

Spokane County profile

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Overview

Regional context

Spokane County is situated east of the Cascade Range and on the western slope of the Coeur d'Alene Mountains next to the Idaho border. Spokane County ranks in the middle of other counties in terms of land area, which was 1,763.79 square miles in 2010. It was the eighth most densely populated county at 267.2 persons per square mile in 2010. Spokane is the most populous county in Eastern Washington and ranks fourth in the state.

The city of Spokane is the second-largest city in Washington state. It serves as the business, transportation, medical, industrial and cultural hub of the region, the inland Northwest. In 2020, the city of Spokane had 228,989 residents, 42.5 percent of the county's population.

Local economy

Spokane County was created by an act passed by the Territorial Assembly in 1858. After settlement in the 1870s, Spokane became the hub in the inland Northwest for mining, timber and railroad activities.

Of all the forces that shaped the Spokane County economy, none is more powerful than Spokane's historic role as a regional center of services for the surrounding rural populations of Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho. Regional services include government and higher education, medical services, retail trade and finance.

Fairchild Air Force Base is the county's largest employer. Fairchild will be getting more planes in 2022 with corresponding increase in service personnel. In addition, manufacturing has had a solid base due to the nexus of the Bonneville dam power generation, rail systems and the Interstate highway system. Spokane is competitive with other urban centers in attracting national and international investment in the form of tourism and conventions, the military and research. These investments in turn support the creation and expansion of still other complementary businesses, creating a well-rounded and diversified economy.

Geographic facts

	Spokane County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,763.79	19
People per square mile, 2010	267.2	8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

For 2021, a significant increase in jobs was posted in the private sector. The increase was mainly due to a decrease of business restrictions due to the pandemic. The increase will probably be permanent going forward due in large part to Spokane business being able to adapt to changing environments. Much of the increase were in industries considered essential during the pandemic. A high number of these industries can accommodate changing staffing patterns such as telework and telehealth.

Key industries posting increases in 2021 are transportation and warehousing, advanced manufacturing, health services, professional and business services, and agriculture.

Several new developments will continue to create jobs. A Health Sciences campus opened in 2014 with health programs from Washington State University, Eastern Washington University and Gonzaga. Private firms specializing in research and development and biotechnology have made Spokane their home because of the Health Sciences/Medical School campus at River Pointe and will play an increasingly important role in the area's economy. Amazon built two fulfillment centers (warehouse), which in addition to warehousing will increase air and road transportation employment. Spokane may benefit from a migration of west coast IT firms moving to Spokane trying to reduce stress for their workers. Contributing to labor stress in major urban areas are increased cost of living, labor shortages and high commute times. According to Spokane economic development professionals, targets will continue in industries such as advanced manufacturing and materials, energy products and services, information technology and digital services, and logistics and distribution businesses.

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.

In 2021, the Spokane county labor force averaged 284,871. The unemployment rate was estimated at 5.5 percent, with 15,678 unemployed residents. The number of unemployed is half what it was last year during the pandemic. The decrease has created labor shortages across industries as workers move to jobs that pay more.

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division, County Data Tables

Industry employment

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

Spokane County is the largest labor market in Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho. Spokane's economy survived the "Great Recession" and emerged more diversified. Steady growth is forecasted for the future.

Spokane MSA (which includes Stevens and Pend Oreille counties) posted significant job increases in the last half of 2021. Business was impacted significantly from the COVID-19 pandemic during the first half of 2021, but rebounded significantly as restrictions were released during the second half of the year. A majority of Spokane jobs were listed as essential during the pandemic. Giving Spokane a good foundation for recovery. Those include advanced manufacturing, professional and business services, and transportation and warehousing. Health services and education were also impacted, but probably more of a temporary impact, and should return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022. Altogether, those five industries have medium-sized employers that are flexible and efficient in their markets.

The health sciences and medical school development has been a game changer for Spokane. High-tech companies in manufacturing, scientific and technical industries are creating new jobs and will continue to expand the economic base in 2022.

