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New Census Data Show Portland's High-poverty Pockets

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Poverty is not only the province of Portland — Oregon's largest city and cultural capital.

An estimated 30 percent or more of the population lives at or below the federal poverty level in 20 metropolitan Portland census tracts, including some amid outlying suburbs, according to recently published U.S. Census Bureau data.

Several of the tracts are clustered in downtown Portland, as well as North and Northeast Portland neighborhoods with comparatively high minority populations. Perhaps less predictably, the cities of Forest Grove and McMinnville, as well as North Portland's University Park neighborhood, include tracts with similarly high poverty rates. These tracts include concentrations of college students, who typically have low incomes.

The American Community Survey (ACS) population and housing data were collected by the U.S. Census Bureau between Jan. 1, 2005, and Dec. 31, 2009. The estimated poverty rate for the Portland metro area — which includes Washington, Multnomah, Yamhill, Clackamas and Columbia counties in Oregon and Clark and Skamania counties in Washington — was 11.7 percent, with a margin of error of plus or minus 0.3 percent. For these 20 high-poverty tracts, the margins of error ranged from 5 to 15 percentage points.

The federal poverty level for a family of four is income of \$22,050 annually for all states, except Alaska and Hawaii, according to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines. The federal poverty rate for an individual is \$10,830 annually.

Tracts 33.01 and 34.01, which overlay parts of Portland's Humboldt and King neighborhoods, marked a notable concentration of poverty. More than a third of individuals within these tracts lived at or below the poverty line. Non-whites constituted about half of the population, including persons identifying as African-American, who represented about one third of the population of each tract; roughly half of the households in each tract were renters.

Tract 76, which is part of Northeast Portland's Cully neighborhood, was another notable poverty pocket. More than 38 percent of individuals here lived at or below the federal poverty level. Nearly half of the tract's residents were non-white; about 40 percent of the tract's residents were renters. The data underscore that poverty is not just an urban problem. Indeed, more than a third of individuals lived at or below the poverty line in four census tracts clustered around Portland's eastern border with Gresham. These tracts also had a comparatively high percentage of renters.

Census tract 40.02 in North Portland's University Park neighborhood, which includes the University of Portland, also had a high poverty rate compared to other parts of the metropolitan area. Nearly 34 percent of individuals lived at or below the federal poverty level. The tract had slightly higher shares of white residents and homeowners than the metro area overall, but about 41 percent of its residents were college students.

The outlying suburbs of McMinnville and Forest Grove, which include higher-education institutions, also contained census tracts with comparatively high poverty rates. Nearly 42 percent of individuals in Yamhill County tract 308.02, which includes McMinnville's Linfield College, lived at or below the poverty line. Thirty-five percent of the tract's

residents were students.

In Washington County's census tract 332, the home of Pacific University in Forest Grove, more than 32 percent of individuals lived at or below the poverty line. The tract is notable for its 31 percent Latino population share and more than 1,000 college students, 17 percent of all residents. Seventy-two percent of households are renters.