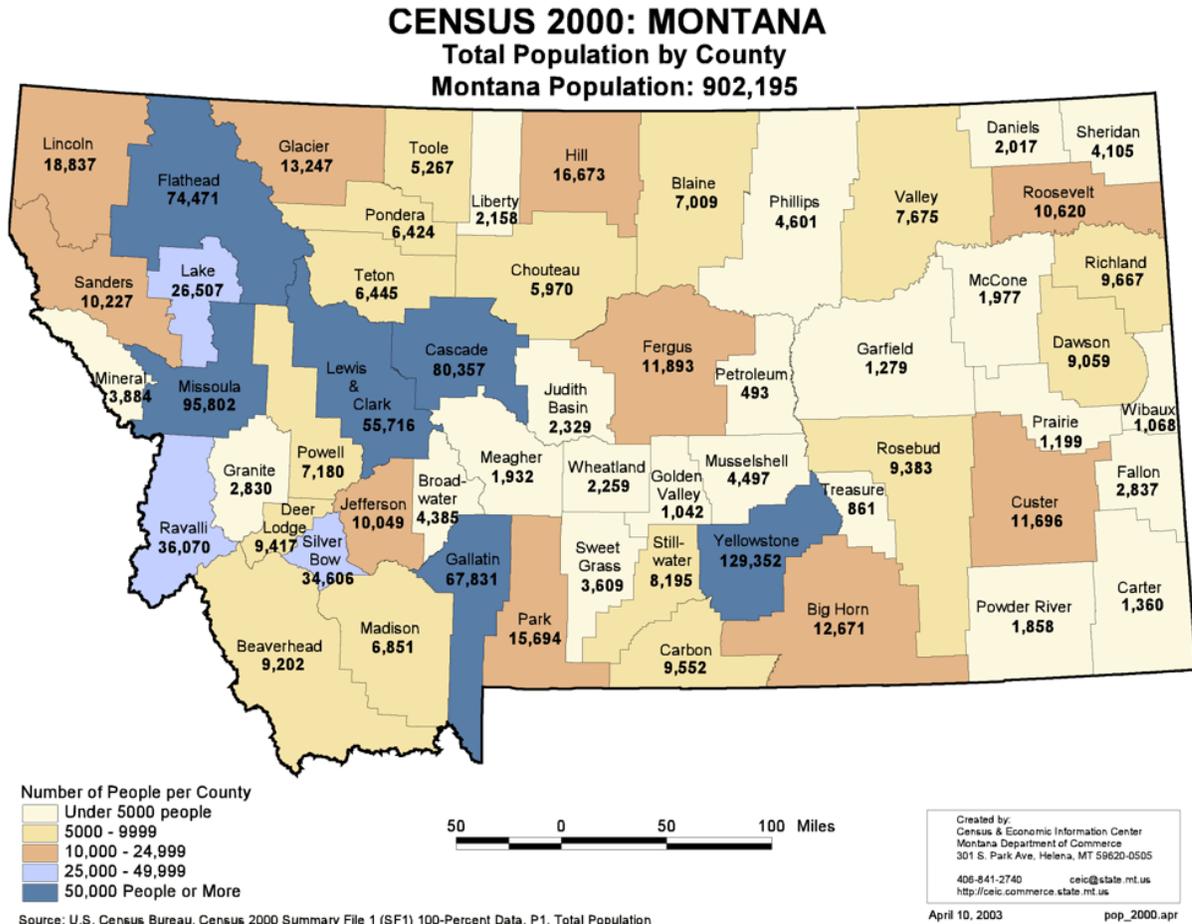


3. POPULATION

Historical Population Change

The population of Richland County in 2000 was 9,667, ranking it 20th out of Montana's 56 counties.

Figure 3.1 Population by County



Source: Montana Census and Economic Information Center

The U.S. census provides data for Richland County's incorporated municipalities (Sidney and Fairview) and for two unincorporated areas (Savage and Lambert). The unincorporated areas are identified for census purposes as Census Designated Places (CDPs). Prior to 2000, the U.S. census had not categorized any CDPs for Richland County.

