

Changes in Household Size in Thurston County

Thurston Regional Planning Council Technical Brief

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Over the last 50 years, households in Thurston County have continued to shrink in size, but the rate at which they are declining has started to slow. This is consistent with national trends.

Household Size

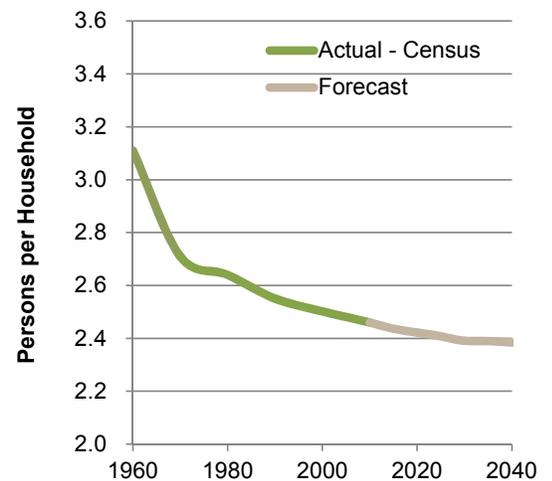
Household size in Thurston County continues to shrink - despite higher vacancy rates. Household size in Thurston County was 2.46 persons per household in 2010. This is down from 2.50 a decade ago and 3.11 in 1960.

This decline in household size seen in Thurston County follows national trends. Some of the reasons are:

- People are living longer
- People tend to remain unmarried longer
- The divorce rate has increased
- Remarriage is less common
- People are having less children

The present economic downturn may have tempered the decline in household size slightly. As home vacancy rates rise, adult children are moving back in with their parents, or sharing housing longer with other adults such as roommates.

Thurston County Household Size



What the Future Holds

Household size is expected to continue to decline slightly over the next 30 years - mainly as a result of an increase in senior households and related demand for multifamily and smaller single family housing as the “baby boom” generation begins to hit retirement age.

Geographic Differences

Households tend to be smaller in urban areas and slightly larger in suburban and rural areas and within smaller cities and towns. This is likely related to the housing choices available in each of these markets. The urban areas tend to have a greater share of apartments, condominiums, and senior housing.

Why are these trends important to understand?

Understanding trends in household size help our community to better plan for anticipated growth. Smaller households mean an increased demand for smaller homes, apartments, and condominiums.

Demographic trends like those highlighted in this brief are important to understand for planning and forecasting purposes. Population and employment forecasts have been developed by the Thurston Regional Planning Council since the 1960s. They are used for transportation, sewer, water, land use, school, and other local governmental planning purposes. They are also used by the private sector for business planning.

Average Household Size by Jurisdiction, 1960-2010

Jurisdiction	Average Household Size (Persons/Occupied Household)					
	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
Bucoda	N/A	2.79	2.76	2.76	2.87	2.53
Lacey	3.44	2.84	2.48	2.44	2.47	2.44
Olympia	2.81	2.54	2.32	2.22	2.21	2.18
Rainier	N/A	3.18	3.08	2.97	2.82	2.73
Tenino	N/A	2.81	2.75	2.60	2.52	2.45
Tumwater	3.26	2.54	2.37	2.27	2.20	2.27
Yelm	N/A	3.02	2.94	2.86	2.67	2.95
Chehalis Reservation ¹	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.03	3.56	3.05
Nisqually Reservation ¹	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.48	3.40	3.16
Incorporated	N/A	2.62	2.41	2.32	2.32	2.33
Unincorporated	N/A	2.80	2.84	2.75	2.67	2.59
Thurston County	3.11	2.71	2.64	2.55	2.50	2.46

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Explanation: ¹Data is for the reservation as a whole, including those portions outside Thurston County.

For more information contact:
Thurston Regional Planning Council
info@trpc.org