

Franklin County profile

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Overview

Regional context

Franklin County, named for Benjamin Franklin, was created from Whitman County in 1883. The county is located in southeastern Washington at the convergence of the Snake and Columbia rivers. The Columbia River forms its western border, and the Snake River forms its southern and eastern borders. Adams County is to its north. The railroads secured the county's future as towns grew up around its railroad stations. Ranching and farming have continued to be the economic mainstay of Franklin County. It ranked 27th in the state in terms of land area and 15th in the state in people per square mile (62.9) in 2010.

Local economy

Native Americans were the first people who inhabited this area, hunting game and fishing salmon. In the 1850s, white prospectors traveled through the area to the gold rush in British Columbia. Some stayed to raise sheep and plant orchards. The 1855 treaty agreements resulted in the native people ceding their lands to the United States and moving onto reservations.

In the 1800s, cattle and horse ranches dominated much of the northern county while orchards flourished elsewhere. With the coming of the railroad, settlements started at the mouth of the Snake River. Pasco was connected to Kennewick through ferry-operated services and steamboats, which ended in 1887 when the first railroad bridge connected Pasco to Kennewick. The railroad furthered development throughout the 1900s. There were settlements of Chinese who worked for the railroad. Some of the Chinese panned gold and operated businesses in the rail towns.

There was unremarkable growth until World War II when the U.S. Army-Air Force base moved to Pasco and the Hanford project moved to Richland. In 1948, the first farm received water from the Grand Coulee Dam irrigation system. Manufacturing and storage facilities, including ice houses and fruit packing facilities, followed.

The 1990s and 2000s brought increasing industrial diversity with continued agriculture and food manufacturing as its economic base. The economic downturn, however, did not spare Franklin County. The county's rate of unemployment has risen, and the length of joblessness has increased. Construction, real estate and rental and leasing were the industries that lost the most employment during the recession. Industries that are creating stability in the area include food manufacturing, agriculture and private and public educational and health care services.

Franklin County became the first Hispanic-majority county in the Pacific Northwest. It is also one of the region's fastest growing counties.

Geographic facts

	Franklin County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,242.17	27
People per square mile, 2010	62.9	15

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

Local population growth, which has increased by 25.7 percent since 2010, continues to drive demand for more educational, health care services and other service delivery industries.

The good news is that the housing market in the county is stable with growing housing inventories and affordable prices. Affordability of housing continues to decrease as the housing process continues to increase from year to year. In return, this is putting a lot of pressure on county planning for housing expansion.

Over the past year, there have been many industries that have contributed to job growth in Franklin County including construction, private educational services, administrative and waste services, professional and technical services, finance and insurance, information, and health care and social assistance.

Average annual employment growth in Franklin County was 0.4 percent for the past five years, this was brought down by a decrease in employment over the year due to COVID-19 by 4.0 percent.

Nonfarm employment projections are down for Benton and Franklin counties combined, and the two counties together are expected to grow at the rate of 1.0 percent a year through 2029.

Industries that are projected to add the most jobs include private and public education, health care, construction, and other services.

Labor force and unemployment

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

The Franklin County total resident labor force was estimated at 43,810 in 2021, which was 0.1 percent lower than in 2020. The Franklin County unemployment rate was 6.6 percent in 2021, which was 0.5 percent more than in 2018. Resident employment increased by 897 jobs over the year to 40,929, while the number of unemployed residents decreased by 925 to 2,881 in 2021.

The labor force picture is starting to decline after a slight increase in 2020. The labor force participation rate was 64.5 percent in 2019, compared to 66.4 in 2018. It is more volatile year to year in Franklin County compared to the state because of the county's core agricultural industries and resident labor force activities.

The most current data show that the Franklin County March revised 2022 unemployment rate was 7.4 percent, a decrease of 0.7 percent from the 8.1 percent reading in March 2021.

Industry employment

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

Total covered employment in Franklin County was 33,592 in 2020, which has decreased by 3.9 percent or 1,365 jobs since 2019 due to COVID-19 impacts and closures. The five-year average annual growth rate of Franklin County covered employment was 0.4 percent.

