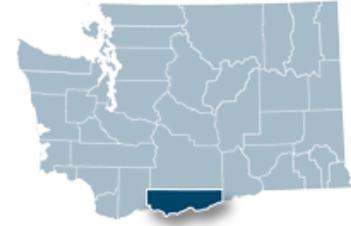


Klickitat County Profile



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Overview

Regional context

Klickitat County is located in south central Washington. For roughly 10,000 years it was home to the Klickitat and Wishram tribes, hunter-gatherers who subsisted on elk, salmon, and local roots such as camas and celery. White settlers started pouring into the region in the 1850s. The Klickitat developed a complex relationship with the newcomers, but ultimately the Klickitat were forcibly displaced by the territorial governor and the U.S. Army, mostly to the Yakama Reservation, which today comprises the northern edge of Klickitat County. Much of the tribal economic base was destroyed when The Dalles dam was constructed in 1957, raising the water level and destroying Celilo Falls, the major fishing and trading center for tribes throughout the region. In 2018, the county was home to an estimated 480 indigenous people, who still celebrate traditions such as the appearance of roots in the spring and the annual return of salmon up the Columbia River. There are longhouses in Rock Creek and Roosevelt.

The economy of the county shifted to farming and timber: sheep and cattle raising, wheat, logging and lumber, then later expanding into orchards, vegetables, aluminum, and now drones and wine. Klickitat County has three distinct economic regions. The western third of the county relies on unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV, a.k.a. drones) production, wood products, and orchards and fruit packing. The eastern third is dominated by vegetable farming, as well as the Roosevelt regional landfill. The central third boasts the county seat, Goldendale, the Maryhill Museum, windsurfing and kite boarding beaches, as well as the now-shuttered aluminum smelter. Vineyards and wineries have been expanding across the county.

Recent trends in the local economy

Nonfarm employment in Klickitat County grew rapidly in the mid-1990s, peaked in 2000, and dropped sharply over the next four years before starting a recovery in 2005 that continued into mid-2009. The Great Recession was short and sharp in Klickitat: employment declined for twelve months (August 2009 to August 2010), falling by 450 jobs (8 percent). Recovery finally began in mid-2015, and job growth was extremely strong through the end of 2017, reaching 4.8 percent in 2016 and 4.6 percent in 2017. Employment growth slowed in 2018 and then plunged in early 2019 due to cutbacks in the drone industry. Preliminary estimates show that in 2019, the county averaged 6,380 nonfarm jobs, 120 fewer (1.8 percent) than in 2018.

Geographic facts

	Klickitat County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,871.31	24
People per square mile, 2010	10.9	35

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

Job growth in Klickitat County has been highly dependent on manufacturing and specifically the UAV industry – and it’s important to note that there are other important sectors apart from manufacturing. From 2015 to 2018, manufacturing accounted for 670 out of 920 net new jobs in the county. As of November 2019, preliminary estimates put manufacturing at -270 jobs over the year, with nonmanufacturing at +120 for a net change of -150. While manufacturing surged and then took a step back, nonmanufacturing has averaged 1.5 percent growth per year over the past four years, reflecting a steady diversification of the economy. UAVs will continue to play an important role in Klickitat (and in the Columbia Gorge as a whole) going forward, along with agriculture, wood products, the landfill and tourism/recreation.

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.

Over the past 25 years, unemployment in Klickitat County has slowly trended lower, as the county economy has become less dependent on resource-based jobs that tend to have large seasonal and cyclical patterns. The gap between the county and the state unemployment rate, which was typically 4 to 6 percentage points in the 1990s, has also closed, and was only a point (state) to a point and a half (national) in 2018. The rate for 2018 was only 5.7 percent, the lowest since the current methodology was adopted in 1990. Unemployment was up a bit in 2020, with the preliminary rate at 6.3 percent.

Census data suggest that labor force participation rates in Klickitat County have been particularly low, compared with the state and nation. Much of the gap had to do with Klickitat’s older population. However, the labor force participation rate for the prime working-age population (25 to 54) was still substantially lower, as shown in the following table. The low participation rate means the county has relatively fewer wage earners, which affects other economic variables such as household income and personal income.

Source: Employment Security Department

Labor force participation rate for residents aged 25 to 54 years - the prime age working population - for 2014 to 2018

Group	Klickitat	State	U.S.
Total	70.7%	78.2%	77.7%
Male	76.1%	84.3%	82.8%
Female	65.2%	71.9%	72.6%

In the 2012 to 2016 period, three-fourths of the county's jobs were held by county residents. Most of the incoming commuters came from adjacent counties: Skamania, Hood River, Yakima and Wasco. Thirty percent of the county's employed workers commuted to jobs outside the county, with Hood River (13 percent) and Wasco (10 percent) being the prime destinations.

