trimester of their pregnancy and are more likely to seek care in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters. Rural counties have the highest percentage of women who seek no prenatal care at all. (See Table 7-8) The higher percentages of women seeking care in later trimesters may be attributed to the rural nature of the counties and lack of both health care and transportation services. Group 1 includes four counties located far from the urban centers that provide medical services.

	N	1st Trimester	2nd Trimester	3rd Trimester	None
Group 1	40	68.8	21	7.2	4.75
Group 2	98	82.08	14.5	2.84	0.42
Group 3	260	82.1	13.73	3.63	0.53
Group 4	628	82.3	14.05	3.3	0.35
Group 5	1418	87.55	9.9	2.3	0.25

7.3.6 Crime and Safety

How safe people in poverty feel is important to their way of life. Crime and Safety is analyzed by looking at juvenile and adult arrests over a seven year period to understand the trends. By computing yearly increases or decreases into a percentage of change per year, P4P was able to control for population variations within the groups over the seven year period. It also gave a more accurate picture of the success of crime prevention programs.

Figures 7-7 and 7-8 show the percentage of change per year in arrests for both juveniles and adults. The most compelling finding is that with the erratic activity that takes place from year to year there is no solid evidence that prevention programs are working or that communities are becoming safer. In juvenile crime, both the smallest and largest groups show a decline in the number of arrests per year. The three middle groups show a steady increase. In adult arrests, the picture is more complicated. All of the groups seem to rise and fall together, with the exception of Group 3, which includes two rural counties in the far north of the region, and one rural county in the far south.

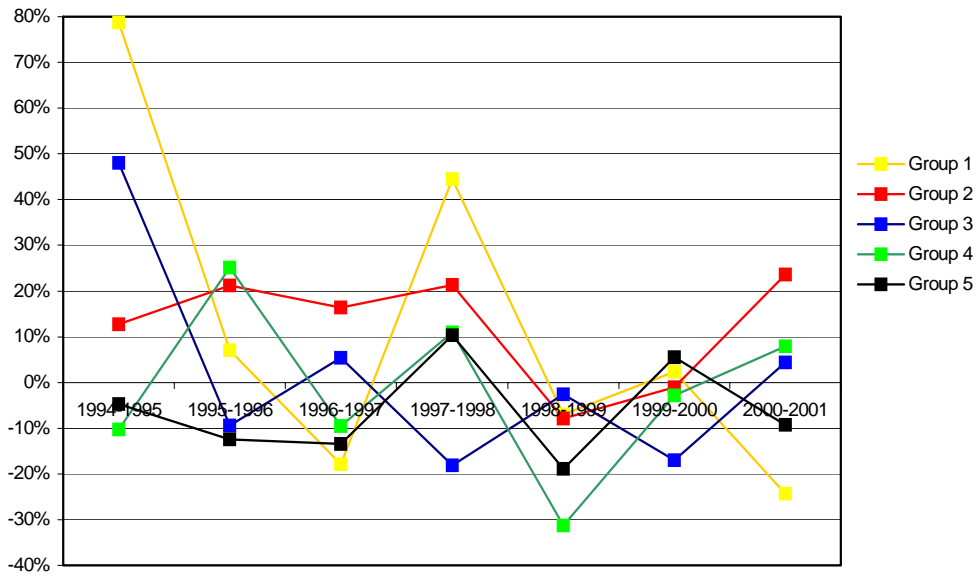


Figure 7-7. Juvenile Arrests (Percentage Change per Year)

