

Coos County Community Indicators: *A Profile by Town*

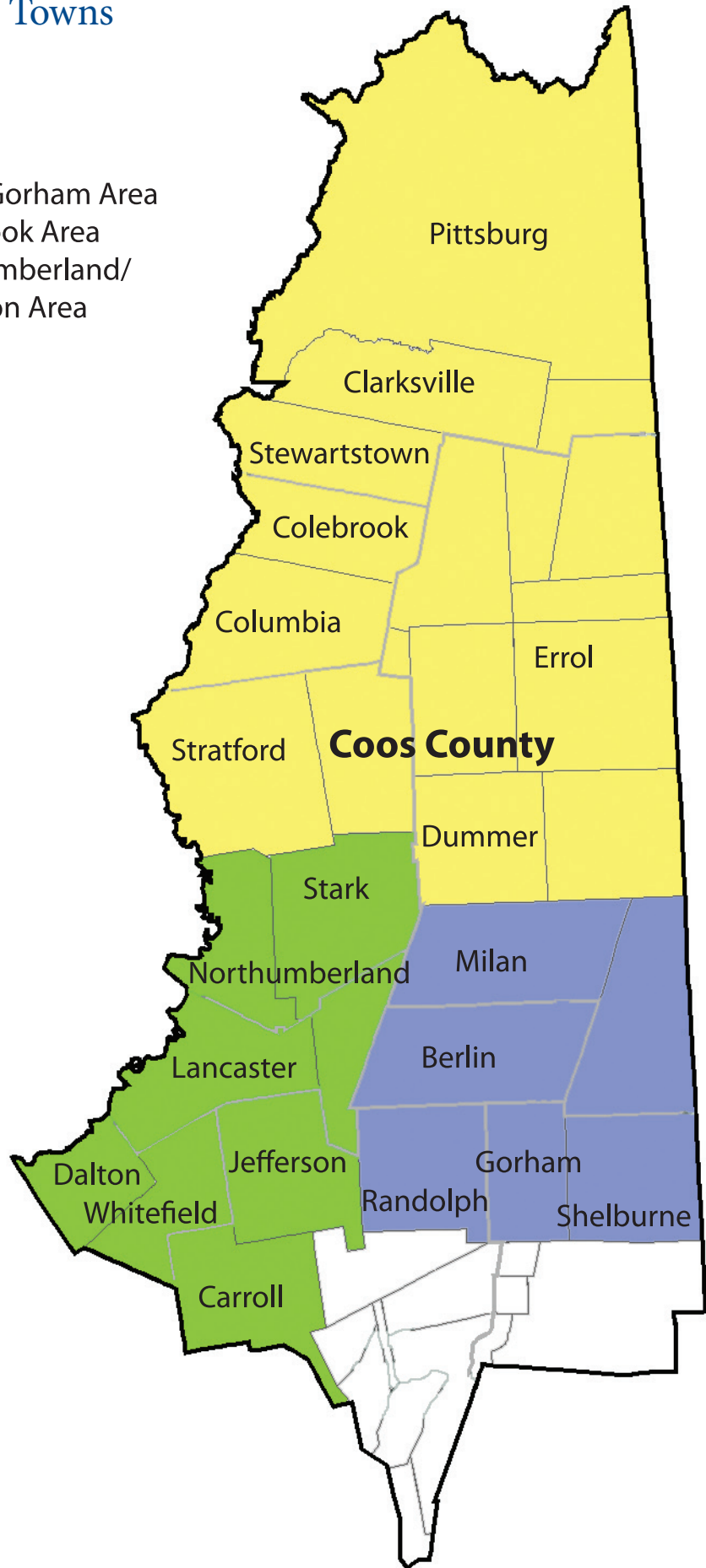


*Sponsored by the Coos County Family Support Project
Funded by a grant from the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund
of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation*

FEBRUARY 2008

Map of Coos County and Towns

- Berlin/Gorham Area
- Colebrook Area
- Northumberland/
Groveton Area



Towns included in report:

- Berlin*
- Gorham*
- Lancaster*
- Northumberland*
- Whitefield*
- Colebrook*
- Pittsburg*
- Stewartstown*
- Stratford*

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A Profile by Town

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Prepared by The Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire

February 2008

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Coos County Community Indicators: Introduction

In the summer of 2006 a group of community based organizations agreed to work together to create a plan for connecting support services for families throughout Coos County. It was our belief that the health and human service organizations in the County have the resources and the expertise to improve outcomes for families and children. What is missing is a way to coordinate our efforts, identify shared goals and measure progress towards those goals so that we can learn from and share successful strategies.

Weeks Medical Center, Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital, Northern Human Services, Child and Family Services, The Coos County Coalition and the Carsey Institute joined the Family Resource Center @ Gorham to submit a proposal to the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund to create the Coos County Family Support Project. The proposal was funded by Tillotson in 2007 and the leadership team has been meeting monthly to identify the steps needed to track and improve outcomes for families.

In order to create a more positive future for Coos, we must first understand where we are starting from, what needs to change and how we will measure our progress. This report is an important first step in creating a baseline that we can use to assess, plan and measure changes in the social, community and economic status of Coos County.

The profile presents social, community and economic data in the three major regions of the county and compares these with state and national data (where available). This profile gives us a snapshot of the strengths and the challenges of the regions and the county as a whole. While it does not cover everything, we believe that it does give us a better understanding of the forces affecting community and family life in the County.

It is our hope that community leaders and planners will use the information in this report to create strategic and realistic initiatives that take into account both the positive and the negative forces that are in effect. Ultimately we plan to publish updated versions of this information so that we can track the effect over time of targeted activities created to improve outcomes for the regions and the county as a whole.

Coos County Family Support Project Partners

The Family Resource Center @ Gorham The Family Resource Center @ Gorham (FRC) is a private non-profit corporation that was established in April 1997, whose mission is to bring a variety of health and human service programs together to work collaboratively with each other and the community. The Resource Center provides primary prevention, support, referral and community connections to improve the health and quality of life for low income children, youth and families throughout Coos County. The programs reached over 1,000 individuals in Coos County in FY 2007. The Center operates with a community board of directors, a staff of 35 and a broad range of volunteers. The funding comes from a mix of state, federal and private foundation sources.

Weeks Medical Center (WMC) is located in Lancaster, NH and serves about 13,000 people in the ten rural towns on both sides of the Connecticut River. Weeks is a Critical Access Hospital providing acute inpatient and emergency medical care, outpatient and rehabilitation services, primary care (with 3 physician offices), home health and hospice services, school nurses and community outreach services.

Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital (UCVH) is located in Colebrook, NH and serves 9,149 people in an 850 square mile radius in the Great North Woods of NH, the northeastern corner of Vermont, and 2 small townships in Maine. UCVH is a Critical Access Hospital providing acute inpatient and emergency medical care, outpatient and rehabilitation services, home health services, school-based services (school nurses and school based health clinics) and community outreach services (community health education and programming).

Child and Family Services (CFS) is New Hampshire's oldest statewide, children's charitable organization and has been a partner with families, schools and communities to improve the quality of life for children for over seven generations. In the North Country, Child and Family Services has program sites in Littleton, Lancaster, Colebrook and Gorham. In 1990 the agency expanded its service network by offering home-based family-support services and educational and supportive group learning programs from Groveton to Pittsborough.

Northern Human Services (NHS) is a blended service agency, providing services to people affected by mental illness, developmental disabilities, substance abuse, and related disorders, allowing these individuals and families to live meaningful lives in their communities. NHS is a private, non-profit organization, formed in 1971 when three Child Development Centers and four Community Mental Health Centers merged. For 34 years, NHS has provided quality community-based individualized services to the residents of Coos, Carroll, and Upper Grafton Counties.

Coos County Coalition: North Country Health Consortium is a group of community members and organizations that initially came together in 1999 in order to prevent substance abuse by youth. The Coalition's main focus has been and continues to be increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors that lead to substance abuse and other youth risk behaviors and is funded through a Drug Free Communities Support Program (DFCSP) SAMHSA Grant. The vision of the Coalition is to "create healthier communities for our children" and its mission as a regional group is to "to provide leadership in the development and implementation of a regional set of initiatives to prevent risk behaviors by youth."

The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire conducts research and analysis into the challenges facing families and communities in New Hampshire, New England, and the nation. The Carsey Institute sponsors independent, interdisciplinary research that documents trends and conditions in rural America, providing valuable information and analysis to policymakers, practitioners, the media, and the general public. Carsey was established in 2002 from a generous gift to UNH from Marcy Carsey.

Overview of Report

This profile report presents data on social indicators for Coos County and for selected towns in the county. Towns were selected to represent three areas in the county: the Berlin/Gorham area, the Lancaster area, and the northern Colebrook area. Nine towns were selected, based for the most part on population size; data on very small towns tend to be less reliable. It is still important to be cautious in interpreting some of the data, particularly percentage changes over time. In the smallest towns a small numerical change can result in a large percentage change. The population figures are presented in a table in the appendix to this report for reference.

The major source of data for the report is the U.S. Census. While this is a reliable source of information, the most recent census data for many indicators is the 2000 decennial census. These data are now somewhat dated. We tried to use more recent data where possible. The

profile is intended to provide a snapshot of change in Coos County and its towns, and it will be valuable to compare the data as presented here with new census data from 2010.

The report includes several types of comparisons. There are some indicators presented to capture changes over time; from 1980 to 1990 and 1990 to 2000. A second comparison is across the nine towns selected for the profile. Although the towns have much in common, there are distinctions described in comparisons across the towns. A third comparison is Coos County relative to the state of New Hampshire. Coos County has many distinctive features compared to the state as a whole, and these are highlighted in the profile report.

The research for this report was conducted by a team at The Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire. Karen Schreiner, a graduate student in Sociology collected the data on the towns of Lancaster, Northumberland, Whitefield, Pittsburg, Stewartstown, Colebrook, and Stratford. These supplemented data presented in the earlier "Upper Androscoggin Valley Area Profile" published in June 2006. Sarah Savage, a Ph.D. student and fellow at The Carsey Institute, prepared that report. Wendy Walsh, research assistant professor at UNH provided valuable feedback and advice on the profile work. Sally Ward, professor of Sociology and Faculty Fellow at The Carsey Institute oversaw the project. The team worked throughout the project with Cathy McDowell and the other partners in the Coos County Family Support Project.

Profile Highlights

Coos County has experienced substantial change as the economy has shifted away from manufacturing, and in particular as the paper products industry has changed over time. Demographic shifts are also important, as the population of the county has decreased over time, the population has aged, and the type and size of families has changed. There are many challenges associated with these economic and social changes. The county and its towns have important assets as well, including importantly, an amenity-rich environment and great natural beauty.

Some of the major highlights in the report include:

- Most of the towns in Coos County have lost population in recent years and growth has been modest in the others. The population decline in Berlin has been especially marked. This is likely a result of changes in the paper products industry, changes that have continued through 2007.
- There has been an aging of the population across the county in all areas. There has been an increase in the percentage of those 55 and older and a decrease in the population aged 20-34 across all areas.
- In all towns the percentage of households defined as families with children decreased from 1990 to 2000. While this is a statewide (and national) trend, the magnitude has been greater in Coos County.
- There has been a substantial increase in the percentage of families that are headed by a single parent, and the increase across the areas in Coos County has been greater than that in the state as a whole.

- The crime rate in Coos County has been substantially lower than that in the state or the nation, although there has been a slight increase beginning in 2001.
- The percentage of idle teens has decreased substantially in the majority of towns in the county.
- In almost all cases the youth of Coos County are more at risk for substance use and abuse than the youth in the state as a whole or in the nation.
- In most towns the housing vacancy rate is higher than in the state, and the rate increased from 1990 to 2000. The value of homes is lower than in the state in all towns. Both of these suggest greater housing availability in these towns.
- In almost all towns the educational attainment increased from 1990 to 2000, but most towns lag behind the state of New Hampshire as a whole.
- Part-time work has increased in many towns and is more common in Coos County than the state.
- Although seasonal work has declined over time, it is more common in several of the towns than in the county or state as a whole.
- Changes in the economy have been substantial, with a decline in manufacturing industries. This has been somewhat offset by increases in some service industries and, importantly, by increases in the recreation and amenities industry as tourism has become more important in the county's economy.
- The percentage of people living below poverty declined from 1980 to 2000 in all but three of the towns; there were consistent increases in Berlin, Northumberland, and Colebrook.

SOCIAL INDICATORS

Numbers of people in a community, age groupings, and family structure have implications for issues such as workforce availability, construction/consolidation of schools, health care services and day care needs. It is important to understand the social indicators of the region in order to identify what resources, structures, and economic supports will be needed in the future.

Population Change by Town

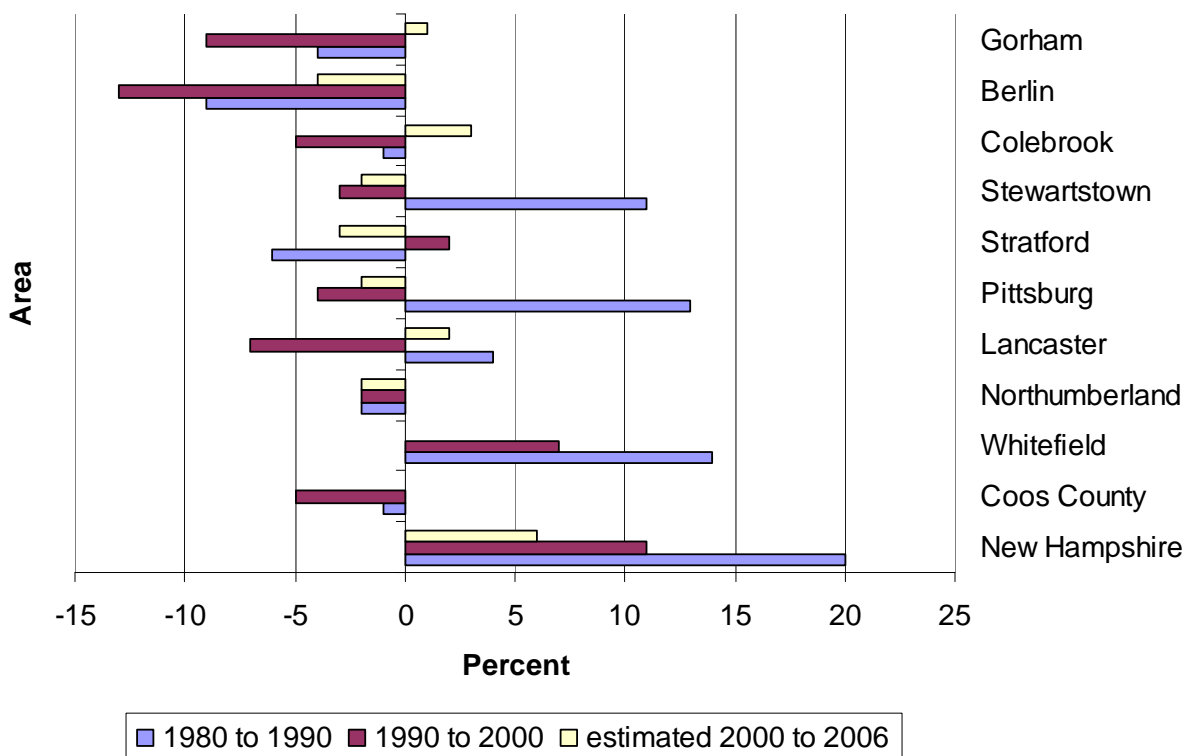
Why is this important?

