A Demographic Exploration of Frederick County Income and Poverty

Welcome to the December, 2007 edition of "A Demographic Exploration of Frederick County." The 2006 and 2005 data from the American Community Survey (ACS) has been released for Frederick County. This month we will discuss this updated information in regards to income and poverty status. For further information on the demographics and other statistics of Frederick County, please visit http://www.co.frederick.md.us/planning

According to the 2006 American Community Survey, Frederick County had a median household income of $74,029. This is $8,885 more than the median income of Maryland, $65,144. Since 1979, when County residents made only $560 more than the average State resident, Frederick County has continued to increase the gap between the median income of the Maryland and the County. Within the past 27 years, Frederick County residents have increased their median household income by 114%. The greatest increase in household income was between 1989 and 1999, when residents went from making $41,382 to $60,276 in 10 years; a 46% increase. Even within the last 7 years residents have seen a 23% or $13,753 increase in income.

Since 1999, the majority of households make $50,000 - $74,999 a year. In 1999, the income ranges of households were more evenly distributed than in 2006, taking on a bell shaped curve appearance. Incomes spiked at $50,000 – 74,999 and on both sides of this spike the percentage of households slowly dropped. In 2006, the household income still spiked at the $50,000 – 74,999 range; however the 2 sides of this spike were not evenly distributed. The income ranges rise at a slow rate until spiking and than remain at constantly higher percentage levels. In essence, the division of poor and rich households in Frederick County has become more extreme within the past 7 years. (Figure 1)

Households Income Characteristics for Frederick County						
	1999		2006		Change 1999 - 2006	
Total Households	70,115	100.0%	79,983	100.0%	9,868	14.1%
Income Range						
$0 – 9,999	2,754	3.9%	2,034	2.5%	-720	-26.1%
$10,000 - 14,999	2,260	3.2%	1,580	2.0%	-680	-30.1%
$15,000 - 24,999	5,519	7.9%	4,100	5.1%	-1,419	-25.7%
$25,000 - 34,999	6,554	9.3%	5,731	7.2%	-823	-14.4%
$35,000 - 49,999	11,063	15.8%	10,021	12.5%	-1,042	-9.4%
$50,000 - 74,999	16,815	24.1%	17,246	21.6%	431	2.6%
$75,000 – 99,000	11,846	16.9%	14,550	18.2%	2,704	22.8%
$1000,000 - 149,000	9,495	13.5%	15,496	19.4%	6,001	63.2%
$150,000 +	3,809	5.4%	9,225	11.5%	5,416	142%
Median Household Income	$60,276		$74,029		$13,753	22.8%

Figure 1.

Since income levels have consistently risen in Frederick County, it stands to reason that the percentage of people below the poverty levels would drop. In 2006 fewer people and families were below the poverty level than in 1989 and 1999. Since 1989, the poverty level has consistently dropped going from 4.8% of all people to 3.9% in 2006. In all cases where the poverty level is reported there was a significant decrease in percentages except for among the unrelated individuals 15 years and over. This may be an anomaly of the new reporting methodology of the American Community Survey since it does not seem to coincide with the other reported statistics.

The greatest decrease in poverty levels occurred in the female householder category. In 1989 17.3% of these households were below poverty level, in 2006 this has decreased to only 7.7%. Female householders with children still have the highest percentage of poverty levels but the decrease has been very significant within the past 17 years. Within the subcategories of female headed households there was also extreme decreases. Households with children under 5 years old decreased from 36.6% in 1989 to 11.5% in 2006. Households with children under 18 years old decreased from 25.1% in 1989 to 9.0% in 2006. The reasons for these extreme decreases may be varied. Possibly there are fewer households that are headed by females with children or these households are simply making more money. Figure 2.

Poverty Status for Frederick County Residents			
	1989	**1999**	**2006**
All individuals	**4.8%**	**4.5%**	**3.9%**
Persons 18 years and over	4.5%	4.2%	4.2%
Persons 65 years and over	9.2%	6.0%	5.4%
Related children under 18 years	5.6%	4.9%	2.8%
Related children under 5 to 17 years	5.3%	4.6%	1.6%
Related children under 5 years	6.2%	6.1%	6.1%
Unrelated Individuals over 15 years and older	13.9%	13.8%	15.9%
All families	**3.5%**	**2.9%**	**1.6%**
Families with related children under 18 years	4.8%	4.1%	2.4%
Families with related children under 5 years	5.4%	5.6%	2.4%
All female Householders with children	**17.3%**	**13.8%**	**7.7%**
Households with related children under 18 years	25.1%	19.2%	9.0%
Households with related children under 5 years	36.6%	32.8%	11.5%

Figure 2.

Households in Frederick County have been making more money within the past 27 years. The income levels are increasing and poverty status has been decreasing. However, the split in distribution between the rich and poor households has become greater. The County is consistently above the average income and below the average poverty levels for the State of Maryland. It is very likely that within the coming years these trend will continue.