Table 3.1 Change in Population 1990-2000

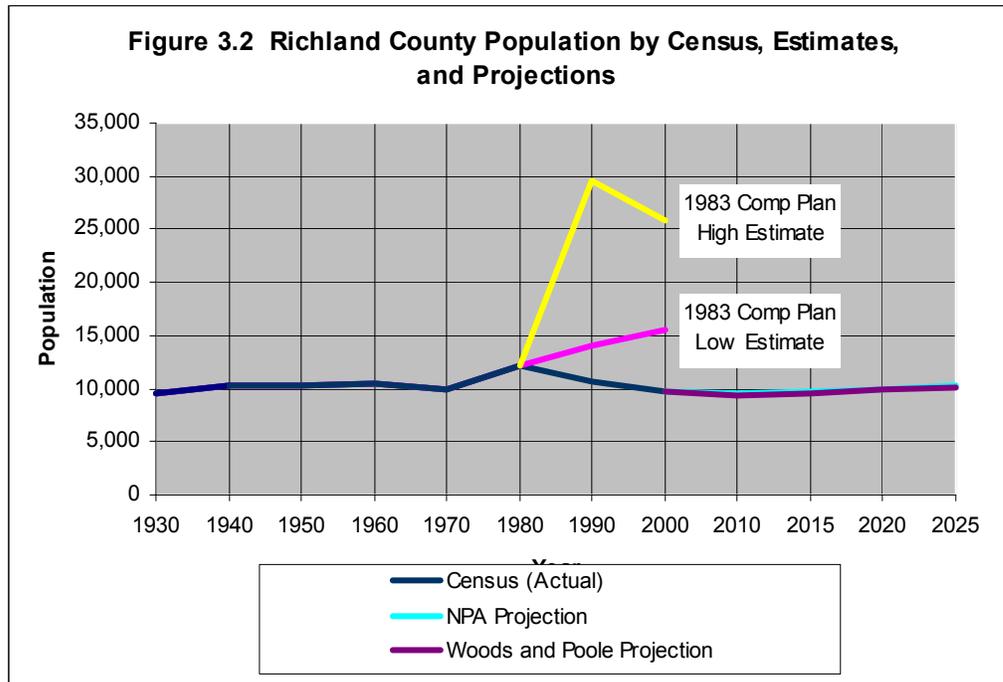
City/Town/CDP*	2000 CENSUS	2000 RANK**	1990 CENSUS	Numeric Change 1990 to 2000	1990% Change to 2000***
Richland County	9,667	20	10,716	1,049	-9.79
Fairview town	709	113	869	-160	-18.41
Fox Lake CDP (Lambert area)	157	220	--	--	--
Knife River CDP (Savage area)	297	167	--	--	--
Sidney city	4,774	20	5,217	-443	-8.49
Balance of County	3,730		4,630	-900	--

* Census designated places (CDPs) are delineated for each decennial census as the statistical counterparts of incorporated places. CDPs are delineated to provide data for settled concentrations of population that are identifiable by name but are not legally incorporated under the laws of the state in which they are located. The boundaries usually are defined in cooperation with local and tribal officials.

** Rank in order of 275 Montana places (municipalities and CDPs). County's rank is out of 56 Montana counties.

***Boundaries of Census Designated Places (CDPs) may vary from one decennial census to the next with changes in the settlement pattern; a CDP with the same name as in an earlier census does not necessarily have the same boundary. Census counts of Incorporated Places (cities and towns) reflect population change through both migration and land annexation.

Figure 3.2 displays actual population from the decennial censuses (shown as the dark blue line), and population projections for 1980 to 2000 which were developed as part of the Richland County Comprehensive Plan in 1983. The figure also displays two different projections for population from 2000 to 2025 (NPA Data Services, Inc. and Woods and Poole Economics, Inc.), both of which were provided by the Montana Census and Economic Information Center.



As shown by actual census counts, population in the county stayed relatively steady, at about 10,000 persons, between 1930 and 1970. In the 1970s and early 1980s, population increased with oil and gas development in the county (from 9,837 persons in 1970 to 12,243 persons in 1980).

The census figures do not include persons who live and work in an area but who list another location as the place of permanent residence. Consequently, the census numbers for Richland County are likely an undercount of the total number of persons who may have temporarily moved to the area. As a case in point, the population of the county grew by 24% between 1970 and 1980, while the county's civilian labor force increased by 71% in that same decade (Richland County Comprehensive Plan 1983, page74).

