



News Release

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Oregonians' Gains from 1990s Boom Fully Erased Census Data Shows Median Income Still Down; Number of Poor Grows; and More Oregonians Lack Health Insurance

(Silverton, Oregon) An analysis of new data released by the U.S. Census Bureau today shows Oregonians' economic gains during the 1990s boom years have been completely erased. "The recession and failed tax and economic policies have turned back the clock for too many Oregonians," according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCPP), a non-profit research institute in Silverton.

OCPP's analysis of the new Census data shows that the typical Oregon household has lost nearly \$3,000 since the peak of the economic boom years. In 1999-00, median income peaked at over \$45,100. By 2002-03, the figure fell nearly \$3,000 to \$42,200. This decline erased the gains of the 1990s economic boom. Oregon's median household income in 2002-03 was more than \$500 less than it was at the end of the 1980s (see attached graphs).

"The downturn has played pickpocket in Oregon," said Chuck Sheketoff, executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy. "Three thousand dollars is a lot of money for the typical Oregon household to lose."

Compounding the bad news, the share of Oregonians without health insurance coverage shot up in 2002-03. OCPP analysis of the Census data shows that 562,000 Oregonians went a full year without health insurance in 2002-2003. This is 85,000 more than in 2001-02. The percentage of Oregonians lacking insurance for a full year was up to 15.9 percent in 2002-03, compared to 13.7 percent in 2001-02 (see attached graph).

"By counting only those who lacked insurance for a full year, the Census data understate the health insurance problem," said Sheketoff. "Many more Oregonians went without insurance for parts of 2002 and 2003."

Sheketoff noted that the striking increase in uninsurance rates is particularly troubling because scheduled cuts to the Oregon Health Plan will leave even more Oregonians without health insurance. "The future is bleak because of the anti-tax crusaders' efforts to defeat Measure 30 and to tie the helpful hands of

government. The planned cuts in the Oregon Health Plan over the next 10 months mean we can expect a growing epidemic of Oregonians lacking health insurance.”

The proportion of Oregonians in poverty did not change significantly between 2001-02 and 2002-03. However, while the poverty rate remained relatively unchanged at 11.7 percent, continued population growth means Oregon had an increasing number of poor residents. There were about 19,000 more poor Oregonians in 2002-03 than there were in 2001-02. Since the end of the 1980s, Oregon has added 107,000 more poor people.

“Government policies matter,” said Sheketoff. “Oregonians’ votes to raise the minimum wage helped hold down the poverty rate during the downturn, while the cuts to the Oregon Health Plan made matters worse.

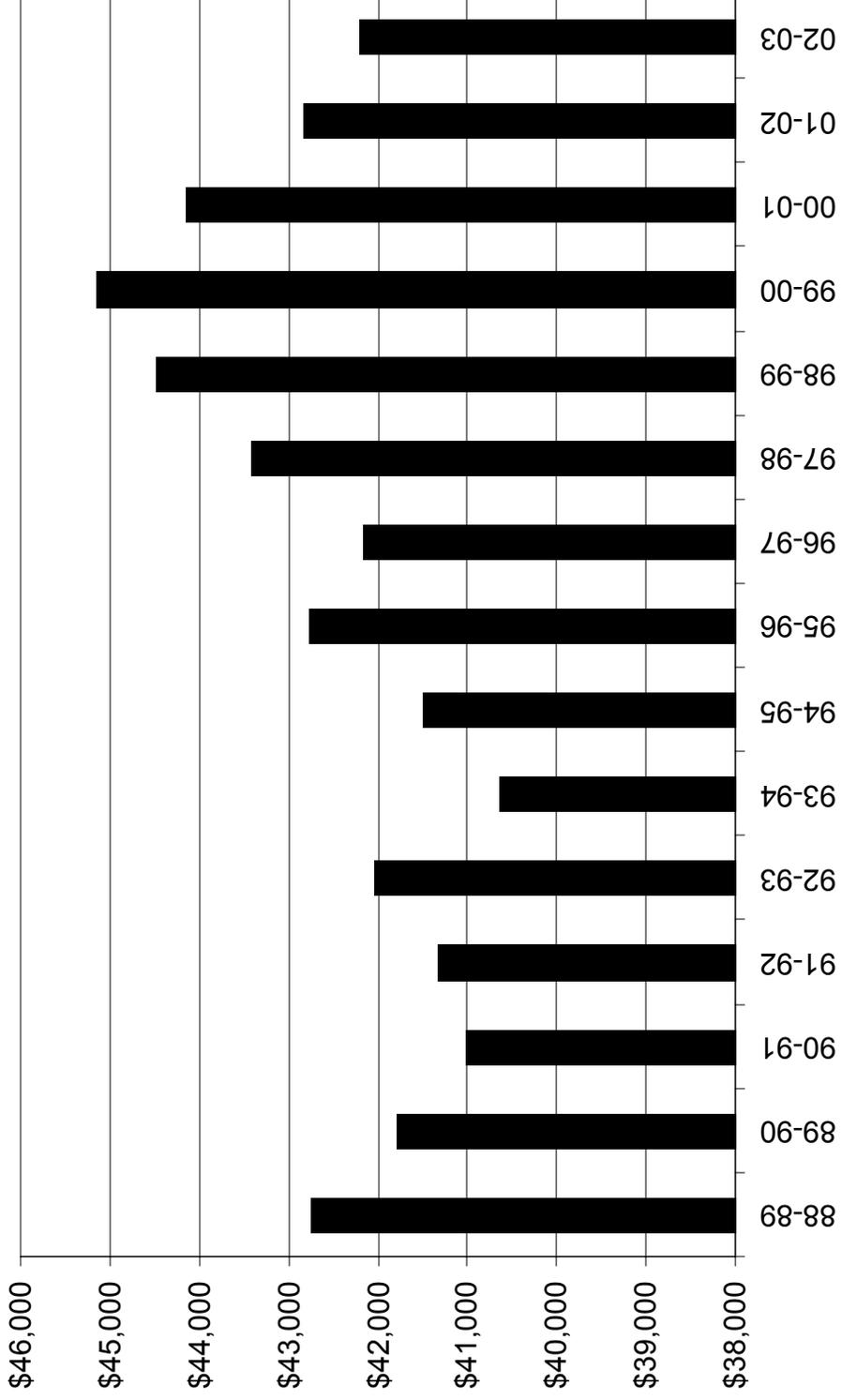
“Oregonians may love dreamers, but the news today about poverty, income, and health insurance status shows that the economy and cuts to government programs have been a nightmare for an increasing number of people,” said Sheketoff. “If Oregonians want to turn the tide and restore income, reduce the number of poor, and ensure that more people have the health care they need, we must make public investments in education, training, and government health care programs.”