Migration is one indicator of an area's ability to offer an attractive quality of life and economic opportunities for individuals and families. It is important to identify areas of growth or decline in the population because services and resources can be developed to respond to a changing population.

How are we doing?

New Hampshire has grown throughout the period, especially in the 1980s. In contrast, Coos County has lost population. Within Coos, the decline has been experienced in most towns. Stewartstown, Pittsburg, and Whitefield grew in the 1980s, and Whitefield continued its growth in the 1990s. Since 2000, however, only Gorham, Colebrook, and Lancaster had any increase in population, and those were modest. The overall population decline is linked to both demographic changes and the state of the economy in Coos County, both of which are important contexts for the changes described in the remainder of the profile report.

Percent Change in Population



Data Source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census; 2000-2006 Population Estimates, U.S. Census Bureau

Population by Age Group

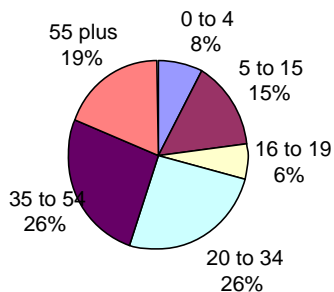
Why is this important?

Population data can be used to make decisions about services which may be needed to support the growth of certain age groups, such as more child care or school services for a growing population of children or healthcare services for an increasing number of elderly. Changes in the age distribution also impact the size of the labor force. According to a report by PolEcon Research on fiscal and demographic trends in New Hampshire, The 35-54 year old age group represents the most productive workers (Gottlob, 2006).

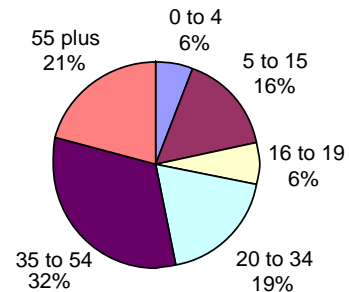
How are we doing?

The data on the age distribution of the population highlight two important trends. First, in all areas there has been an aging of the population over time. The percentage in the 55+ category has increased in New Hampshire as a whole and has increased or remained the same in the areas in Coos County. The percentage aged 35-54 increased in all areas from 1990 to 2000. Second, there has been a marked decline in the percentage of the population aged 20-34 in all areas and in the state as a whole. Compared to the state as a whole, Coos has population distribution with more people 55 and older and fewer people in the 20-34 year old category.

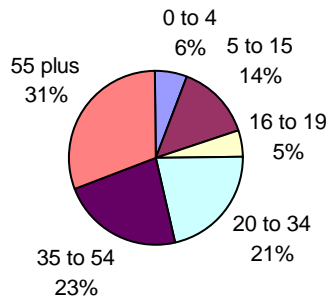
New Hampshire's Population by Age Group, 1990



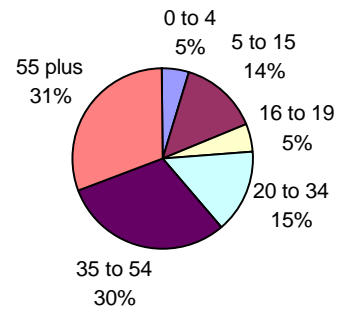
New Hampshire's Population by Age Group, 2000



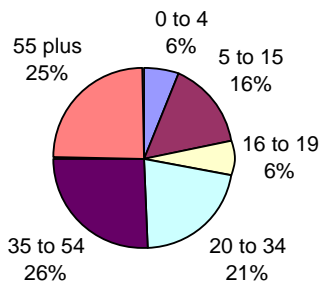
Berlin/Gorham Area's Population by Age Group, 1990



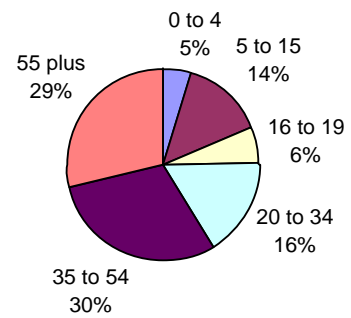
Berlin/Gorham Area's Population by Age Group, 2000



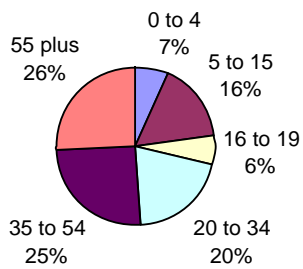
Colebrook Area's Population by Age Group, 1990



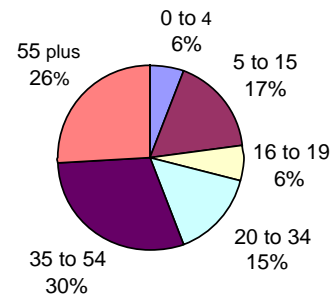
Colebrook Area's Population by Age Group, 2000



Lancaster Area's Population by Age Group, 1990



Lancaster Area's Population by Age Group, 2000

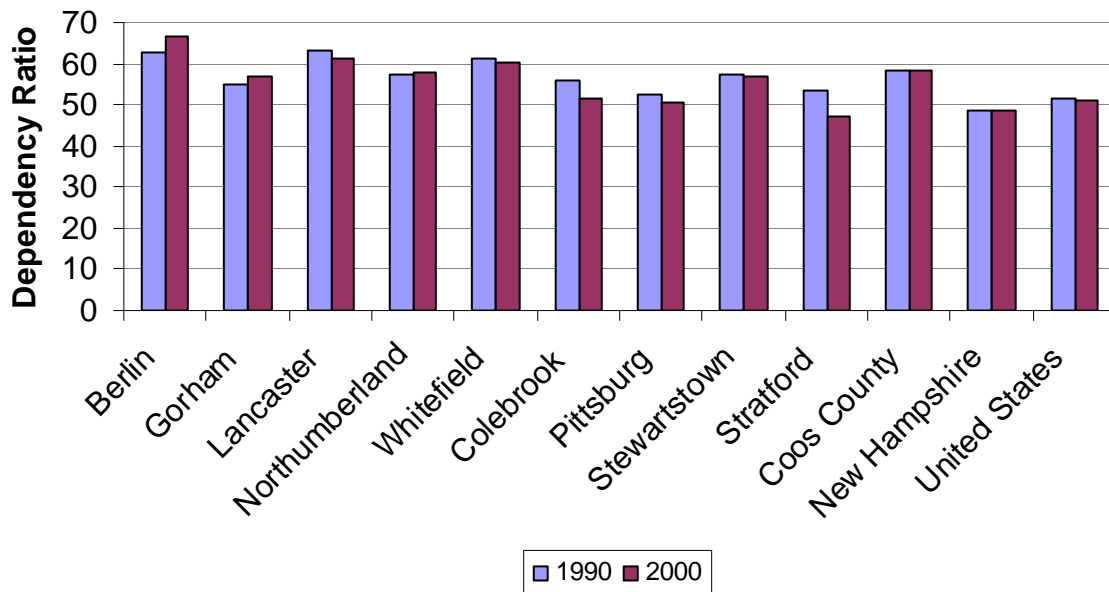


Population by Dependency

Why is this important? Youths and the elderly population depend partly on the active workforce for support. A high dependency ratio means that the community's dependent residents outnumber the workforce that supports them. When this happens it places a higher burden on the workforce to provide the necessary community supports and resources.

How are we doing? The changing age structure is reflected in the dependency ratio presented here. Coos County as a whole has a higher dependency ratio than the state, and within Coos, Berlin, Gorham, and Northumberland dependency ratios increased from 1990 to 2000. In other towns there were modest declines over time.

Dependency Ratio* of Youths and Elderly to the Working Age Population



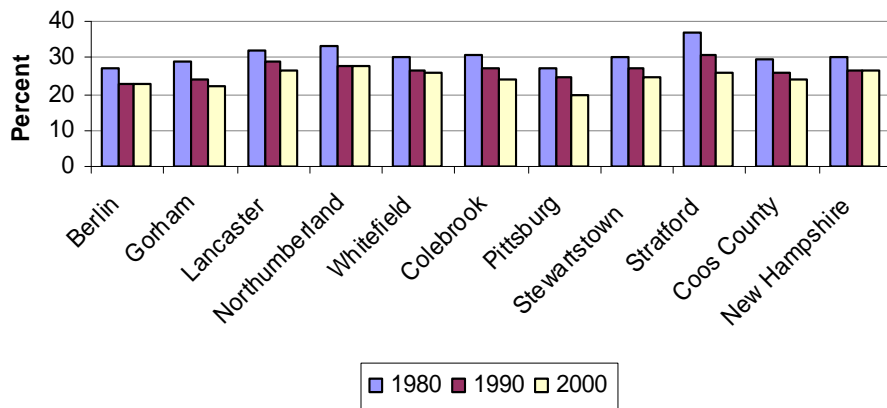
*Dependency ratio = Number of population under age 15 plus number age 65 and over divided by the number of population ages 15 to 64 (Gottlob, 2006).

Data source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

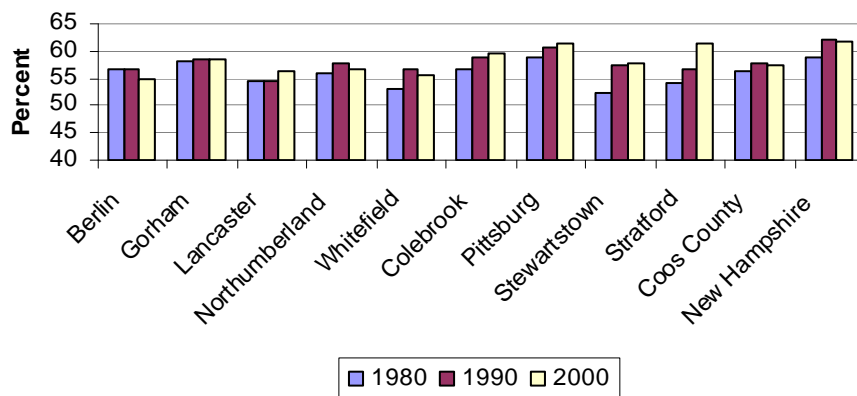
Details of the age distribution that contribute to the dependency ratios are presented next. All towns, along with Coos County and New Hampshire, experienced a decrease in percentage of the population who are children between 1980 and 2000. All towns have increased in their proportion of elderly population during this time. Most towns also experienced an increase in the percentage of working age adults between 1980 and 2000; the exceptions are noteworthy: working age adults declined proportionately in Berlin, Northumberland, and Whitefield. The county as a whole has fewer working age adults and more elderly than the state.

The population of Coos County is aging, even more so than the state as a whole. The aging of the population is particularly clear in Berlin and Pittsburg, where the percentage elderly has increased substantially over time. In Berlin this has been accompanied by a decline in the percentage of working age adults, a function of the economic restructuring in the traditional manufacturing and forest product sectors.

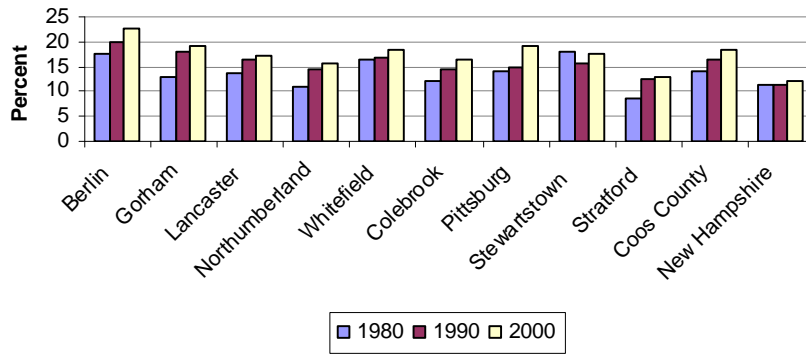
Percentage of Population who are Children



Percentage of Population who are Working Age Adults



Percentage of Population who are Elderly



Data Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census.

Number of Families

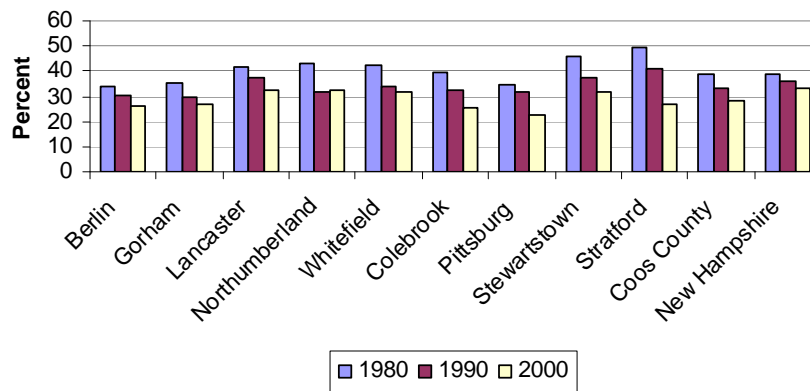
Why is this important?

Knowing how many families live in particular towns over time is one indicator of community growth. Understanding who is moving in or out of a community has implications for the types of resources that might be needed. Communities with young families may need larger schools, recreation departments or family support services, while communities with an elderly population may need more geriatric services and housing for the elderly.