In 1983, when the County Comprehensive Plan was prepared, the oil boom had reached its peak. The preparers of the plan developed five different future development scenarios to predict changes through 2005. The scenario with the most conservative projections of population growth was the "Zero Oil and Gas" scenario, which predicted that oil and gas development would not continue to grow. The scenario with the greatest population increases was one that predicted a double boom for the county--an oil and gas boom (with peak population in 1994) and coal and synfuels development (with peak population increases projected in 1991). Under this scenario, population related to the coal and synfuels would peak in 1991 and oil and gas development populations would peak in 1994.

Even the lowest projection was more optimistic than actual events. For the county as a whole, the 1980 census population of 12,243 dropped to 10,716 in 1990 and 9,667 in 2000.

Figures 3.2 and 3.3 display actual census counts for Sidney and Fairview and include the population projections for both municipalities as estimated in the 1983 County Comprehensive Plan. In addition, Figure 1. includes population projections that were made in the Sidney City-County Comprehensive Plan-1980. Similar to the county, census counts for both 1990 and 2000 showed consecutive decreases. Census data for both municipalities include increases from annexations, but only Sidney has had annexations since 1980.

Population counts for Fairview do not include residents in East Fairview, which is actually in North Dakota. According to the US Census, 66 persons lived in East Fairview. (Olson)

Figure 3.3 Sidney Population, Actual and Estimates

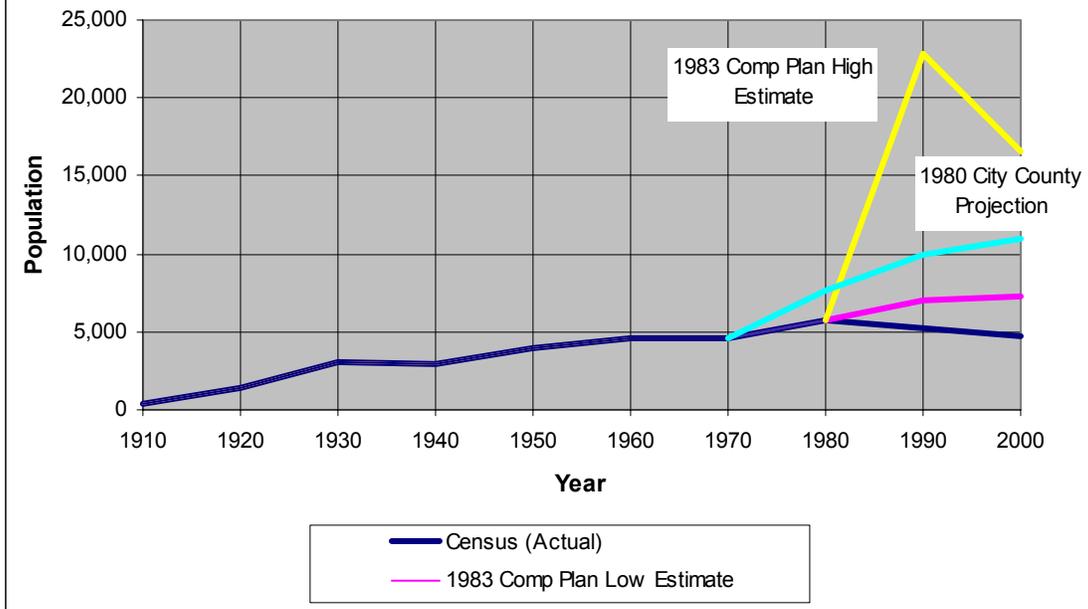
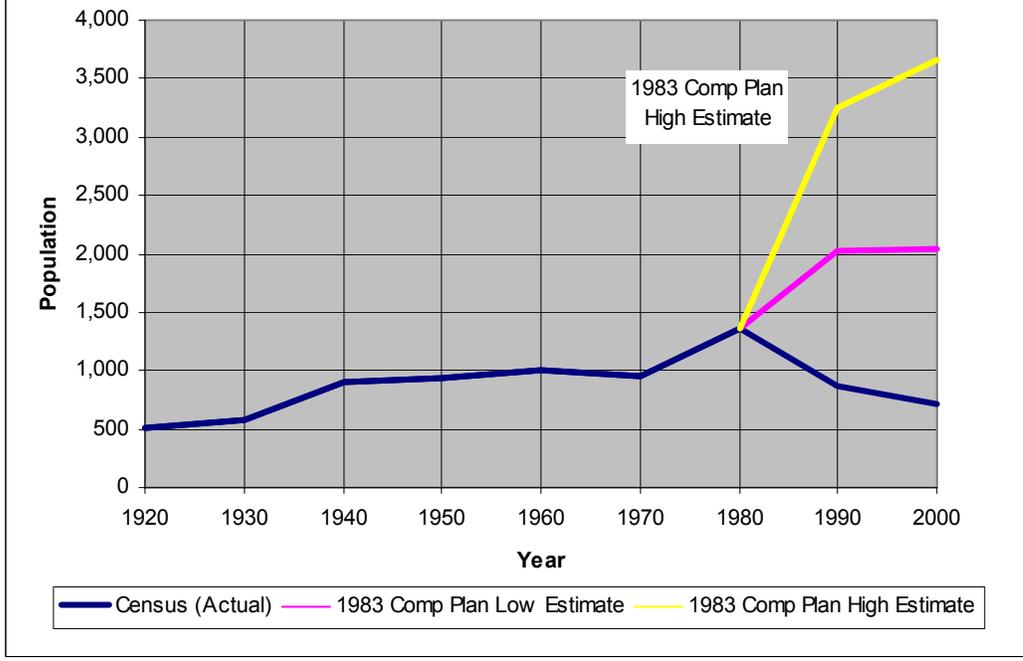


