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Washington County
Commission on
Children & Families

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Gaston



Gaston Community Profile

While Washington County as a whole grew by 43% in the 1990s, the population of Gaston declined by some 7% from 606 to 563.

This small, rural community in western Washington County reflects its agrarian roots. Similar to the rest of the county, Gaston shows growing diversity in its population with the proportion of Latinos growing from 8.7% in 1990 to almost 17% in 2000.

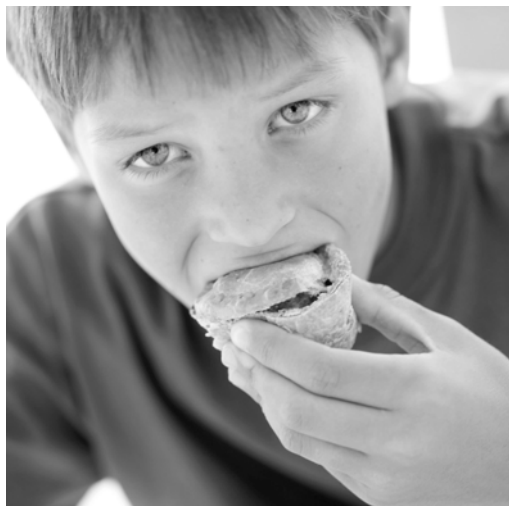
Gaston has a higher proportion of youth than the county as a whole, 34.1% compared to 25.5% in 2000. While the majority of children live in a two parent household (61.2%), Gaston has the highest proportion of single parent households in the county at 38.8%.

Poverty

While per capita income in Gaston almost doubled in the 1990s, growing from \$9,319 in 1990 to \$17,758 in 2000, it remains well below that of the county as a whole (\$24,969).

Similar to the county as a whole, poverty in Gaston grew during the 1990s, from 9.1% to 11.1%. Poverty disproportionately affects children, with 21.3% of children in Gaston living in poverty in 2000. Children living in single parent households were even more likely to live in poverty (33.3%).

The percent of children participating in the free/reduced lunch program is another indicator of poverty. Since the 2000-01 school year, the percentage of children participating in the Gaston School District increased from 28.6% to 32.8% in the 2006-07 school year.



Education

Reflecting the agrarian background of the area, Gaston residents have lower educational attainment levels than other parts of the county. Almost 16% of residents over age 25 have not completed high school, compared with 11% of residents county-wide.

Educational attainment levels are correlated with poverty levels, and Gaston residents are significantly less likely to have a college or graduate degree than other county residents. While 36.7% of county residents had a college diploma in 2000, just 6% of Gaston residents had a four year college degree.

Test scores at the third and eighth grade levels are used as measures to determine the general school performance of children and their schools. In the Gaston School District, scores for third graders have improved in recent years and now exceed those for the state as a whole, although eighth graders' performance has declined, and they continue to perform below their peers state-wide as illustrated by the chart below.

Third Grade	District Reading	State Reading	District Math	State Math
% meeting standards in 2001-02	77%	85%	62%	69%
% meeting standards in 2005-06	95%	90%	95%	88%
Eighth Grade	District Reading	State Reading	District Math	State Math
% meeting standards in 2001-02	70%	64%	50%	56%
% meeting standards in 2005-06	64%	68%	60%	68%

Overall, student performance has generally shown improvement, for both White and Latino students, although performance for Latino students lags behind that of their White peers, as illustrated by the following chart.

Education Cont.

	Language Arts White	Language Arts Latino	Math White	Math Latino
% meeting / exceeding standard in 02-03	60.2%	52.9%	58.9%	62.6%
% meeting / exceeding standard in 05-06	67.6%	64.3%	68.4%	60%
% change	12%	21.6%	16.7%	-4.2%

The school drop-out rate for Gaston has shown a small increase in recent years, although it remains well below that of the county and state.

The drop-out rate in Gaston increased from 1.5% in the 2000-01 school year to 2.3% in the 2005-06 school year. This compares to a county rate of 3.4% and a state rate of 4.1% for the 2005-06 school year.