- In 2021, Spokane-Spokane Valley MSA nonfarm jobs averaged 253,300 compared to 243,600 jobs in 2020.
- Goods-producing employment recorded 32,700 jobs in 2021, an increase of 900 jobs from 2020.
- Service-providing employment totaled 220,600 in 2021, an increase of 8,800 jobs from 2020. Transportation and warehousing and Leisure and hospitality jobs posted the largest increases.

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

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division, 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.

Spokane County highlights:

In 2020, the largest job holder age group in Spokane County was the 25 to 44-year-olds with 44.2 percent of the workforce. This percentage was closely followed by job holders aged 55+ at 23.4 percent of the workforce.

In 2020, men and women had equal shares of jobs in Spokane County at 50 percent each.

- Male-dominated industries included construction (84.6 percent), manufacturing (75.6 percent) and transportation and warehousing (75.3 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included health care and social assistance (74.9 percent), educational services (66.1 percent) and finance and insurance (63.4 percent).

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division, County Data Tables

Wages and income

In 2020, Spokane County averaged 218,202 jobs covered by unemployment insurance with a total payroll over \$11.7 billion.

The county's average annual wage was \$53,681 in 2020, which ranked 13th among all Washington counties. The state's average annual wage was \$76,801 and the state less King County was \$50,834.

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.

Per capita income reached \$50,038 in 2020, 17th in the state. This is 16 percent below the U.S. average and 25 percent below the state average of \$67,126.

Median household income over the period 2016 to 2020 was \$60,101, well below the state's \$77,006 according to the U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.

Over the period 2016 to 2020, 13.4 percent of the population was living below the poverty level in Spokane County. This is well above 9.5 percent for the state.

Source: Employment Security Department/DATA Division, County Data Tables; Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.

Population

Spokane County's population was estimated at 539,339 in 2021, making it the fourth-largest county in the state. The city of Spokane is the largest city with 42.5 percent of the county's population.

The population's total percent change from 2020 to 2021 was 1.2 percent. The increase was due to both natural increase and in-migration.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Population facts

	Spokane County	Washington state
Population 2020	546,040	7,738,692
Population 2021	539,339	7,705,281
Percent change, 2020 to 2021	1.2%	0.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Age, gender and ethnicity

Most of the people moving into the county are in search of jobs and tend to be younger. Even with the in-migration of younger individuals, the large swell of baby boomers will continue to increase the median age. At some point, the aging of Spokane County may decrease with the influx of younger individuals, who may stay in the area and start families, and a concurrent loss of retirees who migrate out of Spokane County to follow the sun.

Spokane County is far less diverse than either the state or the nation. In 2021, 88.9 percent of the county was white compared to 78.5 percent of the state and 76.3 percent of the nation. Hispanics or Latinos made up 6.1 percent of the population compared to 13.0 percent in the state.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Demographics

	Spokane County	Washington state
Population by age, 2021		
Under 5 years old	6.0%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	22.0%	21.8%
65 years and older	16.6%	15.9%
Females, 2021	50.4%	49.9%
Race/ethnicity, 2021		
White	88.9%	78.5%
Black	2.0%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	1.8%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islander	3.0%	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	6.1%	13.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Educational attainment

Spokane County had more adults 25 years and older who were high school graduates in the 2016 to 2020 period at 94.1 percent than the state at 91.7 percent or the nation at 88.5 percent.

In terms of a bachelor's degree or higher, Spokane County had fewer adults aged 25 and older with higher education at 31.6 percent than the state at 36.7 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Community Indicators Initiative of Spokane](#)
- [EWU | Institute for Public Policy and Economic Analysis](#)
- [Greater Spokane Incorporated](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Spokane County home page](#)
- [Spokane County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Spokane County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Spokane County Thumbnail History](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Washington Ports](#)
- [Workforce Development Areas and WorkSource Office Directory](#)

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