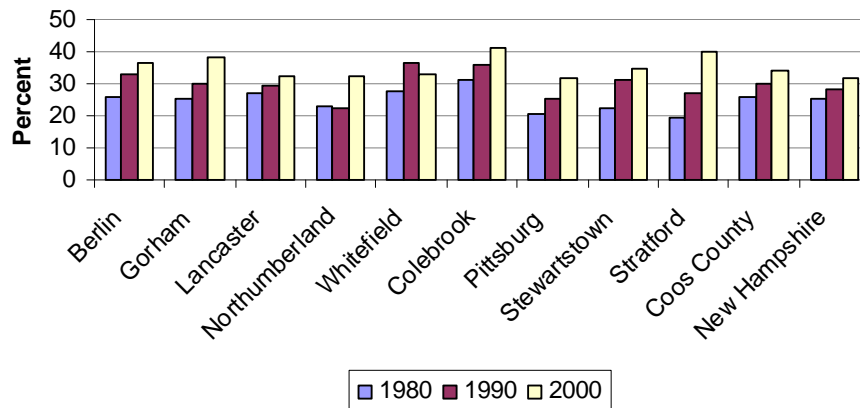
How are we doing?

Along with the decline of the proportion of the population of children from 1980 to 2000, there was a decrease in households defined as “families with children” in all towns. Nonfamily households, which are defined as “...a householder living alone...or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom he/she is not related” (U.S. Census) increased in prevalence between 1980 and 2000. In Stratford, this increase is most notable, where the percentage of nonfamily households more than doubled between 1980 and 2000. Throughout the county we see evidence of the more general nationwide demographic trend of family change: an aging population, families with fewer children, and more households of unrelated people or people living alone.

Households Defined as Families with Children



Households Defined as Nonfamily



Data Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census.

Single Headed Households

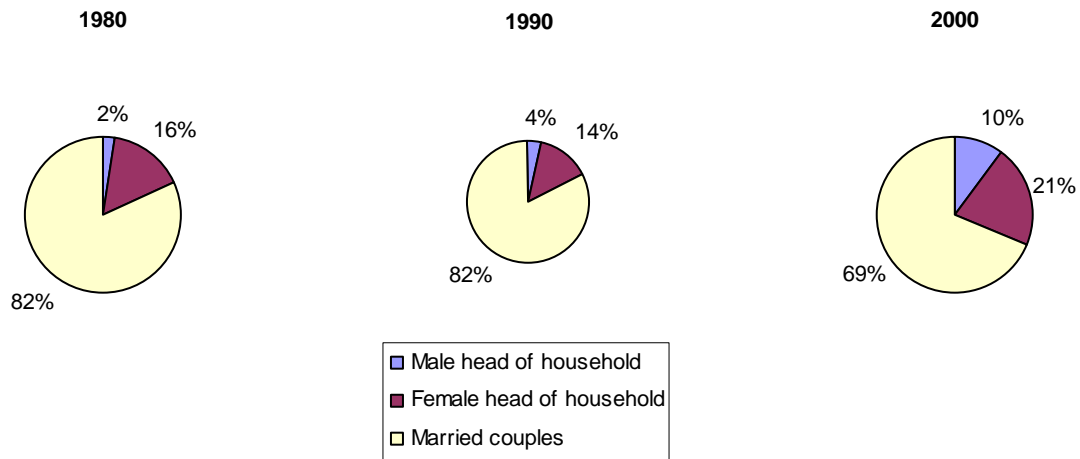
Why is this important?

Single headed households tend to have fewer financial and social resources than two-parent households and the children are at increased risk of living in poverty.

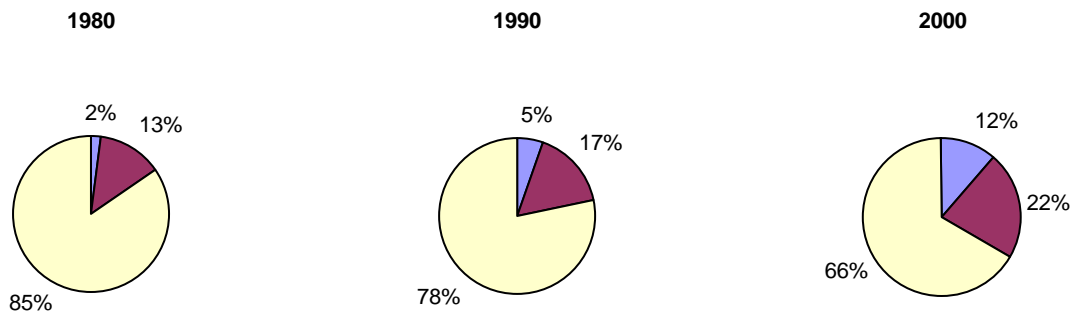
How are we doing?

Nearly a third of all households in 2000 had a single parent in all three areas. Most of these are single mothers, although there was a marked increase in the 1990s in families with a male single parent. Coos County towns have more single parent families than the state as a whole.

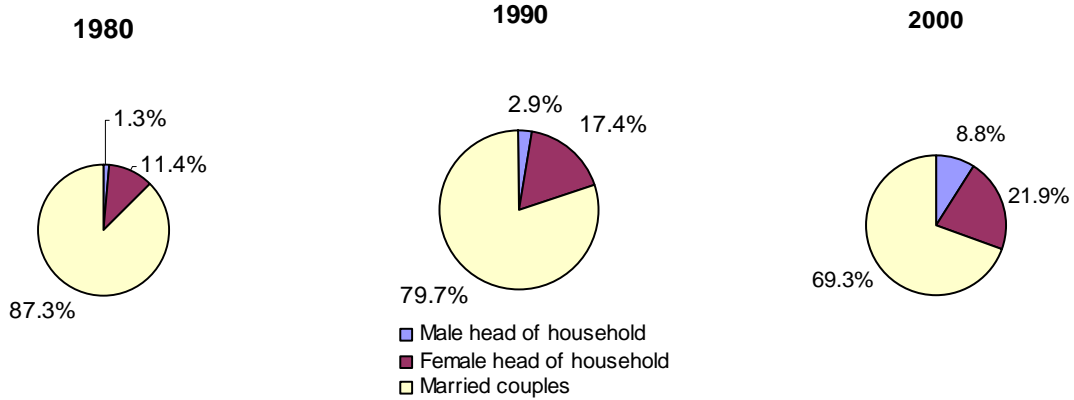
Types of Households Defined as Families with Children in the Lancaster Area



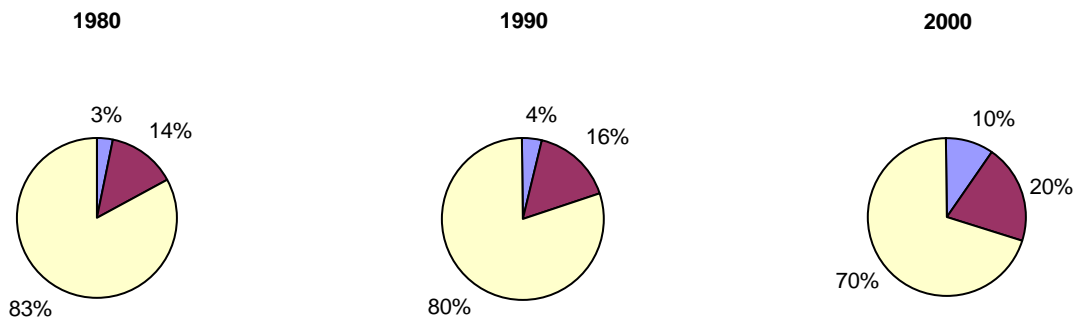
Types of Households Defined as Families with Children in the Colebrook Area



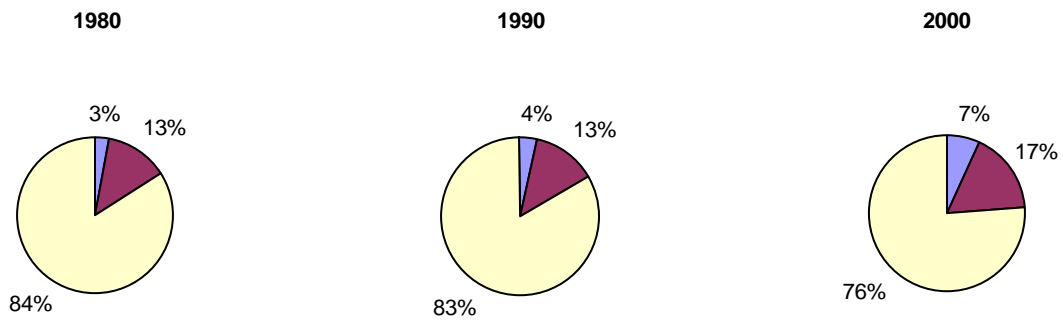
Types of Households Defined as Families with Children in Berlin-Gorham Area



Types of Households Defined as Families with Children in Coos County



Types of Households Defined as Families with Children in New Hampshire



Number of Workers in Families

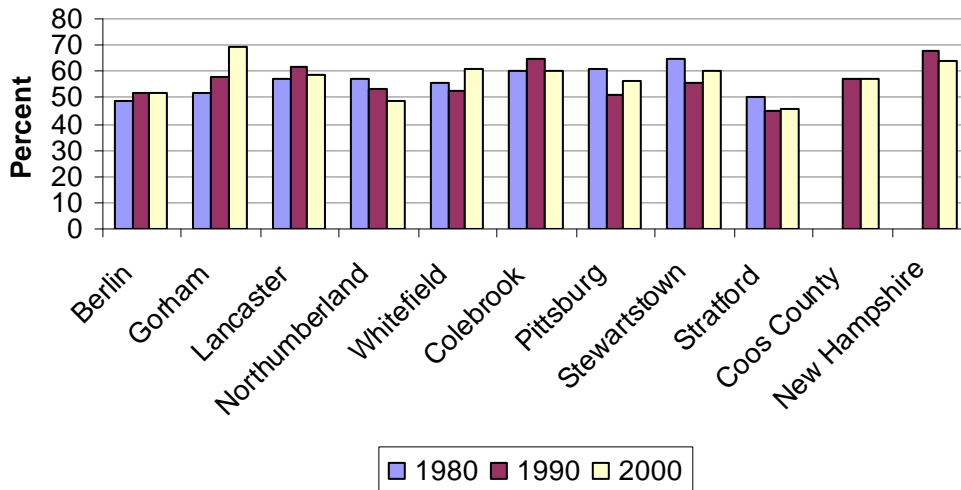
Why is this important?

The number of workers in families affects the social, economic, and personal aspects of family life. When families have more than one worker, they must find ways to juggle time between work and family. Choice of jobs may be limited by the other partner's work schedule, availability of quality childcare, and supervision of teens.

How are we doing?

There is no clear trend across these towns with respect to families with two or more workers. Only Northumberland experienced a steady decrease in families with two or more workers between 1980 and 2000. Berlin and Gorham saw steady increases in families with two or more workers. Lancaster and Colebrook experienced an increase in 1990, and then a decrease in 2000. Five towns- Gorham, Lancaster, Whitefield, Stewartstown, and Colebrook, had a higher percentage of families with two or more workers in 2000 than Coos County, but only Gorham had more than the state of NH as a whole.

Percentage of Families with Two or More Workers



Data Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census

Working Mothers

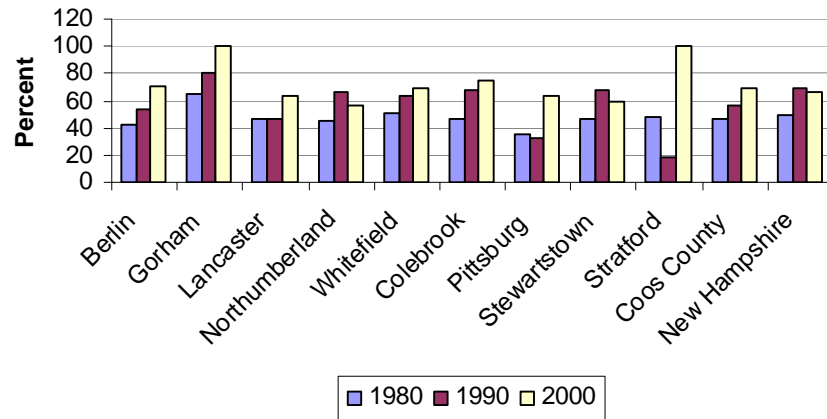
Why is this important?

An increase in working mothers could mean a need for increased childcare services, after school programs, and support systems for families.

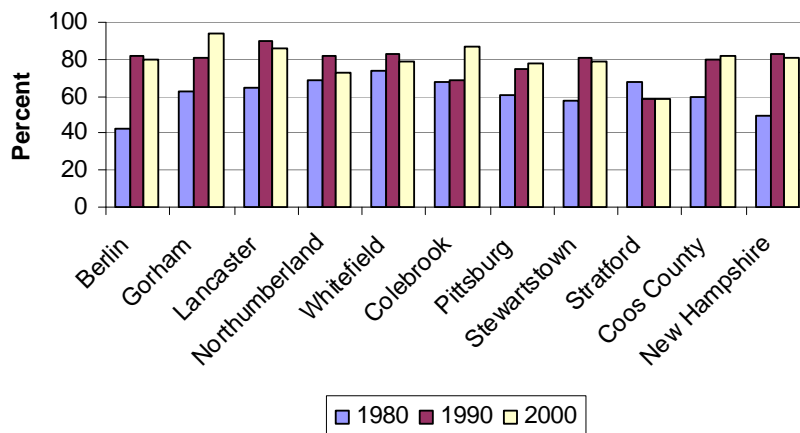
How are we doing?

Between 1980 and 2000, all towns experienced an increase in the percentage of mothers with children under 6 in the workforce. Stratford is the most noticeable of these, with an increase from 47% in 1980 to 100% in 2000. All towns except Stratford experienced a similar increase in the percentage of mothers with children 6 to 17 years old during this time. It is important to note, however, that the overall totals of mothers in smaller towns such as Stratford are quite low, so any increase or decrease in percentage may appear more dramatic. For instance, in 2000, Stratford had a total of 11 mothers with children under 6, all of whom worked.

**Percentage of Mothers with Child Under 6 Years
Who Work**



**Percentage of Mothers with Child 6 to 17 Years
Who Work**



Data source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census.

COMMUNITY INDICATORS

Safety, health and education all contribute to a community's success. Indicators describing rates for crime and violence, teenage pregnancy, access to health care, safety and availability of housing stock and educational levels have implications for the overall well-being and achievement of a community and its members. These indicators also significantly influence and support and community's economic growth. In order to make progress, a community must recognize and actively address the role that these factors play in economic and community development.

