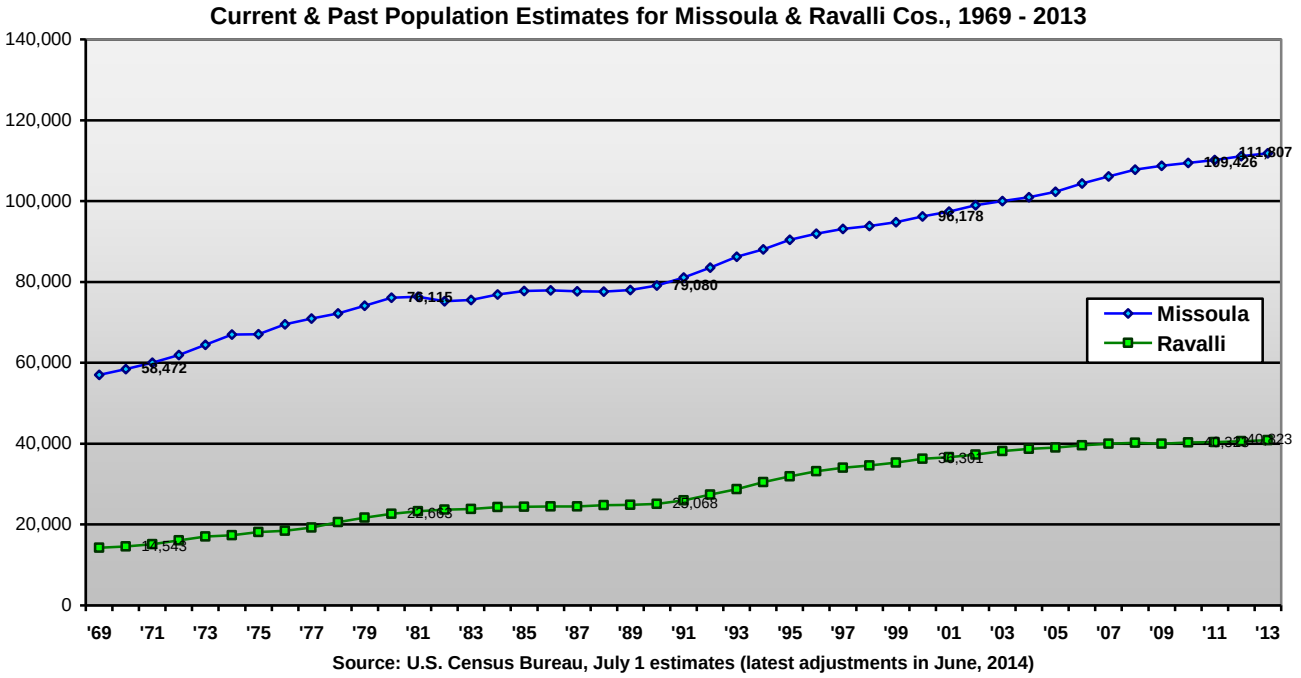
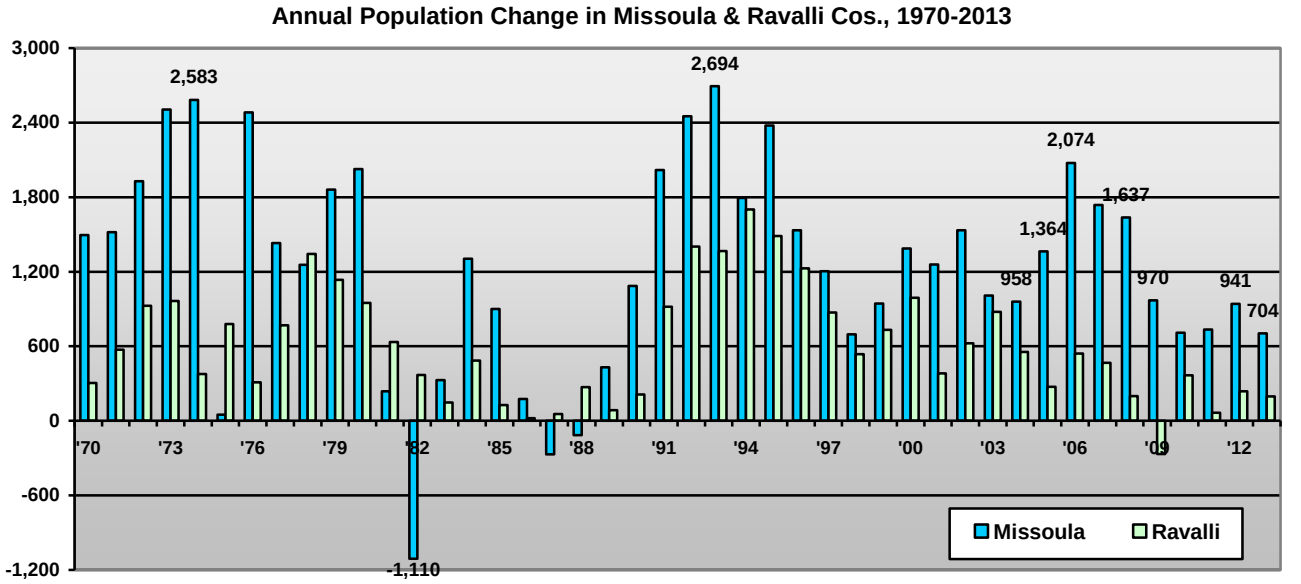
A. Population Growth for Missoula County Over Time

The upper chart shows population levels for Missoula and nearby Ravalli Counties since the early 1970s. The data used are July 1 estimates for each year by the U.S. Census Bureau. These are then revised over time by the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) in reporting annual local area income and employment.

The Census estimate for Missoula County's population in 2013 is 111,807, up from 109,426 in July of 2010. The chart also shows populations at ten-year intervals, going back to 2000 (96,178), 1990 (79,080), 1980 (76,115), and 1970 (58,472). The lower chart shows annual population change for each county over this period.

Area population growth was high in the mid-70s, followed by sluggish growth or decline in the '80s, coinciding with a deep economic downturn in the area at that time. Growth accelerated in the early and mid-'90s, which was fed by a fairly dramatic shift in migration patterns, bringing more people to the area. Growth slowed in the late '90s, only to increase again, hitting a peak in 2006 with a county-wide increase of 2,074. Growth slowed again in more recent years as the nationwide recession took hold locally.



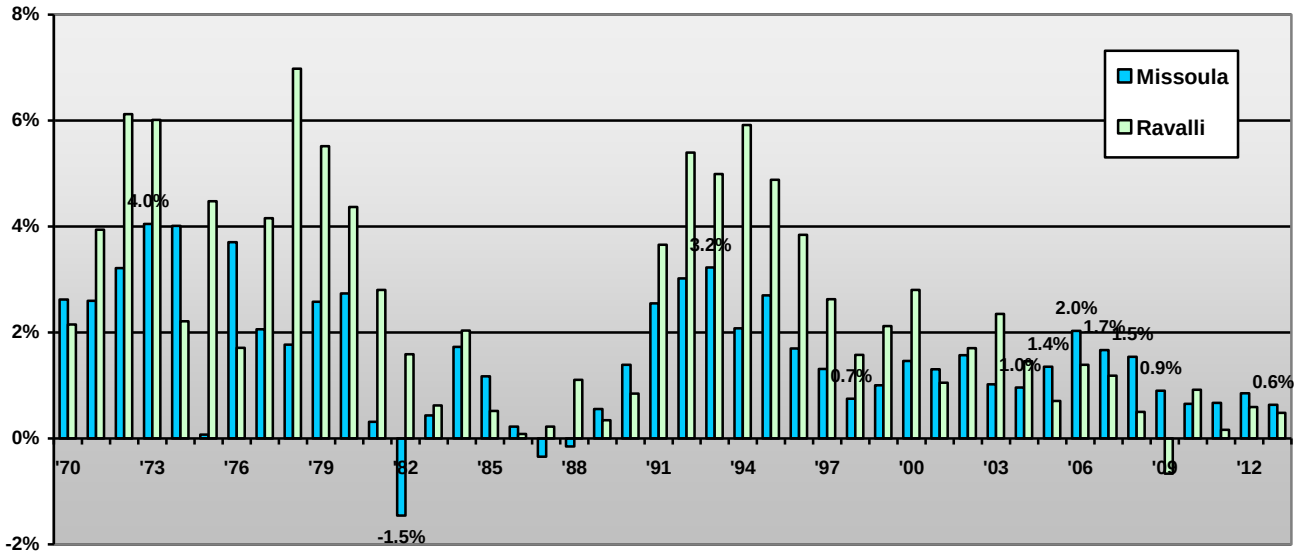


A. Area Annual Population Growth Rates: Missoula and Ravalli Counties

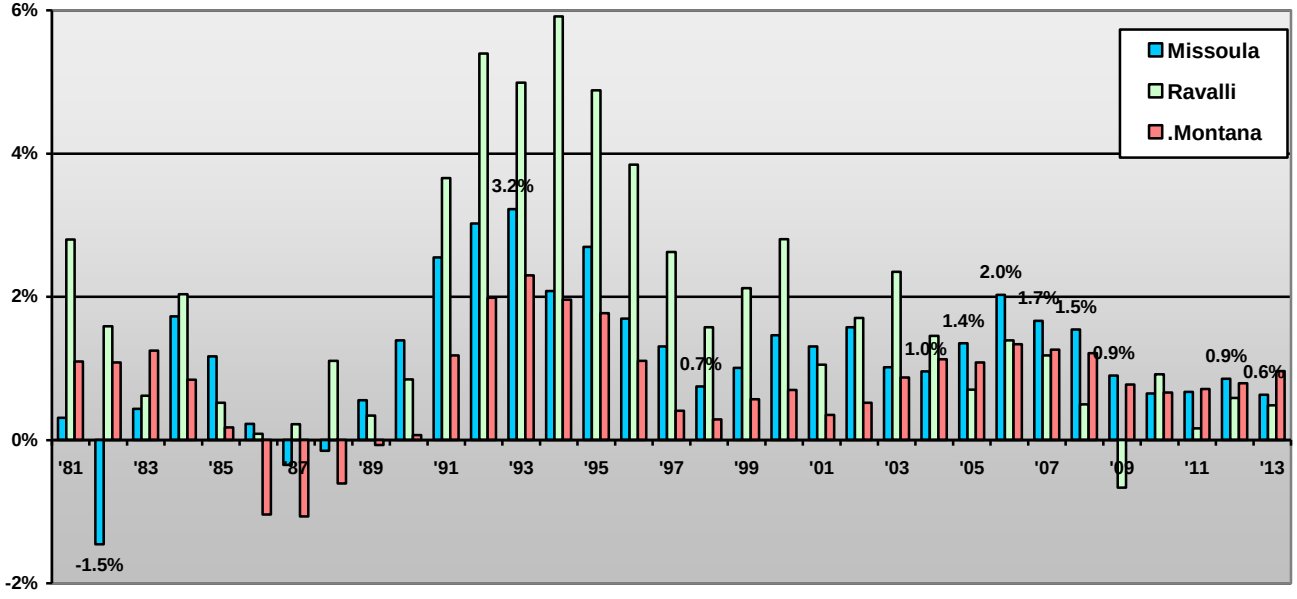
The upper chart shows annual population growth in Missoula and Ravalli Counties in percentage terms since the early '70s. In percentage terms, area growth was "fastest" during the '70s, with annual growth in Missoula County reaching 4% in 1972 and 1973. Population grew very sporadically in the '80s, but with the influx of new residents in the early '90s, annual growth rose to 3% before falling back to + or - one percent a year between 1998 and 2006. Missoula's population rose by 2% in 2006, but has decreased almost yearly since then and in each of the last five years from 2008 to 2013 has increased by less than one percent a year.

The lower chart shows how population growth patterns in Missoula and Ravalli Counties compare with growth statewide, beginning with the early '80s. Population growth in the Missoula area has been consistently higher than statewide except in these more recent years. Ravalli County led all counties in Montana in the rate of growth during the '90s, but its recent growth is even slower than Missoula's. Area population growth could remain sluggish for a few more years. Future growth will increasingly depend on larger migration patterns.

Annual Percentage Pop. Change in Missoula & Ravalli Cos., 1970 - 2013



Annual Percentage Pop Change: Missoula & Ravalli Cos. vs. Montana, 1980 - 2013



Source: Using U.S. Census Bureau July 1 estimates (June, 2014 estimates)

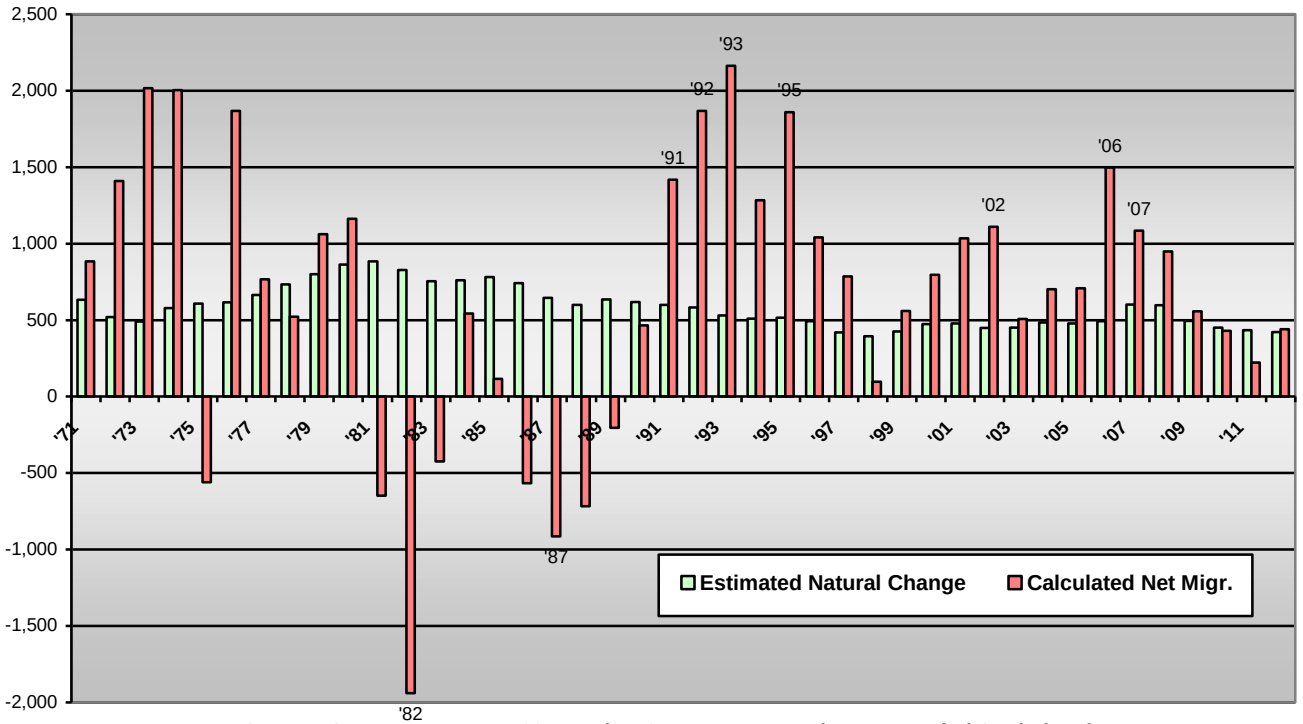
A. Estimated Population Change by Component in Missoula County – Natural Change vs. Net Migration

Population in any area changes through births and deaths (natural change) and through net migration (people moving to the area from elsewhere people moving away). Birth rates can rise and fall over time as age demographics change, impacting area growth. And patterns of migration can change, sometimes dramatically, from one period to the next.