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Industry employment

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

Major trends and events over the last 20 years include:

- The expansion of agriculture throughout the county, but especially in vegetable farming and vineyards in east Klickitat and fruit orchards in the western portion.
- The closure of the aluminum smelter in Goldendale in 2001.
- The development of the regional landfill at Roosevelt in 1992 and its subsequent expansion.
- The establishment and expansion of Insitu, a designer and fabricator of unmanned drones, in Bingen, along with a number of its suppliers.
- Layoffs at Insitu and its suppliers in 2019.

As 2018 came to a close, preliminary estimates showed that:

- The county averaged 6,380 nonfarm jobs, down 120 jobs or -1.9 percent over the year.
- Private sector employment declined by 110 jobs, -2.4 percent.
- Construction and mining employment increased by 20 jobs over the year, while logging lost 10 jobs.
- Manufacturing fell by 140 jobs, a loss of 8.4 percent.
- Trade, transportation and utilities added 10 jobs.
- Professional and business services dipped by 10 jobs.
- Education and health services was unchanged.
- Leisure and hospitality added 20 jobs.
- Government inched down by 10 jobs.

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

Source: Employment Security Department

Agriculture

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there were 750 farms in the county, with a total of more than half a million acres and \$99 million in sales. The fruits, tree nuts and berries category accounted for \$64 million in sales – the county has extensive production of cherries and wine grapes. There were almost \$10 million in sales of cattle and calves, and \$8 million in grains, oilseeds, dry beans and dry peas – mostly in wheat.

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.

Klickitat County highlights:

- Males held a majority (58 percent) of the jobs in Klickitat County in 2018. The state was much closer to a 52/48 split.
- Female-dominated industries included healthcare (71 percent), education (69 percent), accommodation and food services (65 percent) and retail trade (56 percent).
- Male dominated industries include construction (83 percent), administration and waste services (78 percent), manufacturing (74 percent) and agriculture (59 percent).
- The average wage for jobs held by females paid only 57 percent of the average for jobs held by males.

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

Industry employment by race/ethnicity

The table below shows estimated employment by industry by the race or ethnicity of the worker holding the job. Some takeaways: a majority (58 percent) of jobs held by Latinos were in agriculture, and another 18 percent were in manufacturing. Jobs held by African Americans were primarily in agriculture or manufacturing (both 38 percent). Similarly, 41 percent of jobs held by Asian Americans were in agriculture, with 29 percent in manufacturing; and for Indigenous People, 20 percent were in agriculture, and 21 percent in manufacturing.

Jobs by race/ethnicity of employee, 2018

Industry	Total*	White Non Latino	African American	Native American	Asian American	Pacific Islander	Two or more races	Latino
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	7,503	5,647	124	65	169	20	133	1,345
21 Mining	1,622	690	48	13	70	5	14	782
22 Utilities	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
23 Construction	247	218	0	4	0	0	5	18
31-33 Manufacturing	1,987	1,598	47	14	48	4	37	238
42 Wholesale trade	138	111	0	0	4	0	7	14
44-45 Retail trade	382	298	1	3	10	3	10	55
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	96	70	0	0	0	0	0	21
51 Information	46	43	0	0	0	0	0	3
52 Finance and insurance	57	50	0	0	0	0	0	5
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	35	28	0	0	0	0	0	5
54 Professional, scientific and technical svcs.	131	119	0	0	0	0	0	10
55 Mgmt. of companies and enterprises	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
56 Admin. support, waste mgmt., remediation	333	284	6	6	7	0	11	19
61 Educational services	689	632	3	7	0	0	11	35
62 Healthcare and social assistance	500	430	2	1	4	0	8	51
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	85	78	0	0	0	0	1	3
72 Accommodation and food services	292	235	2	0	10	0	10	32
81 Other services (ex. public administration)	323	277	2	2	2	0	7	29
92 Public administration	400	365	0	5	6	0	6	16

*Includes all non-federal jobs covered by unemployment insurance, less suppressed industries.

