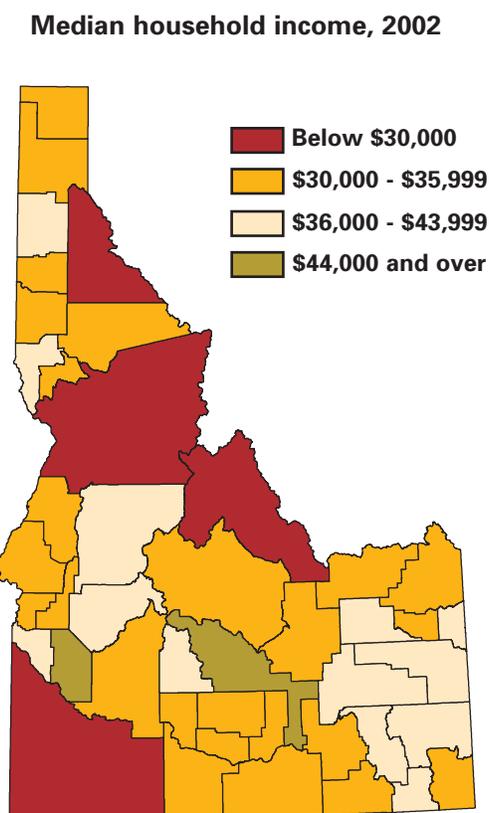


INCOME

Income levels in rural Idaho are below those in urban parts of the state, consistent with patterns across the United States. Though living costs tend to be lower in rural areas, the difference is probably not enough to offset the rural/urban income gap. The mix of industries, wage rate levels and the age of the population are key factors causing that gap.

One useful measure of income is the median level, at which half of all households have lower and half have higher incomes. In 2002, median household income in rural Idaho was 15 percent less than the median for urban areas. The gap has been about the same since 1990.

But the statewide median belies the variation among counties. In 2002, median household income was highest in Blaine County at about \$53,000 and Ada County at about \$48,000. One is a rural center and the other urban. In both, household income was higher than the state and national medians. Households in Owyhee, Lemhi, Idaho and Shoshone counties – all rural – reported the lowest median income levels. Each was below \$30,000.



Households receive income from three sources — wages and salaries earned from jobs and businesses, investments earnings such as dividends, interest and rent, and transfer payments for retirement, unemployment compensation and public assistance. The relative importance of each in a community tells us something about local residents and their economy. For example, where transfer payments make up a relatively large part of the total, a significant proportion of residents are likely to be retired or receiving public assistance.

Wage and salary earnings make up about two-thirds of personal income in Idaho's urban, commuting and rural center counties. In the state's most sparsely populated counties – the open country – earnings make up only 58 percent of total personal income. Statewide the share of total personal income from earnings has been declining over the last several decades as the other sources have increased. In 2002, income from property investments accounted for 21 percent of the total in the rural open country.

Percent personal income by source, rural and urban Idaho, 2002

	Urban	Commuting	Rural Center	Open Country
Earnings	69	68	65	58
Dividends, interest and rent	18	15	20	21
Transfer	14	17	15	21
Total	100	100	100	100