The upper chart shows population change each year from 1971 to 2012 by major component, with natural change (births minus deaths) shown in green and net migration shown in red. The lower chart sums these data to show component change for ten-year periods starting in 1971.

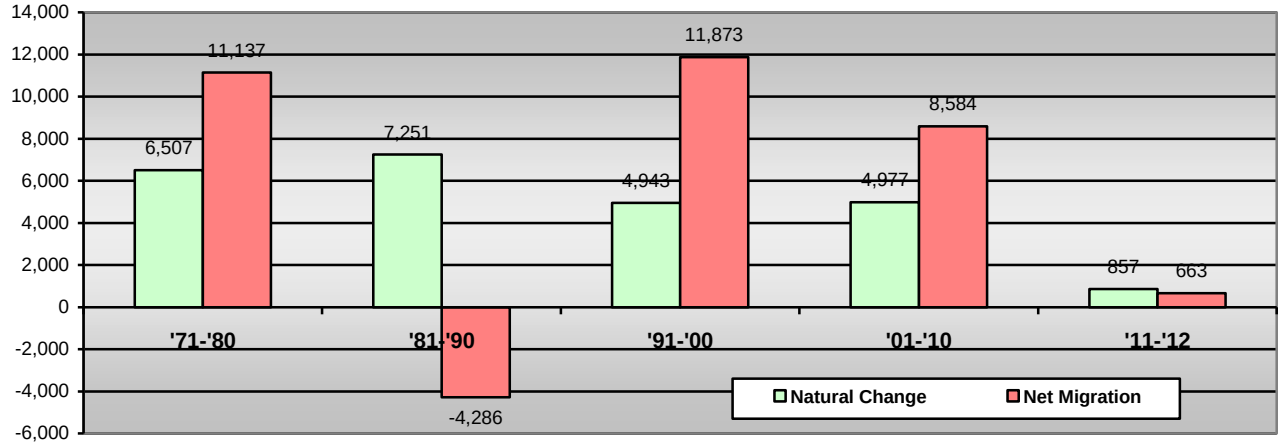
Population change each year through natural change is much more consistent and predictable than change through net migration. Missoula County added significantly to its population in the '70s and '90s through net "in-migration" – many more people moving to the county than those moving away. The county experienced net "out-migration" in the '80s – the result of a rocky economy largely tied to declines in the wood products industry.

Components of Population Change in Missoula Co.: Natural Change vs. Net Migration



Source: Swanson, August, 2014, using Census, BEA, and Montana Vital Statistics data

Population Change in Missoula Co. by Component for 10-yr. Periods

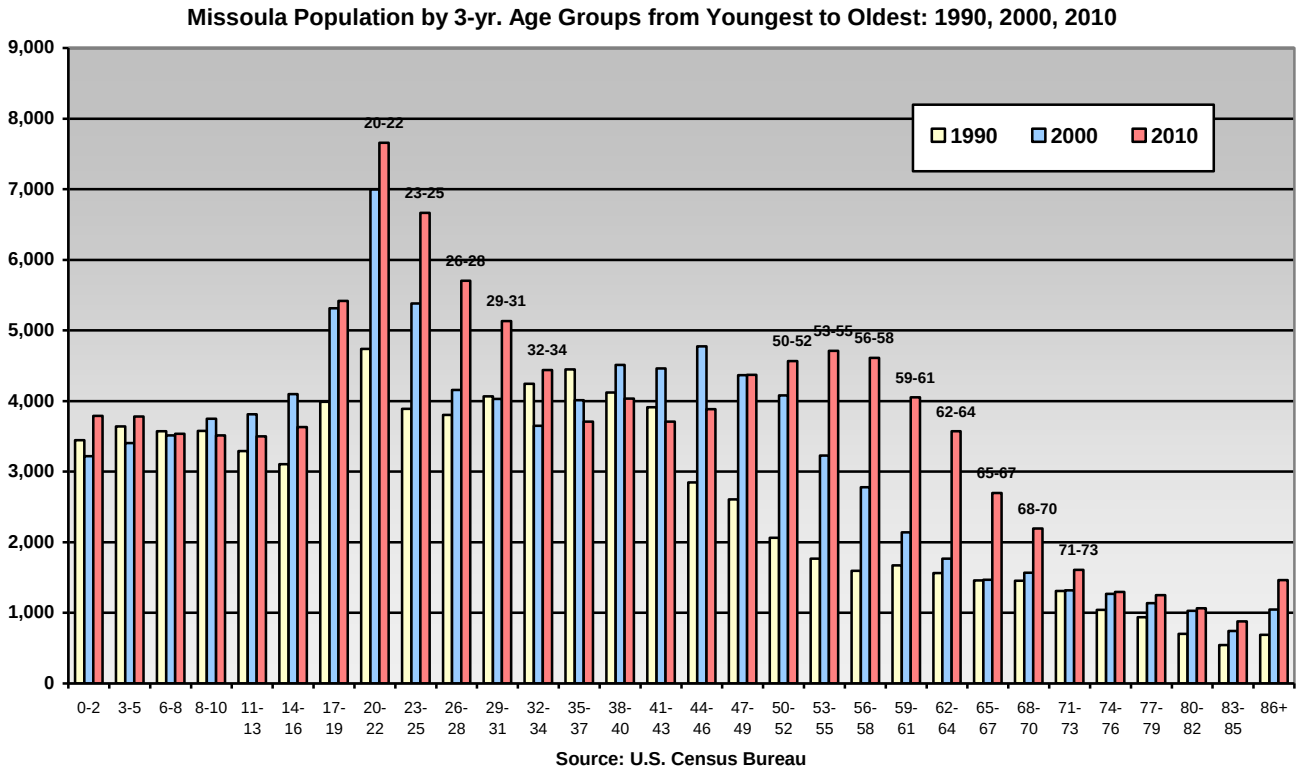


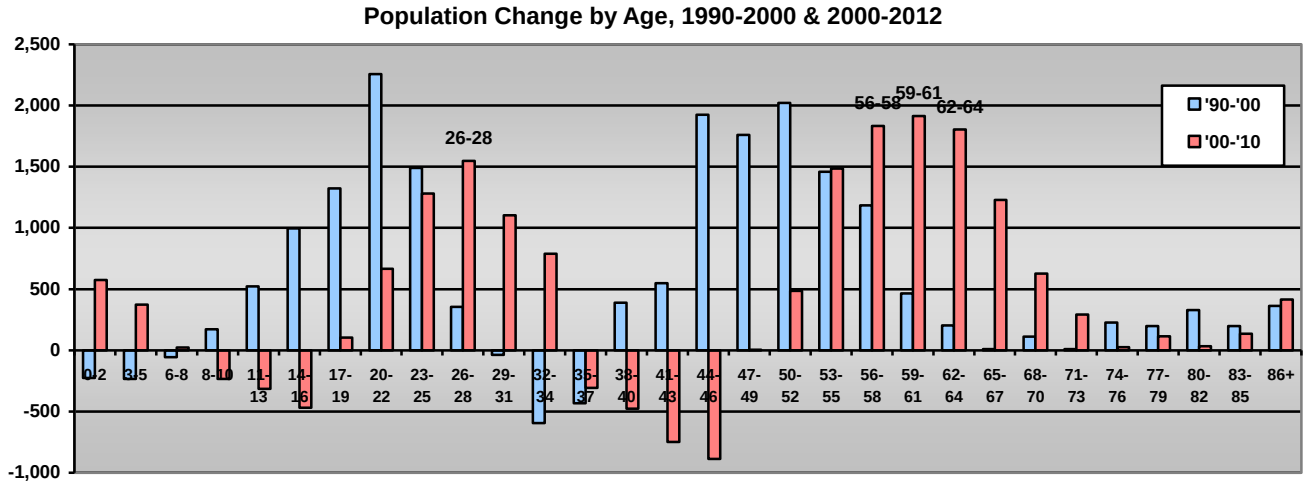
A. Recent Aging of the Population – 1990, 2000, & 2010 Population Distribution by Age

The upper chart shows population estimates at the time of ten-year censuses in 1990, 2000, and 2010 for Missoula County by age, from youngest at the left to oldest at the right. Age counts are shown in yellow for 1990, blue for 2000, and red for 2010.

In 1990 baby boomers or those born in the late '40s to early '60s, were in their 30s and 40s. In 2010 they were in their 50s and 60s, accounting for significant increases in the number of people in 2010 in the two-year age groups from 50 to 70 in the chart.

The lower chart shows changes in the Missoula County population from one census to the next ('90 to '00 in blue and '00 to '10 in red). Between 1990 and 2000 when Missoula County's population grew from 78,900 to 95,800 (an increase of nearly 16,900 residents or 21%) most of the increase was among persons 40 to 60 (boomers) and 10 to 25 (boomers' children or "echo"). Between 2000 and 2010 when Missoula's population grew from 95,800 to 109, 300 (an increase of 13.500 and 14%) most of the increase was among persons 50 to 70 and 20 to 35.

