

BFT 2016 - #2:

Welcome!



Wow, it's the third edition of our newsletter already. In addition to reading the newsletters, I hope you have been reading the articles in the Tri-City Herald that take a close look at one measure per month. And speaking of that, you can only manage what you measure. And conversely, if you ignore data, you can't expect things to move in a desired direction. That is why the Benton Franklin Indicators website, the newsletters, and the articles are so important. As Carrie Green told you back in the first issue, over 150 community leaders and stakeholders worked diligently to identify the most important measures that can drive improvement of the local area. It behooves us all to become familiar with these metrics and then think about how to improve our numbers, discuss your ideas with others, write letters to your elected officials, convene stakeholders, invest your energy to make changes, suggest a topic to the Badger Club, give a TEDx talk (you get the idea....).

Thank you.

Gary E. Spanner - Economic Development Office - Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Short Stories:

Have you Visited TRIDEC's Property Site Selector Website?



The [Tri-Cities Property Site Selector](#) website is an economic development tool managed by the Tri-City Development Council (TRIDEC). Driven by GIS (Geographic Information Systems), Site Selector is highly interactive and comprehensive. Property can be searched through defining characteristics of the property itself as well as those of surrounding area. The user can create layers of variables to find the most desirable location.

The [Tri-Cities Property Site Selector](#) is linked to the Washington Commercial Brokers Association of, so anytime a new property is posted it is downloaded to the website.

Carl Adrian, President and CEO of TRIDEC, believes this is a tremendous tool that allows businesses who might be considering or expanding to fully examine the area (properties, demographics, higher education institutions, consumer expenses, labor force, and talent pool, just to name a few options as there are many available) before they pick up the phone to gather additional information from directly from TRIDEC.

Adrian explains that approximately 90% of the calls they now receive at TRIDEC from people and businesses looking to relocate or expand have already done their research on the Site Selector website. Adrian says these inquiries are coming from people who have already eliminated other potential sites to relocate or expand, so when these calls come in, the Tri-Cities has already made it through at least one

or two elimination processes. In short, the Tri-Cities has already met the criteria expanding or relocating businesses are looking for before TRIDEC is contacted.

Adrian and his team attend national conferences, such as the International Council of Shopping Centers, and are able to instantly answer specific questions they receive regarding available properties in the Tri-Cities. They can show inquisitors exactly how many rooftops are within a certain radius of the property being considered, something very specific grocery store businesses want to know when considering a new location. The same is true for industry, but they would generally be more concerned with wanting to know how few rooftops are within a certain radius.

Adrian believes the [Tri-Cities Property Site Selector](#) website really works well in tandem with the Benton-Franklin Trends site. The Site Selector website offers a tremendous amount of specific information for properties, making it easy for businesses looking to relocate or expand to find properties that will fit their needs. Once they have found suitable potential sites, they can use the Benton-Franklin Trends site to learn more about the community, such as socio-economic data, especially because the data is displayed in a trend over time.

Moving forward, Adrian and his team will be sitting down with the local Geographical Information Systems (GIS) departments to determine compatibility with the Site Selector to expand the content available on the Site Selector website. Additionally, the plan is to greatly increase the focus on industrial properties as well as making the industrial properties section much more data intensive.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA): Location of Fatal Crashes - Washington



Unfortunately, auto mobile accidents are a part of driving. But we also know that being a safe, responsible driver reduces the chances of being in an accident. So knowing where fatal auto accidents have occurred in the past makes the safe, responsible driver also an informed driver. To see the NHTSA interactive map of fatal traffic accidents in Washington State, [click here](#). Fatal crashes occurring in 2012, 2013, and 2014 are offered. The best way to see detailed information about the Tri-Cities and both counties is to center the map and then zoom in.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife - Interactive Mapping Tools



Have you ever wondered about fish populations, habitats, and hatcheries? Or perhaps barriers in streams and rivers to fish, perhaps the density of marine birds on the Washington coastline, or places in Washington State for hunters and outdoor enthusiasts? If so, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) interactive maps website will keep you busy, entertained, and informed. [Click here](#) to visit the WDFW interactive mapping website.

