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Orleans County

General Overview

Situated between Rochester and Buffalo, Orleans County is among the smaller counties in the Finger Lakes region. Orleans was formed in 1824 from portions of Genesee County, and saw a large population increase shortly thereafter, due to the Erie Canal. Large portions of the county consist of farmland; other sectors driving the economy include Manufacturing and Government.

Orleans County has a declining population, one of the highest rates of single families in the region, and growing child poverty. However, prekindergarten participation is the highest in the region, and the high school graduation rate exceeds the region and state. While unemployment has been relatively high, growth in salaries has been strong.

Demographic Overview

Orleans' population is shrinking:

- Orleans lost 6.4% of its population from 2000 to 2016, in contrast to increases of 14.8% for the nation, 4% for the state, and 1.1% for the region. Orleans declined the most of any county in the region.
- In 2016, Orleans was home to 41,350 residents, or 3% of the regional population. Orleans was the fourth smallest county in the region by population, ahead of Wyoming, Seneca, and Yates.

Like other counties in the region, Orleans County has a population that is aging:

- The number of residents 60-84 increased by 18% from 2000 to 2012-16, and those over 85 by 42%. During this same period, the number of residents aged 20-39 and those under the age of 20 decreased by 19% and 25%, respectively.

Orleans was the second most diverse county in the region, after Monroe:

- From 2000 to 2012-16, the African American and white population shrank (by 19% and 4% respectively), while the Asian and Hispanic populations grew (95% and 13% respectively). Orleans had the largest decrease of any county in its African American population, and its white population shrank faster than the state and region.
- In 2012-16, 90% of Orleans residents were white, the smallest share in the region besides Monroe. African Americans made up the largest minority group, at 6%, followed by Hispanic (5%) and Asian (1%) residents.

The makeup of Orleans households has changed considerably since 2000:

- In 2012-16, 18% of Orleans households consisted of married couples with children, a 7-point decline from 2000. During that period, there was a 3-point increase in both married couples with no children and those who live alone.
- Orleans had a similar share as the region of married couples with children, and the second largest share of single parents with children in 2012-16.

Arts, Culture and Leisure

Despite a substantial increase from 2005 to 2007, tourism revenue per resident has grown only slightly since and was the second lowest in the region in 2016:

- In 2016, tourism revenue per resident was \$617, well below the state (\$3,240) and the region (\$1,305). Only Wayne County had lower revenue per resident than Orleans.
- Revenue per resident grew by 50% from 2005 to 2007, but then decreased to lower levels in the years following. Revenue per resident only reached 2007 levels in 2015. Overall revenue per resident increased by only 4% between 2007 and 2016. The only other counties with increases of a similar scale from 2005 to 2007 were Seneca (47%) and Yates (78%).

A similar trend occurred with recreation spending per resident:

- From 2005 to 2007, recreation spending per resident more than quadrupled, far beyond any county or the state. However, since 2007, revenue has fallen by 8%. Orleans' recreation spending per resident level in 2016 was still below 2007 levels.
- In 2016, recreation spending was \$114 per resident, above the region (\$72) and the regional counties (except for Genesee and Wyoming) but below the state (\$363).

Children and Youth

The child poverty rate in Orleans has increased since 2000 and is now the highest in the region:

- In 2012-16, 24% of Orleans children lived below the poverty line, greater than the nation and region (both 21%), state (22%), or any county in the region.
- The rate rose by 8 points since 2000, greater than increases for the state (2 points), nation (4 points) and similar to the region (7 points).

The rate of single parent families in Orleans in 2012-16 increased 7 points since 2000 and is the second highest rate in the region:

- In 2012-16, 38% of families were headed by a single parent, above the nation (35%) and state (37%) and slightly lower than the region (39%). Orleans' rate is second only to Monroe (41%).

In 2015, 81% of Orleans mothers received prenatal care in the first trimester, above the state (76%) and the regional (79%) rates. Orleans early prenatal care rate has increased by 6 points since 2000, a larger increase than the region, state, nation, and all regional counties except for Genesee.

The rate of indicated cases of child abuse and neglect has more than doubled from 2000 to 2016, and was higher than the state and region:

- In 2016, there were 26 cases of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children under 18, more than the state (16) and region (18). Of regional counties, only Yates had a higher rate than Orleans.
- The rate in Orleans has more than doubled since 2000, a much larger increase than the state (21%), region (25%), and every other county. In 2000, Orleans had the lowest rate of any county in the region.