The average annual wage for covered employment in Franklin County was \$47,010 in 2020, an increase of 6.8 percent over the year. Franklin County total covered annual payroll in 2020 was \$1.58 billion, which is 2.6 percent higher than in 2019.

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division

Top 10 Franklin County industries in 2020

Rank	Industry	Percent share of total employment
1	Government	19.1%
2	Agriculture	18.7%
3	Manufacturing	11.1%
4	Retail trade	9.6%
5	Health care and social assistance	9.3%
6	Construction	7.2%
7	Accommodation and food services	5.3%
8	Wholesale trade	5.7%
9	Transportation and warehousing	3.8%
10	Administrative and waste services	2.8%

Goods-producing industries, which include natural resources, mining, construction and manufacturing, decreased in employment from 2019 to 2020 by 0.9 percent, or 115 jobs.

Average annual employment in 2020 was 12,385 workers and annual wages totaled \$535.0 million, with an increase over the year of 5.6 percent. Total payrolls translated to a \$43,191 average annual wage for goods-producing workers.

- Manufacturing decreased employment over the year by 1.7 percent or by 66 jobs to 3,715 in 2020, with average annual pay of \$48,693. Manufacturing represented about 11.1 percent of total covered employment.
 - The food manufacturing subsector decreased by 0.5 percent over the year and provides over 2,945 jobs with an average annual wage of \$47,561.
- Construction accounted for 7.2 percent of the total average annual employment in the county, or 2,403 jobs.
 - The average annual wage in construction was \$54,350 in 2020.
 - Over the year, the construction sector increased by 7.6 percent or 170 jobs. Construction activities are moving forward with new housing developments to accommodate the current population demand, along with all the new commercial construction in local educational services.
- Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Franklin County, representing 18.7 percent of total employment. It is, however, highly seasonal and volatile from year to year.
 - Average annual employment in agriculture in 2020 was 6,267, with a decrease over the year of 3.4 percent or 219 jobs.

- The average annual wage in agriculture was \$36,652, mainly due to the seasonality of agricultural activities.
- Crop production represents 49.7 percent of total agriculture, which is largely in non-citrus fruit farming including apple orchards, grape vineyards and other produce.
- Support activities shared 38.6 percent of employment, which includes post-harvest crop activity.

Service-providing industries in 2020 have a 63.1 percent share of Franklin County's total employment of 33,592. There was an average of 21,208 jobs in this industry, which paid an average annual wage of \$49,238 in 2020. Over the year, service-providing industries decreased by 1,247 jobs, or 5.6 percent.

- Retail trade is the largest employing private service industry in Franklin County, representing 9.6 percent of total employment and the fourth largest of all industries after agriculture, government and manufacturing.
 - Retail trade is usually a very stable industry. In 2020, this industry had an average of 3,212 jobs, which paid an average annual wage of \$37,836.
 - However, the retail trade industry decreased by 4.4 percent over the year, with many industry segments decreasing due to the mandated closures during the pandemic.
- Health care and social assistance employment in the private sector was 3,140 jobs, which represented about 9.3 percent of total employment in 2020. Over the year this industry increased by 4.6 percent or 138 jobs, for which pandemic-related demand spurred the growth for health care services.
 - The average annual wage in this industry was \$44,724.
 - The five-year average annual growth rate in this industry has been over 6.7 percent, with continuous growth due to population expansion and demand.
- Public administration is the largest service-providing industry in Franklin County with a 19.1 percent share of total employment. Over the year, this industry decreased by 3.3 percent or 222 job loss due to school closures during the pandemic.
 - The largest share of employment in this industry is in the local school administration and health care services as there is more demand by growing population.
 - This industry had an average annual employment of 6,430 in 2020, and an average annual wage of \$60,728.

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

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division, QCEW

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.

