

Summer 2009

Indicators of the Metroscope: School Meals

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Recommended Citation

Mylott, Elizabeth (2009). "Indicators of the Metroscope: School Meals," Summer 2009 Metroscope, unnumbered.

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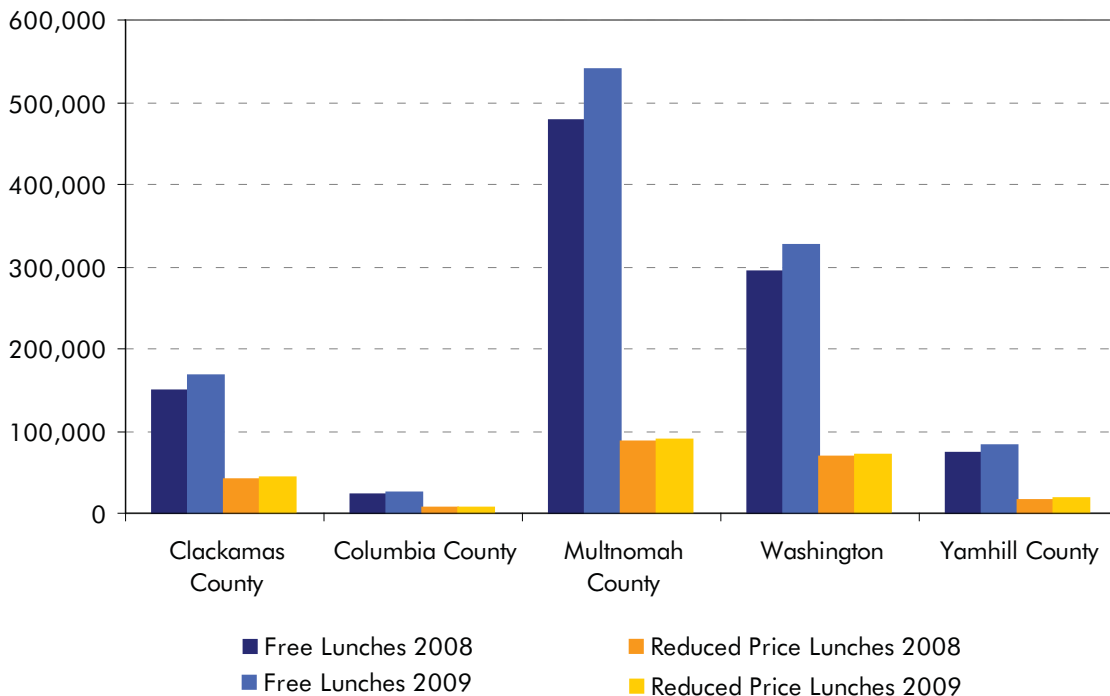
School Meals

by Elizabeth Mylott

In April 2009, Oregon's unemployment rate was 12%, the second highest in the country. This represents a dramatic increase since the beginning of the recession in December 2008 when the state's unemployment rate was just 8.1% (<http://www.bls.gov/cps>). One result of the economic situation is an increase in the demand for emergency food boxes and other types of food assistance. Oregon has a history of food insecurity. In 2008, 12.4% of the state's population was living in households that struggle with hunger or were food insecure. One important way that families are able to access additional food and meet the nutritional needs of their members is through the school lunch program. Started in 1946, and expanded to include breakfast in 1966, the National School

Lunch Program provides free and reduced school meals to children from families who meet eligibility guidelines. In Oregon, a child from a family of four with an income of \$2,297 a month would be eligible for free meals, and \$3,269 per month is eligible for reduced price meals. Since the 2003-2004 school year, the number of Oregon children eligible for the program has been above 40%. The number of school lunches served by schools in the metroscope has increased from the 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 school year. Yamhill County served an average of 10,000 more free lunches per month in 2008-2009 than in 2007-2008. And in Clackamas County, nearly 3,000 additional students were eligible for reduced price lunches each month.

Number of Free and Reduced Price Lunches Served in Public Schools in the 5-County Portland Region 2008 and 2009



Source: Oregon Department of Education