Main Articles:

Median Age Consistently Lower in Combined Counties than State and U.S. by Scott Richter and Dr. Patrick Jones

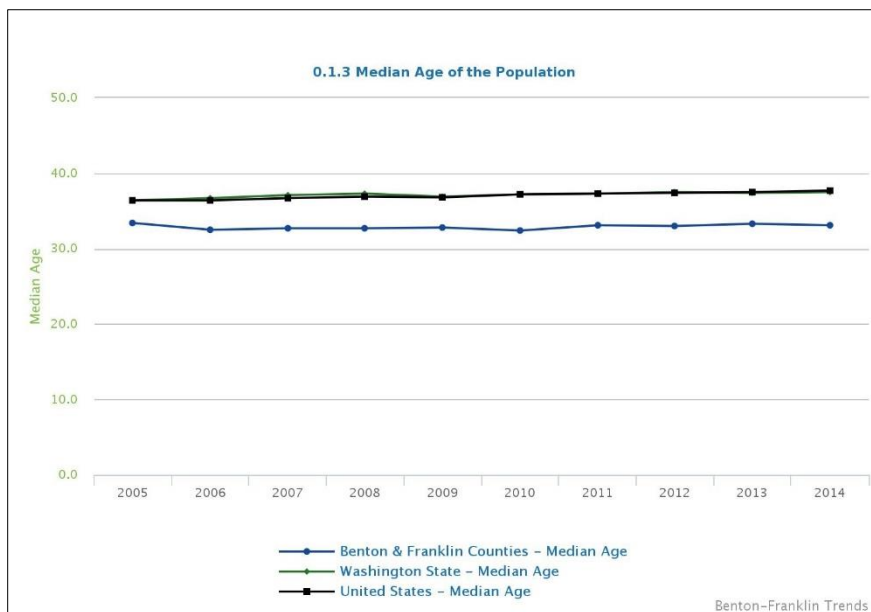
The median age of the population is the specific age where half of the population is younger than and half of the population is older. With continued advances in the health industry, the graying of the baby boomers, and constant improvements to our general quality of life, the median age of the U.S., and most geographical areas within the U.S. will continue to see an increase. Sometimes, however, these increases can take many years to see a demonstrable change in the values measuring median age.

According to the U.S. Census, the median age of the U.S. population during 2014 was 37.7, increasing from 35.3 in 2000.

Looking both back in history and into the future, the [median age of the total population of the U.S. in 1940 was 29.0 and is estimated to be 39.0 by the year 2050.](#)

According to the [median age of the population](#) indicator, the values in the two counties are moving counter to the national and world population age trends. The median age of the population of Benton & Franklin Counties combined is also well below the state benchmark. Specifically, the graph is showing us

that the median age is generally flat, but is decreasing a little. In the combined counties, the median age in 2005 was 33.4, decreasing to 33.1 in 2014). The same is true for Benton County coming in at 36.4 in 2005 and decreasing to 35.4 in 2014. Differing slightly from the rest, the median age of the population of Franklin County has increased from 27.0 in 2005 to 29.7 in 2014. The most prominent aspect of the indicator is that Benton & Franklin Counties, both individually and combined, show a much younger profile when compared to the benchmarks.



What lies behind this overall measure of age in the Tri-Cities metro area? Looking at another indicator on the trends site, the [Share of the Population by Age Groups](#) for the combined counties,

over the entire span of the indicator we see that the 65+ age group is increasing and the 0-17 age group is decreasing. Both of these groups are considered to be dependent populations as they are either older or younger than the primary working age group of 18-64 year olds. This directly affects the dependency ratio of a community - the potential for social support needs, as the share of the population working and providing social security dollars to the dependent age groups (primarily 65+).