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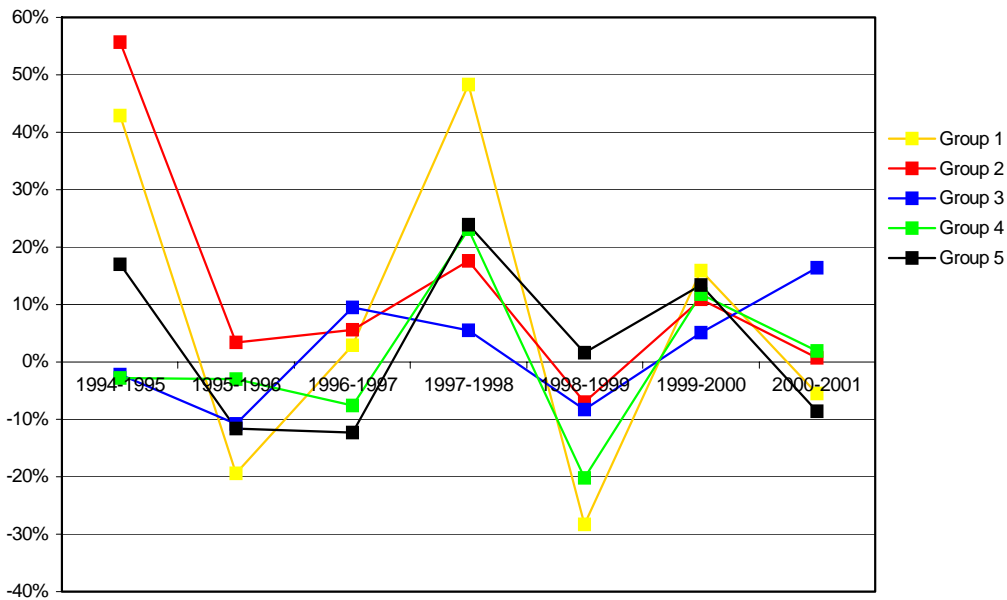


Figure 7-8. Adult Arrests (Percentage Change per Year)

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7.3.7 Food Security

Food security as an indicator of poverty can be measured by analyzing the percentage of children that participate in free or reduced school lunch programs. In many cases, school lunch programs provide the only nutritionally balanced meal that children will receive in a day. Table 7-8 shows the percentage of participation in school lunch programs. All of the groups show a high percentage of participation and Groups 3 and 4 have the highest participation rate. While the percentages are similar to the national average it is important to note that participation in these programs is crucial for families in poverty.

Group 1	40%
Group 2	37%
Group 3	43%
Group 4	43%
Group 5	32%

7.3.8 Technology

Technology as an indicator of poverty can be examined by analyzing the potential resources in the region. Eastern Idaho has significant technology resources and the region is gaining recognition for its capacity to develop technology related industries. The region's largest employer now has a different name and a revised mission. Earlier this year the Department of Energy announced that the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory would become the nation's premier nuclear laboratory—the Idaho National Laboratory. Science and technology provide a sound economic base for the region.

Two innovative concepts are currently being explored in order to foster economic growth 1) the CANAMEX Trade Corridor, and 2) the Eastern Idaho Technology Corridor. These initiatives target both the resources that the business community provides and the labor force that can make economic growth a reality.

7.3.8.1 The CANAMEX Trade Corridor. The CANAMEX Trade Corridor has been defined by the federal government as a high priority corridor. (See Figure 7-9.) The passage of NAFTA in the mid 1990's provided an opportunity for increased trade between Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The CANAMEX Trade Corridor is a project that will utilize transportation, commerce and communication to stimulate economic growth along the corridor line.

The map below shows the CANAMEX Trade Corridor route, which runs along the interstate line connecting Canada and Mexico via five western states.



Figure 7-9. The CANAMEX Trade Corridor

The goal of the plan is to develop a four lane highway connecting the three countries in order to provide a highly accessible route for the delivery of goods and services. The highway will likely boost economies in the communities connected to the route.

The five initiatives included in the plan are the:²³

1. Smart Freight Corridor
2. Smart Tourist Corridor
3. Telecommunications Access for Rural Areas
4. Corridor Highway Improvements
5. Smart Process Partnerships.

Since Interstate I-15 runs through the Eastern Idaho region, the area is in a position to benefit from the increased traffic the corridor will bring and the subsequent development of infrastructure to support the corridor. In addition, transportation and technology industries in the region will experience development opportunities, helping to transform Eastern Idaho into a sound economic region.

²³ www.canamex.org



7.3.8.2 The Eastern Idaho Technology Corridor. The Eastern Idaho Technology Corridor is a regional project that taps into the science and technology resources in the region in order to stimulate economic growth.

Figure 7-10 shows how the corridor encompasses most of the 16 counties in the region. The Technology Corridor includes many of the organizations and institutions that serve the regional community including four universities, the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory, the Argonne National Laboratory, The Idaho Accelerator Center, and the Inland Northwest Research Alliance, a research cooperative between eight northwestern U.S. universities.²⁴

The Eastern Idaho Technology Corridor works in partnership to “provide a rich environment for technology based companies”²⁵ in the region. The region provides a environment to advance the technology industry and with adequate planning technology can be used to foster economic development.

