



## Tualatin, Oregon City and Beaverton see fastest-growing metro-area poverty rates since 2000

[The Oregonian](#) By [The Oregonian](#)  
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TUALATIN -- This city calls to mind high-end shopping and its pristine artificial lake. But Tualatin also saw the sharpest jump in poverty in the metro area since 2000.

More poor people now live in the nation's suburbs than its cities, according to the new book "[Confronting Suburban Poverty in America](#)," released this week by researchers for the [Brookings Institution](#).

That shift was identified in Portland and its suburbs for the first time after the 2000 census.

Since then, the growth of poverty in suburbs such as Tualatin, Oregon City and Beaverton has eclipsed the rate at which poverty is growing in Portland, Vancouver and Gresham. (*See chart below.*)

Government and nonprofit officials expect the trend to continue as the economy recovers.

Low-income residents have moved to Portland suburbs from larger cities or other countries for years, drawn by affordable housing and a lower cost of living in some places. But recession-era unemployment and foreclosures pushed many suburban residents below the poverty threshold for the first time.

In Tualatin, the poverty rate increased from 5.5 percent in 2000 to 13.6 percent from 2009 to 2011, according to Census and [American Community Survey](#) data.

Tualatin police have observed apartment complexes where multiple families share cramped spaces. The library has welcomed hundreds of more patrons using free Internet to apply for jobs. [Bridgeport Elementary School](#) provided free and reduced-price lunches to 23 percent of its students in 2000; that has risen to nearly 64 percent this school year.

### 'It's a denial'

"I see a lot of people who you wouldn't expect coming into a food pantry," said Mike Shiffer, board president of the [Tualatin School House Pantry](#). The pantry recorded 27,365 visits in 2012, more than double the annual visits in its early years.

"When we first started back in 2004, people said, 'Well, you don't need a food bank in Tualatin,'" Shiffer said. "To some degree, it's a denial."

Tualatin officials couldn't pinpoint reasons for the city's increase in poverty. The city added more than 500 affordable housing units in 2001 and 2002, although those residents do not necessarily live below the poverty threshold.

The city also saw a rise in Latino residents, who are more likely to be poor in Tualatin, but recent poverty data broken down by race and ethnicity are statistically shaky.

Gresham has the highest poverty rate in the metro area, at 18.5 percent, but the increase in its population of poor people between 2000 and 2009-11, nearly 75 percent, was the seventh highest.

In Tualatin, Oregon City, Beaverton and Newberg, the populations of poor people more than doubled in the decade following the 2000 census.

Portland and Vancouver showed smaller increases in populations of poor people.

Smaller cities and unincorporated communities were not included in the data.

The Brookings study is "verifying what people have been seeing on the ground level," said Jean Kempe-Ware, spokeswoman for the [Oregon Food Bank](#).

The food bank gave out nearly 90,000 emergency food boxes in Washington County last fiscal year, more than triple the number of a decade before.

"Washington County is a magnet for people hoping to find gainful employment," due to the county's reputation as Oregon's economic engine, said Jerralynn Ness, executive director of nonprofit [Community Action](#).

But as the county population grew in the past decade, the population of poor people reached its highest level in 2011, Ness said.

Oregon City has seen an influx of poor people who moved from Portland when that city's social services were inundated, said Teri Gant, executive director of the [Father's Heart Street Ministry](#), a nonprofit in Oregon City.

Unlike in Portland, the suburban needy do not congregate where they can be noticed, Gant said.

"I don't think it's hidden," said Don Mazziotti, Beaverton's community and economic development director, of increased suburban poverty. "I think it's been ignored."

Despite "out-migration" of those who cannot afford to live in Portland, poverty is still treated as an urban problem, Mazziotti said.

The "suburbanization of poverty" is here to stay, said Alan Berube, an author of the new book and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit dedicated to independent research and policy solutions.

"This is a permanent shift in where we find poverty in America that public policy has yet to catch up with."

-- [Nicole Friedman](#) and [Fenit Nirappil](#)

Poverty trends		
City	Population change	Poor population change
Tualatin	18%	189.1%
Oregon City	27.6%	132.58%
Beaverton	18.8%	101.03%
Newberg	20.3%	100.45%
Milwaukie	-2.9%	94.92%
Tigard	17.1%	74.98%
Gresham	17.9%	74.6%
Hillsboro	31.9%	70.87%
McMinnville	22.4%	70.25%
Vancouver	13.5%	59.64%
Portland	11.2%	53.78%

*Changes in Portland-area population and poor population from 2000 to 2009-2011, using data from the 2000 Census and the American Community Survey. Poverty thresholds were \$11,484 for an individual in 2011 and \$8,794 in 2000.*

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