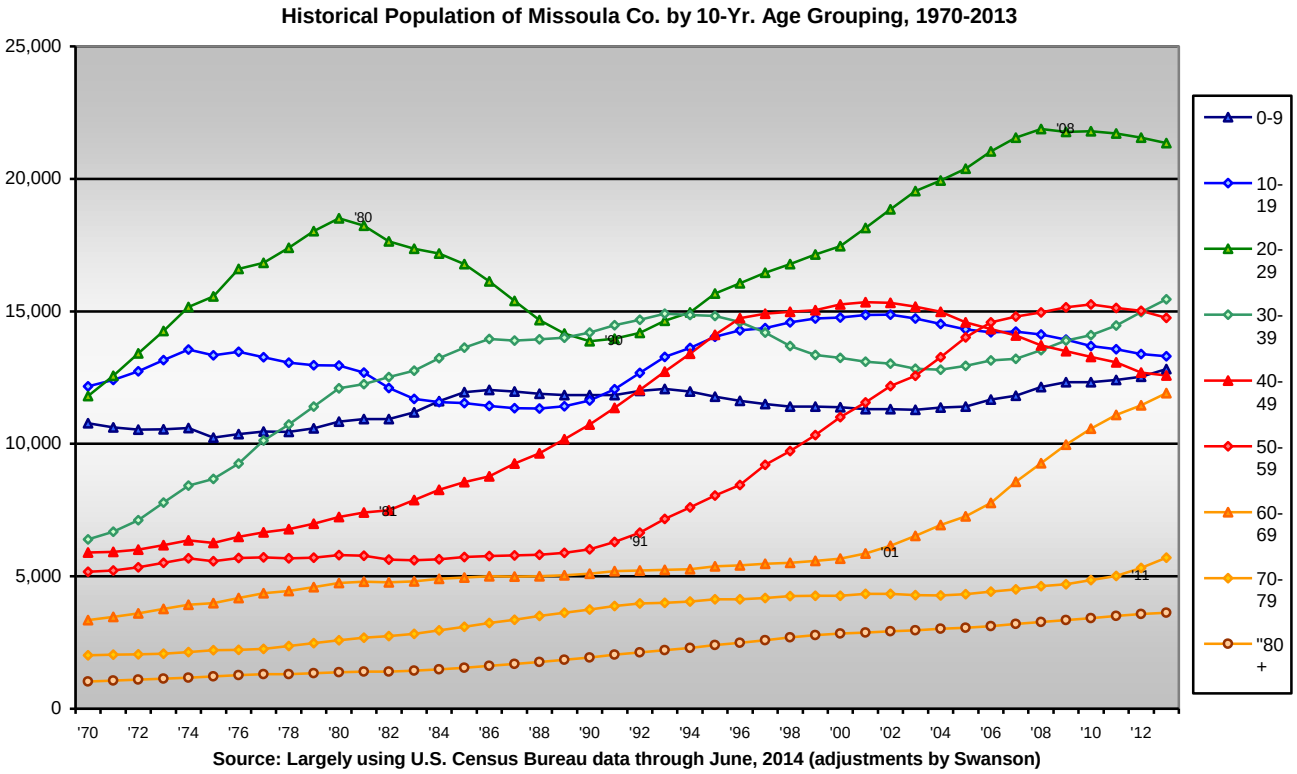


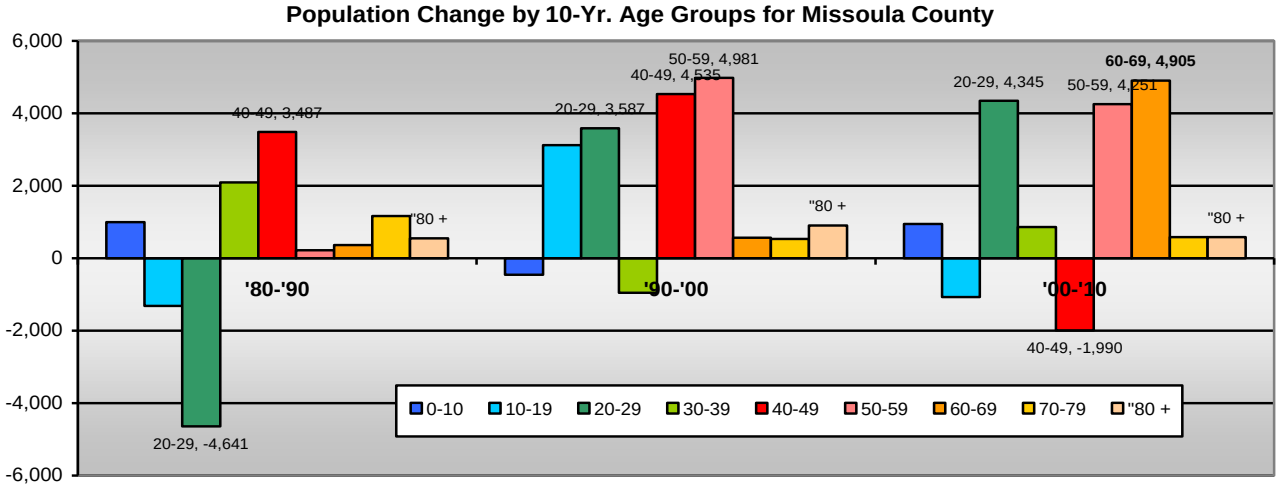


A. Annual Population Estimates by Age for Missoula County, 1970-2013

The Census Bureau also produces estimates of county populations by 5-year age groupings on an annual basis, supplementing more definitive ones done during ten-year censuses. The chart at the right shows Missoula County's population for 10-yr. age groupings over more than 4 decades. Blue lines show children and younger adults (0-9 and 10-19). Green lines show estimates for young adults in their 20s and 30s. Red lines show estimates for persons in their 40s and 50s and estimates for older adults are shown in gold.

There is very little in aging patterns that is "linear" in nature. Population numbers for most age groups, particularly those under 50, tend to go up for a time before going down and then back up again. They resemble "waves" where, over time, the tide comes in and then goes out. This is the result of periods in time when births and/or migration numbers have tended to increase then fall back, like when birth numbers in the U.S. and other countries rose rapidly following W.W.II. This boom in births created a "bubble" in the population that continues to exert itself. The oldest of this baby boom generation reached into their 60s in the last decade.





A. Projections of Missoula County's Population by Age

In the course of this study, work was focused on producing general estimates of how Missoula County's population is likely to change within age categories over the current and next decade. The table at the right shows the results of this work.

Several sources were used in assembling past data, mainly ones from the U.S. Census Bureau including recent June estimates of county populations by age for 2010 to 2013 and inter-censual estimates for 2000 to 2010, 1990 to 2000, and 1980 to 1990. All of these are found on the U.S. Census web site.

Projections beyond 2013 were produced by first estimating five-year progression ratios for each 5-year age group whereby the population 25 to 29 in year X is a function of the 20 to 24 population five years prior to year X and so forth for each age group. The 0 to 4 age group is then estimated using regression analysis as a function of the young adult population (20-24, 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39), or those most likely to be adding to the population of young children.

Between 2010 and 2020 the county's overall population will grow by about 9.6% or 10,500, with the highest growth by aging boomers, 65 to 69 (up by 2,780 or 65%) and 70 to 74 (up by 2,550 or 90%). There also will be increases where children of boomers are concentrated, particularly the 35 to 39 group (up by 2,245 or 35%). Those 30 to 34 and 40 to 44 also will increase, but on each side of this "echo" generation there will be decreases.

Missoula County's Population by 5-yr. Age Groupings, Past & Projected

	'80	'90	'00	'10	'20	'30	'10-'20		'20-'30	
0 to 4 yrs	5,656	5,848	5,460	6,330	6,574	6,236	244	3.8%	-338	-5.1%
5 to 9 yrs	5,184	5,992	5,927	6,000	6,948	6,692	948	15.8%	-257	-3.7%
10 to 14 yrs	**5,551**	5,568	6,513	5,848	6,661	7,060	813	13.9%	399	6.0%
15 to 19 yrs	7,404	6,074	8,250	7,844	7,881	9,126	37	0.5%	1,246	15.8%
20 to 24 yrs	9,788	7,355	10,805	12,200	11,119	12,666	-1,081	-8.9%	1,546	13.9%
25 to 29 yrs	8,721	6,513	6,650	9,600	8,631	8,671	-969	-10.1%	40	0.5%
30 to 34 yrs	6,862	6,986	6,291	7,750	9,048	8,247	1,298	16.7%	-801	-8.9%
35 to 39 yrs	5,238	7,211	6,955	6,353	8,598	8,245	2,245	35.3%	-353	-4.1%
40 to 44 yrs	3,894	6,264	7,578	6,283	7,441	8,687	1,158	18.4%	1,246	16.7%
45 to 49 yrs	3,349	4,466	7,687	6,992	6,453	8,733	-539	-7.7%	2,280	35.3%
50 to 54 yrs	3,066	3,283	6,489	7,608	6,224	7,371	-1,384	-18.2%	1,147	18.4%
55 to 59 yrs	2,735	2,740	4,515	7,647	6,855	6,326	-792	-10.4%	-529	-7.7%
60 to 64 yrs	2,528	2,647	3,156	6,299	7,422	6,119	1,123	17.8%	-1,303	-17.6%
65 to 69 yrs	2,218	2,458	2,512	4,274	7,054	6,511	2,780	65.0%	-543	-7.7%
70 to 74 yrs	1,496	2,147	2,311	2,806	5,357	6,740	2,551	90.9%	1,383	25.8%
75 to 79 yrs	1,085	1,595	1,959	2,047	3,592	5,929	1,545	75.5%	2,336	65.0%
80 to 84 yrs	694	1,087	1,574	1,696	2,097	4,004	401	23.7%	1,907	90.9%
85 or older	688	846	1,264	1,728	1,846	3,239	118	6.8%	1,393	75.5%
	76,157	79,080	95,896	109,305	119,800	130,600	10,495	9.6%	10,800	9.0%
Tot. 10-yr chg.	17,549	2,923	16,816	13,409	10,495	10,800				
Tot % chg.	29.9%	3.8%	21.3%	14.0%	9.6%	9.0%				

Source: Swanson, August, 2014, using historical estimates by the U.S. Census Bureau (future 0-4 pop. Is projected using regression analysis with 0-4 pop. dependent upon populations 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, and 35-39 -- other 5-yr. age groupings are generally projected using 5-yr. age progressions similar to grade progressions in making school enrollment projections)

In the subsequent decade (2020 to 2030) growth will be focused among older adults 70 and older and among middle age adults 40 to 55 years of age. Declines will occur in adults 55 to 69 and 30 to 40, and also among you children. Under these projections the overall population of Missoula County will rise to almost 120,000 in 2020 and 131,000 in 2030.

A. Past and Projected Trends in Missoula County Births and Deaths – "Natural Change"

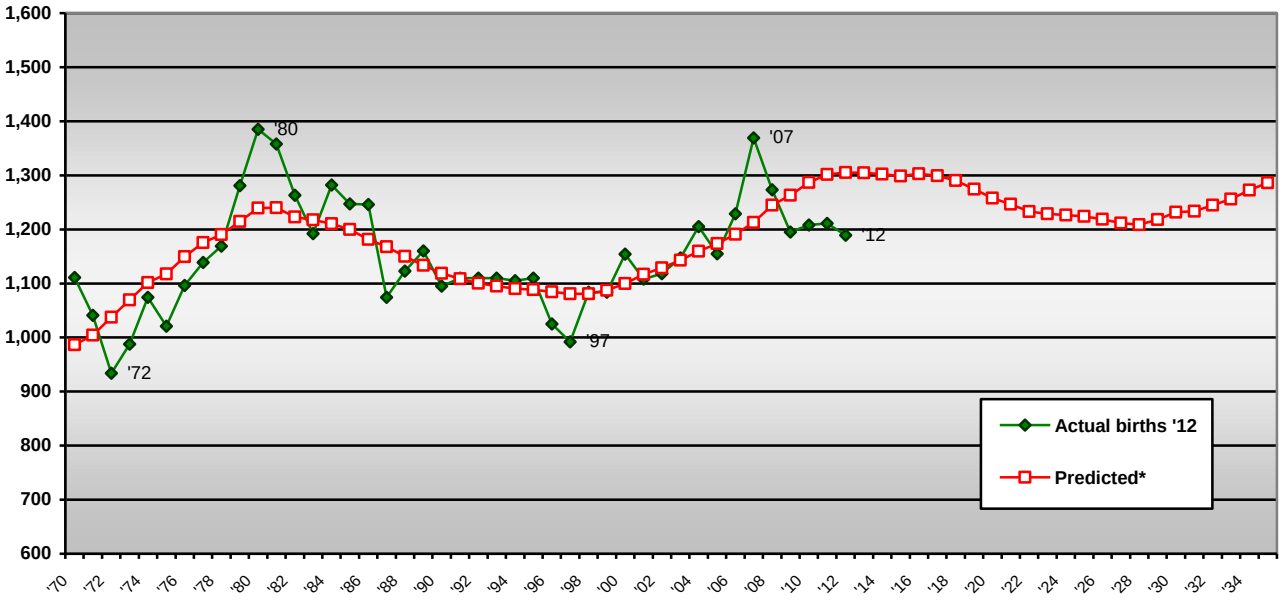
An important aspect of population change is what is referred to as "natural change." This is change in the population in one year or over time that results from both births and deaths among the resident population. The upper chart shows historical birth counts for Missoula County from 1970 to 2012 (the latest available annual data from the Montana Vital Statistics Bureau). Actual births are shown in green and projected births, both in the past and future, are shown in red.

Births projections are made using regression analysis where the number of births in a given year is treated as a function of the adult population 20 to 40 years of age.

Similar analysis is done in the lower chart for deaths. Actual deaths between 1970 and 2012 are shown along with predicted deaths using regression with deaths a function of the older adult population, ages 55 and older. The predicted number of annual deaths in the future steadily rises as the area population ages and grows in numbers.

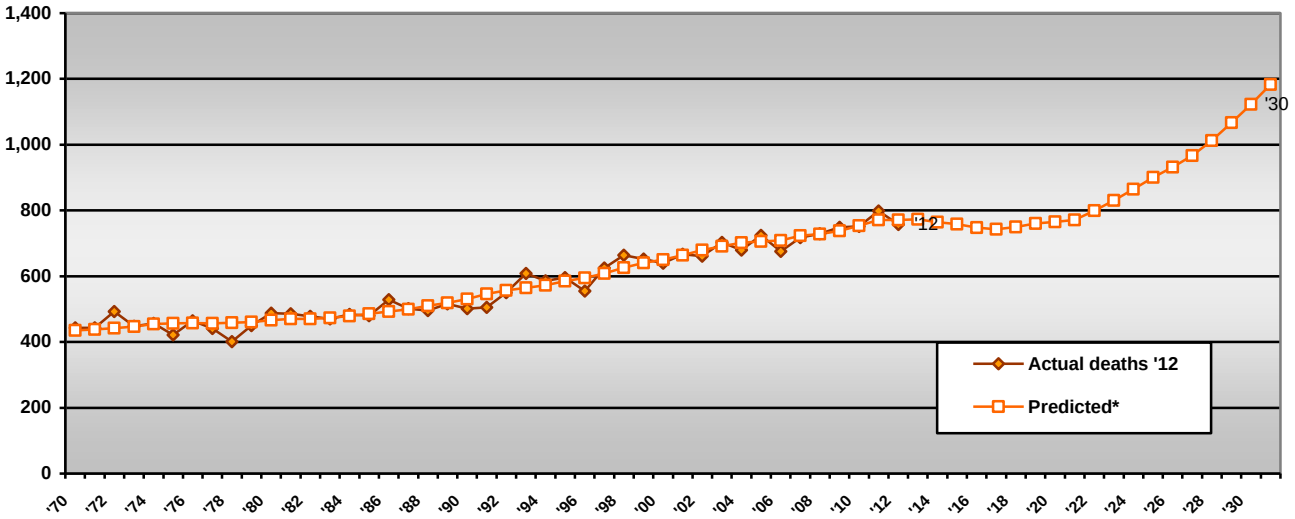
By 2030 the number of deaths approaches 1,200, which compares to annual deaths at that time of around 1,300.