Knowing the median age of the population is important because it helps provide insight into both current and future demands of the economy and for services provided by the government.

If the median age of the population were to increase, it will also impact policy decisions about funding for senior programs, for Medicare and home health care, as well as affecting the economy via a possible uptick in

travel, real estate activity (due to downsizing), job changing, and volunteerism.

On the other hand, If the trend continues decreasing or at least not showing much movement as it has in the past, it would be important to consider what a continued population of largely younger people would mean for the local area and how that might impact the economy differently than an older population would.

5-Year High School Graduation Rate Exceeds State for Second Consecutive Year by Scott Richter and Dr. Patrick Jones

One of the clearest measures of high school success is graduating. The [Washington State Graduation Requirements](#) include earning the required amount of credits, passing state tests, and completing a High School and Beyond Plan.

For some students, this doesn't occur within the 4-years we generally associate with the length of time it takes to graduate. In fact, according to Washington State law ([RCW 28A.225.160](#)), "it is the general policy of the state that the common schools shall be open to the admission of all persons who are five years of age and less than twenty-one years residing in that school district." Therefore, students who are struggling to meet academic requirements, have issues outside the classroom such as teen pregnancy, homelessness, or perhaps a poor home environment, and even kids who completely drop out - can go back to high school and earn their high school diploma - if they choose to, until the age of 21, but with only one additional school year offered after turning 21.

Along with 11th and 12th graders, students who take five years to graduate high school, also known as a 5th year or super-seniors, are included in the [Extended Graduation Rate for Public Schools Who Graduate Within 5-Years](#), also known as the Adjusted Cohort Rate. Since most of the kids who don't finish on time, but still have the desire to do so, can complete the graduation requirements within another year or less, it is important to track these students who are still achieving a high school diploma.

According to Bruce Hawkins, recently retired superintendent of Educational Service District 123, "While 'on-time' graduation is highly praised by some, I personally feel that extended graduation rates indicate that our society is far more complex than when I graduated high school some 47 years ago. The fact remains that our schools are graduating a higher percentage of students than any time in history."

Hawkins further states that "high school graduation rates have received more attention by school systems and of course high schools. Some would note the former Federal Statute NCLB as the motivation. In our region, I think it more likely that education leaders have

drawn a clear link between graduation and quality of life for the students in our charge. This heightened awareness has prompted interventions for students.”

Tracking the adjusted cohort rate is a federal mandate from the U.S. Department of Education. In addition to tracking the adjusted cohort rate the U.S Department of Education also requires all school districts in the nation to also track the four-year cohort (see: [On-Time Graduation Rate for Public High School Students Who Graduate Within 4-Years](#)).

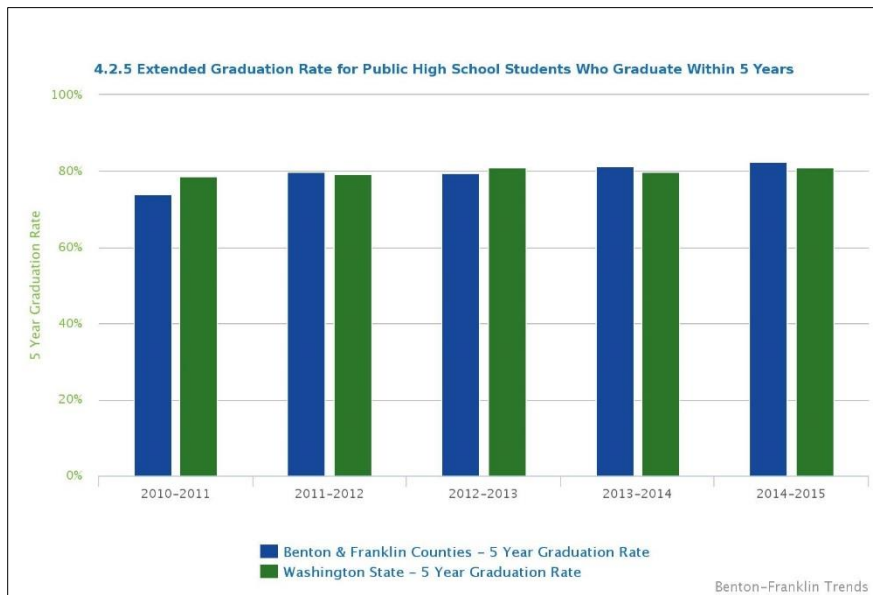
The adjusted cohort rate is used to account for students who graduate in five years. A cohort, or class, of freshman students can change size over time as students transfer to other schools or enter the class. To account for these changes, students are given ID numbers to track their progress at different schools if they do transfer to another public school in Washington State. The adjusted cohort rate does not allow exceptions for students enrolled in special education or ESL classes. More on the adjusted cohort rate methodology [can be found here](#).

