

Couleecap Tracks Changing Demographics Impacting our Area's Future

This paper provides a snapshot of the area in terms of population, jobs and the economy, and future concerns. While other Couleecap position papers examine specific issues, this paper is intended to provide information that can be reviewed for trend analysis and decision-making within the included communities.

Where do we stand?

Table 1. provides demographic changes for selected items, along with rankings within the State of Wisconsin, and other related information where applicable.

Our Rankings in WI:

Positive Rankings

- **Labor Force Participation Rate 1999**
Crawford 6th highest
- **Percent of Jobs in Retail 1998**
Crawford 7th highest

Negative Rankings

- **Per Capita Income 1999**
Vernon 2nd lowest
- **Percent of Jobs in Manufacturing 1998**
Vernon 9th lowest
- **Percent of Workers with Poverty Earnings**
Crawford 7th highest
Vernon 8th highest
- **Median Household Income 1999**
Crawford 10th lowest
- **Prenatal Care Rates 1998**
Vernon 4th lowest
Monroe 9th lowest
- **Juvenile Arrest Rate 1999**
La Crosse 5th highest

Table 1. Demographic Changes:

Title	Year	Crawford	La Crosse	Monroe	Vernon
Total population	1990	15,940	97,904	36,633	25,617
	2000	17,243	107,120	40,899	28,056
	Change	8.2%↑	9.4%↑	11.6%↑	9.6%↑
Poverty rate	1990	14.6%	13.4%	13.0%	15.8%
	2000	10.2%	10.7%	12.0%	14.3%
	Change	2.4%↓	2.7%↓	1.0%↓	1.5%↓
<hr/>					
Total families	2000	4,611	25,599	10,790	7,502
Family poverty	2000	7.2%	5.3%	8.4%	9.0%
Rank*		15	35	8	5
Median income	1995	\$34,155	\$44,390	\$41,400	\$36,455
	2001	\$39,000	\$50,900	\$47,100	\$40,600
Rank*		63	30	40	55
Single parent families	2000	24.2%	24.6%	24.9%	20.0%
Rank*		23	21	16	55
Teen births	1999	11.4%	9.2%	10.4%	7.8%
Rank*		24	42	28	55

*Rankings are ordered throughout the State 1 through 72 from highest to lowest. The highest ranking for an undesirable or negative indicator, such as poverty level, would be the "worst" ranking, and the lowest ranking would be the "best."

Income data are inflation-adjusted, expressed in 2001 dollars, to allow more realistic comparisons over time, as real purchasing power of a dollar declines through inflation. For example, one dollar in 1979 would buy as much as \$2.26 in 2001.

Poverty: In Table 1., it is noted that each of the counties experienced a slight decline in its poverty rate from 1990 to 2000. Crawford, La Crosse and Vernon counties also experienced the expected decline in number of persons in poverty. Monroe County, due to its somewhat higher rate of overall population growth, did show an increase in the number of persons in poverty, from 4,614 in 1990 to 4,774 in 2000.

Race/Ethnicity: From the 1990 Census to the 2000 Census, each of the four counties has experienced some changes in racial make-up. Each county reported decreases in the number of persons who identified themselves as being Caucasian: Crawford – 1.8%; La Crosse – 2.1%; Monroe – 1.7%; and Vernon – 8%. The largest numerical changes in race were noted in La Crosse and Monroe counties. In La Crosse County, the number of persons who reported being Black or African American more than doubled, from 409 to 1016, in the ten-year span between 1990 and 2000 and increase of about 700 Asian persons was experienced. In Monroe County, the number of persons who reported themselves to be “some other race” jumped from 65 to 347. Numbers of persons defining themselves as Hispanic or Latino increased in all four counties. (See Table 2.)

Table 2. Hispanic Composition in the Four County Area:

Hispanic Populations	1990	2000	% Change
Crawford County	67	129	92.54↑
La Crosse County	640	990	54.69↑
Monroe County	234	740	216.24↑
Vernon County	98	186	89.80↑

Other Snapshots:

- Traditionally the four-county area has labor force participation rates at or above the national rate. Yet, the per capita income as a percentage of the U.S. per capita income shows that this region is below the national average. Per capita income in Crawford County never reached above 80 percent of the national per capita income between 1969 and 1999.
- More than 50 percent of workers in Crawford and Vernon counties earned sub-poverty wages in their primary jobs in 1998.
- Vernon County has the lowest percentage of single parent families, with one in five families headed by a single parent.
- Based on its total population, Vernon County has the 9th highest poverty rate in the State.
- In 1998, La Crosse County had a prenatal care rate above the State average. Vernon County ranked 4th lowest in prenatal care rates as compared to the rest of the State.
- All counties have a higher percentage of people enrolling in the Badger Care program than the statewide average. Badger Care is the State’s health care program for poor families and individuals.
- Job growth between 1990 and 1998 was at least 10 percent greater in Crawford County than the other three counties.
- Like Wisconsin in general, the number of full-time farms declined in all four counties between 1992 and 1997. Crawford, La Crosse and Vernon counties saw a rate of decline faster than the State average.
- During the same period, all four counties experienced faster losses in farm acreage than the State average.

Commentary: Decisions that impact how we live are made at all levels from personal and family to national policy. Many communities are engaging in a planning process called Smart Growth to make decisions on land use and provision of services. Service organizations are looking at needs in the community that they have the capacity to address. People are looking at starting their own businesses. Information is an important part of the decisions we make. This paper gives us a glimpse into some important issues of the four county region. Let us use these facts to build upon and improve the quality of life for our families, friends and neighbors.

Presented by Pat Tucker, Planning Director 1/03

Sources: •Sustaining Wisconsin – A Statewide Dialogue on Wisconsin’s Future, Center on Wisconsin Strategy, 2002;
 •1990 and 2000 Census;
 •WISKIDS 2002.

Special Thanks to: Jane Steingraeber and Dr. Gary Gilmore for assistance in preparing the final draft of this paper.