

# Grays Harbor County Profile



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## Overview

### *Regional context*

Grays Harbor County, established in 1854, is bounded to its west by the Pacific Ocean. The Quinault Tribe and several other tribes lived along the coastal area. They were decimated by disease from European contact. The 1850s brought many settlers. The major industries were logging, milling and timber exports.

### *Local economy*

The 1920s brought a long slow decline in the wood products industry including a housing market crash during the Great Depression. Weyerhaeuser planted its first tree farm in 1941 in anticipation of the need to replace old-growth harvests. But local mills suffered further declines from the 1960s on, with Asian mills outbidding them for logs. This was followed by federal logging restrictions due to threats to the spotted owl and salmon. Fishing and clamming, once important to the county's economy, also deteriorated based on depleted stocks.

In 2000, employment opportunities came in the form of the Stafford Creek prison, which employs close to 600 staff, and the Quinault Tribe casino and resort complex which opened at Ocean Shores. Charter fishing and ocean beaches continue to bring in tourists. Currently, the majority of firms and employment are in the services sector industries.

## Geographic facts

	Grays Harbor County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,902.3	15
People per square mile, 2010	38.3	19

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

## Outlook

The outlook for 2021 has been clouded by the COVID-19 pandemic and the surrounding uncertainty of the state and local economy. The March 2020 beginning of the outbreak saw rising unemployment rates and declining nonfarm payroll employment across the state and nation. The change of the calendar will not provide immediate relief, but more uncertainty is the one thing that can be counted on.

The Port of Grays Harbor continues to expand its lines of business including increased log exports, a new compressed natural gas (CNG) facility, and a proposed crude oil facility. Tourism facilities are still beginning to be developed and tourism has been identified as a major player with efforts being made for impactful tourism efforts. Important tourism destinations include Westport, Ocean Shores and Seabrook. It was many of these tourism activities that provide some economic relief to the area as state residents, weary of the state lockdown flocked to local beaches and attractions during the summer and fall of 2020.

## 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 average annual unemployment rate in Grays Harbor County has been on a decline year over year since 2010, when it reached 13.9 percent. In 2019, the figure was 7.1 percent, effectively ending that streak, as the 2018 rate was 6.9 percent. The 2020 average was 11.4 percent with the seasonal grip of winter and COVID-19 certain to keep these rates high through at least the first quarter of 2021.

Spring will bring some relief to the unemployment rates, but the effects of the pandemic blurs the complete picture.

Source: Employment Security Department

## Industry employment

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

Nonfarm employment declined year over year from 2007 through 2013. It started to turn around in 2014, which showed a 0.6 percent growth rate (120 jobs) compared to 2013. The 2020 nonfarm employment averaged 21,590 jobs; a 1,440 job drop over 2019. Service-providing industries accounted for the majority of jobs, with state and local government being the top employer. Trade, transportation and utilities account for the next highest employment sector with education and health services in third position. The preliminary drop saw the impact of the pandemic across most sectors.

Nonfarm job growth in the county has been modest, and the last three years have seen nonfarm jobs vary in a 22,730 to 23,030 range. The 2020 preliminary nonfarm total is the lowest nonfarm county total since before 2000. Making a turnaround even more challenging.

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

Source: Employment Security Department

## 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.

### *Grays Harbor County highlights:*

In 2019, the largest job holder age group in Grays Harbor County was the 55 and older age category, making up 26.8 percent of employment across all industries. The next largest share was among people age 35 to 44 with 21.6 percent of employment.

- In 2019, the county's workers mirrored state patterns with workers age 14 to 24 dominating services jobs in the county including food service, arts, entertainment and recreation and retail trade.
- Workers in the 55 year and older age category were prevalent in public administration, educational services, real estate and rental and leasing, transportation and warehousing, and management of companies.

Females made up 49.6 percent of the labor force in Grays Harbor County with males making up 50.4 percent in 2019.

- Male-dominated industries included construction (80.1 percent), manufacturing (79.2 percent), wholesale trade (76.0 percent) and transportation and warehousing (80.0 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included finance and insurance (79.6 percent), healthcare and social assistance (78.9 percent) and educational services (71.7 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

## **Wages and income**

In 2019, there were 23,180 jobs in Grays Harbor County covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of over \$1 billion.

The average annual wage in 2019 was \$43,346, well below the state's average annual wage of \$69,615. The median private sector hourly wage in 2018 was \$18.39, below the state's median hourly wage of \$24.94.

### *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 2018, the county's per capita personal income was \$41,928, less than the state (\$64,758) and the nation (\$56,490).

According to the U.S. Census, median household income in 2019 was \$51,240 in Grays Harbor County.

In 2019, Grays Harbor County's poverty rate of 13.1 percent compared to Washington state's rate of 9.8 percent and the nation's rate of 10.5 percent, according to U.S Census Bureau QuickFacts. 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

Grays Harbor County's population was 74,720 in 2020, up slightly from the 2010 Census count of 72,797.

In 2020, the largest city in Grays Harbor County was Aberdeen (16,890), followed by Hoquiam (8,540) and Ocean Shores (6,690). The fourth largest city in the county is Montesano with a population of 4,175.

### *Population facts*

	Grays Harbor County	Washington state
Population 2020	74,720	7,656,200
Population 2010	72,797	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2020	2.64	13.85

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management

### *Age, gender and ethnicity*

- People under 18 years of age made up 20.3 percent of the 2019 population.
- The group 65 years and over made up 22.3 percent of the population.
- The youngest age group, those under 5 years, made up 5.2 percent of the population in 2019.
- Females made up 48.9 percent of the county's population compared to the state at 49.9 percent in 2019.
- Grays Harbor County is less diverse than the state or nation, according to the 2019 data, as nearly 87.1 percent of the population is counted as white.
- The largest minority grouping in the county was the Hispanic or Latino, followed by the American Indian and Alaska Native category in 2019.

### *Demographics*

	Grays Harbor County	Washington state
<b>Population by age, 2019</b>		
Under 5 years old	5.2%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	20.3%	22.8%
65 years and older	22.3%	15.9%
<b>Females, 2019</b>		
	48.9%	49.9%
<b>Race/ethnicity, 2019</b>		
White	87.1%	78.5%
Black	1.4%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	5.6%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	1.8 %	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	10.3%	13.0%

### *Educational attainment*

In Grays Harbor County during the period 2015 to 2019, 89.7 percent of people age 25 or older were high school graduates, compared to 91.3 percent statewide. The number holding a bachelor's degree or higher was 16.5 percent in the county compared to the state's 36.0 percent and the nation's 32.1 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

### **Useful links**

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Grays Harbor County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Grays Harbor County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Grays Harbor County History](#)
- [Grays Harbor County home page](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Grays Harbor Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Self-Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Ocean Shores](#)
- [Seabrook](#)
- [The Port of Grays Harbor](#)
- [Westport Grayland Chamber of Commerce](#)

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