The rate of foster care admissions in Orleans was 3.6 per 1,000 children in 2016, an increase of 5% from 2000. Orleans' rate was above the state (2.0), region (2.1) and all of the surrounding counties.

The teen pregnancy rate in 2015 was 3.3%, higher than the region (2.2%) and every regional county.

Community Engagement

The voter registration rate in Orleans fell from a peak of 83% in 2005 to 76% in 2016, below the regional and state rates of 82% and 80% respectively.

Orleans also had relatively lower voter turnout:

- Just 29% of registered voters cast ballots in the 2014 midterms, below the region (35%) and every county in the region. Turnout fell by 5 points from 34% in the 2010 midterms.
- Turnout for the 2016 presidential election improved from 2012 – 50% of voters cast ballots, on par with the state and below the 58% for the region. Orleans' turnout in 2016 was lower than every other county in the region.

The share of registered borrowers increased by 8 points since 2000 in Orleans County, the only county in the region besides Monroe with an increase:

- In 2016, 65% of residents of Orleans' county library system were registered borrowers, above the state (55%) and region (63%).
- The number of library visits increased by 82% in Orleans, a greater increase than for the state and region, and most other counties in the region.

Average charitable giving was low in 2015, with an average contribution of \$2,960 per tax return, though it increased by 9% from 2011. Orleans' giving was the second lowest in the region, and was far below the \$6,000 for the nation, \$6,950 for the state, and \$4,440 for the region.

Economy

Unemployment in Orleans has consistently been higher than the nation, state and region:

- In 2016, the unemployment rate in Orleans was 5.7%; despite falling from a high of 9.7% in 2012, the rate was higher than the nation (4.9%), state (4.8%), region (4.7%), and every other county in the region except Wyoming
- Orleans' decrease of 3.9 points in the rate from 2010 to 2016 – a period of economic recovery after the Great Recession – was smaller than the nation, but higher than the region, the state, and many counties in the region.
- Total jobs in Orleans decreased by 1.6% from 2015 to 2016. A larger decrease than at the state (1.5%), national (1.7%), and regional (1.1%) level.

Total job growth since 2001 has been slightly above that of the region:

- The number of jobs in Financial Activities and Professional and Business Services grew by over 90% from 2001 to 2016. The increases outpaced the nation, state, and region. It is important to note that the small number of overall jobs for each sector means that a large increase in the sector's employment may represent a modest increase in total jobs.
- The manufacturing sector in Orleans grew by 29% from 2001 to 2016 – an extraordinary achievement, given large losses in the sector for the nation (down 23%), state (down 33%) and region (down 34%). Orleans was the only county besides Yates to experience an increase in manufacturing jobs over that period. Orleans also saw a large increase in Natural Resources and Mining jobs (115%), well above national, state, or regional increases.
- The Government, Information; and Trade, and Transportation sectors lost jobs from 2001 to 2016.

Growth in average salary in Orleans has been relatively strong:

- In 2016, the average salary in Orleans was \$39,490, an increase of 12% from 2000. This compares to an increase of 9% for the nation, 8 % for the state, and 3% for the region.
- However, Orleans' salary in 2016 was lower than the nation (\$52,950), state (\$67,090), and region (\$46,460).

Education

Orleans has had extraordinary growth in prekindergarten participation, and has the highest rate in the region:

- In 2016, 78% of eligible Orleans children were enrolled in prekindergarten, higher than the state (52%).
- The rate rose by 67 points from 2001, outpacing the state and regional increases (both 37 and 33 points respectively).

Student performance on Common Core-aligned tests in 2017 was relatively poor:

- The percent of students passing the 3rd grade English and 4th grade math tests (36% and 37% respectively) were 1 and 4 points below the regional rate. Orleans' proficiency rates were the third highest in ELA and third lowest rates in math among the regional counties.
- For 8th grade math, Orleans was 1 point above the region (16% passing), and for English was 2 points below the regional rate (38% versus 40%).

In 2017, for both the English (87%) and Algebra 1 (88%) Common Core Regents tests, Orleans had a higher percent passing than the state and the region.

The 4-year graduation rate in Orleans in 2017 (89%) was above the region and state 4 and 7 points respectively. Orleans' graduation rate rose by 8 points from 2008 to 2017.

Adults in Orleans were less educated than their peers in the country, state and region:

- In 2012-16, just 47% of adults 25 and older in Orleans had attended at least some college, well below the region (62%), state (59%), and nation (59%). Orleans had the lowest figure of any regional county except Wyoming.
- Adults who had obtained a bachelor's degree or higher made up a smaller share of the population (16%) than the state, nation, and region. Orleans had a higher share of high school graduates (39%) than the state, nation and region.
- The share of adults who had less than a high school diploma (14%) was above the region (10%) and nation (13%), and on par with the state (14%).