Franklin County highlights:

In 2020, the largest share of employment was held by those 35 to 44 years of age with a 21.9 percent share. The second-largest share is in 25 to 34 year-olds at 21.2 percent. These county numbers are close to the state's figure of 23.1 and 23.0 percent, respectively. In addition, 45 to 54 year-olds had a 19.7 percent share of employment in Franklin County.

- The county's demographics showed male workers held 55.8 percent and females held 44.2 percent of all jobs.
- Male-dominated industries included mining (87.6 percent), wholesale trade (80.5 percent), construction (78.2 percent), transportation and warehousing (77.3 percent), utilities (72.8 percent) and real estate and rental and leasing (67.1 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included health care and social assistance (79.1 percent), educational services (69.5 percent), finance and insurance (67.7 percent), professional, scientific and technical services (55.7) and accommodation and food services (55.2 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

Wages and income

In 2020, there were 33592 jobs in Franklin County covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of over \$1.58 billion.

The average annual wage was \$47,013, well below the state's average annual wage of \$73,504. The median hourly wage in 2021 was at \$21.46, below the state's median hourly wage of \$30.50.

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, Franklin County's personal income totaled \$4.2 billion, which translates to a \$43,271 per capita personal income. Franklin County's per capita personal income was 35.5 percent less than the state (\$67,126) and 27.8 percent less than the nation (\$59,510).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, the median household income was \$66,904 in 2016 through 2020. The county's median was less than that of the state (\$77,006) during the same period but higher than nation at (\$64,994).

Franklin County's poverty rate of 12.4 percent was higher than Washington state's rate of 9.5 percent and the nation's rate of 11.4 percent in 2020, according to U.S Census Bureau QuickFacts.

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

Population

In 2021, Franklin County's population was 98,268. Since 2010, Franklin County has had a 25.7 percent or 2.3 percent annual growth rate. In comparison, the state grew by 15.1 percent from 2010 to 2021, which is a 1.37 percent annual growth rate.

The largest city in Franklin County is Pasco, the county seat, with a population of 77,100 in 2019.

Population facts

	Franklin County	Washington state
Population 2021	98,268	7,738,692
Population 2010	78,163	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2021	25.7%	15.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Age, gender and ethnicity

Franklin County has a much younger population than does the state.

- Almost one-third of Franklin County’s population (32.0 percent) was under 18 years of age compared to the state (21.8 percent) in 2021.
- Residents under the age of 5 years old made up 8.7 percent of the county’s total population compared to 6.0 percent in the state in 2021.
- In 2021, Franklin County’s population 65 years and older made up 9.7 percent of the total compared to 15.9 percent of the state’s population.

The county was 48.4 percent female compared to 49.9 percent for the state in 2021.

Franklin County was the first county in the region to have a majority of Hispanics in its population. In 2021, Franklin County was 39.9 percent white alone and not Hispanic compared to 67.5 percent in the state. Hispanics or Latinos were 53.6 percent of the population compared with 13.0 percent in the state.

Demographics

	Franklin County	Washington state
Population by age, 2021		
Under 5 years old	8.7%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	32.0%	21.8%
65 years and older	9.7%	15.9%
Females, 2021	48.4%	49.9%
Race/ethnicity, 2021		
White, not Hispanic	39.9%	67.5%
Black	2.8%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	1.7%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	2.8%	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	53.6%	13.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Educational attainment

High school graduates among Franklin County’s population 25 years and older totaled 76.7 percent, lower than the state (91.7 percent) in 2016 through 2020.

Those holding a bachelor’s degree or higher made up 18.9 percent of Franklin County residents age 25 and older compared to 36.7 percent of state residents over the same period.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Benton-Franklin Workforce Development Council](#)
- [City of Pasco](#)
- [City of Connell](#)
- [Franklin County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Franklin County on HistoryLink.org](#)
- [Franklin County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Franklin County home page](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Tri-City Industrial Development Council](#)
- [Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Port of Pasco](#)
- [Washington Ports](#)
- [Washington State University Tri-Cities](#)
- [Workforce Development Areas and WorkSource Office Directory](#)

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