Figure 3.4 Fairview Population, Actual and Estimates



County population estimates from the U.S. Bureau of the Census for 2001 through 2004 show a continued decline in population, despite a clear influx of workers related to a new oil and gas boom that has occurred since 2000. Like the decennial census counts, the estimates do not include persons who have a permanent residence outside the county. The estimates are based primarily on administrative records, which include registered births and deaths, federal income tax returns, Medicare records, and military movement. Since most administrative record data sources lag the current estimate year by as much as two years, the data for the current year are projected from past years. (http://www.census.gov/popest/topics/methodology/2005_st_co_meth.html)

Table 3.2 Population Estimates 2000-2004

Geographic Area	Population Estimates						April 1, 2000	
	July 1, 2004	Percent Change 2000-2004	July 1, 2003	July 1, 2002	July 1, 2001	July 1, 2000	Estimates base	Census
Richland County	9,112	-5.7%	9,177	9,276	9,445	9,627	9,667	9,667
Fairview town	663	-6.5%	670	679	692	706	709	709
Sidney city	4,480	-6.2%	4,523	4,577	4,660	4,753	4,774	4,774
Balance of Richland County	3,969	-5.1%	3,984	4,020	4,093	4,168	4,184	4,184

Source: Montana Census and Economic Information Center

According to residents, this boom is different from the boom of the late 1970s. Much smaller numbers of new oil and gas workers are actually moving their families and their permanent residence to Richland County. Most workers are on shifts that allow them to return to their permanent homes (and families) for a respite between shifts. While at work in the county, many employers are providing temporary housing with rental units, motel rooms, and trailer houses either at existing trailer and RV parks or at well sites.

There are, however, a number of persons who have been moving to Richland County as a permanent place of residence since 2000. These include persons who have come with new and/or increased employment activity, primarily related to oil and gas development. Anecdotal information indicates the number of new permanent households is relatively small compared to the overall increase in the workforce resulting from oil and gas development.

Population by Age and Race

The county's population is becoming predominately older over time. The median age for the county increased from 33 to nearly 40 years between 1990 and 2000. Median age in 2000 for Montana was 37.5 years and 35.3 years for the U.S. as a whole.

The nation is aging. In 2000, 12.4% of the U.S. population was over 65. In Montana, 13.4% of the population was over 65. The proportion of persons over age 65 in Richland County is significantly higher than that of the state or the nation and is particularly concentrated in the municipalities. Sidney's population over age 65 was 18% of the total population in 2000.

