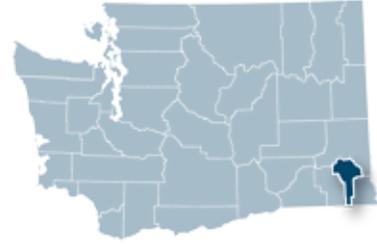


# Garfield County Profile

By Ajsa Suljic  
Regional labor economist  
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## Overview

### *Regional context*

Garfield County was formed from the eastern portion of Columbia County by an act of the Washington Territorial Legislature in 1881. Garfield County is bordered by Whitman County on the north, Asotin County on the east, Columbia County on the west and on the south by Wallowa County, Oregon. The Snake River makes up its northern and northeastern borders and is an essential part of its economic existence.

Garfield County is the seventh-smallest county in the state, with only 710.5 square miles. Before white exploration and settlement, the semi-nomadic Nez Perce inhabited the area on both sides of the Nez Perce Trail as means of commerce, which was of strategic importance to the development of the region.

The establishment of the territory and the end of the Indian Wars resulted in an influx of white settlers into the county. Garfield County settlers came and started farming and ranching in the area. Later some settlers started communities in the Pataha Creek area, today's Pomeroy City, with the first known commercial establishment being a stage station and "eating house" (shaver). By 1875, there was an estimated 200 farms in the area, which produced major crops of pears, wheat, blue grass and others. Garfield County is the least populated county in the state of Washington, ranking 39<sup>th</sup> among 39 Washington counties, with population of 2,256 people in 2013, or 3.2 per square mile.

### *Local economy*

The Garfield County workforce is employed primarily in government services (around 68.5 percent in total). While local government makes up the biggest share of that employment, which includes local education services, federal government employment is very significant for the area by providing stable and higher paying jobs.

Farmland occupies over two-thirds of the county's total land usage. The main crop is dry land wheat. The total value of agricultural sales tends to be in the same range as the total wages earned for the county.

As of the 2017 Agricultural Census, the county had 226 farms with an average size of 1,283 acres. The number of farms increased by 7.0 percent from the 2012 Census. The market value of agricultural products sold was \$37.2 million, with 86 percent of that being from crop sales and 14 percent from livestock, poultry, and other products. About 36 percent of farms in Garfield County have a value of crop sales over \$100,000. Main crops in Garfield County include all types

of wheat for grain, barley for grain, chickpeas, canola and forage. Largest livestock inventory are cattle and calves. Only 34 percent of Garfield farms hire farm labor, and 92 percent of all farms are family farms.

Demographics also play a role in Garfield County’s economy as a high proportion of elderly residents continue to increase demand for local healthcare services, which in this county are mostly provided by the government sector. Healthcare and social services are projected to grow at a faster than average rate.

## Geographic facts

	Garfield County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	710.69	33
People per square mile, 2017	3.2	39

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management

## Outlook

Garfield County’s employment has fluctuated up and down in the past ten years. Garfield County covered employment continues its decline with the new 10-year low. This marks a 10-year average annual decline of 2.3 percent since 2008. Since the recession of 2007, covered employment has not recovered and continues its downward trend, which puts a lot of strain on the economic well-being of this small rural county.

Wholesale trade and retail trade will continue to be the cluster that provides the most private sector jobs. Major agricultural commodities will remain in production if there is demand and proper weather conditions. Government employment is the leading employing industry and the only one that has shown stability.

There are some promising opportunities in future job development from the Columbia Pulp project, which might shape the future of jobs in Garfield County within the next 5 to 10 years.

## 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.

In 2018, the county labor force was estimated at 901, marking an eight-year downward trend. The number of people employed was estimated at 849, while about 52 people were estimated to be unemployed and looking for work. Resident employment remained the same while the number of people looking for employment decreased and dropped out of the labor force.

Unemployment was down to 5.8 percent in 2018 from 5.3 percent in 2017. Yearly averages in the labor force show some volatility, which is associated with the government and seasonal agricultural economic base.

The average annual unemployment rate in Garfield County in 2008 was the lowest in 14 years, at 4.6 percent before it peaked again in 2010 at 8.1 percent. The unemployment rate fluctuates throughout the year, reflecting the seasonal employment, with lows in September or October each year and peaks in January or February.

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.

Garfield County's average covered employment was 678 in 2018, a 1.3 percent decrease over the year. Garfield County had an annual decrease of 1.8 percent for the past ten years. Almost all employment in Garfield County is in service-providing industries, specifically government employment at 69.3 percent of the total. Total covered payrolls were at \$32.5 million in 2018, up by 4.7 percent over the year.

