

Clallam County profile



By Jim Vleming,
Regional labor economist
Updated May 2022

[Overview](#) | [Geographic facts](#) | [Outlook](#) | [Labor force and unemployment](#) | [Industry employment](#) | [Wages and income](#) | [Population](#) | [Useful links](#)

Overview

Regional context

Clallam County occupies a long and narrow area in the most northwestern corner of Washington state. Encompassing part of the Olympic Peninsula, the county includes 1,738 square miles of mostly forested and mountainous land. Clallam County is full of natural wonders and many tourists and locals visit the [Olympic National Park](#), which attracted over 2.7 million [visitors](#) in 2021.

The region's 200 miles of coastline have fostered the maritime and fishing industries. Traditionally, much of the economy of the county has reflected this natural abundance with jobs in forestry, wood products and fisheries. As demand has declined for some of the goods-producing and agricultural products in the county, the service sector, including leisure and tourism, has grown in their place. The labor market continues to develop, benefiting from the region's natural resources.

Local economy

Around 1851, the first white settlers staked their claims in the area. Clallam County was created in 1854 from bordering Jefferson County. The county's name is derived from the Klallam or S'Klallam people who continue to play a significant role in the county. In 1890, Port Angeles was named the county seat. Sequim and Forks are the other two incorporated cities in the county.

Logging was the primary industry and benefitted greatly when railroads made it possible to reach further and further into the great conifer stands. Hydroelectric power from the Elwha River dam spurred the first large sawmill in the area. The "Big Mill" was the largest employer in the county for the next 25 years. World War I fueled the need for spruce, which was vital to building the first airplanes. In the 1920s, pulp production took off in Port Angeles, providing the growing need for newsprint and cellulose.

After World War II, growth continued in timber and agriculture. Commercial and sport fishing activities became increasingly important. In the 1960s, Clallam County tribes reclaimed traditions and reasserted tribal rights to shares of the fish harvests. The Jamestown S'Klallam tribe won federal recognition in 1981, and received trust land at Blyn on Sequim Bay, which now houses a tribal center and casino.

The service sector has been experiencing growth over the past decade. In 2021, it accounted for over 88.5 percent of all nonfarm employment. The county houses a prison, a hospital and school district, which are the top employers. The city of Forks continues to be a tourist attraction after the Twilight movies put it on the map.

Other new industries have moved into the county in the past decade, increasing overall employment. In 2021, goods producing industries advanced 6.8 percent over 2020, including both construction, up 8.6 percent and manufacturing, up 5.1 percent.

In summary, over the past 20 years, the economy in Clallam County has experienced slow but steady growth. This economic growth has been shaped by a vibrant port district in the county’s major coastal city of Port Angeles. New in-migration is also on the rise as many retirees are attracted to Sequim’s “sunbelt” climate.

Geographic facts

	Clallam County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,738.33	20
People per square mile, 2010	41.1	18

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

The year 2020 was a year of inertia as growth was a challenge in Clallam County. Then in March, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the economy slipped into reverse. The preliminary 2021 nonfarm job totals show the emergence of recovery. Nonfarm employment in the county was 23,300 in 2021, up from 22,420 in 2020. The preliminary 2021 numbers continue to lag the pre-pandemic total of 23,530 in 2019.

The continued closure of the Canadian border through 2021 further impacted the economy. With the border restrictions eased in April 2022, the local economy will feel a boost. The availability of small business loans and the resilient nature of the local economy certainly won’t hurt the recovery moving forward.

Science and academic institutions in the county continue to research important topics and educate the next generation of the labor force. The Department of Energy’s Marine Sciences Laboratory is based at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Sequim. Current projects at the lab include ocean energy development, impact of populations on marine environments and improved coastline security. The hope is to find a vibrant opportunity for growth in the areas of marine conservation and aquaculture.

Peninsula College continues to be a vibrant part of the community by offering programs including advanced manufacturing, community education and worker retraining. It has three campus locations – Port Angeles, Port Townsend and Forks.

Labor force and unemployment

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

The 2021 civilian labor force (29,275) increased from 2020 levels (28,904). The total number of employed residents increased by over 1,413 over the period. The number of unemployed residents was down by over 1,042 over the year. The not seasonally adjusted preliminary 2021 unemployment rate stood at 6.5 percent, down from the 10.2 percent rate posted in 2020. The pandemic was the ingredient that sent the numbers into double digits in 2020, then eased to friendlier levels in 2021.

Source: Employment Security Department/Data Division

Industry employment

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

Clallam County had an estimated 23,300 nonfarm jobs in 2021 up from the 22,420 posted in 2020. The jobs picture appears brighter heading into 2022 as some of the pandemic questions finally appear to have some answers.