Crime Rate

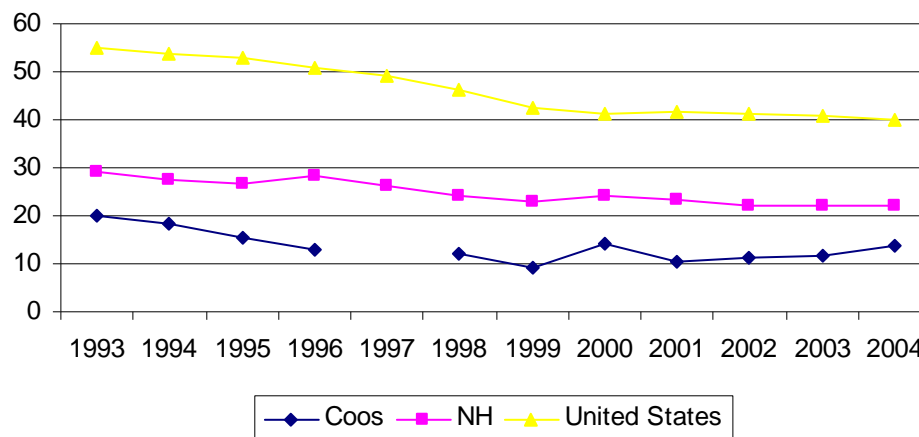
Why is this important?

Crime rate is one measure of community safety. When there is a low crime rate, residents have a feeling of security in their community, and it often indicates a strong sense of community respect and pride. The crime rate includes crimes like homicide, rape, assault, burglary, larceny, and theft. The total number of occurrences divided by the population determines the rate.

How are we doing?

Though Coos County's crime rate is consistently lower than that of both New Hampshire and the United States, beginning in 2001 it began to rise slightly from 10.6 per 1000 people to 13.8 in 2004. In contrast, the crime rate at the state and national levels, continued to decline. The recent increase in crime rate in Coos County indicates a potentially growing problem in the county.

Crime Rate per 1,000 Population



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics. URL: <http://bjsdata.ojp.usdoj.gov/dataonline>.
Carsey Institute Indicator Website. URL: <http://nneindicators.unh.edu/>
Data for 1997 for Coos County were not available.

Idle Teens

Why is this important?

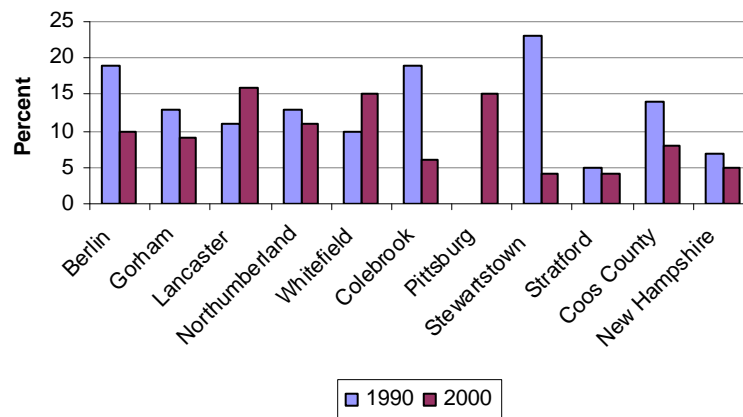
Teens between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not in school or working are considered “idle teens.” Teens that are not participating in school or work often experience a higher rate of crime, substance abuse and unwanted pregnancies.

How are we doing?

Since 1990, the percent of idle teens has decreased in Berlin, Gorham, Northumberland, Stewartstown, Colebrook, and Stratford. In Stewartstown, this decrease was most notable, from 23% in 1990 to 4% in 2000. However, in Lancaster, Whitefield, and Pittsburg, the percent of idle teens increased during this time. The actual number of idle teens is very small in each of these towns, however, so the percentages are somewhat misleading. In general, across the county there are fewer idle teens in 2000 than in 1990. More teens are either working or attending school.

Area	Teens aged 16 to 19		Number (percent) not in school nor employed		Number (percent) enrolled in school	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Berlin	572	536	106 (19%)	52 (10%)	413 (72%)	453 (85%)
Gorham	136	152	18 (13)	13 (9)	97 (71)	116 (76)
Lancaster	222	127	24 (11)	20 (16)	182 (82)	107 (84)
Northumberland	140	143	18 (13)	16 (11)	110 (79)	113 (79)
Whitefield	98	125	10 (10)	19 (15)	73 (74)	85 (68)
Pittsburg	35	52	0 (0)	8 (15)	33 (94)	44 (85)
Stewartstown	52	50	12 (23)	2 (4)	29 (56)	46 (92)
Colebrook	154	123	29 (19)	7 (6)	95 (62)	86 (70)
Stratford	81	68	4 (5)	3 (4)	66 (81)	62 (91)
Coos	1819	1721	251 (14)	146 (8)	1354 (74)	1410 (82)
NH	62619	67668	4674 (7)	3333 (5)	49281 (79)	56712 (84)

Percentage of Idle Teens, 1990 and 2000



Source: Kids Count New Hampshire.

At Risk Births

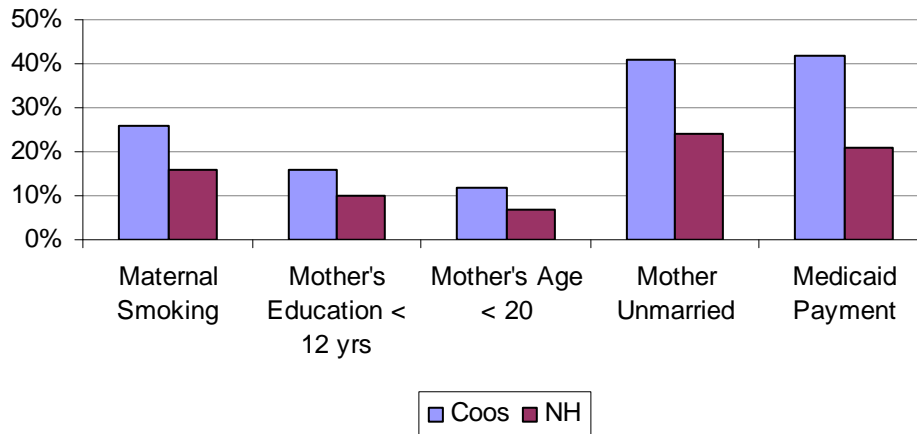
Why is this important?

Research indicates that infant health at birth can be significantly impacted by factors such as smoking during pregnancy and the mother's education, age, marital status and income level. Children born with these risk factors are more likely to read below grade level and drop out of school early.

How are we doing?

At-risk births are more prevalent among mothers in Coos County than the state as a whole according to a variety of indicators. The largest discrepancy between Coos mothers and the state-level is the noticeably greater use of Medicaid among the former. Over 40% of mothers from Coos use Medicaid versus just over 20% at the state-level.

Indicators of Infant Health (Age<1): 1995-2003



Source: New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services

Youth Risk and Behavior

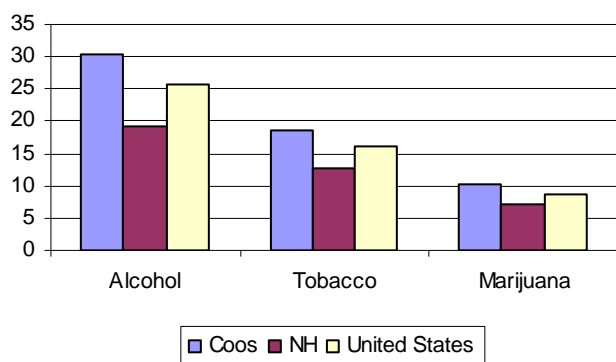
Why is this important?

Young people represent the future of an area, and risk-taking behavior such as substance abuse jeopardizes the chances for a successful transition to adulthood. Data are presented here on tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana use and perceptions among youth in Coos County.

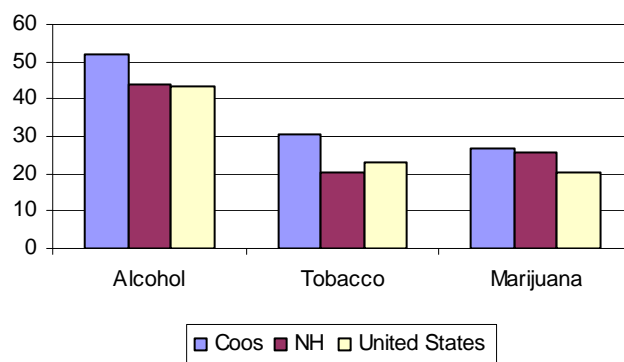
How are we doing?

In almost all cases the youth of Coos County are more at risk for substance use and abuse than the youth in the state as a whole or in the nation. Youth in Coos start using alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana earlier and their use is higher during the most recent month. This is especially marked for alcohol and tobacco. Their perception of risk from alcohol use is about the same as for the state as a whole, and, interestingly, they are more likely to perceive risk from marijuana use than youth in the state as a whole. They are much less likely to perceive that their parents would disapprove of alcohol use and somewhat less likely to perceive parental disapproval for tobacco and marijuana.

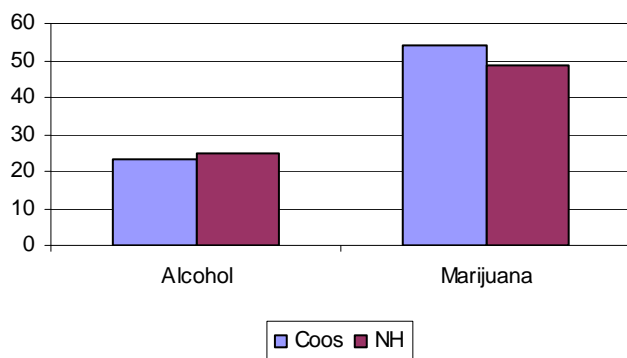
Percentage of Students Under 13 at Onset



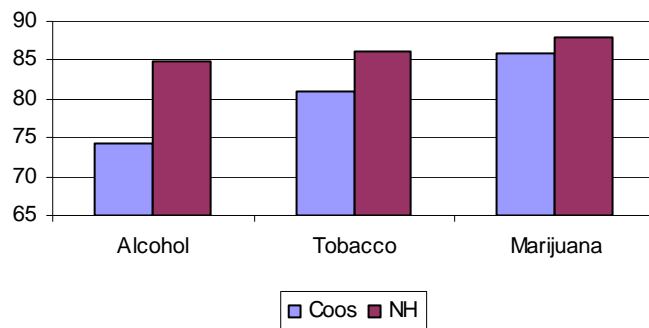
Use During Past 30 days (Percentage)



Perception of Risk or Harm



Perception of Parental Disapproval



Source: Coos County Coalition 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Housing

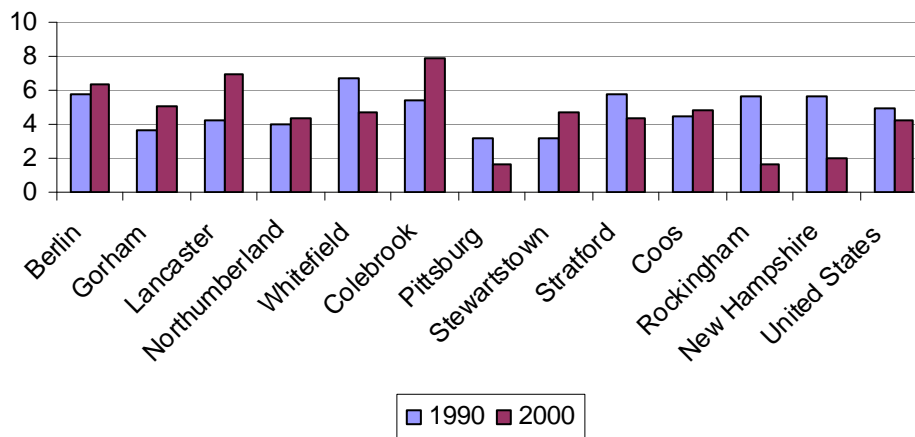
Why is this important?

Housing supply plays a key role in whether families can find affordable places to live. The availability of affordable housing, an excess of older, vacant housing or increased demand for real estate by affluent outsiders all have an effect on the age, income level and interests of who can or will live in a community.

How are we doing?

In the majority of towns, the vacancy rate increased between 1990 and 2000. The increases are most notable in Lancaster and in Colebrook. The high vacancy rates are driven in part by out-migration. A comparison of the vacancy trends in Coos to the more affluent county of Rockingham as well as to New Hampshire as a whole reflects the unique conditions in Coos. While Rockingham and New Hampshire have witnessed dramatic decreases in vacancy rates between 1990 and 2000, Coos has experienced an increase, approaching 5% vacancy. Moreover, the national trend shows a decline in vacancies.

Percent Housing Vacancies: 1990 and 2000



*Percent vacant excludes vacancies due to seasonal/recreational purposes.

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

Property Values

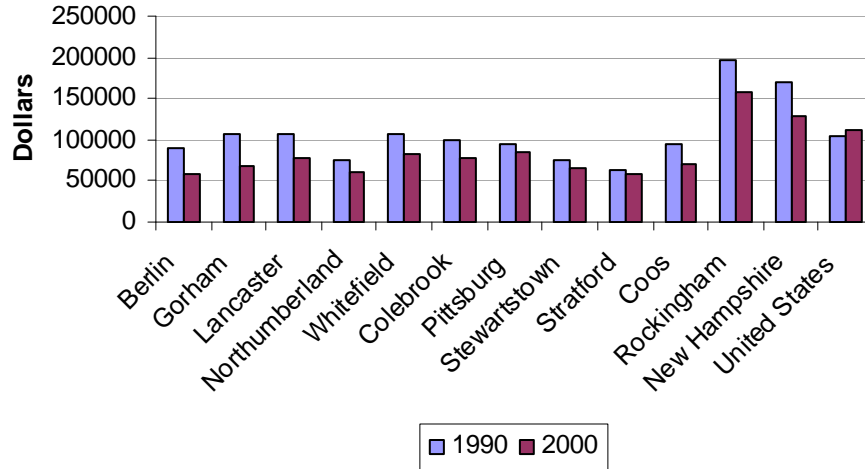
Why is this important?

The age, square footage and condition of a home and the real estate market as well as the aesthetics of the neighborhood and access to schools, stores, recreation etc. can all influence property values. When the initial investment in a property becomes a loss it can affect the individual home owner and the community as a whole if would-be home buyers and developers are deterred from investing. If, on the other hand, people from outside the community purchase real estate at higher values, property values may rise, making ownership and taxes more challenging for local people.