Annual Births by Missoula Co. Residents: Actual and Predicted*, 1970-2035



Source: Swanson, August, 2014 (*Births predicted using regression analysis and pop. projections for younger adults)

Annual Deaths by Missoula County Residents: Actual and Predicted, 1970-2030



Source: Swanson, August, 2014 (*Deaths predicted using regression analysis and pop. projections for older adults)

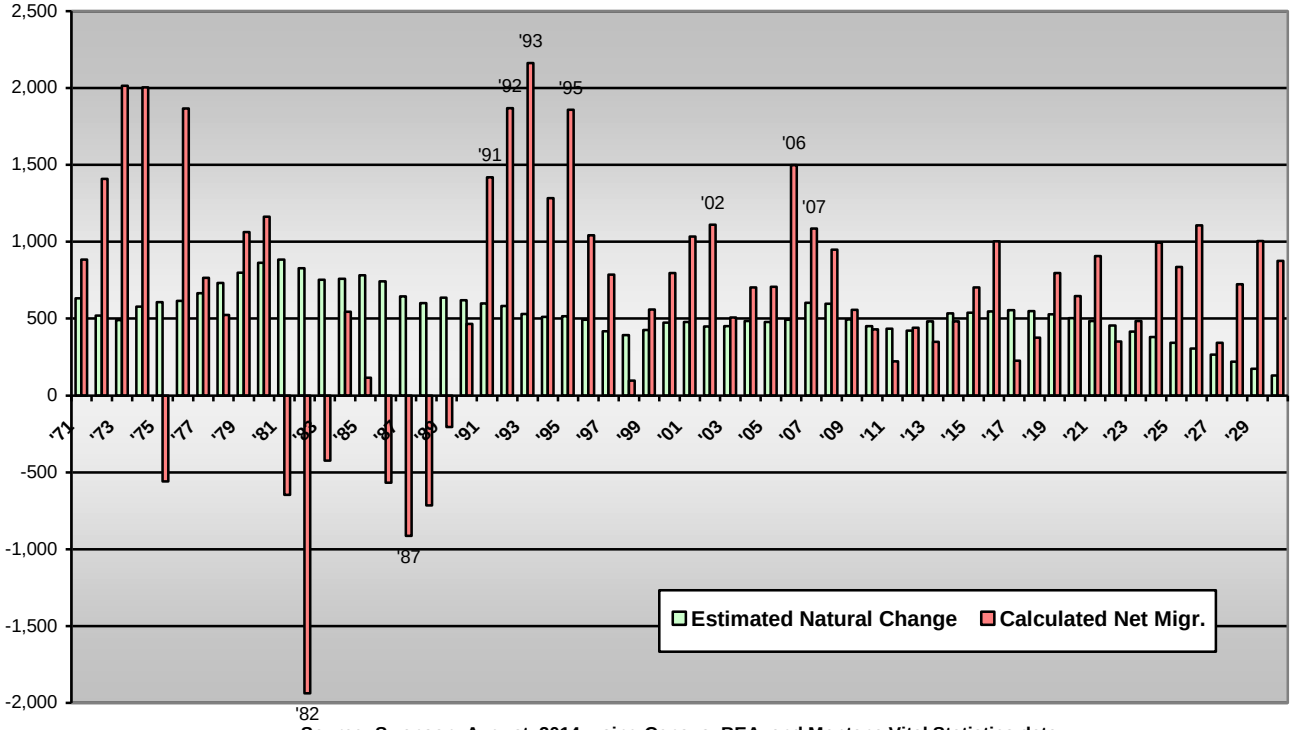
A. Past and Projected Missoula County Population by Major Component

Past and projected counts for annual births and deaths by Missoula County residents can then be used to yield estimates, again past and future, of annual natural change in the population. These estimates are shown in the upper chart in green. As births begin decline in a few years and deaths rise with an aging population, natural change will gradually decline. More and more population growth is then driven by what happens in net migration (shown in the chart in red).

Net migration going into the future is simply calculated by subtracting projected natural change from total annual change in the population, as projected and derived from these age data. Going into the future the Missoula area is expected to continue to have positive net migration, similar in magnitude to what it experienced in the last decade.

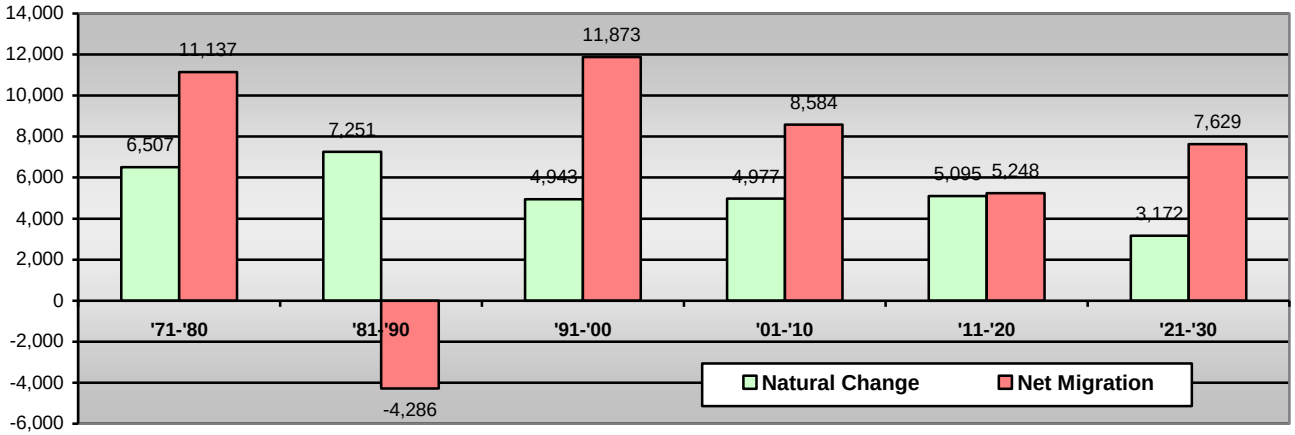
The county's overall population will continue to grow, even with an aging population as long as this positive net migration continues as these levels. For areas with negative net migration and aging population, their population decline will most likely increase. The lower chart shows estimates for total population change by component over ten-year periods.

Components of Population Change in Missoula Co.: Natural Change vs. Net Migration



Source: Swanson, August, 2014, using Census, BEA, and Montana Vital Statistics data

Population Change in Missoula Co. by Component for 10-yr. Periods: Past & Projected



A. Past and Projected Missoula County Population by 10-yr. Age Groups

This chart contains data from the previous chart on page 5 of this report showing past estimates of Missoula County's population by age (1970 to 2013) and combines with these projections for this from 2013 through 2030. Projections are made for 5-yr. age groupings which were then combined into these 10-yr. age groupings.

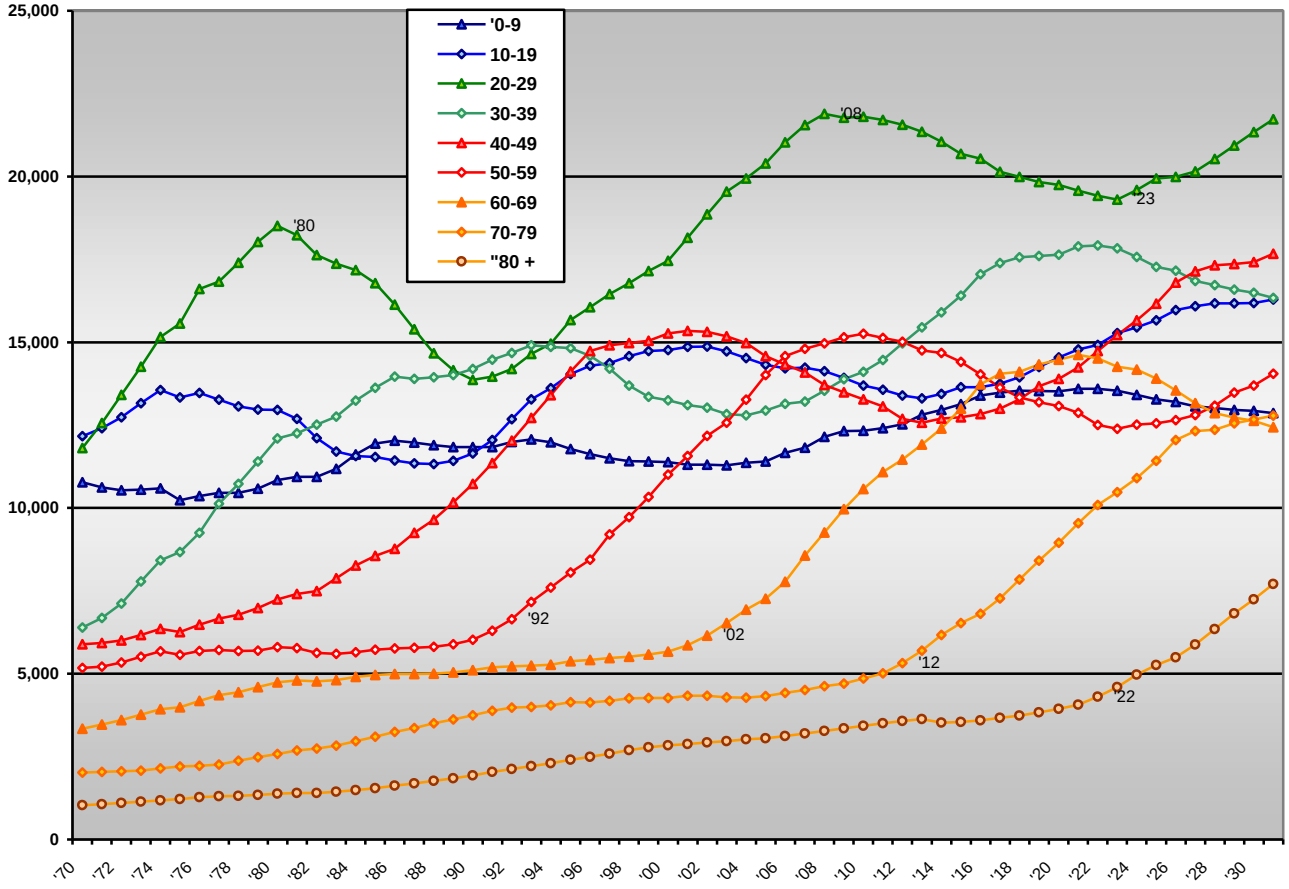
There are clear patterns in how the population of the county can be expected to age. You can see how aging among boomers continues to shift out over time, with an acceleration in growth of the 50-59 age group starting in 1992, which then translates into an acceleration in growth in the 60-69 age group in 2002, which then further translates into accelerated growth in the 70-79 age group in 2012. This in turn will translate into accelerated growth in the 80 and older group in 2022.

So, the pattern in how aging shifts forward to older and older age groups over time, reflecting aging in the large and influential baby boomer group, can be easily seen and projected.

The pattern of change for younger age groups – ones under 40 – are harder to project since there is more complexity in how numbers change for younger adults and children. However, the number of births from one year to the next can be generally projected by looking at the relationship between birth counts and populations of young adults from their early 20s to late 30s.

So, levels in the number of children under five are estimated going into the future using multiple regression and by making their numbers a function of the number of persons 20 to 24, 25 to 29, 30 to 34, and 35 to 39. Young adults at these ages account for most of the births and as their numbers change, so do births.

Past & Projected Missoula Co. Population by 10-Yr. Age Groupings, 1970-2030



Source: Swanson, 2014, using U.S. Census Bureau historical data

Children under 10 (blue line with triangles) largely will increase over the current decade before flattening and gradually declining. Those 10 to 19, after reaching a high in the last decade and then decreasing, should begin to grow in numbers again.

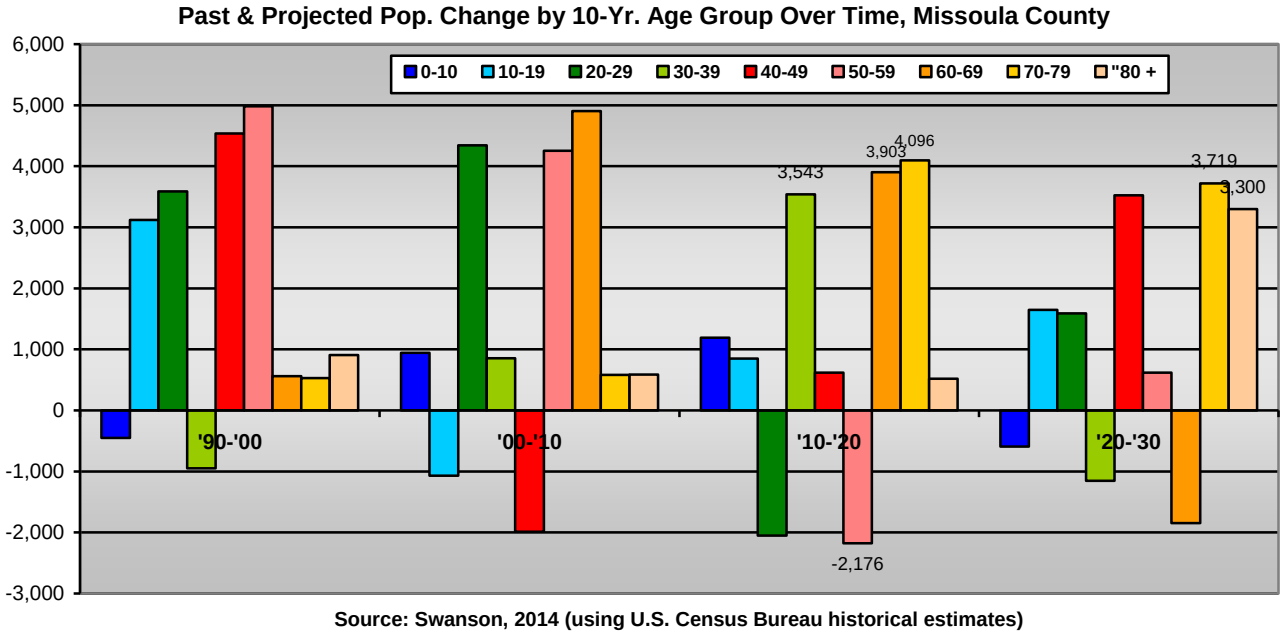
A. Changing Age Composition of the County Population

The upper chart shows how the population of Missoula County has changed and will change over ten-year period of time under these projections by age group.