- The goods-producing sector in the county employed 2,670 during 2021. The manufacturing sector accounted for 1,030 of those jobs.
- The service-providing sector employed 20,630 in 2021, with retail trade and leisure and hospitality combined accounting for 6,050 jobs.
- Government was the leader in nonfarm employment providing 7,830 jobs in 2021.

Nonfarm job growth in the county has been less than spectacular, since 2000, the annual rate of growth has been 0.6 percent.

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

Source: Employment Security Department/Data Division

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.

Clallam County highlights:

In 2020, the largest job holder age group in Clallam County was the 55 and older age category, making up 29.1 percent of employment across all industries. The next largest share was among people aged 35 to 44 with 21.7 percent of employment.

- In 2020, the county's workers mirrored state patterns with workers ages 14 to 24 dominating the accommodation and food services jobs in the county. This age group was also well represented in arts, entertainment and recreation, and retail trade.
- Workers in the 55 year and older age category were prevalent in utilities, educational services, transportation and warehousing, real estate and rental and leasing, and health care and social assistance.

Females made up 52.6 percent of the labor force in Clallam County with males making up the difference at 47.4 percent in 2020. Men were more often represented in higher paying industries.

- Male-dominated industries included construction (84.1 percent), manufacturing (83.2 percent) and transportation and warehousing (77.6 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included finance and insurance (75.0 percent), health care and social assistance (76.6 percent) and educational services (69.7 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

Wages and income

In 2020, there were 22,328 jobs covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of over \$1 billion.

The average annual wage was \$45,547 below the state's average annual wage of \$76,801.

The median hourly wage in 2020 was \$22.52, below the state's median hourly wage of \$29.28 and the state excluding King County median hourly wage of \$25.01.

Personal income

Personal income includes earned income, investment income and government 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.

In 2020, the per capita personal income was \$49,718, less than the state (\$67,126) and the nation's (\$59,510).

The median household income was \$55,090 in 2020. The county's median was less than the state's (\$77,006) and the nation's (\$64,994).

In 2020, 13.3 percent of the population was living below the poverty level, higher than the state at 9.5 percent and the nation at 11.4 percent. The state and national rates are not directly comparable to the county rate because they each use different data sources.

Source: Employment Security Department; Bureau of Labor Statistics; Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Population

Clallam County's population estimate in 2021 was 78,209. The population in Clallam County has increased from the 71,404 residents counted in the 2010 census.

Port Angeles is the largest city in the county with 20,120 residents in 2021, up from 19,038 in 2010.

Sequim is the next largest city with 8,125 residents in 2021, up from 6,606 in 2010.

Population facts

	Clallam County	Washington state
Population 2021	78,209	7,738,692
Population 2010	71,404	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2021	9.53%	15.08%

Source: Office of Financial Management; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Age, gender and ethnicity

Clallam County had almost double the population in the 65 and older age category compared to the state in 2021.

- Clallam County's population of those aged 65 and older was 30.5 percent compared to the state's 15.9 percent.

- The next largest group, those under 18, was 16.7 percent in the county, less than that of the state's 21.8 percent.
- The youngest group, those under five years old, was 4.3 percent in Clallam County compared to the state's 6.0 percent.

Females in 2021 made up 50.6 percent of the county's population compared to 49.9 percent of the state.

Clallam County showed much less diversity in 2021 than the state. In 2021, the white alone category accounted for 87.1 percent of the county population followed by Hispanic or Latino at 6.6 percent and American Indian and Alaskan Native at 5.6 percent.

Demographics

	Clallam County	Washington state
Population by age, 2021		
Under 5 years old	4.3%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	16.7%	21.8%
65 years and older	30.5%	15.9%
Females, 2021	50.6%	49.9%
Race/ethnicity, 2021		
White	87.1%	78.5%
Black	1.2%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	5.6%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	2.1%	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	6.6%	13.0%

Educational attainment

Most of Clallam County residents age 25 and older (92.1 percent) were high school graduates, which exceeds the 91.7 percent of Washington state's residents and the 88.5 percent of U.S. residents during 2016 to 2020.

Those with a bachelor's degree or higher made up 28.8 percent of Clallam County residents age 25 and older compared to 36.7 percent of state residents and 32.9 percent of U.S. residents during the same period.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Clallam County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Clallam Economic Development Council](#)
- [Clallam County History](#)
- [Clallam County home page](#)
- [Clallam County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Port of Port Angeles](#)
- [Peninsula College](#)

- [Sequim Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Pacific Northwest National Laboratory](#)
- [Elwha River Restoration](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Washington Ports](#)
- [Workforce Development Areas and WorkSource Office Directory](#)
- [Emerald Coast Opportunity Zone](#)
- [City of Forks](#)
- [City of Port Angeles](#)
- [City of Sequim](#)
- [Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe](#)

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.