How are we doing?

All towns experienced a decrease in property values between 1990 and 2000. Property values in Northumberland and Stratford were lowest in both years. Declining property values also occurred at the state level, suggesting that factors outside of Coos are contributing to this trend on a more widespread level. However, the nation as a whole experienced a modest increase in property values. Although a decline in property values can have a negative impact on overall economic well-being, lower property values can also make housing more affordable. By this measure, housing is more affordable in Coos County and all towns than in the state as a whole.

Median Value of Owner-occupied Housing Units (in 2000 dollars)



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

Housing Affordability

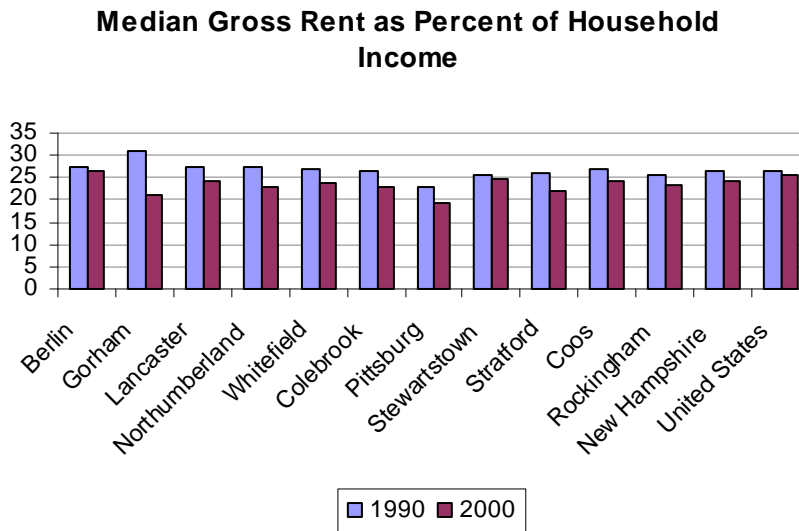
Why is this important?

Affordability of housing has implications for who stays, who leaves, and who is attracted to an area. If housing is not affordable, potential workers may not be able to live near the jobs that are available. Factors that affect affordability include job availability, interest rates, wages, development initiatives, and property taxes.

Comparing household income and expenses is a useful means for determining the affordability of housing. This varies for renters and owners. Renters' expenses include rent and utilities, whereas owners are responsible for mortgage payments, property taxes, insurance, and utilities. One rule of thumb is that housing expenses should not exceed 25% of household income (Northwest Area Foundation).

How are we doing?

In all towns, as well as at the county and state levels, rent became more affordable between 1990 and 2000. Of these towns, Pittsburg had the most affordable rent in both 1990 and 2000. In addition, by 2000 rent in all towns except Berlin was below the 25% level of income, a common cut-off point in analyses of affordable housing. Given the economic impact of changes in the paper mill industry, the figures for Berlin are likely due to the income side of the equation rather than housing costs per se.



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

School Assessment

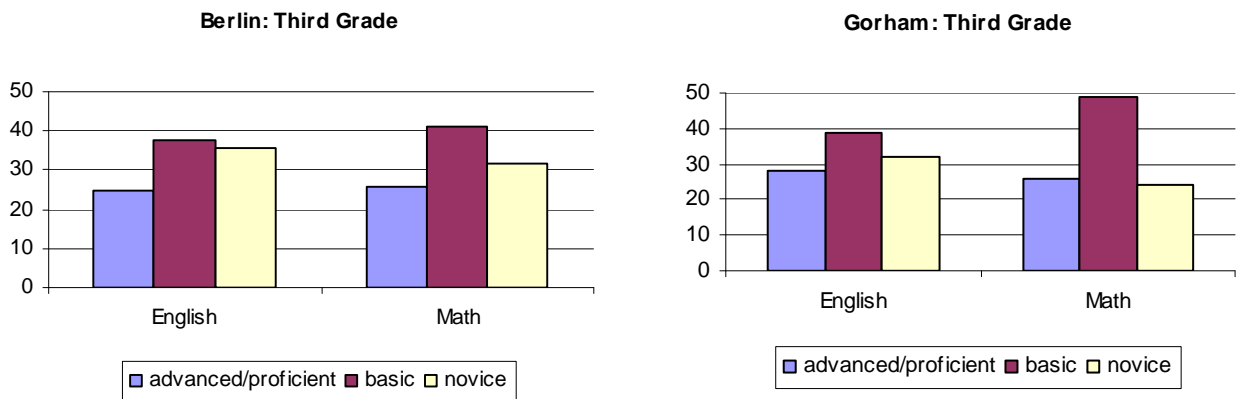
Why is this important?

The New Hampshire Educational Improvement and Assessment Program (NHEIAP) tests all NH public school third graders in English language arts and mathematics and all sixth and tenth grade students in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. The tests create a standard for what New Hampshire students should know and be able to do in core-content areas. The results of the tests produce individual student proficiency reports as well as reports at the school, district, and state levels. The information is then used to make decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies, professional development for teachers, resource allocation and staffing.

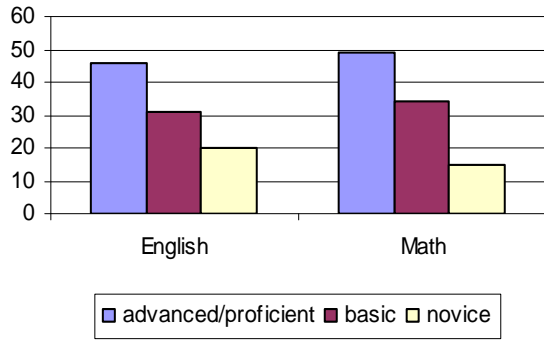
How are we doing?

A comparison of school assessments at the third grade level from 1998 to 2004 demonstrates that most students in these towns and in the state as a whole are performing at the basic level or better. In some cases, the percentage in the novice category is higher than the statewide percentage. It should be pointed out that very recent changes and improvements in assessment outcomes are not reflected in these data, which are the average percentages from 1998 to 2004. Any change since 2004 would not be captured in these data. It is also important to note that some of the schools are very small so percentage comparisons across schools are in some cases not appropriate.

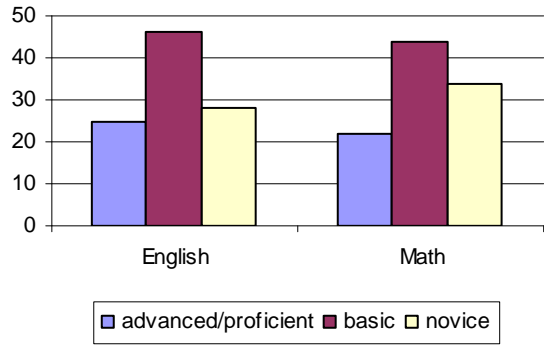
Third Grade Assessments, Average for the 1998-2004 School Years



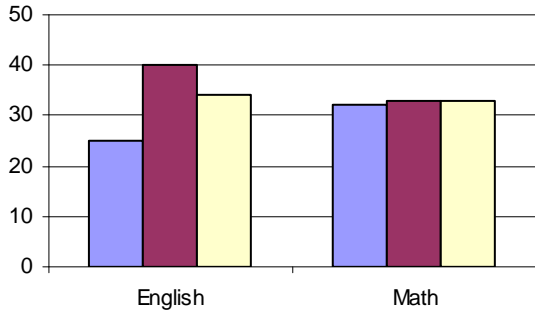
Lancaster: Third Grade



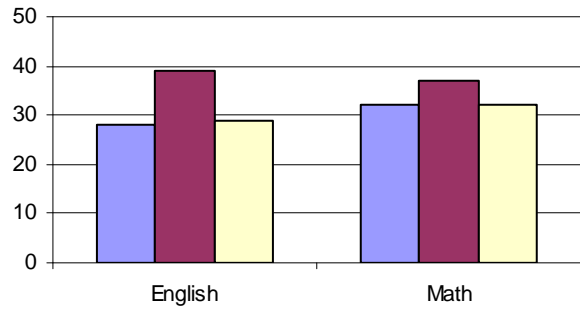
Colebrook: Third Grade



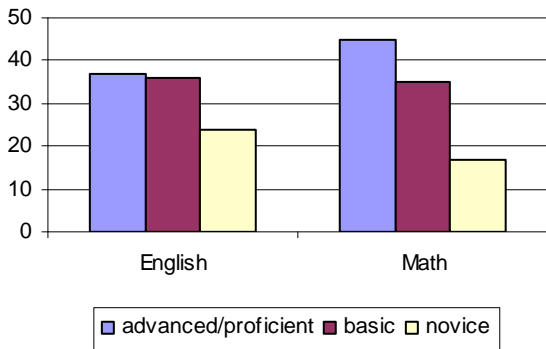
Northumberland: Third Grade



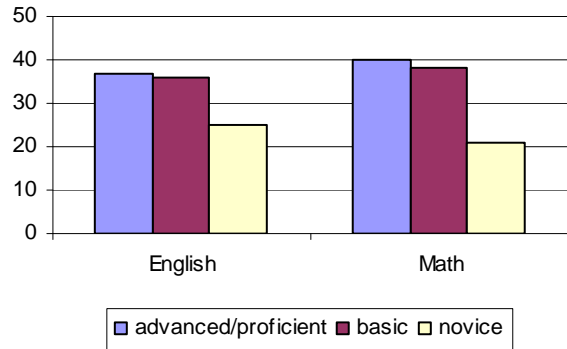
Stratford: Third Grade



Whitefield: Third Grade



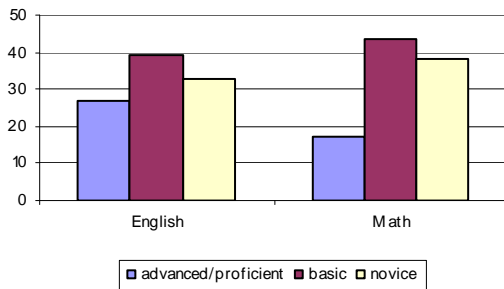
New Hampshire: Third Grade



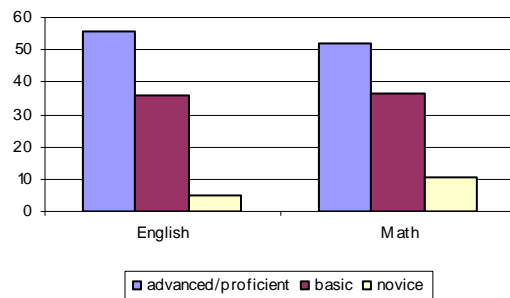
At the sixth grade level, Gorham and Lancaster had a higher percentage of students scoring in the advanced/proficient levels than the statewide average. Of the seven towns represented here, Gorham has the lowest percentage of students at the novice level. In half of the six towns the percentage in the novice category is comparable to or lower than the state percentage.

Sixth Grade Assessments, Average for the 1998-2004 School Years

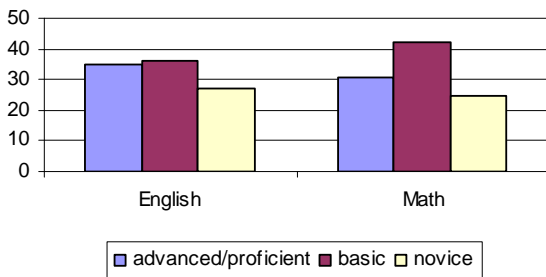
Berlin: Sixth Grade



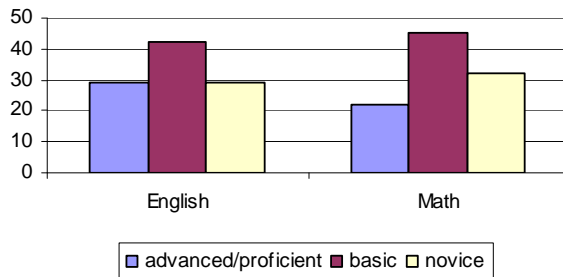
Gorham: Sixth Grade



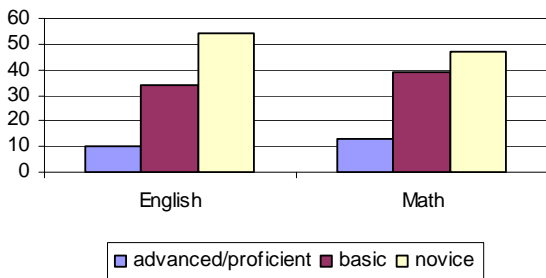
Lancaster: Sixth Grade



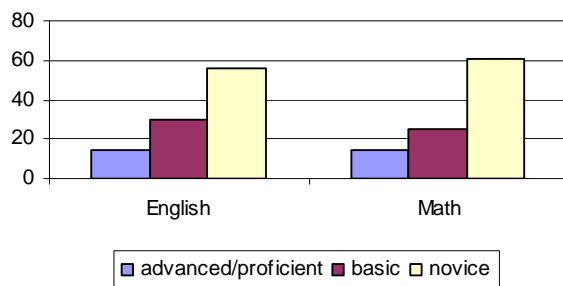
Colebrook: Sixth Grade



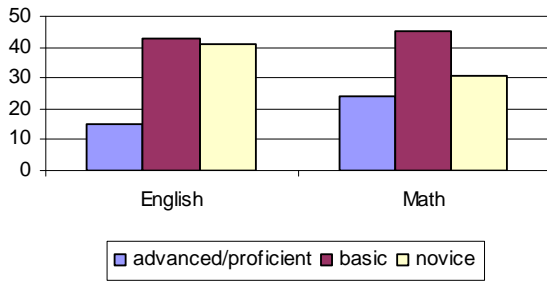
Northumberland: Sixth Grade



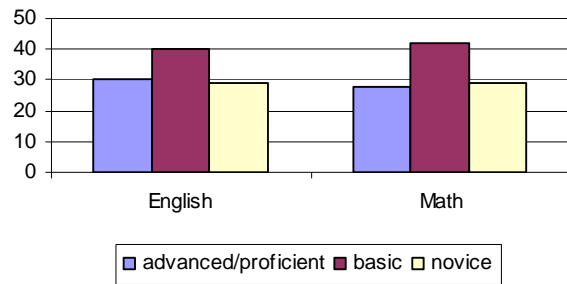
Stratford: Sixth Grade



Whitefield: Sixth Grade



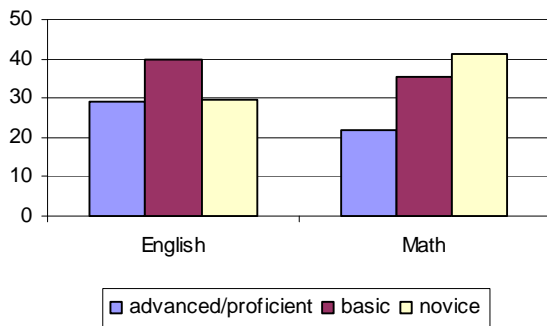
New Hampshire: Sixth Grade



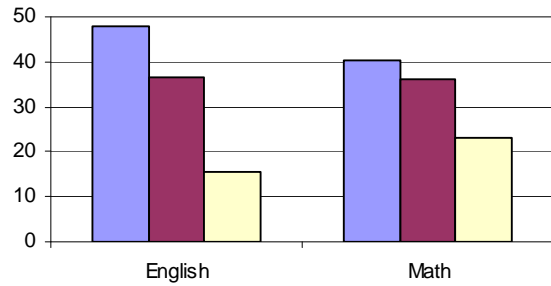
At the tenth grade level, over one-third of students in Gorham, Northumberland, Colebrook, and Pittsburg, as well as statewide, scored at the advanced/proficient level. By tenth grade, in all towns with the exception of Berlin, the percentage novice in math is comparable to the state average.