Looking at this indicator for the greater Tri Cities, we see great progress in raising the extended graduation rate (the adjusted cohort rate). Beginning during the 2010-2011 school

year (the first year the adjusted cohort rate was mandated to be tracked), the extended graduation rate was 74.1% compared to 78.8% in the state. During the most recent year available (2014-2015), the combined counties had increased their adjusted cohort rate to 82.5%, compared to 81.1% in the state.

Local improvements can also be seen within each county. During the 2014-2015 school year, the adjusted cohort rate was 83.6% in Benton County and 80.1% in Franklin County. These are increases from the 2010-2011 school year adjusted cohort rates of 75.2% and 71.3% respectively. The school districts within Kennewick and Pasco each, in turn, saw increases (from 79.6% and 68.9% in 2010-2011

to 83.0% and 78.4% in 2014-2015 respectively). The City of Richland decreased from 85.4% in 2010-2011 to 83.8% in 2014-2015, but remains higher than the combined counties benchmark



for both the adjusted cohort rate and the on-time graduation rate.

“Now in its third year, a program with our [United Way](#) [focusing on] Middle School attendance. We have made significant reductions to absenteeism at the Middle School level.” Therefore, looking into the future, Hawkins “prediction is that current trends will hold.”

Jobs by Educational Attainment

Lagging Benchmarks by Matt Lower and Dr. Patrick Jones

As the Tri Cities points toward a greater mix of technology in its economy, an important economic metric is the share of jobs by educational attainment. Year to year changes in the share of the minimum level of education required for jobs in the Tri-Cities market shows how successful the region has been in creating jobs that demand higher levels of training. Higher education levels correlate with higher wages and a subsequent increase of spending power in the local economy.

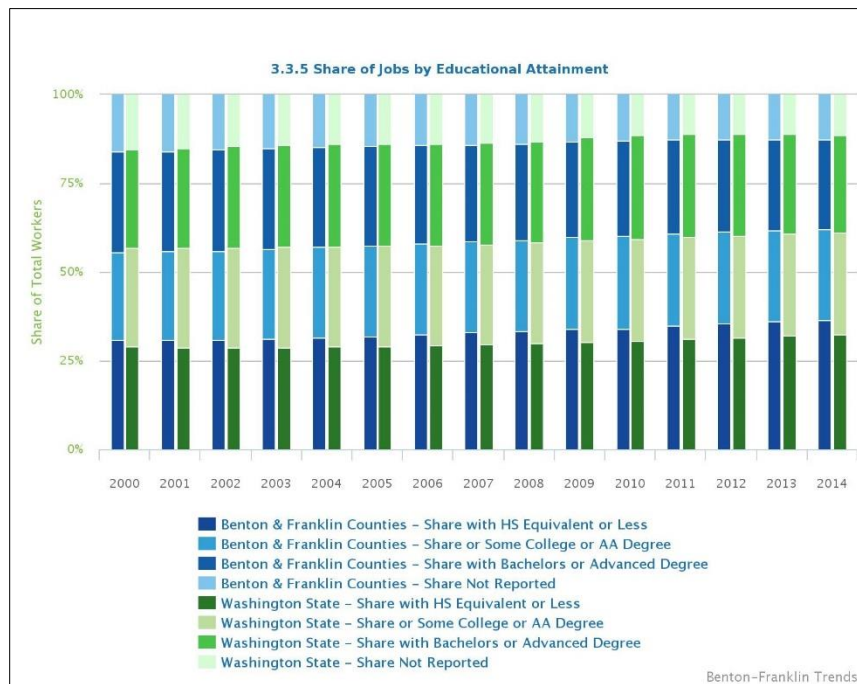
A comparison across geographic levels also fosters insights on how well the Benton and Franklin Counties are doing in matching the results for Washington State, one of the most educated in the U.S.