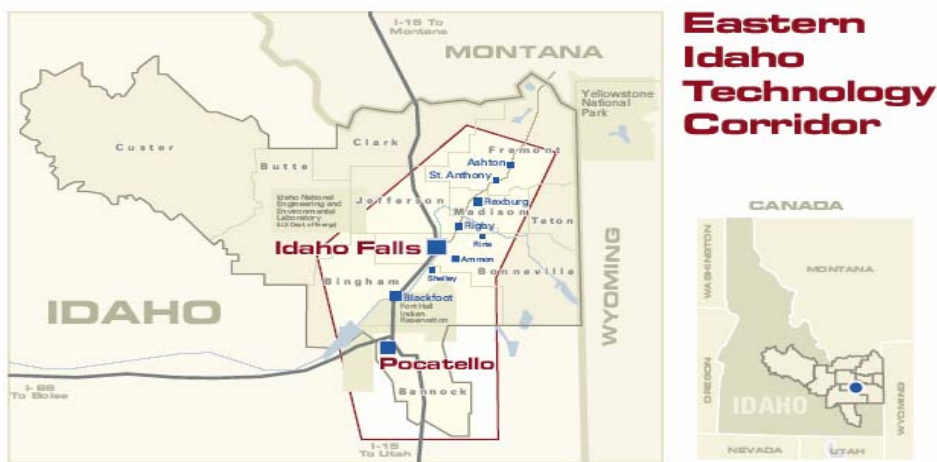


Figure 7-10. The Eastern Idaho Technology Corridor

²⁴ www.eastidaho.org

²⁵ id



7.3.9 Transportation

"If a guy needs a ride, he ought to be able to get a ride."

—Jon Norstog, Steering Committee Member

Transportation as an indicator of poverty is addressed by examining access routes from the rural communities to the urban service centers. As the map below indicates,²⁶ most areas that have severe poverty do not have easy access to urban centers. Since the urban centers (Figure 7-11) are vital in a region that characterized by its rural nature, transportation is strongly linked to poverty.

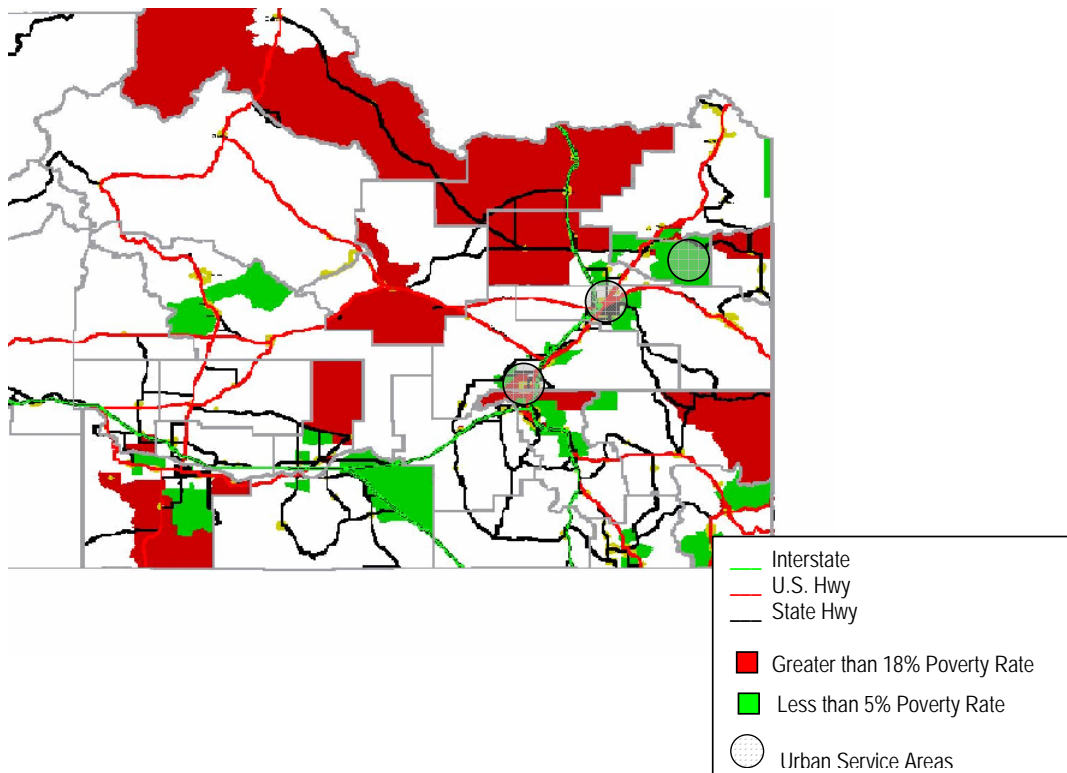


Figure 7-11. Urban Service Areas of Eastern Idaho

²⁶ Map provided by Paul Zelus, Center for Business Research, Idaho State University.