Tenth Grade Assessments, Average for the 1998-2004 School Years

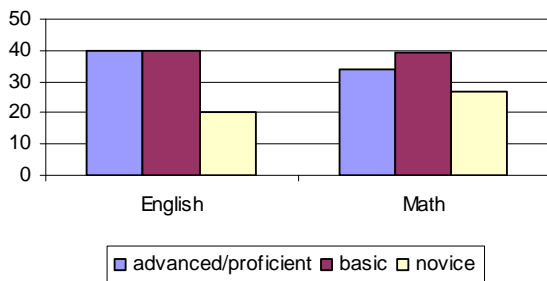
Berlin: Tenth Grade



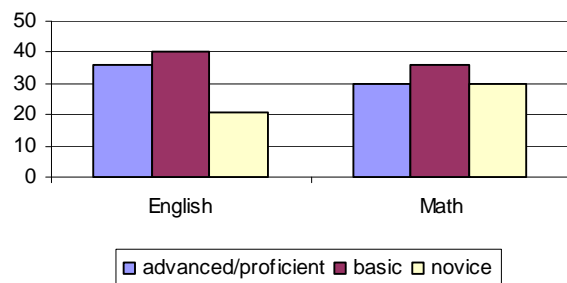
Gorham: Tenth Grade



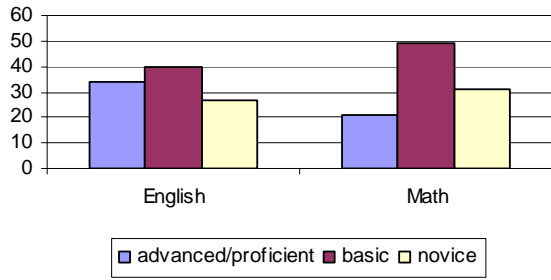
Northumberland: Tenth Grade



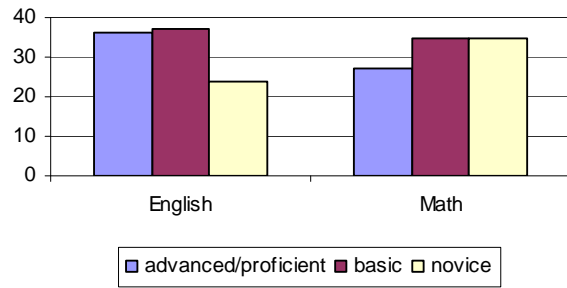
Colebrook: Tenth Grade



Pittsburg: Tenth Grade



New Hampshire: Tenth Grade



Source: NHEIAP, URL:
<http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/curriculum/Assessment/NHEIAP.htm>.

Educational Levels

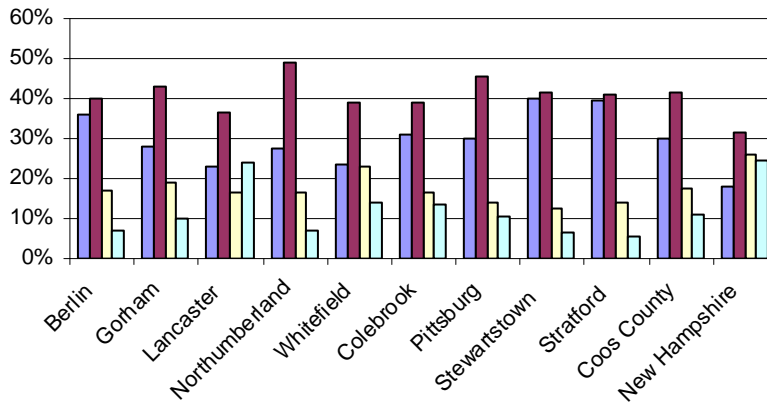
Why is this important?

Educational attainment is an important measure of future income levels and employment opportunities. New businesses and industries are often attracted to communities with an educated workforce.

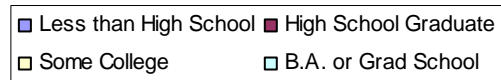
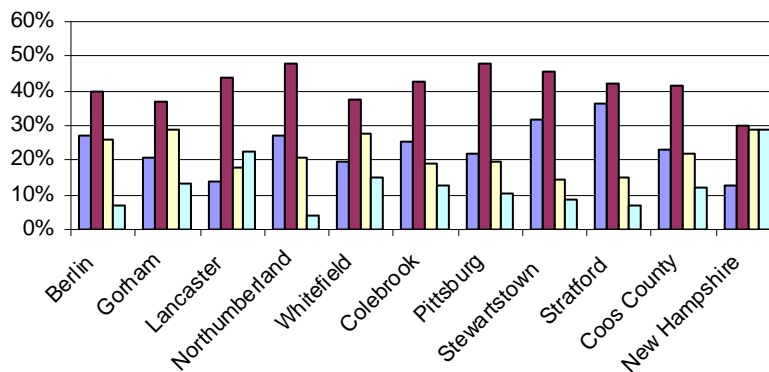
How are we doing?

In both 1990 and 2000, in all towns and in the county and state, the highest percentage of educational attainment was high school graduate. The percentage of those with less than a high school diploma has decreased in all towns between 1990 and 2000. The percentage with at least some college has increased throughout the county. However, a minority in each town has a college degree or more in 2000, despite some increases in this percentage from 1990 to 2000. The levels of education in Coos remain below those of the state, and only Lancaster comes close to the state percentage with a higher education.

Educational Attainment, 1990



Educational Attainment, 2000



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census

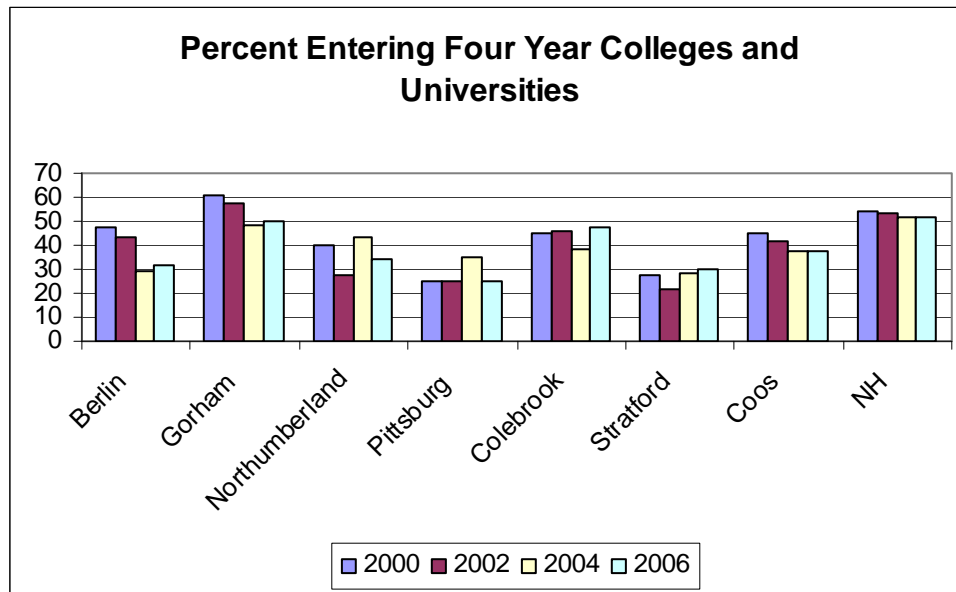
Post High School Education

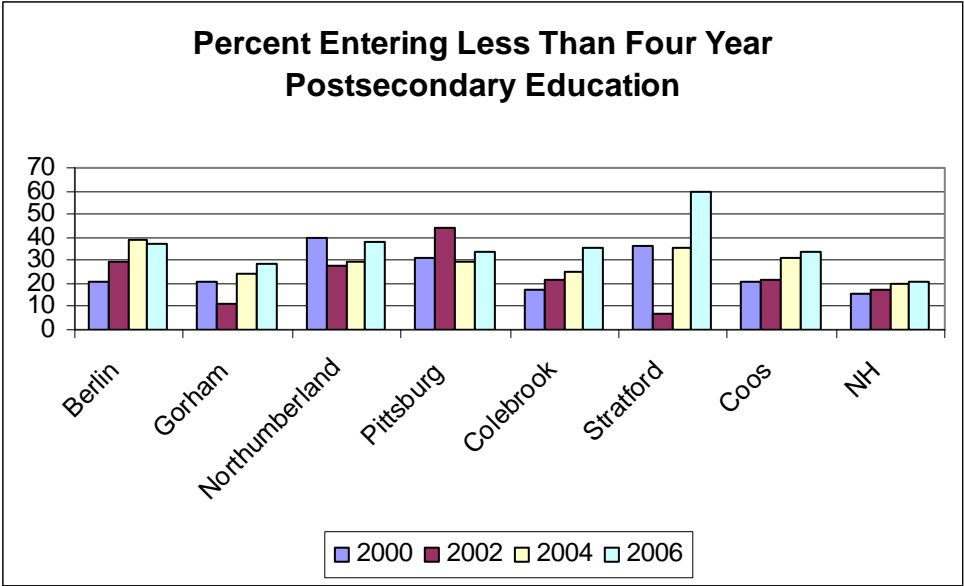
Why is this important?

Attending a post secondary school or college provides individuals with skills that increase employment opportunities, civic engagement and earning potential. Higher educational attainment is also closely associated with increased income.

How are we doing?

With the exception of Gorham, NH has consistently had a higher percentage of graduating seniors entering four-year colleges and universities than Coos County or any of the towns in this report. There has been a decrease in the percentage attending a four year college or university over the six years represented here, even in the high attainment town of Gorham; Colebrook and Stratford are exceptions to this decline. In general, and with the exception of Gorham, the percentage attending a four year post-secondary institution is lower in the towns in Coos County than in the state as a whole. The decline in the percent attending a four year institution is partly compensated by increases in the percentage of high school graduates who attend other post-secondary institutions (e.g., technical college, trade school).





Data Source: New Hampshire Department of Education, Department of Program Support.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

What is the average income in these communities? What is the unemployment rate? When a community has a strong economic base, residents have access to jobs that provide enough income to meet a family's basic need for housing, food, clothing, healthcare, childcare and recreation. Research consistently demonstrates that family socio-economic status has a direct impact on future outcomes for children. Ultimately, financially stable residents contribute both economically and socially to the community, thus improving the long-term growth and stability of the community as a whole.

Labor Force Participation

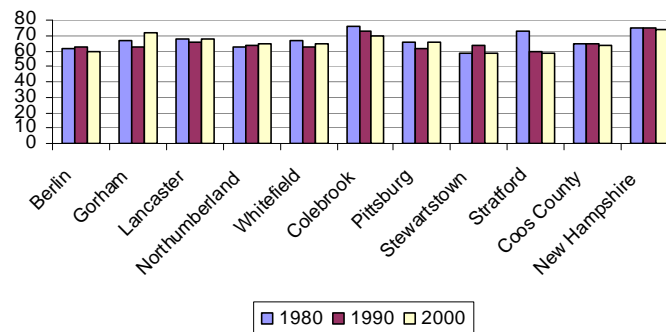
Why is this important?

Labor force participation indicates the percentage of persons 16 and over who are employed or in the armed forces. Employment status is important because it tells us what percentage of those who are able to work who are actually working. When there is a high percentage of eligible workforce employed, it indicates that there is a balance between labor force skills and employment opportunities.

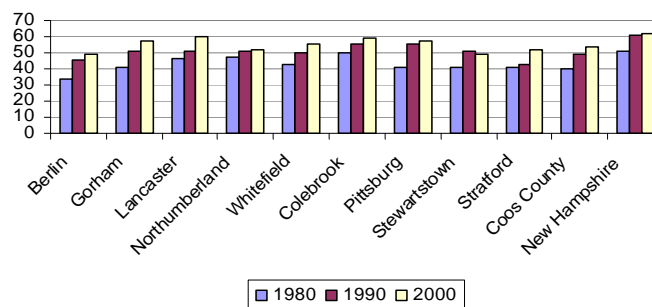
How are we doing?

Aside from Berlin and Stratford, which experienced a decrease in the percentage of employed working age males between 1980 and 2000, there has been only slight change. With the exception of Gorham in 2000 and Colebrook, however, the percentage of males who work is lower in Coos towns than in the state. A consistent pattern emerges for female workers: In all towns, the percentage of working age females who work has increased over the last two decades, to over 50% in most cases.

Percent of Working Age Males Who Work



Percent of Working Age Females Who Work



Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census.

