

Grays Harbor County Profile



By Jim Vleming,
Regional labor economist
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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 2020 continues to be guarded as the county struggles to get back to pre-recession employment levels. The unemployment rates are beginning to move higher, and nonfarm job growth has been mixed and hard to sustain. Look for this trend to continue through 2020.

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.

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 7.4 percent, effectively ending that streak, as the 2018 rate was 6.7 percent. The winter's seasonal influence will take these numbers higher in early 2020.

Spring will bring some relief to the unemployment rates, but some uncertainty blurs the complete picture. Historical data indicates that the CLF continues to slowly grow in the county, as the totals are again above 28,000, after dipping below 27,000 in 2015.

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 2019 nonfarm employment averaged 22,960 jobs; a 60 job drop over 2018. 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.

Nonfarm job growth in the county has been modest, and the last three years have seen nonfarm jobs vary in a 22,730 to 23,080 range. Most sectors of the local service economy remain close to their pre-recession levels, but the goods-producing sector has seen substantial drops in all areas.

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 2018, the largest job holder age group in Grays Harbor County was the 55 and older age category, making up 26.6 percent of employment across all industries. The next largest share was among people age 35 to 44 with 21.1 percent of employment.

- In 2018, 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, transportation and warehousing, and management of companies.

Females made up 49.9 percent of the labor force in Grays Harbor County with males making up 50.1 percent in 2018.

- Male-dominated industries included construction (81.6 percent), manufacturing (79.6 percent), wholesale trade (77.1 percent) and transportation and warehousing (78.1 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included finance and insurance (80.7 percent), healthcare and social assistance (79.8 percent) and educational services (71.2 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

Wages and income

In 2018, there were 23,200 jobs in Grays Harbor County covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of over \$958.4 million.

The average annual wage in 2018 was \$41,313, well below the state's average annual wage of \$66,156. The median hourly wage in 2018 was \$20.26, below the state's median hourly wage of \$25.98.

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 \$40,429, less than the state (\$62,026) and the nation (\$54,446).

According to the U.S. Census, median household income in 2018 was \$47,770 in Grays Harbor County.

In 2018, Grays Harbor County’s poverty rate of 17.3 percent was above Washington state’s rate of 10.3 percent and the nation’s rate of 13.1 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 73,901 in 2018, up slightly from the 2010 Census count of 72,798.

In 2018, the largest city in Grays Harbor County was Aberdeen (16,880), followed by Hoquiam (8,540) and Ocean Shores (6,490). The fourth largest city in the county is Montesano with a population of 4,175.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Population facts

	Grays Harbor County	Washington state
Population 2018	73,901	7,535,591
Population 2010	72,798	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2018	1.5%	12.1%

Age, gender and ethnicity

- People under 18 years of age made up 20.4 percent of the 2018 population.
- The group 65 years and over made up 21.6 percent of the population.
- The youngest age group, those under 5 years, made up 5.3 percent of the population in 2018.
- Females made up 48.8 percent of the county’s population compared to the state at 50.0 percent in 2018.
- Grays Harbor County is less diverse than the state or nation, according to the 2018 data, as nearly 87.2 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 for the population in 2018.

Demographics

	Grays Harbor County	Washington state
Population by age, 2018		
Under 5 years old	5.3%	6.1%
Under 18 years old	20.4%	22.1%
65 years and older	21.6%	15.4%
Females, 2018	48.8%	50.0%
Race/ethnicity, 2018		
White	87.2%	78.9%
Black	1.4%	4.3%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	5.6%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	1.8 %	10.1%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	10.2%	12.9%

Educational attainment

In Grays Harbor County, 88.9 percent of people age 25 or older were high school graduates, compared to 91.1 percent statewide during 2018. The number holding a bachelor's degree or higher was 15.8 percent in the county compared to the state's 35.3 percent and the nation's 31.5 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](#)

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.