	Total Population	Less than 18 years	45-54 years	65 years and over	Median Age
Sidney					
1990	5,217	30.4%	8.5%	15.3%	33.0
2000	4,774	26.7%	13.6%	18.0%	39.1
Fairview					
1990	869	31.2%	11.0%	16.7%	34.1
2000	709	27.5%	10.9%	17.2%	38.8
County					
1990	10,716	31.6%	9.5%	13.3%	33.0
2000	9,667	27.5%	14.7%	15.6%	39.2

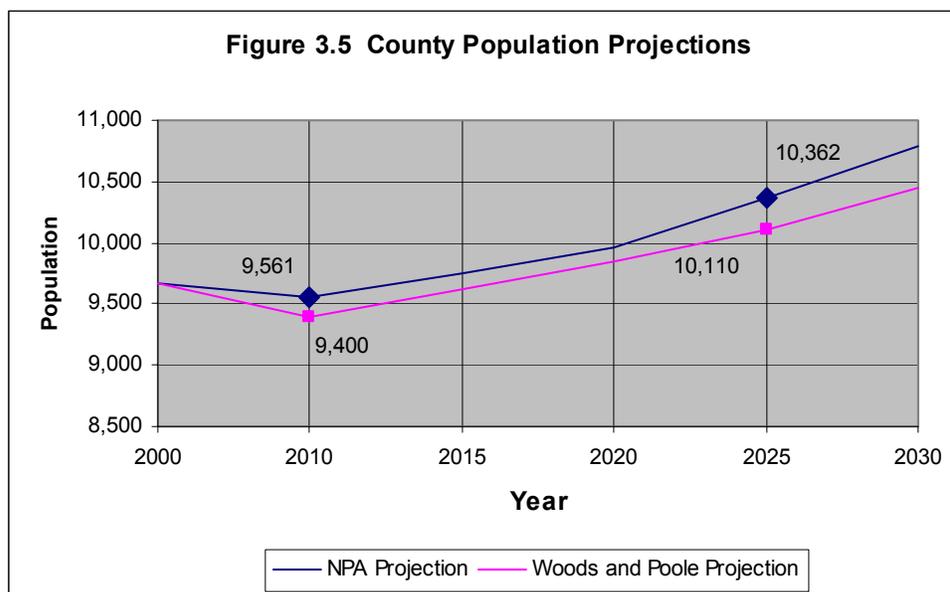
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

The county is generally homogeneous in terms of race. Approximately 96-97% of all persons living in the county are White. American Indians make up the largest component of all other races, at approximately 1-2% of the total population.

Population Projections

The state of Montana provides population projections for counties from two national firms—NPA Data Services, Inc. and Woods and Poole Economics. The two firms have similar projections for the next 20-25 years, based primarily on historical trend data for births, deaths, and migration into and out of the county.

Both projections indicate a continued decline in this decade, and then a slow and steady increase into the future.



Woods & Poole population projections are based on fertility and mortality in each county plus migration, either in or out. Woods & Poole factors employment and labor force projections which do impact population projections. They are projecting a continued, but slow increase in employment in the Mining and Services sectors. These employment increases jump between 2010 and 2015. NPA also factors employment projections which support the population and employment projections increasing. The employment projections are based on what the U.S. economy is doing and take into account the oil and gas sector as part of mining in an indirect way, but do not directly consider the current localized boom in oil and gas development in Richland County. Both NPA and Woods and Poole 'forecasted' increased demand for energy in the U.S. but that increase would not occur until 2010 or so. The increase in demand came earlier than predicted. (Ockert)

Conclusions and Projected Trends

The influx of workers associated with the oil and gas activity that began around the year 2000 and which has been steadily increasing is not reflected in official census estimates. The census counts persons by place of residence and most of the workers live elsewhere and commute to Richland County, albeit for days and weeks for a time. These non-resident workers do, however, have a significant impact on demand for housing, increased traffic, and increased number of public safety-related responses. Current information on the Bakken play indicates that the exploration boom will be three to four years. Many more workers are needed for exploration than for production, and therefore it can be expected that the influx of non-resident workers and their associated impacts will decrease once overall operations in the county are in production phase.

The resident population is aging at rates faster than Montana and the nation as a whole. The percentage of persons over age 65 is greater in Sidney and Fairview than for the county. The increasing aging population has implications for future provision of housing and services (e.g., health care) for the elderly.

The school-age population has declined, but would stabilize and increase if population projections for the future are realized. Declining school populations have implications for the school systems, including employment and funding on the per student formula.

As indicated by the huge differences in actual population numbers and the projections made in the 1980s, population projections are estimates at best. Population projections cannot take into account unforeseen circumstances.