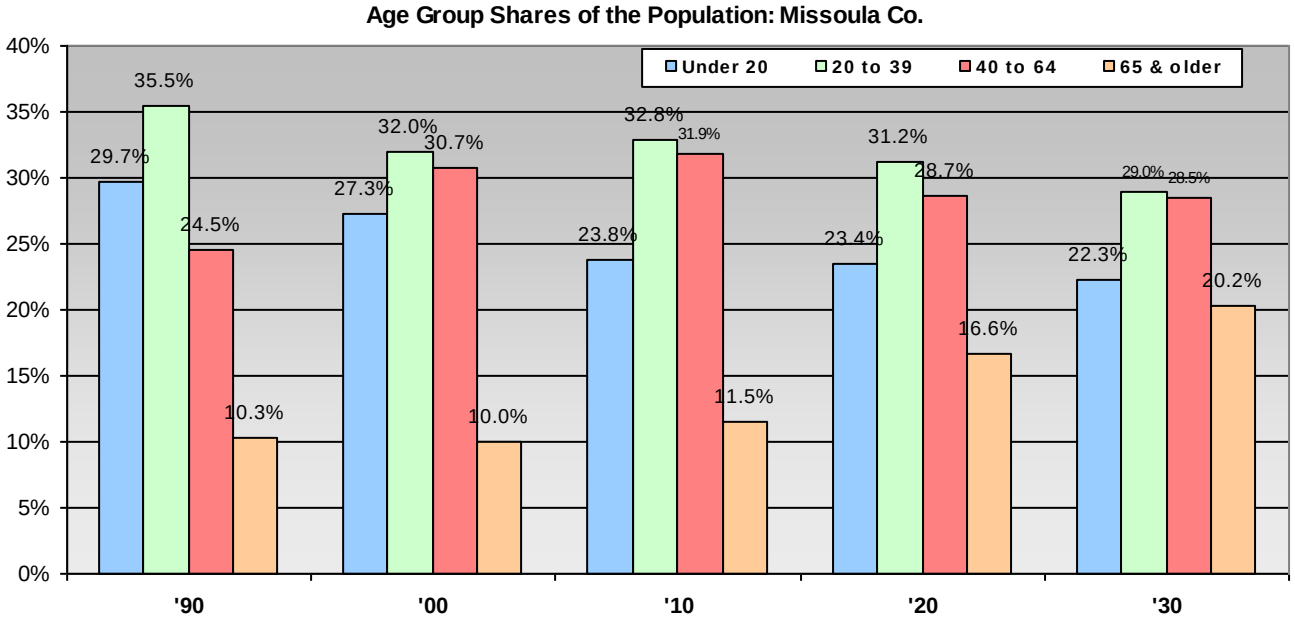
During the '90s when the area's population increased rapidly, growing by 21%, growth was most heavily focused among persons in their 40s and 50s – boomers at their prime working ages. Between 2000 and 2010 when the county's population grew by 14%, growth focused among aging boomers, then in their 50s and 60s, and among children of boomers, primarily in their 20s.

In the current decade (2010 to 2020) growth is primarily occurring among boomers, now in their 60s and 70s, and young adults in their 30s. Significant losses are projected for persons in their 20s (dark green) and 50s (light red). Aging comes to full fruition between 2020 and 2030 with growth now focusing among persons in their 70s and 80s and among those in their 40s.

By 2030 those 65 and older will represent over 20% of the county's population, up from 11.5% in 2010 (lower chart).

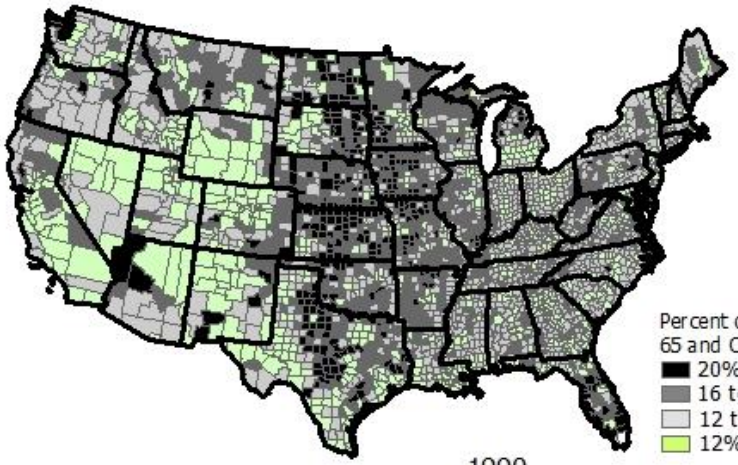


Source: Swanson, 2014 (using U.S. Census Bureau historical estimates)



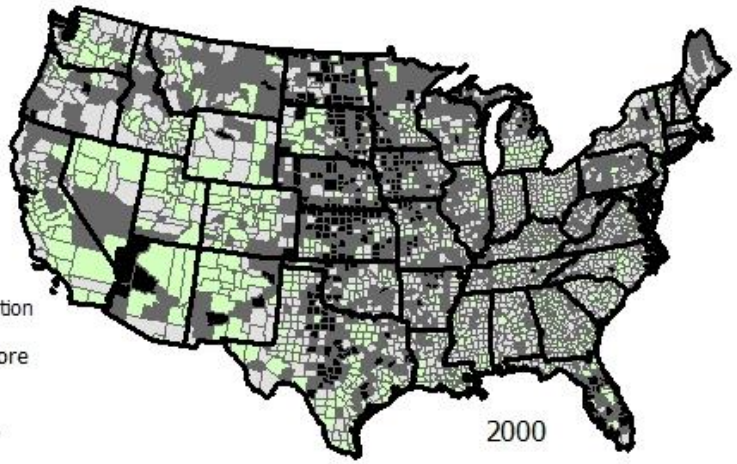
Regional Patterns of Population Aging in the U.S.

The 65 and Older Population as a Percent of the Total Population



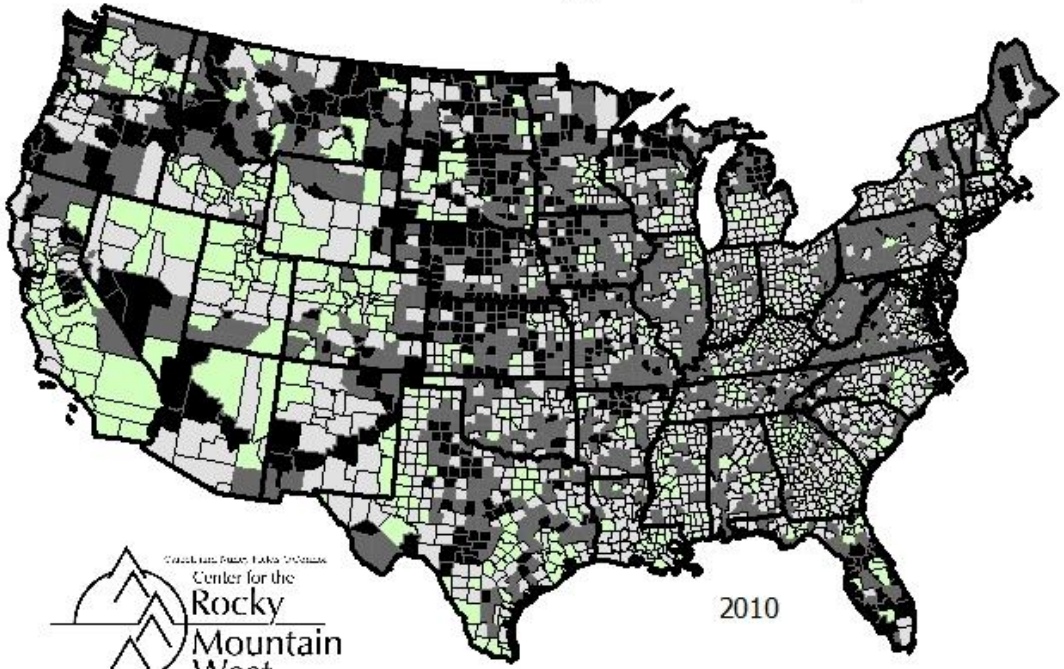
1990

Percent of Population 65 and Older
- 20% and more
- 16 to 20%
- 12 to 16%
- 12% or less



2000

The population of the U.S. is gradually aging, tied to the steady aging of the large and influential "baby boom "population or adults born after W.W.II between 1947 and 1963. The peak years for births by baby boomers were is 1957 and 1958 and persons born in these two years are now 56 and 57 years of age. Boomers born in 1947 and 1948 are now 66 and 67, so the population 65 and older will steadily grow as a percent of the total for much of the next twelve to fifteen years. Some areas are aging faster than others, as indicated in the maps.



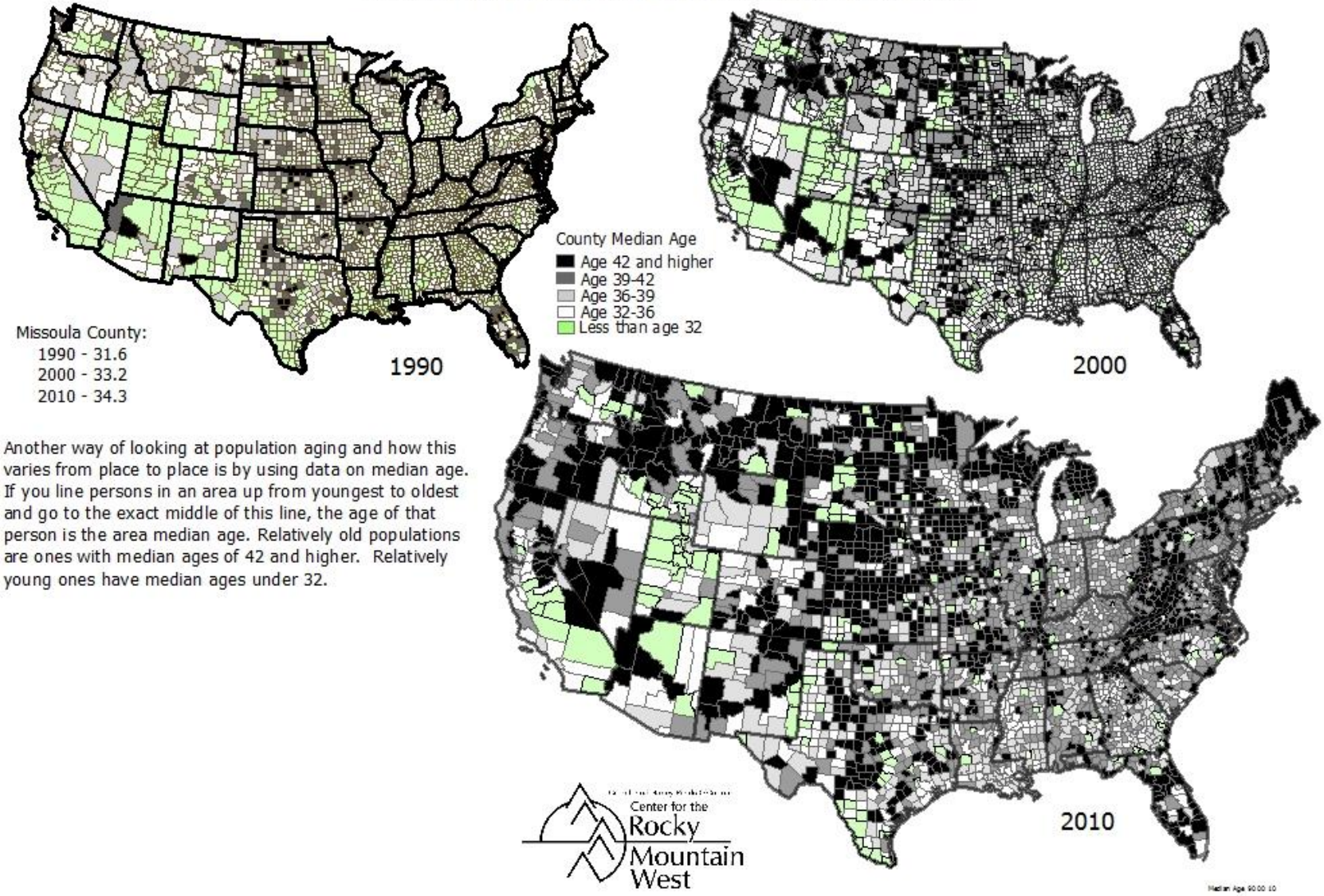
2010

Center for the Rocky Mountain West

Population 65 and over 90 - 00 - 10

Relatively "Old" and "Young" Populations in the U.S.

Median Age of the Area Population (U.S. Counties)



Missoula County:
1990 - 31.6
2000 - 33.2
2010 - 34.3

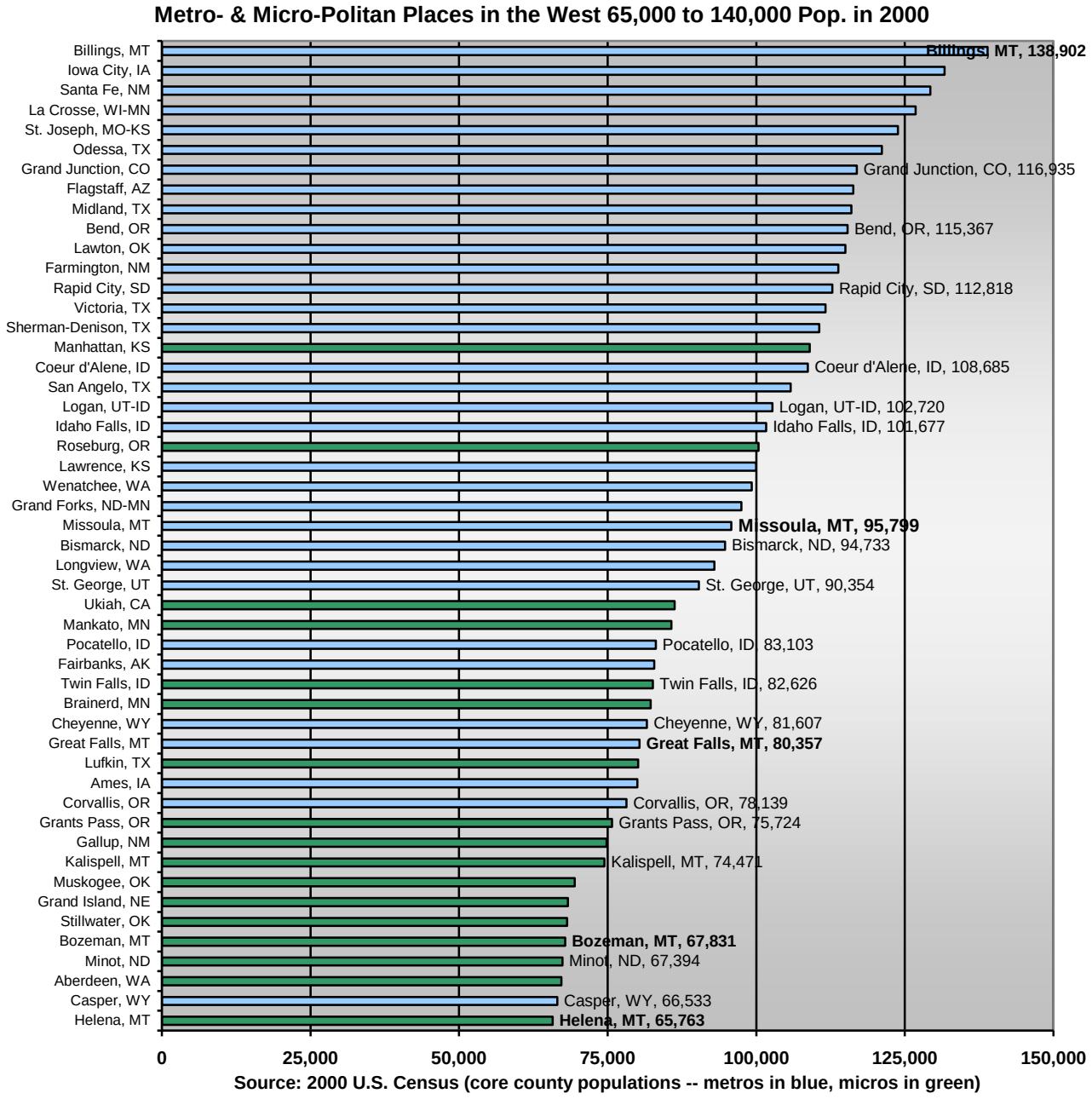
Another way of looking at population aging and how this varies from place to place is by using data on median age. If you line persons in an area up from youngest to oldest and go to the exact middle of this line, the age of that person is the area median age. Relatively old populations are ones with median ages of 42 and higher. Relatively young ones have median ages under 32.