Unemployment Rate

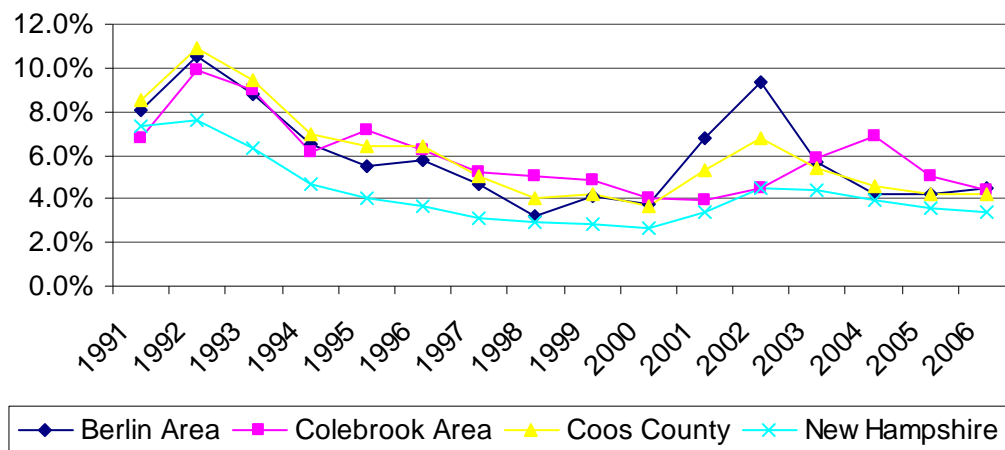
Why is this important?

Unemployment rates are defined as the percentage of adults in the labor force without employment during a given month. Families that experience on-going unemployment are less likely to access healthcare and proper nutrition and more likely to have increased debt and family stress. Significant on-going unemployment in a community can have a negative impact on community structure and services.

How are we doing?

The unemployment rate in the Colebrook labor market area and that of Coos County remained relatively close until 2001, when for a few short years the Colebrook area had a lower unemployment rate than Coos County as a whole. This trend was reversed, however, around 2004. The trend in the Berlin Area is similar to that in Colebrook, except for the spike in unemployment starting in 2000, a product of the restructuring of the paper mill industry. That rate declined after 2002, and by 2006 the unemployment rates in Berlin, Colebrook, and Coos as a whole were close—about 4%. The state continues to have a lower unemployment rate than the county and Berlin and Colebrook labor market areas, however the gap has closed over the past several years.

Unemployment Rate



Source: New Hampshire Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. URL: <http://nnetwork.nhes.state.nh.us/nnetwork/>.

Full and Part-Time Work

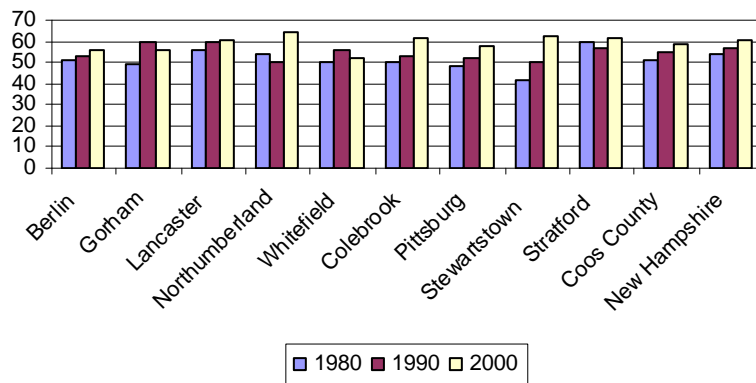
Why is this important?

Full time employment indicates that workers have access to a continuous source of income, sometimes accompanied by health and retirement benefits. Fulltime employment contributes to overall family and community stability because families are less likely to move and more inclined to invest in the community both financially and through civic engagement.

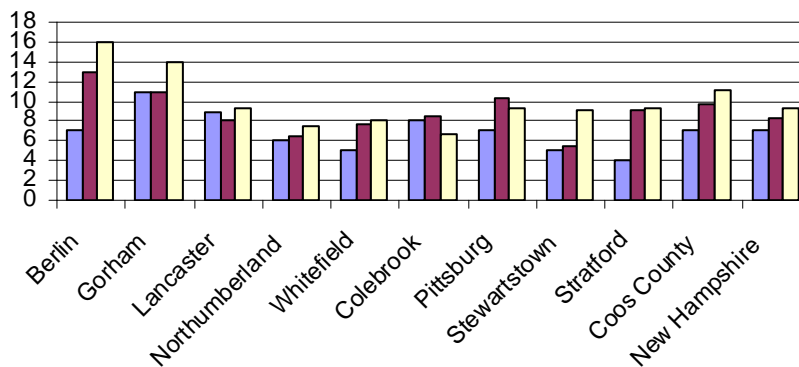
How are we doing?

The percentage of full-time workers has increased at least slightly in all areas over the last two decades. Part-time work has generally increased (except in Colebrook), and the increase is especially marked in both Berlin and Gorham. In the towns in Coos County and across rural New England, manufacturing jobs, which provided health care and pension plans, along with farming and logging are disappearing. Many replacement jobs are in the service and retail industries, which are more often part-time or seasonal, pay lower wages, and offer fewer benefits.

Percentage of Employed Workforce Who Work Full Time



Percentage of Employed Workforce Who Work Part Time



Data source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census.

Seasonal Workers

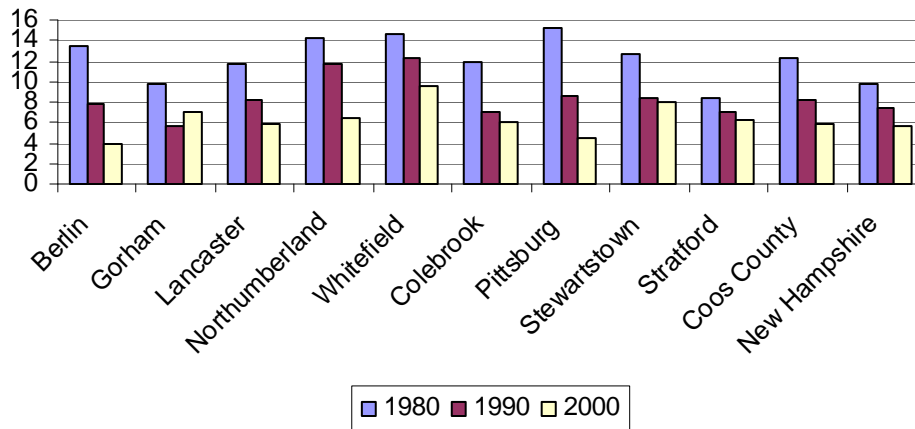
Why is this important?

Seasonal workers are defined as those who work full time for 26 weeks or less. Seasonal workers, by definition, have a stable income source for only part of the year and many rely on that income for their year round needs. In addition, seasonal employment, such as recreation and tourism or other seasonal related businesses, tend to pay lower wages.

How are we doing?

Seasonal work has been declining in all towns since 1980, with the most dramatic decreases in Berlin and Pittsburg. Pittsburg went from having the highest percentage employed seasonally in 1980, to one of the lowest in 2000. Berlin had the lowest percentage of seasonal workers by 2000.

Percentage of Employed Workforce Who Worked Fulltime for 26 Weeks or Less



Data source: 1980, 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census.

Employment Changes

Why is this important?

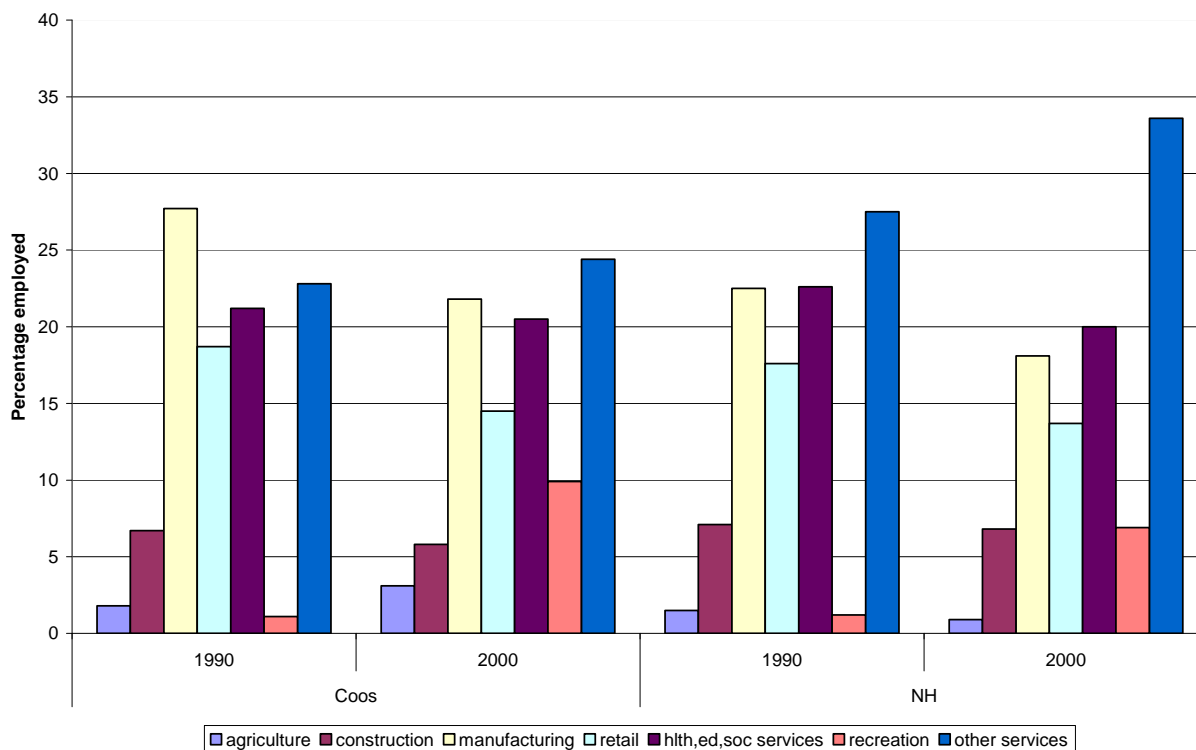
The numbers of people working in different types of industries show what kind of employment opportunities are available. Diversification increases economic stability and makes economic growth less dependent on a single market. Examining the percentage change in the number of people working in particular industries allows us to identify areas for future growth or decline.

How are we doing?

Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of workers in the agricultural, forestry, and fishing industries grew slightly in both the Lancaster area and the Colebrook area, and across Coos County. Even though the growth was slight, it was notable because this type of industry is in general decline on a national level. The most notable change occurred in manufacturing. Manufacturing jobs in both areas and NH declined over the period and we anticipate a significant increase in this trend in the future. There was also a decrease in retail trade which may indicate reduced buying power of residents during this time period.

The overall decline in the proportion of employees in several industries portrayed here is partly offset by increases in employment in various service industries, especially in the recreation service area. This is an opportunity for further growth in the future.

Employment in Coos County and NH, 1990 and 2000



*Note: Health/social services category defined differently in 1990 and 2000: 1990: “health services” and “other related and professional services”; 2000: “health care and social assistance”; “recreation” includes tourism services. Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census.

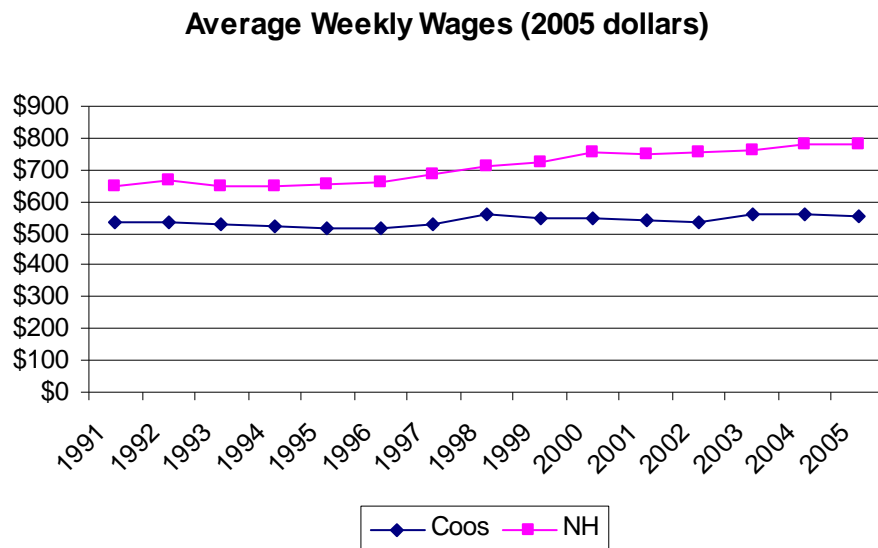
Average Weekly Wages

Why is this important?

The average weekly wage per employee is one measure of job quality. When wages increase over time, it means that wages are keeping up with the rate of inflation and employees are able to maintain their standard of living.

How are we doing?

After adjusting for inflation, the average weekly wages between 1991 and 2005 show little variation in Coos County, where wages stay between \$500-600/week. Average weekly wages at the state level increased slightly and steadily between 1993 and 2005, however, wages for Coos remained consistently lower with a widening gap beginning in 1998.



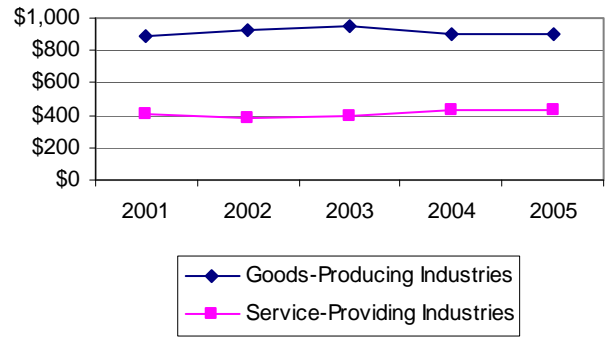
Data Source: NH Economic and Labor Market Information Bureau. URL: http://www.nhes.state.nh.us/elmi/covempwag_arch.htm

One clear benefit of working in goods-producing industries is that workers are consistently paid more than those in service industries and also receive more aggressive wage increases over time. In the Lancaster area, this is apparent in all three towns. In Northumberland, those working in goods-producing industries make significantly more than in Lancaster and Whitefield, though those working in service-providing industries generally make between \$400-600/wk in all three areas.

