



Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Spokane County, Washington and Kootenai County, Idaho

By
Steven Neufeld, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology
Eastern Washington University
Telephone: (509) 359-6027
E-mail: sneufeld@ewu.edu

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I. Executive Summary

This study presents Census data on racial and ethnic diversity in Spokane and Kootenai counties, especially for the major racial and ethnic groupings as defined in the U.S. Census. It examines the racial and ethnic makeup of the population for the two counties, including data on ancestry and foreign-born populations in the two counties. It also analyzes age distributions and household characteristics for the major racial and ethnic groupings.

An upcoming monograph that focuses on racial and ethnic inequality using the same data sources complements this study. The second monograph analyzes racial and inequality in terms of various socio-economic indicators, including poverty, as well as the spatial distribution of racial and ethnic groups.

In terms of population and demographics, this monograph shows that both counties lack significant racial and ethnic diversity compared to their respective states and to the United States as a whole. Kootenai County is less diverse than Spokane County. In particular, the percentage of Blacks and Asians is considerably lower in Kootenai County than in Spokane

County. Countering this, racial and ethnic diversity increased from 1990 to 2000, with all major racial and ethnic groups increasing faster than Whites in both counties. Hispanics in particular grew significantly faster than Whites, and they continue to be the largest racial or ethnic group in both counties.

Ancestry patterns are similar across the two counties, with German ancestry most common, followed by British and Irish ancestry. However, Spokane County has a considerably higher share of foreign born persons than Kootenai County, and of foreign born who have arrived more recently. The foreign born of Spokane County are also linguistically and culturally more diverse. For example, Spokane in recent years has witnessed a sizable immigration of new groups such as Russians and Ukrainians, adding to the ethnic diversity of the city.

Age distributions and household characteristics vary across the major racial and ethnic groupings, with significant differences in median age, family type, and family size. Whites are oldest in both counties, especially in Spokane County, while Hispanics are youngest in Spokane County and Blacks are youngest in Kootenai County. In terms of household type, patterns vary considerably between Spokane and Kootenai counties, but Whites have the smallest households and families in both counties. These differences in age and household characteristics have implications for racial and ethnic inequality and racial and ethnic attitudes and relations.