A. 50 Metro & Micro Places in the western U.S. with 65,000 to 140,000 Populations

At the time of the 2000 Census, there were 50 places (counties) with metro- or micro-politan places as designated by the Census Bureau with county-wide population between 65,000 and 140,000 in the western U.S. Missoula County is one of these with a 2000 Census population of 95,799. The chart shows these 50 places, ranked from top to bottom by their 2000 populations.

Billings, MT (Yellowstone Co.) is the largest of these with a total population of 138,902. Helena, MT (Lewis & Clark) is the smallest with a population of 65,763. In the chart, metro places and their core county populations are shown in blue bars. Micro-politan places are shown in green bars. Census-designated metropolitan places are ones having core populations of at least 50,000 – micro-politan places have core populations of at least 10,000, but less than 50,000.

Montana has three metro places -- the third is Great Falls. Montana has three micro-politan places: Helena is the smallest, next is Bozeman at 67,831, and then Kalispell at 74,471. All of these Montana places are labeled in the chart, as well as those in Idaho, Wyoming, and other nearby states.

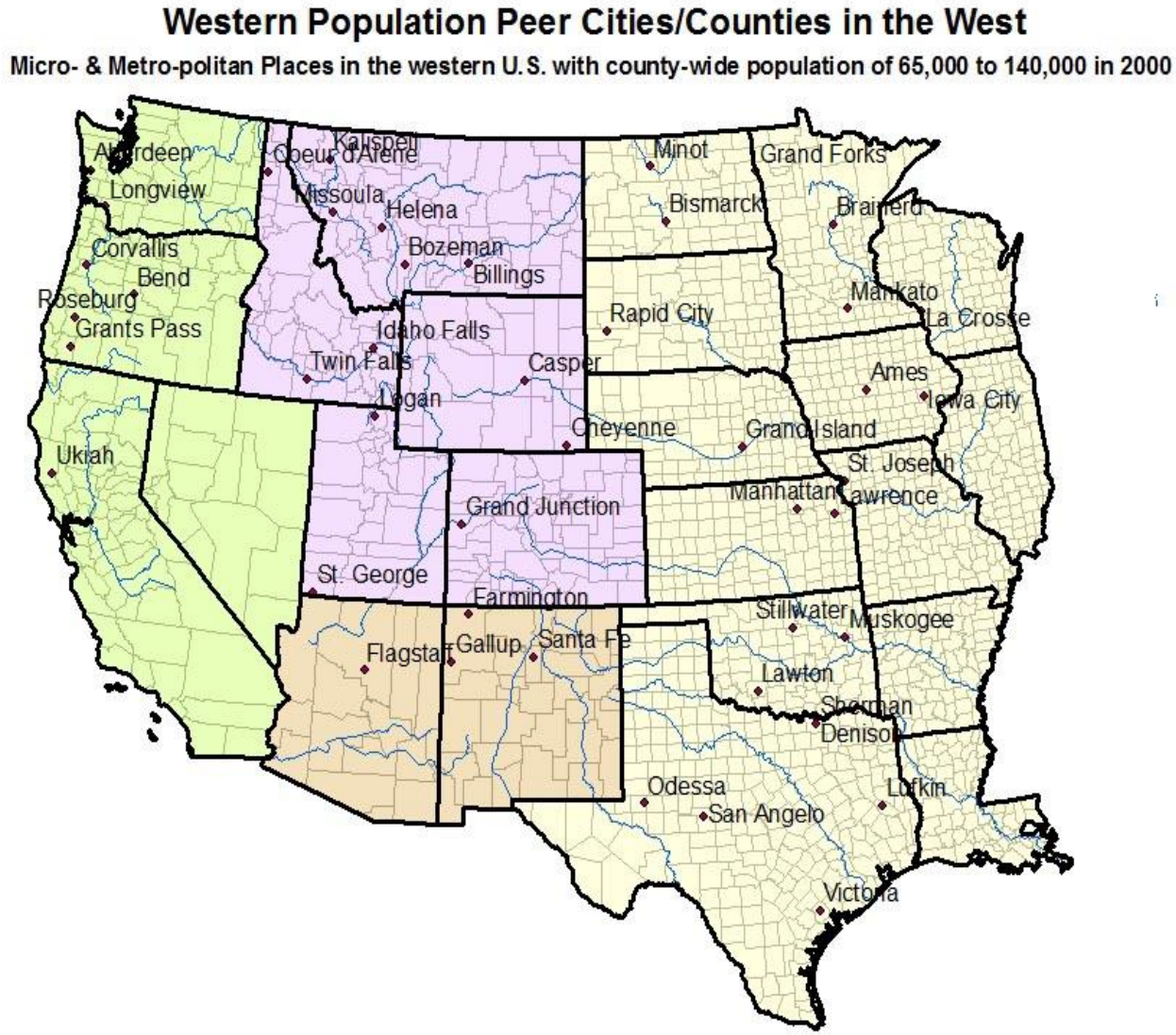


A. Mapping of Missoula County's Metro- and Micro-Population Peers in the West

This map shows where the 50 western population peers for Missoula County are located. Six are in Montana, three are in Idaho (Coeur d'Alene, Idaho Falls, and Twin Falls), and two are in Wyoming (Cheyenne and Casper). Seven are in Washington and Oregon (including Bend and Corvallis). Two are in North Dakota (including Bismarck) and one is in South Dakota (Rapid City). Nearby peers also include Logan, Utah, and Grand Junction, Colorado.

Many of these peers are located in the Plains region, from Minnesota in the north to Texas in the south. While similar in population the economies of places in the Plains are usually quite dissimilar to places in the central Rockies. Places nearby the Pacific coast also can be quite economically dissimilar, especially if they are nearby ports.

Several of Missoula's western population peers are in the Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico), including Flagstaff and Santa Fe. Some are nearby large Indian reservations, including Gallup and Farmington. Regional proximity is one criterion used in reducing these 50 general population peers to a smaller set of "regional peers" for Missoula.

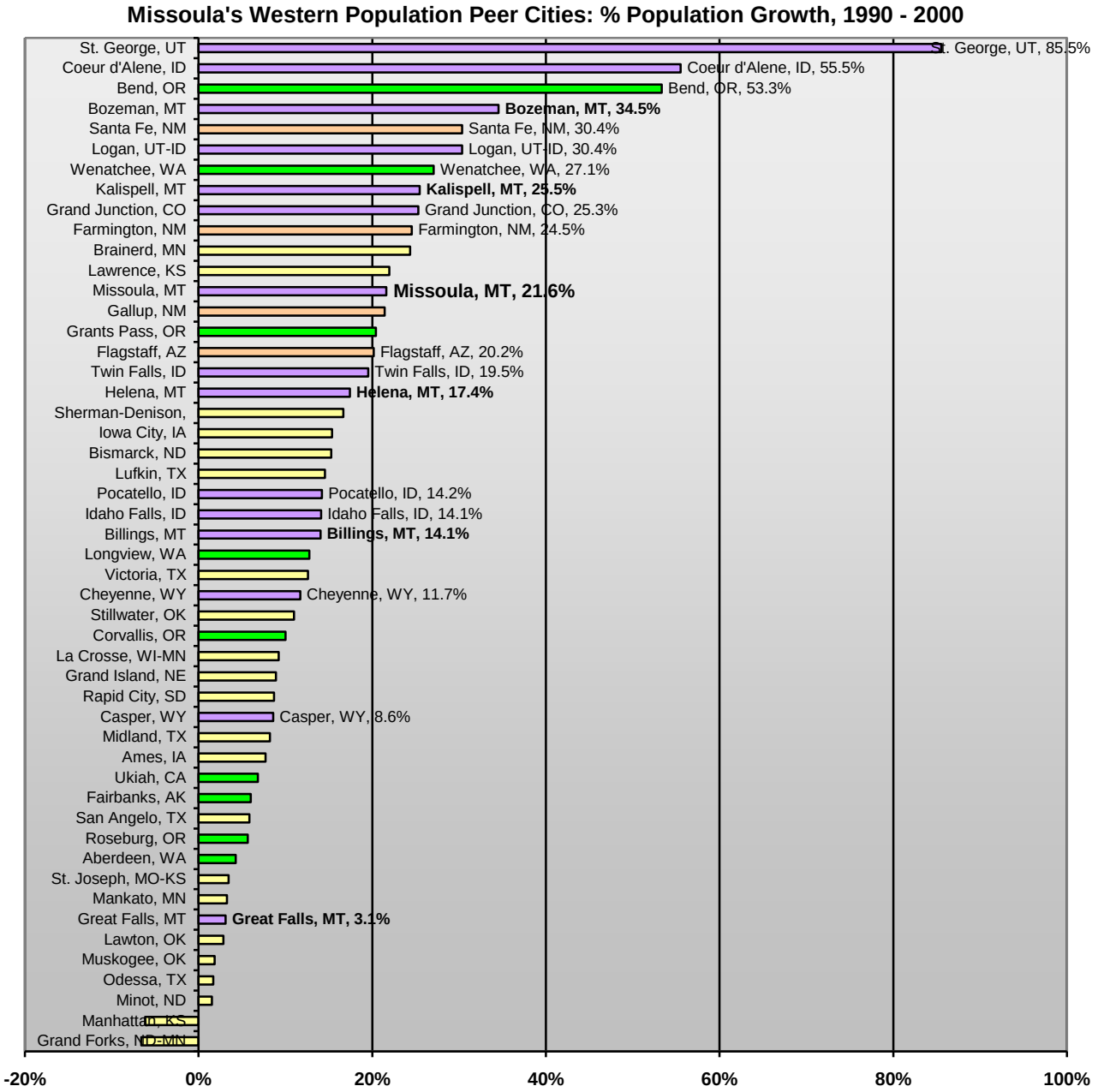


A. Population Growth among General Peers in the '90s

The decade of the '90s saw a major "sea change" in migration patterns in the western United States. The Interior Mountain West region saw much higher rates of in-migration into the region than the prior decade and lower rates of out-migration. Increased net migration drove population growth in Missoula and much of the Interior West through the '90s, with Missoula County's population increasing by nearly 22% during the decade – 13th highest among these 50 peers.

Among these 50 general population peers, St. George, UT, had the fastest growth -- an 86% increase. Six of the nine fast-growing places were in the Rocky Mountain West (five states of MT, ID, WY, UT, and CO shown in purple bars). These include Coeur d'Alene, ID (56% growth); Bozeman, MT (35%); Logan, UT (30%); Kalispell, MT (26%); and Grand Junction, CO (25%). Bend, OR; Santa Fe, NM; and Wenatchee, WA, also were fast-growing, located in the Pacific Northwest (green) and Southwest (brown).

Western peers with declining populations during this period include Grand Forks, ND (-7%) and Manhattan, KS (-6%) (Central Plains, yellow).