During 2014 in Benton & Franklin Counties combined, as seen in the [share of jobs by educational attainment](#), those jobs that required a high school degree or less was 36.4%, an Associate's Degree or some college was 25.5%, and a Bachelor's or Graduate Degree was 25.4%. The remaining 12.7% were "not reported". By comparison in Washington State during 2014, the share of jobs requiring a high school degree or less was 32.5%, those requiring an Associate's Degree or some college

was 28.5%, and those requiring a Bachelor's or Graduate Degree was 27.7%, with 11.2% unreported.

One trend of note within the indicator is the increase of jobs requiring only a high school diploma or less. Since 2000, the both the State and Tri-Cities have seen an increase in the share of jobs requiring only a high school diploma, at nearly 4 percentage points in the State and 6 in Benton-Franklin. "Part of this trend is likely the continued growth of the service sector, which in general requires less educational attainment" says Gary Ballew, Director of Economic Development and Marketing at the Port of

Pasco. Despite the growth of the nearly 6 percentage points in jobs not requiring any higher education, jobs requiring some college or an Associate's Degree were stable over the past 14



years. According to Ballew, this may be reflective of the relative job stability the Hanford Nuclear Site has provided to the region.

Hanford will remain a crucial source of employment for the region for years to come, but as the environmental clean-up at the Hanford nuclear site progresses, some economic development officials are anticipating a decline in the high wage opportunities associated with the superfund remediation.

Port of Benton Economic Development director Diahann Howard says the demand for both trade professions and jobs requiring university degrees will decrease in the coming years. Finding avenues to retain high paying jobs at both levels is a primary challenge moving forward.

In regards to jobs requiring a university-level education, Howard notes that underemployment is an issue in Benton-Franklin, and that “(the region) needs to be better at recruiting outside companies.” Bringing in outside firms to slow the drain of those with bachelor degrees and beyond, and perhaps attracting former residents with such qualifications that left for employment elsewhere, is a high priority moving forward as the Tri-Cities’ knowledge economy continues to transition away from Hanford. Hanford is not the sole location of knowledge jobs in the Tri-Cities, but since many of these jobs are in the government sector, such as at the Northwest

Pacific Laboratory, growth is far more limited than in the private sector.

Howard says that without Hanford, the Tri-Cities’ economy would largely be dominated up by food processing and agriculture. There may be opportunity in the growing agriculture and food processing industries inherit the share of middle skills jobs anticipated to shrink through the progression of the Hanford clean-up. According to Ballew, this upside lies in food processing industry’s shift towards automation: “While total employment in the industry will likely decrease, the skill level and pay will go up. We expect to see a growth in those jobs in requiring some college or AA.” Both officials feel the region is successful in K-12 education and growing talent. Ballew believes that “The Pasco School District has a great STEM program that will create an ongoing talent pool to fill technical jobs, throughout the educational attainment spectrum.”

5-Questions with Rich Cummins - President, Columbia Basin College:



Q1. What are some recent successes at Columbia Basin College that you’d like residents of the Benton & Franklin Counties to be aware of?

