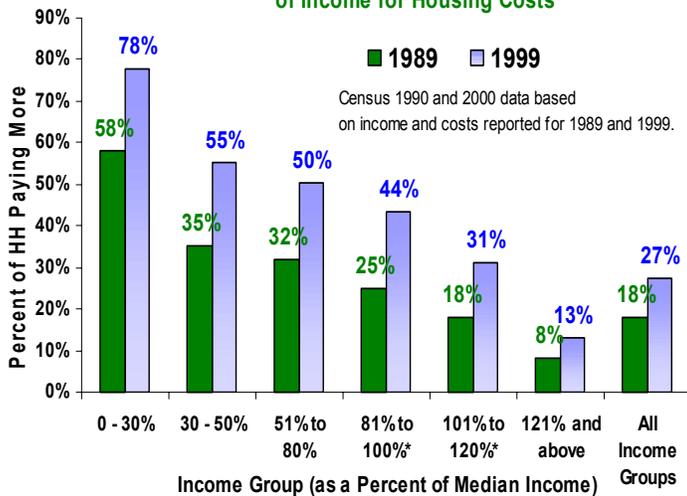


**Census 2000 Shows Increase in Proportion of Income Spent on Housing**

Census 2000 data showing the percent of income spent by renters and owners on their housing costs (tabulated by income level) has recently been released. It indicates that both renters and owners in King County spent a larger proportion of their income on housing in 1999 than in 1989.<sup>2</sup>

The graphs below indicate the proportion of King County households in each income group that spent more than 30% of their income on housing. When low-income families pay more than 30% of their income for housing, resources are often diverted from other essentials – clothing, food and utilities. These households may be at greater risk of homelessness, since any financial setback can compromise their ability to pay their rent, mortgage or property taxes. For renter households it is very difficult to save for a down payment on a home.

**Proportion of Owner Households Paying more than 30% of Income for Housing Costs**



**Owner Households Experience Most Change**

As the graphs show, the change was more dramatic for owner households than for renters. At all income levels, more households paid above 30% of their income for housing in 1999 than in 1989. For the three lowest income groups, well over half of all households overpaid for housing. For those below 30% of median income, only 22% of households could really afford the cost of their home.

As the front-page article points out, the costs of home ownership have improved somewhat since 1999. Lower interest rates encourage homeowners

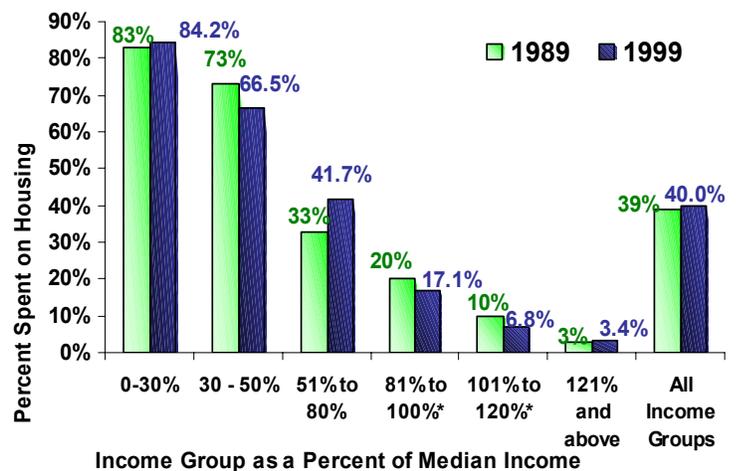
<sup>2</sup> Detailed Housing Characteristics, 1990 and 2000 Census. This census data reports on costs and income for the previous year (1989 and 1999 respectively).

to refinance their home, often saving them several hundred dollars a month in mortgage payments. But at lower income levels, many owner-households have incomes which don't adequately reflect cost-of-living increases. Their incomes have not kept pace with rising home values, and meeting higher property taxes imposes a considerable burden. For the elderly, loss of value in securities may also significantly cut into their retirement income. In working households at least one worker may be unemployed or underemployed.

**Effects on Renter Households Less Clear**

Among renter households, in two income categories (under 30% of median income, and 50 – 80% of median income), there were more households paying over 30% of their income for rent in 1999 than in 1989. However, in the other income groups, there were slightly lower proportions overpaying for housing than in 1989. Among all income groups, the proportion rose one percentage point from 39% in 1989 to 40% in 1999.

**Proportion of Renter Households Who Pay More than 30% of Income for Rent**



**Homeless Find Shelter in Boxes and Trees**

Over 300 volunteers spread out over Seattle and Kent on October 18<sup>th</sup> as part of an annual homeless count. This informal, non-comprehensive count found 2,040 homeless this year, with new areas in Rainier Valley and Kent included. 1,454 were counted last year compared to 1,862 in the same areas this year - a 22% increase.

Tom Carr, Seattle City Attorney, found a gentleman sleeping in a cardboard appliance box, and Teresa Donovan of Plymouth Housing Group found another person perched in a tree 15 feet off the ground. Many of the counters expressed grave concern for the survival of the women, men, and children they found sleeping outside.