The annual Census survey used to estimate the poverty rate, median income, and health insurance coverage for Oregon is based on approximately 1,000 households statewide. The Census Bureau and the Oregon Center for Public Policy use two-year averages of the statewide data to provide more reliable figures.

The **Oregon Center for Public Policy** uses research and analysis to advance policies and practices that improve the economic and social opportunities of low- and moderate-income Oregonians, the majority of Oregonians. The Census report "Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2003 (P60-226)" is available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p60-226.pdf>.

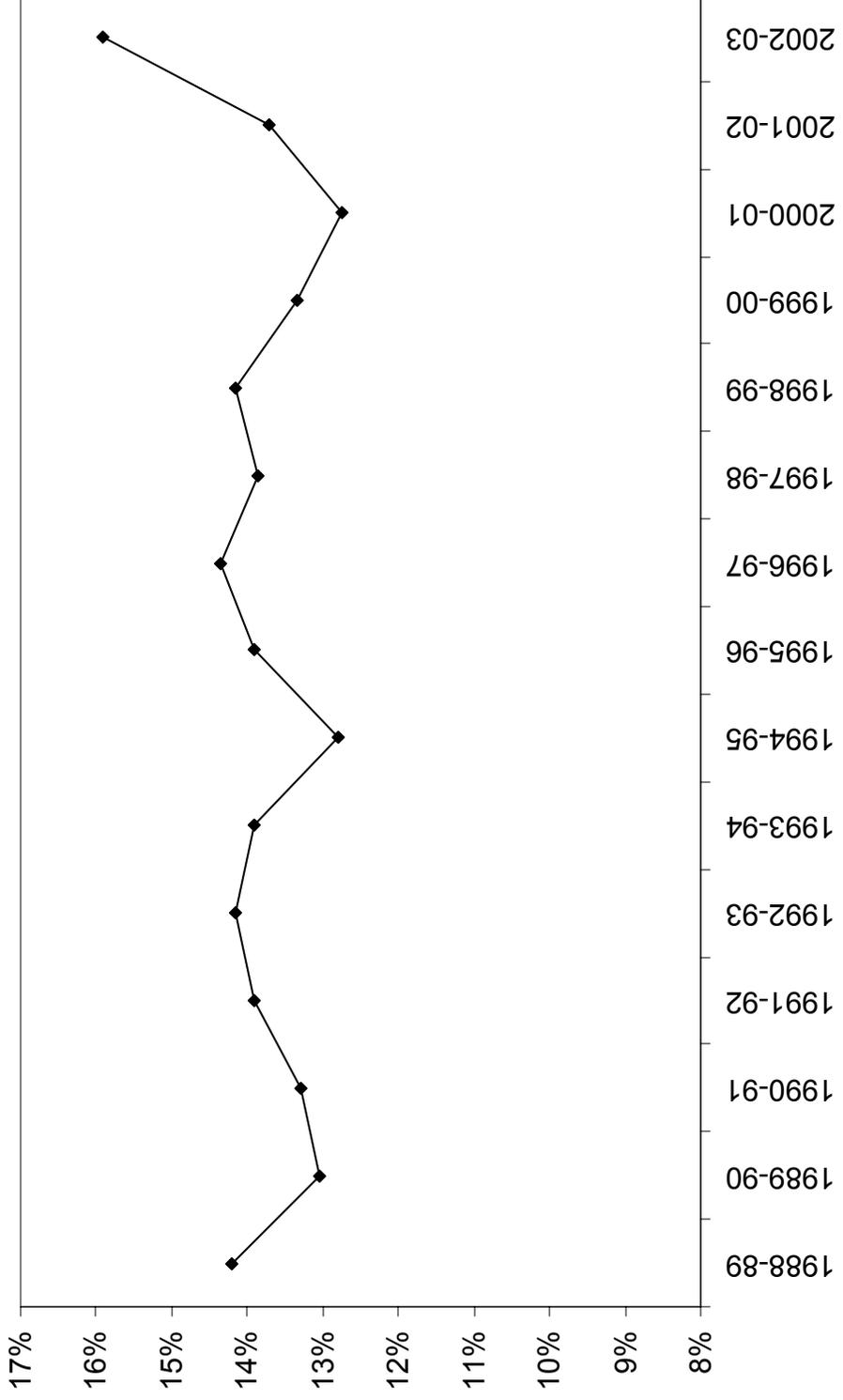
NOTE TO REPORTERS AND EDITORS:
Charts are available on following two pages

Median Household Income in Oregon



Source: OCPP analysis of Current Population Survey data. Inflation adjusted using 2003 dollars.

Percent of Oregonians Without Insurance for Full Year



Source: OCPP analysis of Current Population Survey data