

Asotin County profile

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Overview

Regional context

Asotin County, established in 1883, is in the farthest southeastern corner of Washington, bounded on the east by Idaho and on the south by Oregon. Garfield County makes up its western border and part of its northern border as well. The balance of its northern border is shared with Whitman County.

Before white exploration and settlement, the semi-nomadic Nez Perce inhabited what is now Asotin County. Tribes on both sides of the Nez Perce Trail used it for commerce, which was of strategic importance to the development of the region. Modern-day highways largely parallel the old trail.

The establishment of the territory and the end of the Indian Wars resulted in an influx of white settlers into the county. Asotin, a former Nez Perce village, attracted settlers who were producing cattle, fruit and vegetables for mining camps in Idaho by 1868. Most economic development in the county was linked to mining activity in Idaho.

By the 1950s, agriculture dominated Asotin County's economy with grain crops, such as wheat and barley, as well as peas, berries, tree fruits and nuts, which were clustered near the river. The food processing industry grew up around these crops and the meat and dairy farms.

The dense stands of fir in the Blue Mountains made lumber and wood products a growth industry. Hunting and other outdoor recreation have been growth industries too. The completion of the Lower Granite Dam in 1975 shut down orchard and beef-processing activities along the river as land was submerged, but it created one of the longest inland water routes in the nation. Agriculture remained important, but now shared top billing with port activity at Clarkston-Lewiston and the federal U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which operated the dam. Population growth followed the port activity at both Clarkston and Lewiston, fueling trade and service sectors catering to their needs.

Source: Historic Glimpses of Asotin County by E.V. Kuykendall, Bob Weatherley of the Asotin County American

Local economy

Based on the [Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages](#) (QCEW), in 2020 overall employment grew by 0.5 percent to 6,459, which was led by retail trade growth of 161 new jobs or 15.5 percent over the year. Health care and social assistance added 53 new jobs or 3.4 percent. Professional and technical services grew by 45 new jobs. Also, other industries that added employment includes administrative and waste services (7 new jobs), agriculture (6 new jobs), and real estate and rental and leasing industry with 4 new jobs over the year.

Economic growth is much diversified and varies among those in goods-producing and service-providing industries. These changes are giving many indicators towards employment expansion and opportunities for the local resident labor force.

All the other industries have recorded decreases or remained unchanged over the year. The largest employment loss was in government services sector with 64 fewer jobs. Other industries that have decreased over the year include accommodations and food services (51 jobs), information services with 2 fewer jobs, and other services sectors lost 31 jobs over the year.

Agricultural employment also continues to play an oversized role regarding the overall contribution to the county’s economic well-being beyond covered employment. High prices for wheat positively impact wholesale sales employment, retail sales and the overall quantity of money flowing through the economy. Market value of all products sold was over \$12.9 million, which was down by 37.0 percent from the 2012 Agricultural Census. Crop sales represented 58.48 percent of total value of products sold, while livestock, poultry, and their products accounted for 42.0 percent of total sales. Average per farm sales were \$62,961, which decreased by 43.2 percent since 2012. Top crop production in Asotin County is winter wheat for grain.

Source: Employment Security Department; Asotin County data tables

Geographic facts

	Asotin County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	636.21	34
People per square mile, 2010	34.0	20

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

Most of the growth in the county is expected to be in the service-providing industries. Some of the growing industries include health care, retail trade and accommodation and food services. Construction activities have been strong in the county. Asotin County retail trade dominated in growth with 161 new jobs, or an increase of 15.5 percent. Food and beverage stores were the largest contributors to the county’s job expansion and stability with 113 additional jobs.

Health care and social assistance recorded an average growth of 3.4 percent over the year with 53 new jobs. Segments of growth are social assistance and nursing and residential care facilities. Local population needs for health care services continues to grow in trend with the state and national health care demands. Outlook for health care in Asotin County is very positive and growing. Health care and social assistance makes up over 24.9 percent of total employment in the county with average annual growth of 7.6 percent over the past five years.

As we move forward, we can see growth in professional and technical services industry as population expands their implementation of technology in their work and privet lives. The three-year average annual growth rate at 2.1 percent and this industry makes up 3.4 percent of total covered employment.

Retail trade industry is yet another industry to keep an eye on for the next couple of years, as the area expands with offerings for the local and regional resident population. Average annual growth rate for this industry has been 4.0 percent a year for the past three years with 18.6 percent share of the total employment.

Agriculture employment in the county is expected to continue a slowdown as wheat production becomes increasingly mechanized. For the region, wheat crop production was at levels considered very profitable, historically. Commodities across most markets have continued to see impacts and, in few cases, benefit from changing levels of global trade, demand and monetary valuation.