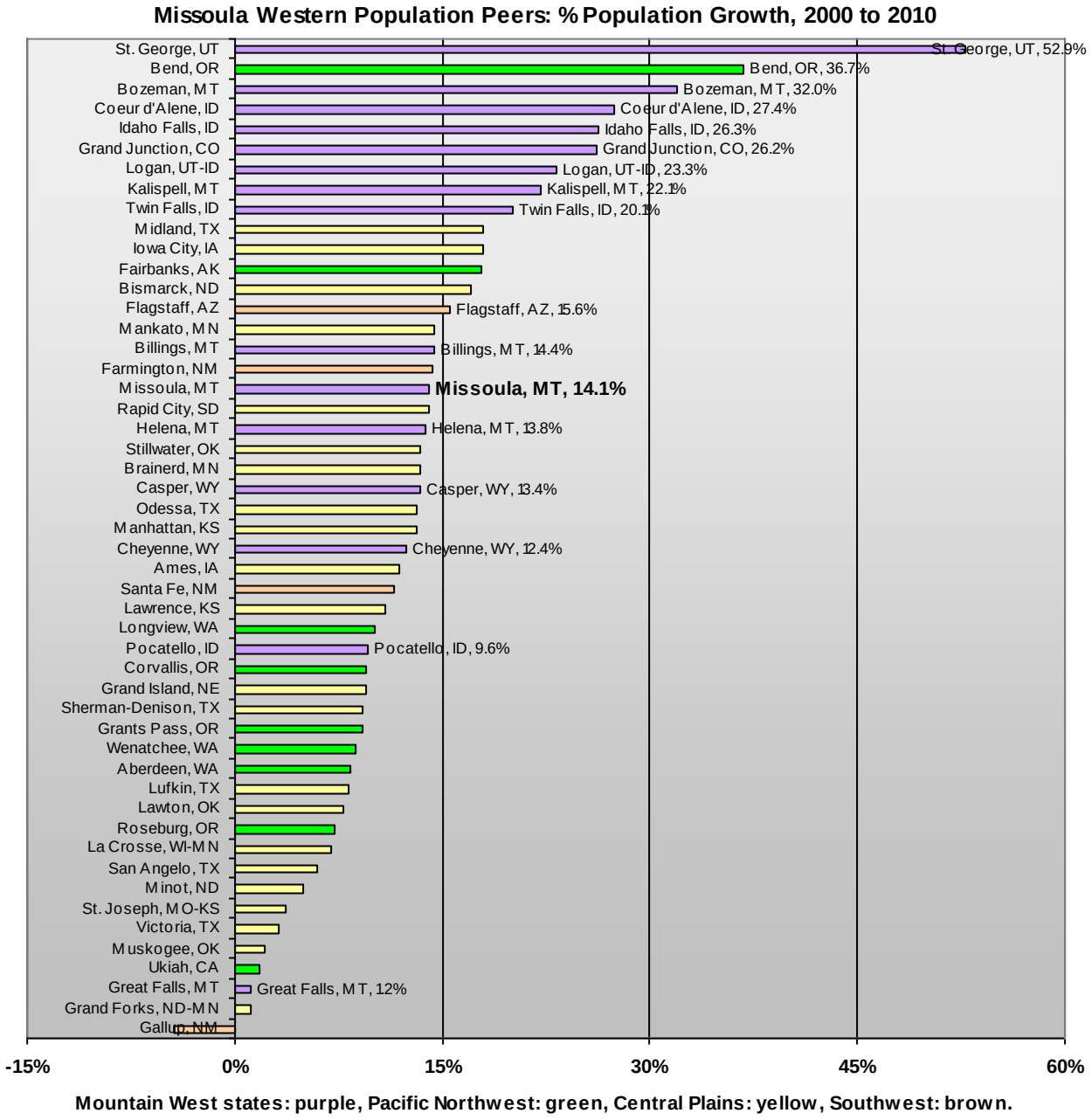


A. Peers Population Growth in the last decade (2000 – 2010)

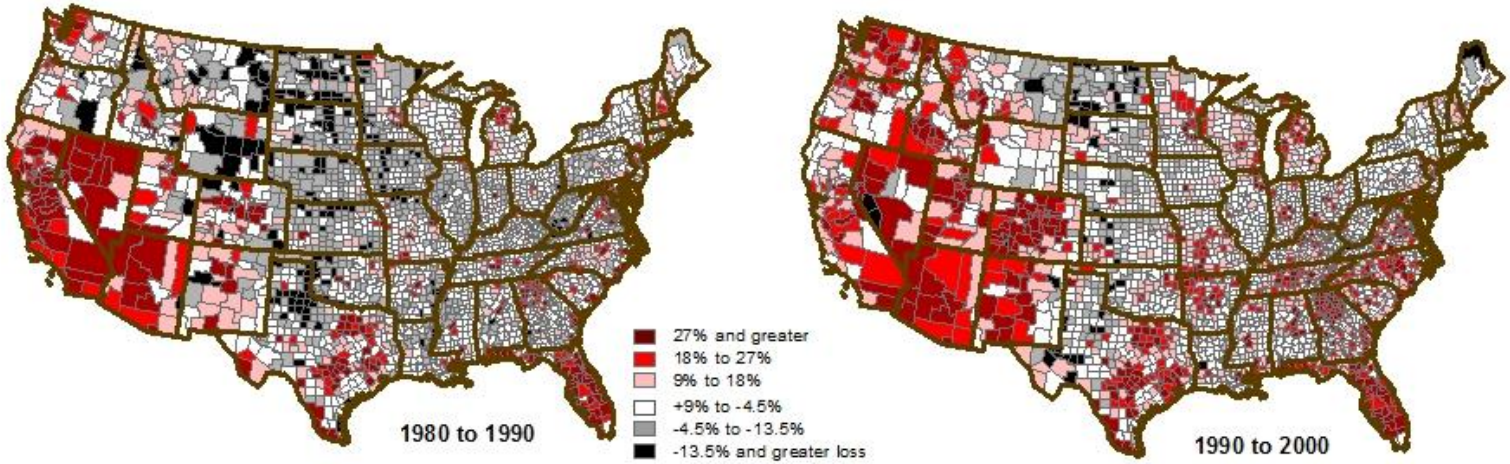
Population growth in the '90s was wide-spread and generous throughout the Interior West, in the last decade this growth moderated and focused on fewer places. Missoula County, which had grown in by 22% during the '90s, slowed to growth of 14% between 2000 and 2010. St. George, UT, the fastest growing among all these peers, continued to lead in growth, but its growth slowed from 86% in the '90s to 53%. Bend, OR, slowed from 53% growth to 37%, and Coeur d'Alene, ID, slowed from nearly 56% growth to 27%.

Bozeman, MT, remained fast-growing, slowing only slightly from 34% to 32%. Kalispell, MT, also experienced only a modest decline in growth, going from 26% to 22% growth. Yellowstone County's population increased by 14% in both decades. Idaho Falls, ID, was one of several places in the Interior West with faster growth in the last decade than during the '90s, rising from 14% growth to 26% growth.

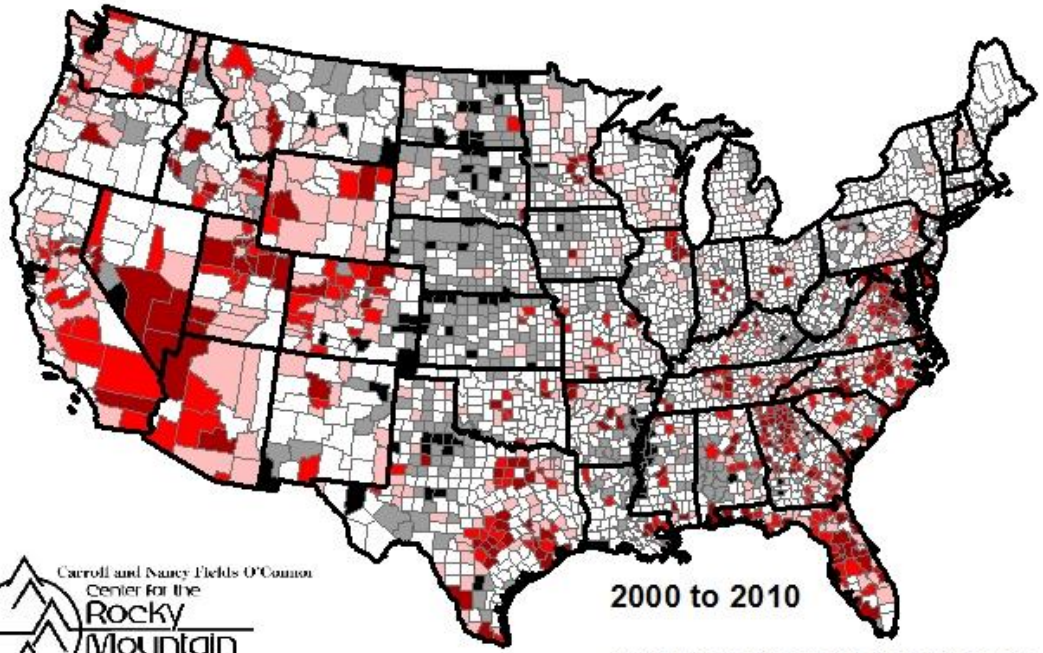
Eight of the nine fastest-growing peers during the 2000-10 period are in the Mountain West (purple), showing that this region among all others in the West continued to have a relatively fast-growing population.



Patterns of Total Population Change Over Time in the U.S.



Areas in dark red and medium red in the map have relatively fast-growing populations in the periods shown – 1980 to 1990, 1990 to 2000, and 2000 to 2010. Areas in black and dark gray are ones with markedly declining populations. And ones in white and light red are counties with modest levels of population decline (declines of down to 4.5%) or with moderate levels of population growth (up to as high as 18% in the period).



Carroll and Nancy Fields O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West

Source: Bureau of Census U.S. Dept. of Commerce.

Total Population Change 90 00 10.mxd

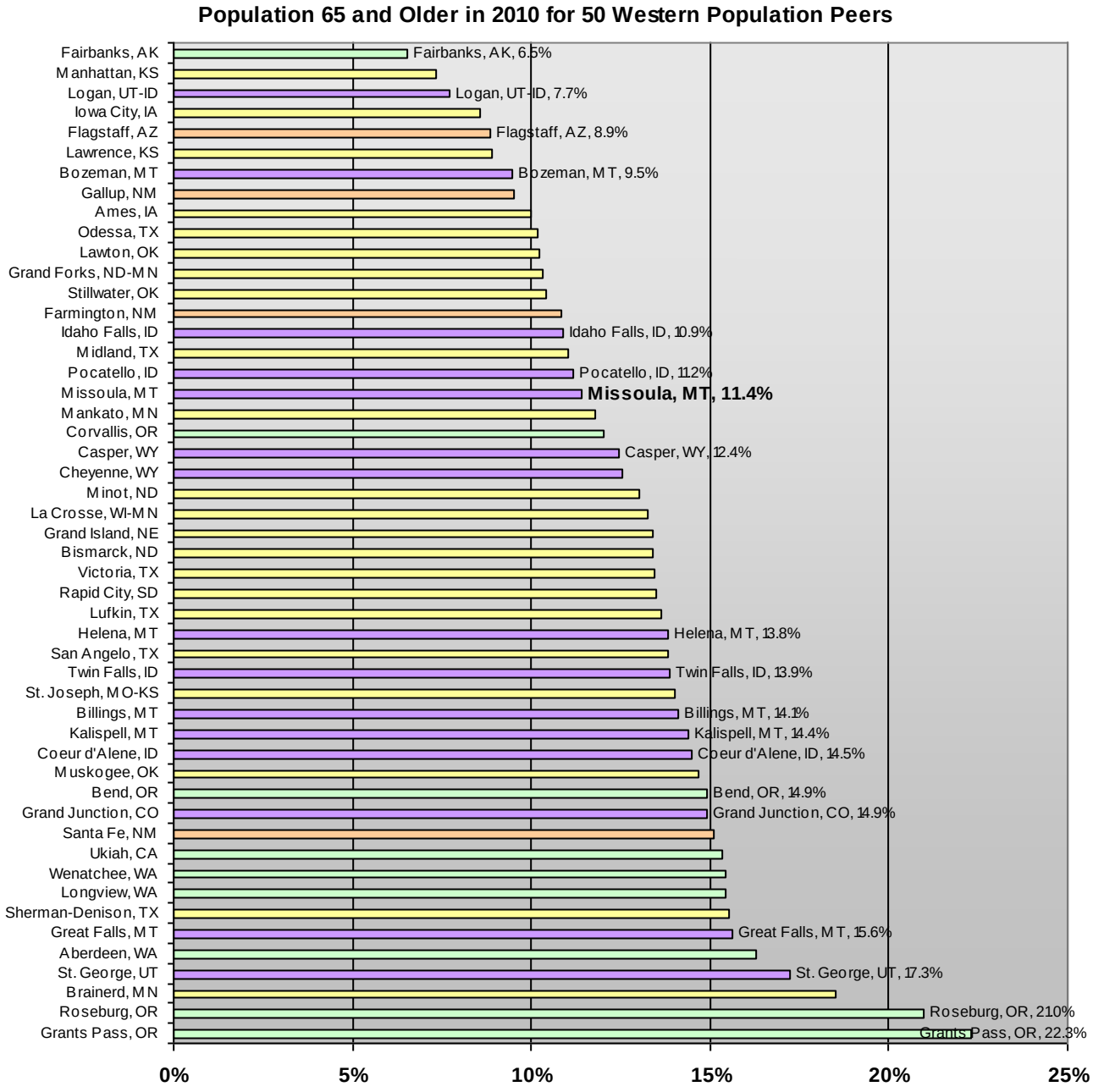
A. Population 65 and older for Western U.S. Peers of Missoula County

In the 2010 Population Census, Missoula County had 11.4% of its total population at ages 65 and older. The chart at the right shows how this compares with the other places in the 50 western population peers for Missoula County. Among the 50 peers Missoula County had the 18th lowest percentage of the total population that was 65 and older.

Fairbanks, AK, had the lowest percentage of the population 65 and older at 6.5%, followed by Manhattan, KS, at 7.3% and Logan, UT, at 7.7%. In Montana only Bozeman (Gallatin Co.) had a lower percentage of this older age group population with 9.5%.

Grants Pass and Roseburg, both in Oregon, had the highest percentages of these 65 and older populations at 22.3% and 21%, respectively. Great Falls had the highest percentage of the six counties contained in this group in Montana at 15.6%. The share of the total population for these older persons was 14.4% in Kalispell (Flathead Co.) and 14.1% in Billings (Yellowstone Co.).

So, relatively speaking, while the older population will steadily grow going into the future, Missoula County currently has a more moderate share of its population that is older.