Spending per student by school districts in Orleans increased at a higher rate than the region, with a 61% increase since 2000. In 2016, Orleans school districts spent \$19,881 per student, below the state (\$23,361) and region (\$21,163).

Financial Self-Sufficiency

Orleans, like the nation, state and region experienced a drop in median household income, after adjusting for inflation:

- In 2012-16, the median household income in Orleans was \$48,731, the lowest among the counties in the region and well below the nation (\$55,322) and state (\$60,741).
- Median income in Orleans fell by 11% from 2000 to 2012-16, a larger drop than the state (3%) and the nation (9%).

Orleans' poverty rate was slightly higher than the nation, region, and the state:

- In 2012-16, 16% of Orleans residents were living in poverty – an increase of 5 points from 2000. The region and nation had smaller increases (4 points and 3 points respectively), while the state rate was unchanged.
- Orleans' rate in 2012-16 was very close to the state (15%), nation (15%), and region (14%).

In 2016, 2.8% of Orleans residents received temporary assistance, slightly below the state (2.9%) and on par with the region. Orleans' rate was higher than every county besides Monroe. The county's rate has increased by 0.4 points from 2000 in contrast to a drop of 0.7 points for the state and 0.3 points for the region.

In 2016, 7.5 emergency meals were served per resident, higher than the state (7.4) and region (6.8), but lower than most of the regional counties except Monroe, Genesee, Livingston, and Wyoming. The county rate increased 360% since 2000, higher than the state (1%) and the region (119%).

Health

In 2015, 7% of residents under the age of 65 did not have health insurance, above the regional rate of 6%, but below the state (8%) and national (11%) figures. Since 2008, the rate has fallen by 7 points in Orleans, compared to a 5-point drop for the state, 4-point drop for the region and 6-point drop for the nation.

In 2016, 18% of Orleans residents were enrolled in Medicaid Managed Care, above the regional figure (16%), and greater than in every county in the region except for Monroe, which it equaled. The rate decreased by 1 point from 2015.

Orleans' mortality rate was third highest among local counties:

- In 2015, the mortality rate was 781 deaths per 100,000 residents, well above the state (634), region (706).
- Most counties, the region, and state have demonstrated a decrease in mortality rates since 2000. Orleans' decrease (12%) was less than the state (-21%) and close to the region (-13%) decrease.

Since 2007, admissions to alcohol/substance abuse treatment facilities in Orleans have declined by 2%.

Housing

In 2012-16, the median home value in Orleans was \$92,000 – lowest among all surrounding counties, and below the state (\$286,300), nation (\$184,700) and region as a whole (\$130,462). This was a decrease of 7% from 2000 to 2012-16, a larger decrease than the 2% drop in the region overall and in contrast to increases for the state (39%) and nation (19%).

In 2012-16, the homeownership rate in Orleans was 76%, somewhat higher than rates of most surrounding counties, and well above the rates for the state (54%) and nation (64%). Homeownership rates changed little from 2000 to 2012-16 for the nation, state, region and all of its counties, and Orleans was no exception.

The ratio of median home value to median household income – a measure of housing affordability – was 1.6 in 2012-16, the lowest ratio among counties in the region and well below the state (3.4) and nation (2.6). Housing affordability for homeowners has remained flat since 2000 in Orleans. Orleans was not as affordable for renters however, with rent consuming 32% of household income, slightly higher than the 30% considered affordable.

Public Safety

While still low relative to the nation and region, Orleans' serious crime rate has risen while other rates have fallen:

- In 2016, there were 181 serious crimes per 10,000 people, lower than the region (215) and nation (284) but higher than the state (166).
- Orleans' rate has increased 16% since 2000, in contrast to steep drops nationally (31%), regionally (39%), and statewide (46%).

Orleans' violent crime rate rose during the mid-2000s, then fell until 2014 before climbing to 19 per 10,000 in 2016, 46% higher than the rate in 2000. The rise in Orleans' rate from 2000 to 2016 was larger than the regional increase (17%) and in contrast to large decreases for the nation (24) and state (32).

The juvenile delinquency intake rate in Orleans County has fluctuated since 2000, ranging from 47 intakes per 10,000 children in 2003 to 212 in 2006. In 2016, the rate was 119, higher than the state (45) and region (51), and an increase of 45% from 82 per 10,000 in 2015.

Note: Data research and analysis completed by [the Center for Governmental Research](#)