Labor force and unemployment

Current labor force and unemployment statistics are available on the [Labor force](#) page on ESD's labor market information website.

The total county labor force was estimated at 10,623 in 2021, about 2.8 percent more than in 2020. The labor force in the county started slowly rebounding in 2012 and decreased in 2020 during pandemic by 1.3 percent. In 2021 labor force recovered from pandemic slump and added more workforce to its ranks. Unemployment in 2021 was 3.7 percent with total of 395 people looking for work. The labor force participation rate in 2019 was 56.6 percent, from 55.9 percent in 2010. The number of employed residents increased by 4.4 percent over the year, or 429 more resident job holders, while the number of unemployed decreased in 2021 by 137 or 25.8 percent.

Source: Employment Security Department; Asotin County data tables

Industry employment

Current industry employment statistics are available on the [Labor area summaries](#) page on ESD's labor market information website.

In 2020, QCEW data show Asotin County averaged 6,4657 covered jobs, up by 0.5 percent from 6,436 in 2019. Of these jobs, the service-providing sector dominated with 83.9 percent of total covered employment while goods-producing industries make up only 16.1 percent.

Asotin County goods-producing industries have grown over the year with an increase of seven jobs or 0.7 percent. Construction is continuing expansion in employment, while manufacturing and agriculture are seeing some structural changes in employment with decreases and restructuring.

- Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting continued to be a small component of total 2020 employment at 1.2 percent. Total covered payrolls were \$1.83 million. Overall average agricultural wages were \$23,738 for the workers. Agricultural employment in Asotin County increased over the year by 8 jobs or 11.6 percent. Long-term change shows annual decline in industry of 2.0 percent over the past five years.
- Construction employment decreased after eighth consecutive years of growth. Decrease was only 4 or 0.8 percent of jobs. Losses are coming from heavy and civil engineering construction and construction of buildings, while specialty trade contractors expanded and by 6.7 percent over the year. The total count was 521 covered jobs, which is the highest in the past ten years. Average annual growth for construction has been 5.6 percent a year over the past five years. Construction is the fifth-largest industry in the county with 8.1 percent of employment and an average \$57,353 annual wage.
- Manufacturing decreased by 5.9 percent in 2020 from 2019, for a total employment loss of 26 jobs or 5.9 percent. Manufacturing makes up only 6.4 percent of total employment or 414 jobs. Manufacturing pays a \$44,878 average annual wage. Major loss of jobs occurred in transportation equipment manufacturing, while machinery manufacturing increased by 18.2 percent. The transportation-specific industry is primarily jet boat manufacturing which has national and international appeal.

- Retail trade is the second largest industry in the county with 18.6 percent share of total employment. Retail employment increased over the year by 15.9 percent or 165 jobs. Average wages in the retail sector tend to be lower than those of other industries at \$35,208 annually. Total employment in the retail trade was 1,205 in 2020. The largest expansion in retail trade had been in food and beverage stores, which followed by general merchandise stores growth over the year.
- Health care and social assistance in Asotin County is the largest industry that made up 25.0 percent of total employment in 2020. It has been and continues to be a key source of jobs for the county. The total number of jobs in health care and social assistance is 1,614 with an increase of 3.5 percent, or 54 jobs from the 2019 level. The health care and social assistance industry paid on average \$47,129 annually. The largest expansion came from social assistance segments with 27 and hospitals with 28 new jobs. Average annual growth rate for healthcare has been 7.6 percent a year for the past five years.
- The accommodation and food services industry had 9.7 percent of total employment with a total of 626 jobs in 2020. This industry was hard hit during pandemic with the loss of 7.9 percent or 54 job over the year. The largest losses in employment were in food services and drinking establishments. Total covered payrolls in Asotin County for this industry was \$12.4 million, which is translated to a \$19,817 average annual wage. Even as it is the lowest paying industry in the county, this industry remains an important support industry for the business community, visitors and area residents.
- Government administration makes up 17.2 percent of total employment in the area, with a total of 1,114 jobs in 2020. Government employment decreased by 5.4 percent from 2019, mainly in local government. Most of the government employment is in local and state education and health services. Government is the third-largest industry segment in the county with a total covered payroll of \$53.1 million, which translates to an average annual wage of \$47,697.

For historical industry employment data, [contact an economist](#).

Source: Employment Security Department; Asotin County data tables

Industry employment by age and gender

The Local Employment Dynamics (LED) database, a joint project of state employment departments and the U.S. Census Bureau, matches state employment data with federal administrative data. Among the products is industry employment by age and gender. All workers covered by state unemployment insurance data are included; federal workers and non-covered workers, such as the self-employed, are not. Data are presented by place of work, not place of residence.