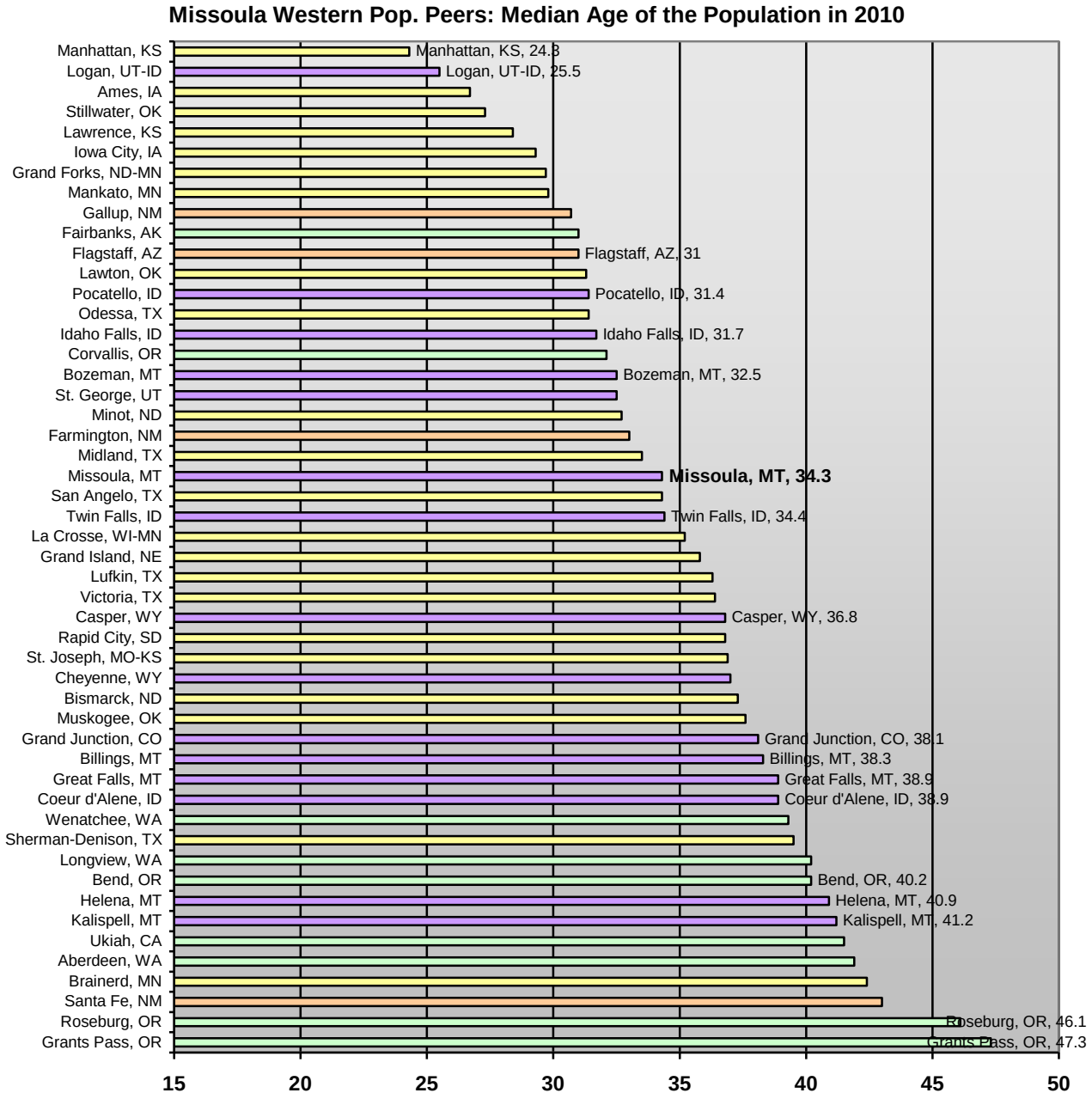


A. Median Age of the Population for Missoula's Western Population Peers

Another way of examining how Missoula County's population may compare with other areas is by using median age rather than share of the population 65 and older. The median age for Missoula County in 2010 was 34.3. What this means is that half of the population of Missoula was older than 34.3 and the other half was younger.

For the 50 western population peers, this ranked Missoula County 22nd lowest or very close to the average median age for all of these places. Manhattan, KS, had the lowest median age at 24.3, followed by Logan, UT, at 25.5. The places with the oldest populations as measured in this way are Grants Pass and Roseburg, the two Oregon counties also having the highest percent of the population 65 and older.

In Montana, only Bozeman had a lower median age than Missoula at 32.5 vs. 34.3. Kalispell and Helena had the highest median ages at 41.2 and 40.9, respectively.

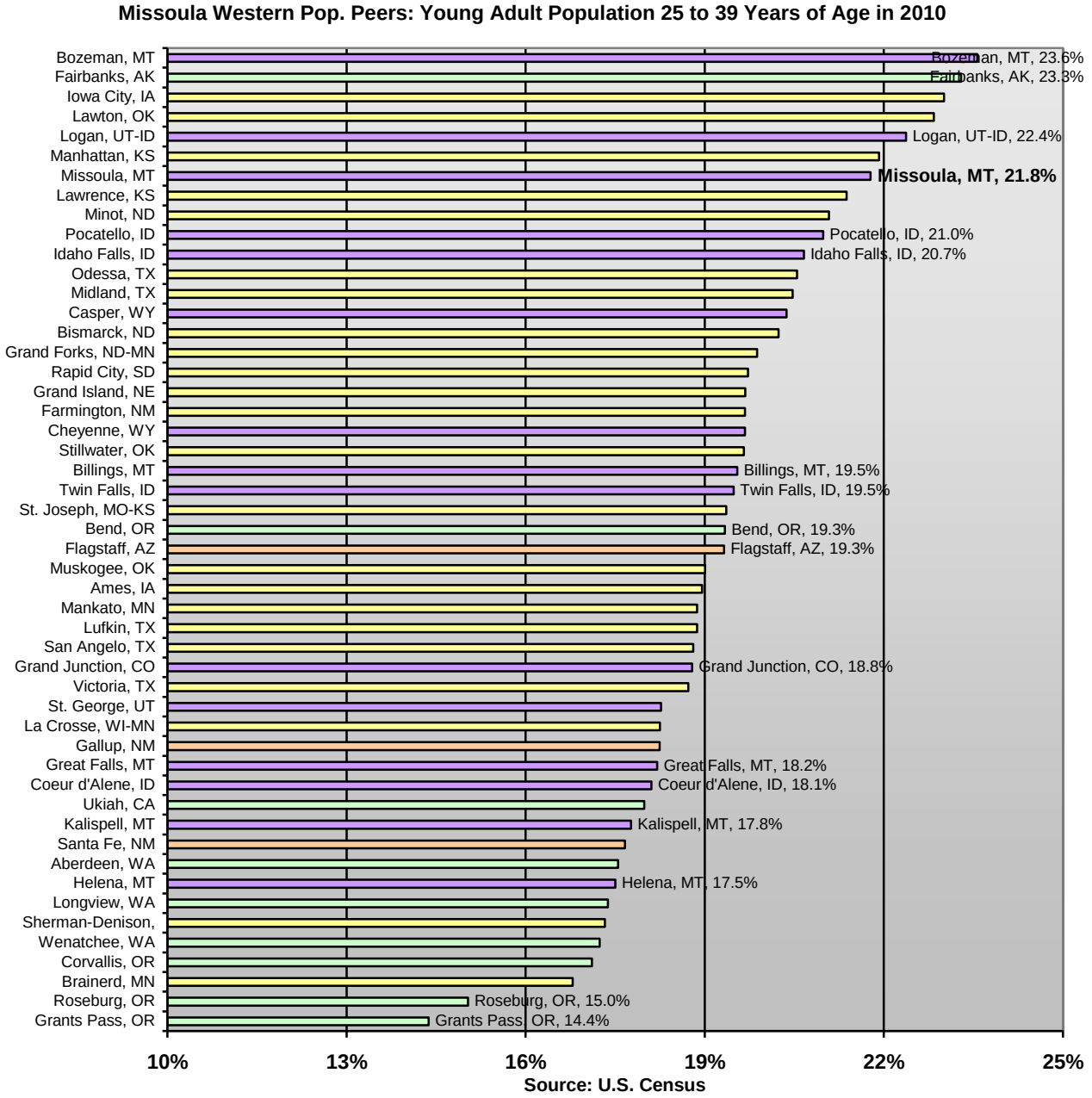


A. Share of the Population by Young Adults, 25 to 39 Years of Age

It's also important to examine how much of an area's total population is made up of "young adults". Adults between 25 and 39 are important in that they are the younger portion of an area's adult work force and the number of these young adults becomes increasingly important as more workers reach ages of retirement. These younger adults replenish the labor force as other older workers leave.

They also are important in shaping other aspects of local community as these persons are at ages of family formation and child-rearing. As they form new families they are more prone to buy homes or have new homes built. They are the ones providing new children who enter area schools and keep enrollments in these schools replenished.

Young adults in their 20s and 30s also are prone to move from one area to the next. So, their choices for where they want to live heavily shape migration patterns. The chart at the right compares the 50 western peers in terms of their 25 to 39 young adult populations. Missoula ranks 7th among these peers in its population of young adults at 21.8%. This suggests it is an attractive place for young adults to live.



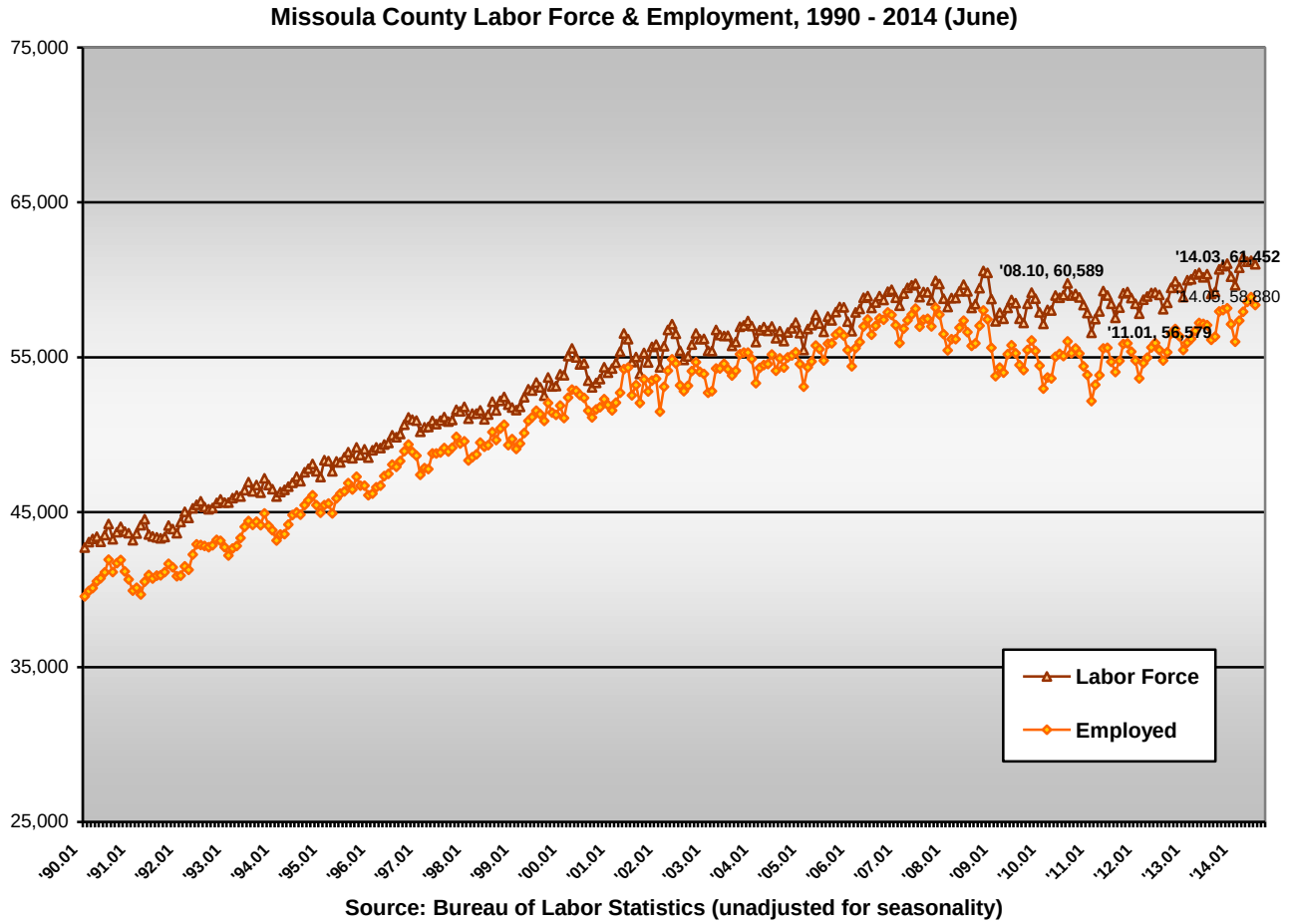
B. Labor Force and Employment Levels Over Time in Missoula County, 1990 - 2014

Labor force data are regularly compiled and reported upon by the Montana Department of Labor & Industry (MDLI) and the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The chart at the right shows monthly counts of the total number of persons residing in Missoula County who are employed or otherwise considered part of the area labor force (which also includes those who aren't employed but are activity seeking employment).

The county's labor force steadily and consistently grew from less than 45,000 workers in the early '90s to well over 60,000 by October of 2008. The nationwide recession officially began in December of 2007 but this did not result in a fallback in Missoula County's labor force until late in 2008. This fallback culminated with a low of around 57,000 workers in January, 2011. Since then the general recovery in the economy is resulting in both labor force and employment growth.

In the chart the gap between the labor force, shown in brown, and those in the labor force who are employed (orange), is the number of unemployed in a given month.

Employment reached a peak level of 58,200 in October of 2007 and then ratcheted down during the economic slowdown to as low as 52,177 in January of 2011. Since then, employment has once again steadily climbed back to higher levels, reaching a recent high of 58,880 in June, 2014.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (unadjusted for seasonality)

The labor force of Missoula County is now steadily growing and the pace of this growth will hinge upon how fast the economy recovers and then on what the pace of growth may be under a new and different, fully recovered economy in the years ahead. Labor force and employment growth in western Montana in the fifteen or more years leading into the most recent recession was heavily influenced by population growth (particularly increased rates of in-migration), that magnified growth in housing and construction that then led to other further expansions in real estate and financial sector activity. While there is currently more labor than available jobs, this situation may be short-lived as future growth in the work force will be constrained by an aging population and a growing number of retirees.