Comprehensive studies of the entire 16 county region do not exist in order to adequately assess the impact that transportation routes have on the region. This is due to a lack of funding for such a study and the large geographic area to be covered. Therefore it is difficult to analyze the negative impact restricted access has on rural counties.

7.4 Summary

Poverty cannot be fully understood by analyzing indicators individually. For example, although employment in a minimum wage job will place an individual in the lowest economic quartile in terms of income, other indicators are affected by poverty status, as well. Low-income jobs affect housing, educational attainment and health. (See Figure 7-12)

Education is linked to all other poverty indicators. For instance, a lack of education can lead to lower income jobs. Lower income jobs lead to inadequate housing. Inadequate housing may lead to poor health and a feeling of being unsafe. Employment is also linked to health because low income jobs do not typically provide health insurance. The cycle repeats itself because people in substandard housing have lower educational attainment.

The link between employment and housing can be seen by reviewing the Fair Market Rent study compiled by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (See Appendix I). The coalition found that wages in Eastern Idaho are not keeping up with rising rental costs. In order to afford decent housing many families live in units that are too small,

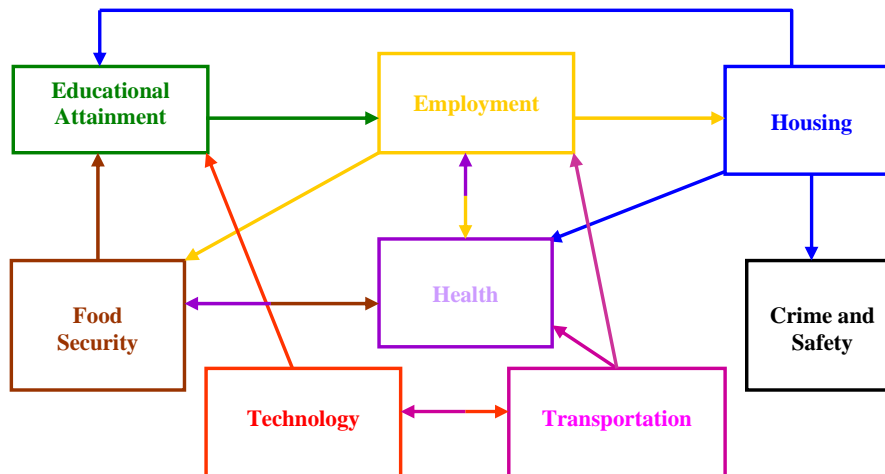


Figure 7-12. Identified Linkages between Poverty Indicators



which can affect their health. In order to find suitable housing, many families live in “low income neighborhoods.” These dwellings are typically older and can expose families to lead paint and substances that agitate childhood asthma. Two of the three major industries in the 16 county region are service and retail. These industries are two of the top four industries least likely to pay health insurance benefits to their employees.²⁷ Living in substandard housing can also be linked to crime and safety. Lower income neighborhoods are less likely to be patrolled on a regular basis and people residing in these neighborhoods often feel helpless to improve conditions.

Another link to housing is the connection between inadequate housing and educational attainment. Research shows that living in low income housing can have a negative affect on educational performance. Schools in neighborhoods with high rates of poverty spend additional time dealing with the children’s family problems and it is shown that children from poor families receive less attention to school work at home.²⁸

Lower income jobs may mean families have a difficult time affording nutritional food. This is especially important in families that have young children. Poor nutrition can lead to difficulties in school and to health complications. In some cases the only nutritional meal that the child receives is at school.

Finally, education is intrinsically linked to employment. Because educational attainment is necessary to gain experience wage jobs, it is important that children receive a good education. If other indicators inhibit educational attainment, there will be a direct impact on the type of employment an individual will be qualified for in the future. For example, providing education or training opportunities can lead to employment in an industry that pays living wages and benefits. People will be able to provide for the medical needs of their families. Having access to a better paying job will increase a person’s housing status. Adequate housing leads to a safer and more conducive environment for children to learn. In essence, the review of poverty indicators indicates the opportunity to turn a model of poverty into a model of prosperity.

²⁷ Idaho Department of Labor, LMI.

²⁸ Danziger, 369.