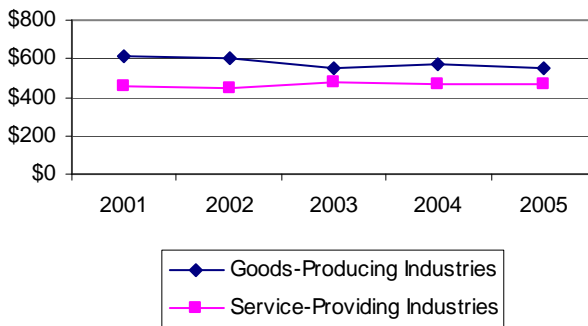
Average Weekly Wages, Lancaster (2005 dollars)



Average Weekly Wages, Northumberland (2005 dollars)



Average Weekly Wages, Whitefield (2005 dollars)

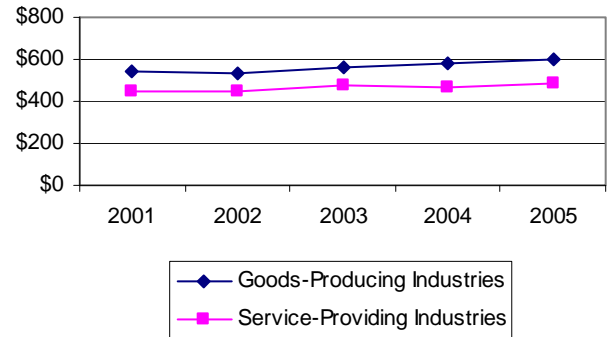


In the Colebrook area, after inflation adjustments, average weekly wages have barely risen over the course of 2001-2005, and in some cases have decreased. Those working in both goods-producing and service industries in Colebrook make more than in the other three towns in this area. In Stratford, beginning in 2004 there was almost no difference in average weekly wages between service-providing and goods-producing industries.

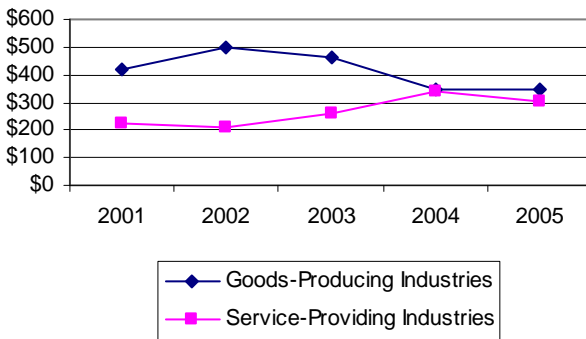
Average Weekly Wages, Pittsburg (2005 dollars)



Average Weekly Wages, Colebrook (2005 dollars)



Average Weekly Wages, Stratford (2005 dollars)

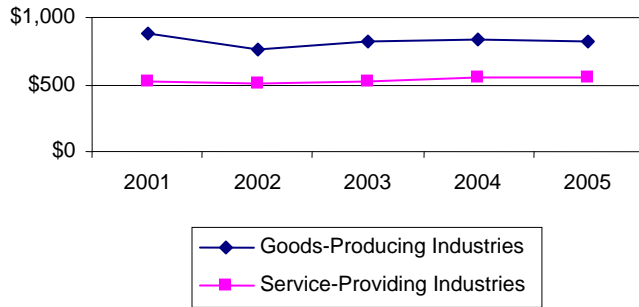


Average Weekly Wages, Stewartstown (2005 dollars)



In the Berlin-Gorham area, wages in goods-producing industries are higher than in the service-sector. However, as noted in previous graphs, goods producing jobs are on the decline in Berlin-Gorham, while lower paying service jobs, especially in the recreation industry, are on the rise.

Average Weekly Wages, Berlin (2005 dollars)



Average Weekly Wages, Gorham (2005 dollars)



Per Capita Income

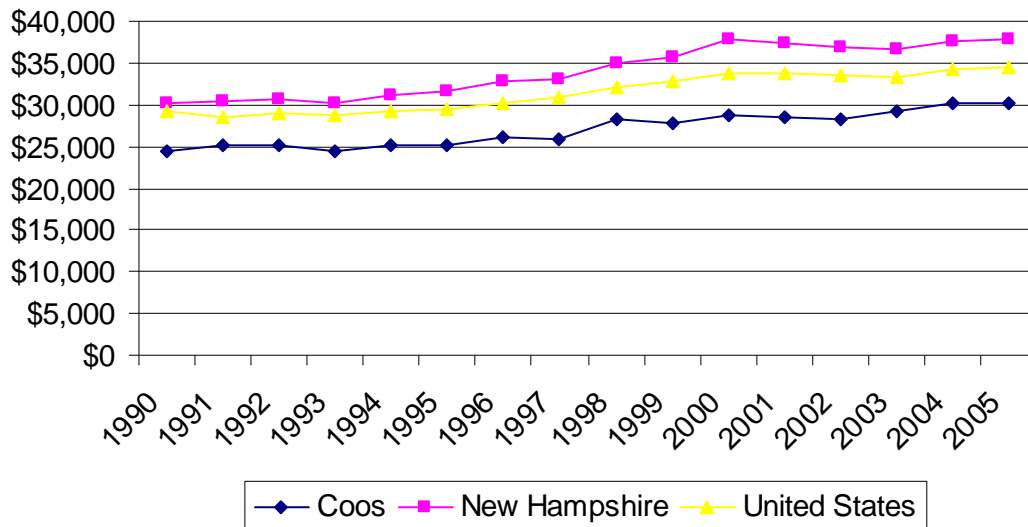
Why is this important?

Per capita income is one measure of overall standard of living and economic activity. High per capita income is associated with lower poverty rates, higher educational levels, and positive health outcomes. Low per capita income means that residents have less money to spend and therefore there is less economic activity in the region.

How are we doing?

While the nineties show an upward trend in per capita income across the nation, per capita income is consistently higher for the state of New Hampshire versus the national figure, but consistently lower in Coos County, in particular. The gap between county and state levels has appeared to widen since the mid nineties.

Per Capita Income (2005 dollars)



Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS CD Table CA1-3, May 2001 Analysis: New Hampshire Office of State Planning.

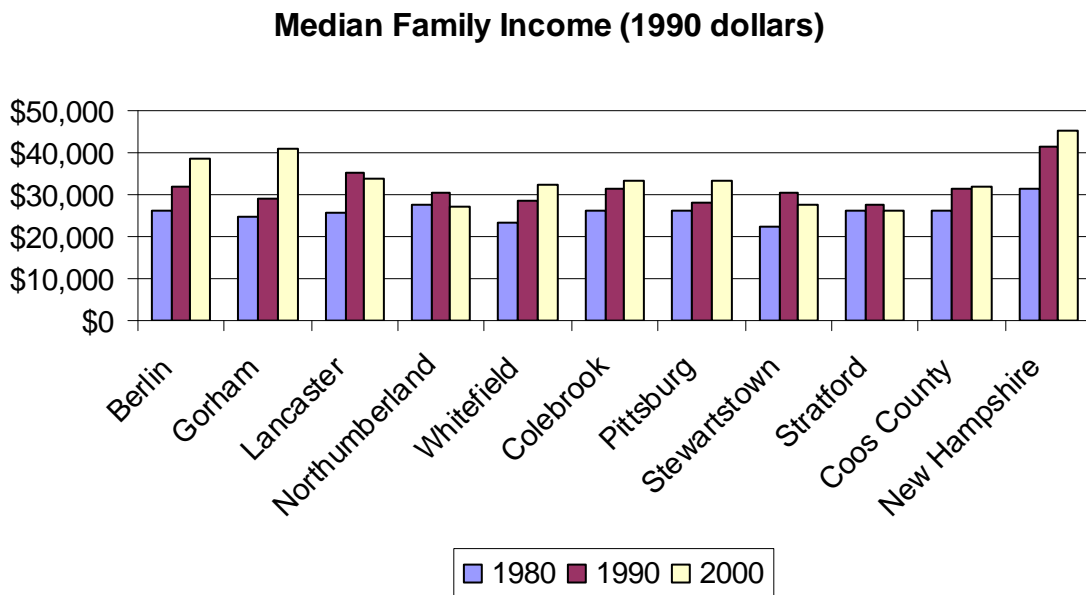
Median Family Income

Why is this important?

Median family income is a measure of average family income. It divides the family income distribution into two parts where half of the population has lower incomes and half have higher incomes. By looking at both median family income and per capita income, we can learn about the overall wealth of a community.

How are we doing?

In four towns- Lancaster, Northumberland, Stewartstown, and Stratford, there was a slight decrease in median family income between 1990 and 2000. The other towns have experienced steady increases since 1980. The state as a whole has a consistently higher median family income than any of the towns or Coos county.



Source: US Census 1980, 1990, 2000; US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Income Calculator.

Poverty Rates

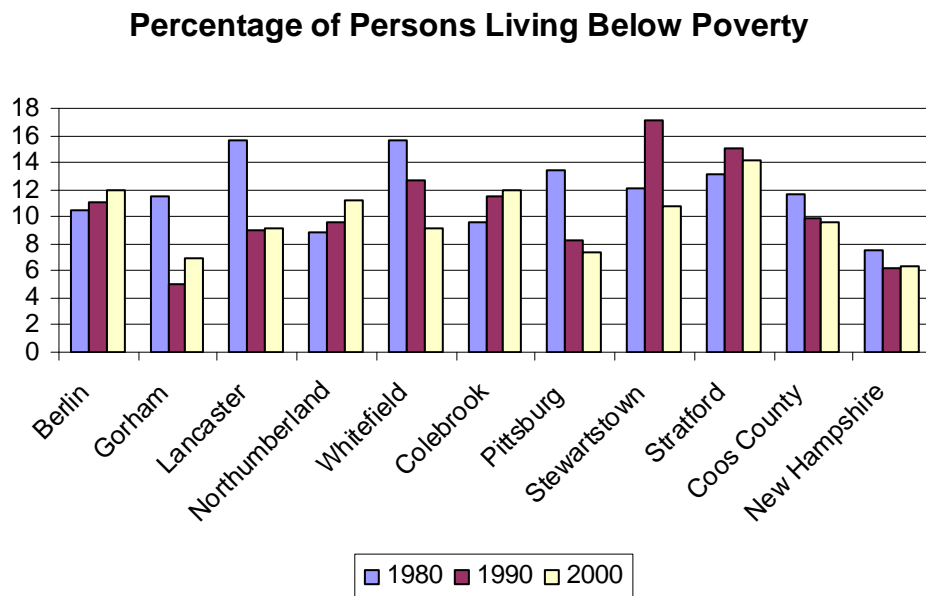
Why is this important?

Poverty rates are one measure of an area's ability to create concrete economic opportunities for residents of all skill levels. Poverty rates reflect an area's overall economic strength. When a high percentage of people live in poverty, many residents may not have access to well paying jobs. People living below the poverty level also require community support, which can put a financial burden on the community.

How are we doing?

In Lancaster, Whitefield, and Pittsburg, poverty levels have decreased between 1980 and 2000. Despite an increase in 1990, this is also true of Stewartstown. Poverty declined in Gorham from 1980 to 1990 and then rose slightly by 2000.

In Berlin, Northumberland, Colebrook, and Stratford, however, the percentage of persons living below poverty level have risen. In 2000, Stratford had the highest poverty level of all nine towns.



Data source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census.

Elderly Living in Poverty

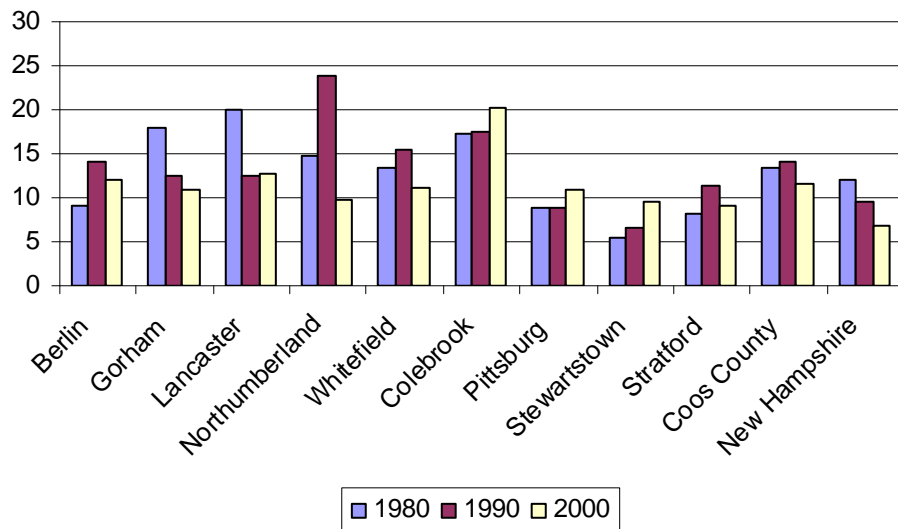
Why is this important?

Knowing how many elders live below the poverty level helps to identify the percentage of the elderly population that may need assistance. This information has implications for the need for services such as assistance with meals, health and housing.

How are we doing?

In the Lancaster area (the towns of Lancaster, Northumberland, and Whitefield), there was a decrease in the percentage of elderly living in poverty between 1980 and 2000. In the Pittsburg area, however, the poverty level of the elderly has risen at least slightly in all four towns. Of these four towns, Colebrook has consistently had the highest percentage of elderly living in poverty. The only town in which there has been a consistent decline in poverty among the elderly is Gorham, which matches the trend seen in the state as a whole.

Percentage of Elderly Living in Poverty



Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census.

**Appendix Table:
Population, Household, and Family Data for Towns, Coos County, and NH,
1990 and 2000**

Area	Total Population		Total Number of Households		Total Number of Households Defined as Families		Total Number Households defined as Families with Children		Total Number Households defined as Families with Children <6 yrs.	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Berlin	11824	10331	4943	4555	3287	2902	1512	1192	NA	475
Gorham	3173	2895	1322	1293	922	802	396	344		170
Lancaster	3522	3280	1315	1286	922	867	483	417		163
Northumberland	2492	2438	973	989	707	667	316	319		106
Whitefield	1909	2038	728	819	512	547	247	262		95
Colebrook	2444	2321	1005	1035	643	608	332	260		92
Pittsburg	901	867	371	386	273	264	114	86		33
Stewartstown	1048	1012	348	371	240	242	129	117		48
Stratford	927	942	333	397	239	235	135	106		41
Coos	34828	33111	13799	13961	9608	9164	4596	3921		1452
NH	1109252	1235786	411186	474606	292601	323651	147185	158410		63769

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Coos County Family Support Project Partners

The Family Resource Center at Gorham

123 Main Street
Gorham, NH 03581
603-466-5190

Child and Family Services

107 Main Street
Colebrook, NH 03576
603-237-4884

Coos County Coalition: North Country Health Consortium

7 Main Street, Suite 7
Whitefield, NH 03598
603-837-2519

Northern Human Services

Berlin 603-752-7404
Colebrook 603-237-4955
Groveton 603-636-2555

Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital

181 Corliss Lane
Colebrook, NH 03576
603-237-4971

Weeks Medical Center

170 Middle Street
Lancaster, NH
603-788-5005

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