Asotin County highlights:

In 2020, men held 44.6 percent of the jobs in Asotin County and women held 55.4 percent.

- Workers over the age of 55 held 25.1 percent of all employment, close to the state number of 23.0 percent.
- Workers between the ages of 35 and 44 held 20.4 percent of all employment, which is followed by workers 25 to 34 years of age with 20.3 percent of all employment.

- Male-dominated industries included construction (84.2 percent), manufacturing (81.4 percent), transportation and warehousing (71.2 percent), agriculture (71.9 percent), and wholesale trade (65.3 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included health care and social assistance (80.4 percent), professional, scientific and technical services (74.2 percent), finance and insurance (74.0 percent), education services (71.0 percent), and the other services (58.8 percent).

Source: Employment Security Department; Asotin County data tables

Wages and income

- In 2020, employers in Asotin County paid \$280.6 million in wages, which increased by 5.5 percent from \$266.0 million in 2019.
- The average annual wage for jobs in the county increased by 5.0 percent to \$43,407 in 2020 from \$41,330 in 2019.
- The 2020 median hourly wage for Asotin County was \$20.86, which increased by 4.6 percent over the year. The county's median wage is below the state figure of \$29.28, and the state figure minus King County of \$25.01.
- Median household income was \$55,794 in 2019 estimates. This is much lower than the state average of \$85,863, and the nation of \$74,592.
- Workers living in Asotin County earn a large portion of their income outside of the county. In 2020, workers earned over 53.1 percent of their total wages working outside of the county. Percent of earnings from jobs in the county going to workers living outside the county steadily increased for the past eight years, going from 23.0 percent to 31.7 percent in 2020.

Personal income

Personal income includes earned income, investment income, and government transfer payments such as Social Security and veterans' benefits. Investment income includes income imputed from pension funds and from owning a home. Per capita personal income equals total personal income divided by the resident population.

- Per capita income in Asotin County was \$49,273 in 2020, and this increased 6.7 percent over the year. Asotin County per capita income is 82.8 percent of the U.S. average (\$59,510) and 73.4 percent of Washington's average (\$67,126).
- Investment income was 18.0 percent of per capita total income in 2020.
- Government transfer payments, as a proportion of total income, have risen steadily from 12 percent in 1969 to 32 percent in 2020.
- The poverty rate for Asotin County in 2019 was estimated at 15.7 percent, above the states poverty rate of 13.6 percent, and below the national poverty rate of 18.5 percent.

Source: Employment Security Department; Asotin County data tables

Population

The U.S. Census estimates the population of Asotin County in 2021 was 22,397. Since 2010, the county's population has increased 3.6 percent, slower than the 15.1 percent for the state.

- Asotin County had 34.0 people per square mile in 2010. The state had 101.2 people per square mile
- Largest city in the county is Clarkston at 7,220 people.
- The population has experienced more net in-migration than natural increases.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Population facts

	Asotin County	Washington state
Population 2021	22,397	7,738,692
Population 2010	21,623	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2021	3.6%	15.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Age, gender and ethnicity

- In 2021, Asotin County had 20.0 percent of its population under age 18, compared to 21.8 percent statewide.
- The population for those 65 years and over was 24.0 percent, compared with 15.9 percent statewide.
- Females were 51.1 percent of the population, compared to 49.9 percent statewide.
- Asotin County was less diverse than the state in terms of race and in 2020, 89.8 percent of residents were white and non-Latino, compared with 67.5 percent statewide.
- Hispanic or Latino residents represented 4.4 percent of the population, compared to 13.0 percent statewide.

Demographics

	Asotin County	Washington state
Population by age, 2021		
Under 5 years old	5.1%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	20.0%	21.8%
65 years and older	24.0%	15.9%
Females, 2021	51.1%	49.9%
Race/ethnicity, 2021		
White	93.2%	78.5%
Black	0.8%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	1.8%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	1.3%	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	4.4%	13.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Educational attainment

- In 2021, Asotin County residents over the age of 25 had high school graduation rates of 91.0 percent, similar to their statewide counterparts at 91.7 percent.
- An estimated 23.4 percent of those over 25 had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36.7 percent statewide.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau County Profile](#)
- [2020 Census State Profile](#)
- [Asotin County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Asotin County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Asotin County History](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Asotin County home page](#)
- [Port of Clarkston](#)
- [Economic Development in Lewis-Clark Valley](#)
- [Southeast Washington Economic Development Association](#)

Employment Security Department is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Language assistance services for limited English proficient individuals are available free of charge. Washington Relay Service: 711.