- Goods-producing industries in Garfield County provided around 50 jobs. Most of the employment in this segment was in agriculture. Agriculture employment keeps its regular cycle employment fluctuation with 2018 being one of the low employment years with close to 40 jobs. Agriculture is slated to keep changing its employment structure with innovation and automation in cultivating and harvesting of the crops.
- Service-providing industries averaged 628 jobs in 2018, a decrease of 1.4 percent from 687 in 2017. This industry cluster is made up of multiple industries serving both population and business in the county. This is the major cluster that continues to provide jobs to the local community.
- Garfield County service-providing employment is 74.8 percent in government, 20.7 percent in trade, transportation and utilities and 3.2 percent in information and financial activities.
- Government employment averaged 470 in 2018, unchanged over the year with main employment in local government and second highest employment being in federal government.

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.

#### *Garfield County highlights:*

The largest job holder group in Garfield County in 2018 was the 55 to 64 years of age group with 24.2 percent of the workforce. The workforce has aged over the years, and now 44.6 percent of the workforce is between 45 and 64 years old, and that is an increase of 1.3 percent over the year.

The Garfield County workforce was mostly male in 2018; 51.7 percent of all industry jobs were held by men and 48.3 percent were held by women. Industry differences are discussed below:

- Male-dominated industries included agriculture (80.3 percent), construction (85.2 percent), wholesale trade (70.6 percent), public administration (59.6 percent).

- Female-dominated industries included accommodation and food services (88.4 percent), healthcare and social assistance (77.9 percent), finance and insurance (61.9 percent) and retail trade (61.8 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

## Wages and income

In 2018, Garfield County had 678 jobs covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of over \$32.5 million.

The county average annual wage was \$47,911 in 2018, which is well below the state's average annual wage of \$66,195. In 2018, Garfield County was ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the state for average annual wages among 39 counties.

The Garfield County median hourly wage was \$21.31 in 2018, which was well below the state's median hourly wage of \$25.98 and below the state, without King County, median wage of \$22.37.

### *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 2017, per capita income in Garfield County was \$42,429, with an increase over the year of 6.3 percent. Nonetheless, income was well below the state's per capita income of \$57,896 and the national income of \$51,640, according to Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Median household income over the period 2013 to 2017 was \$51,399, well below the state's \$66,174, according to the U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts.

Over the period 2013 to 2017, 11.7 percent of the population was living below the poverty level in Garfield County. This compares to 12.2 percent for the state.

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

## Population

According to the Census estimates for 2018, Garfield County's population was 2,247. Garfield County's population decreased by 0.8 percent from 2010 to 2018. This county continues to age out and younger populations leave for other opportunities elsewhere.

The Garfield County seat and the largest city is Pomeroy with a population of 1,400 in 2018. The second notable city is Pataha City.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### *Population facts*

	<b>Garfield County</b>	<b>Washington state</b>
Population 2018	2,247	7,535,591
Population 2010	2,266	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2018	-0.8%	12.1%

### *Age, gender and ethnicity*

Garfield County has a large retirement age community with 26.2 percent of the population being 65 years of age or older.

- Garfield County’s population age 65 and older was 25.4 percent in 2018 compared to the state’s 15.4 percent.
- Those under 18 years of age made up 21.3 percent in 2018 compared to the state’s 22.1 percent.
- The youngest age group, those under 5 years of age, was 7.1 percent in 2018, compared to the state’s 6.1 percent.

Females’ made up 51.1 percent of the county’s population, which is slightly above the state’s 50.0 percent.

Diversity in the county shows that 93.5 percent of residents are white, with 5.4 percent of Hispanic or Latino origin, compared to the state’s 78.9 percent and 12.9 percent, respectively.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

### *Demographics*

	<b>Garfield County</b>	<b>Washington state</b>
<b>Population by age, 2018</b>		
Under 5 years old	7.1%	6.1%
Under 18 years old	21.3%	22.1%
65 years and older	25.4%	15.4%
<b>Females, 2018</b>	51.1%	50.0%
<b>Race/ethnicity, 2018</b>		
White	93.5%	78.9%
Black	0.1%	4.3%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	0.7%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	2.8%	10.1%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	5.4%	12.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

### *Educational attainment*

Over the period of 2013 to 2017, 95.5 percent of individuals age 25 and older were high school graduates, which is higher than that of Washington state (90.8 percent).

Over the same period, it's estimated that 23.0 percent of people in Garfield County 25 and older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. This figure does not compare favorably with the state (34.5 percent).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

### **Useful links**

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Garfield County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Garfield County History](#)
- [Garfield County home page](#)
- [Port of Garfield](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Southeast Washington Economic Development Association](#)
- [Walla Walla Community College Wind Energy Technology Program](#)

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