I want our citizens to know that the community college is the most affordable way to attend college. From our certificates to bachelor degrees, we have the same rigor and quality as the university. We use multiple forms of evidence to make that claim. Here is just one example using numbers: When students with associate degrees transfer from CBC to a university, the average grade point in their junior and senior years is the same or better as those who started at the university as first-year students. And here is an example from a particular program: Columbia Basin College’s Cyber Security bachelor’s degree program (BAS) finished seventh in the nation in the annual “Big Dance for Data Defense” competition, beating stalwart opponents like the University of Washington and University of Idaho along the way.

Studying at a Washington state community college is in no way an inferior experience ... it is just different. We exist to create affordable access for students and families without privilege who want to get educated and enter the middle class.

Q2. What are the largest challenges that CBC currently faces?

The state's funding model has not been responsive to the needs of the Knowledge Economy. Here is another number: About 11.6 million jobs have been created in the US economy since the recovery from the Great Recession began in 2010. Of those, about 80,000 are jobs that require a high school diploma or less. The rest—99 percent of all jobs in the last six years!—require some kind of post-secondary credential.

Clearly, a high school diploma is essential but insufficient.

A number to add to this mix is that 50 percent of all jobs in the economy are what economists call “middle skills,” which means a credential past the high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. Meanwhile, our culture brands people with less than a bachelor's degree as “dropouts,” when in fact there are millions of jobs available for skilled and educated with middle-skill certificates and degrees. Getting that word out, and expanding the definition of “basic education”—the education necessary to do well in the job market—to include middle skills is essential to our state's prosperity. More than ever, standard and quality of life will be determined by each state's higher education attainment rates.

Q3. In your capacity as president of Columbia Basin College, you must consider key measures of activity at CBC on a regular basis. Can you touch on a few of them?

Our performance scorecards are available on our website, and I would be thrilled to have an email or phone conversation with anyone who wants to drop me a note at rcummins@columbiabasin.edu. We look closely at student progress and completion rates, at achievement indicators like GPA, at transfer and post-completion employment rates, and, of course, at productivity.

In the latter case, the community college is the “biggest bang for the buck” around. We also measure innovation in terms of responsiveness to community needs, which I think any number of our recent projects illustrate. Under this large economic and quality-of-life impact analysis, we look closely at student progress and completion rates (4th highest among Washington's 29 community colleges, and Washington's are among the nation's best); at achievement indicators like GPA (our graduates maintain a 3.11 at their transfer institutions); at transfer and post-completion employment rates (76% of completers are employed, which is tied for first among Washington community colleges); and, of course, at productivity (high marks on graduates' ability to meet community needs—4.6/5.0, and on its standards of quality—4.7/5.0).

Honestly, we measure everything, but the most important indicators are the ones that help us understand how to best serve the individual student who is trying to get the education he or she needs to enter and stay a part of the American dream.

Q4. Among the many measures of life in the two counties that are captured by the Trends, what are two or three that stand out the most?

A favorite quotation on mine is from St. Thomas More, who wrote, “Beware the man of one book.” We need to simplify without oversimplifying, and I find it difficult to isolate two or three data points without de-contextualizing each to the point of meaninglessness. We are grappling with complex issues, and all of these data fit like individual fingers into a glove...it's hard to say your index finger is more important than your thumb. These data form a “whole picture” of our community, and I sincerely invite anyone

reading this to spend some time on the BF Trends website to deepen that sense of interdependence between the silos we create to simplify stuff. Our strategic slogan at CBC is, "Research-based, data-informed, learning-focused," which quite simply means we always strive to learn and get better in a world with great complexity.

Q5. Do you have any closing thoughts on how residents of the two counties can best use the Trends in their everyday lives?

Great ideas come from community members who think about these things. The greatest strength of our nation has always been, and will always be, its individual citizens. Look at these data, think about their sources and implications, and make your voice heard at city councils or emails to people like me or through innovative business activity, or ... there really is no limit to how we can all use good data to move the great American project forward.