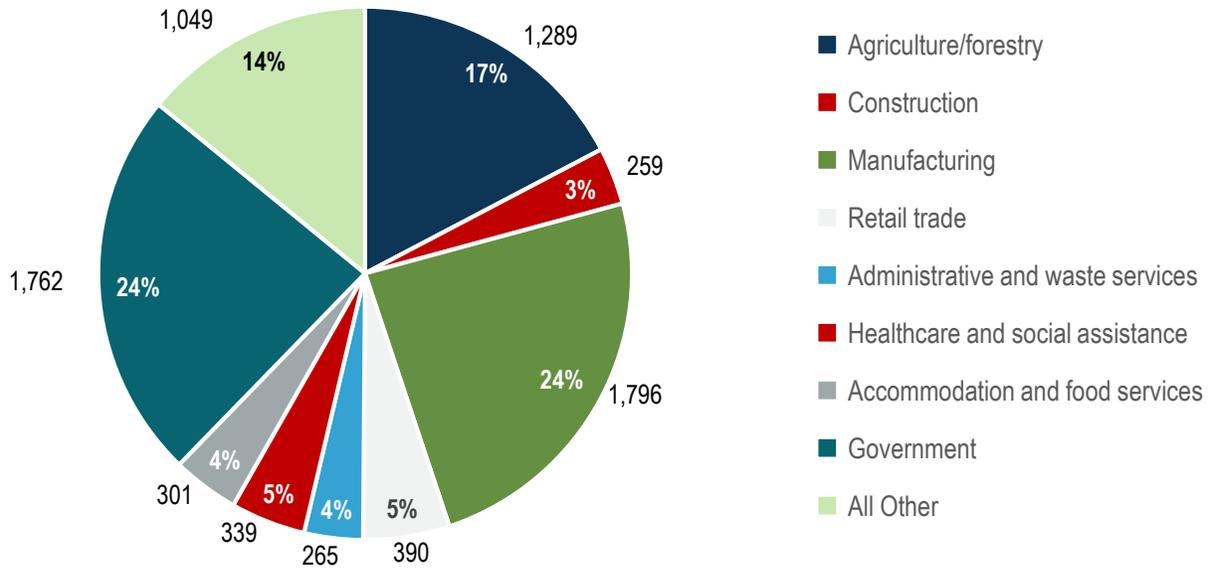
Wages and income

The charts below contrast industry shares of employment and wages covered by unemployment insurance in the county. The biggest difference: manufacturing supplied 24 percent of the jobs in the county, and 39 percent of total wages. The average wage for all jobs in the county was \$52,848, and for manufacturing, \$86,260. The county's average wage has been trending up over time, in line with the average for the rest of the state if King County is excluded.

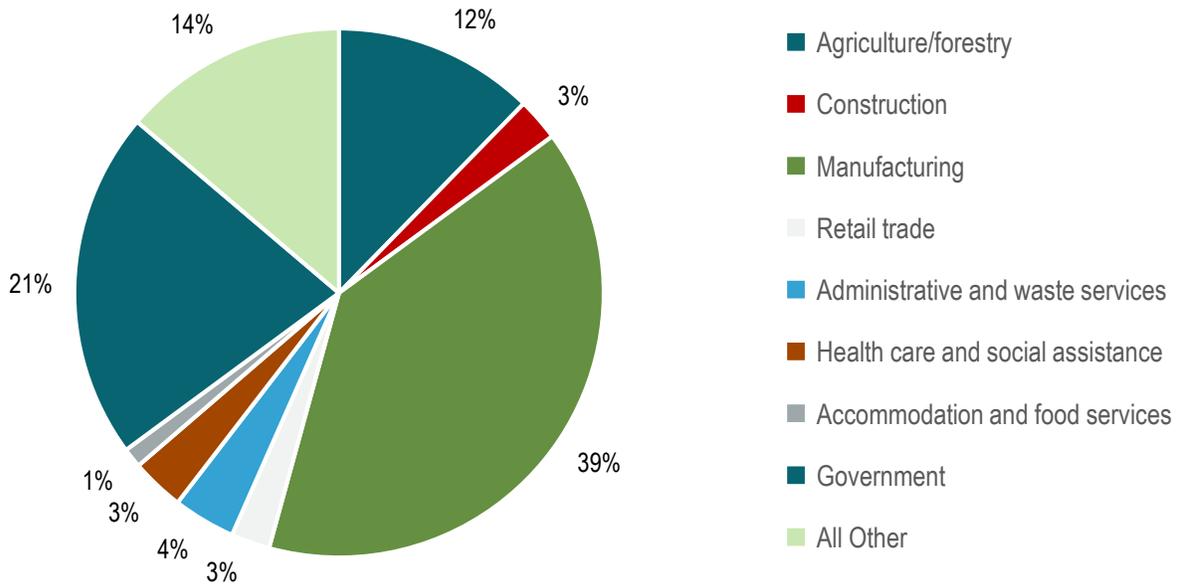
Covered employment in 2018

The median hourly wage for non-federal jobs in Klickitat County was \$22.49 in 2018. In comparison, the state median was \$25.98 (\$22.37 if King County was excluded). The 2018 median was 3.9 percent above the 2017 figure, the third consecutive year with a large increase.

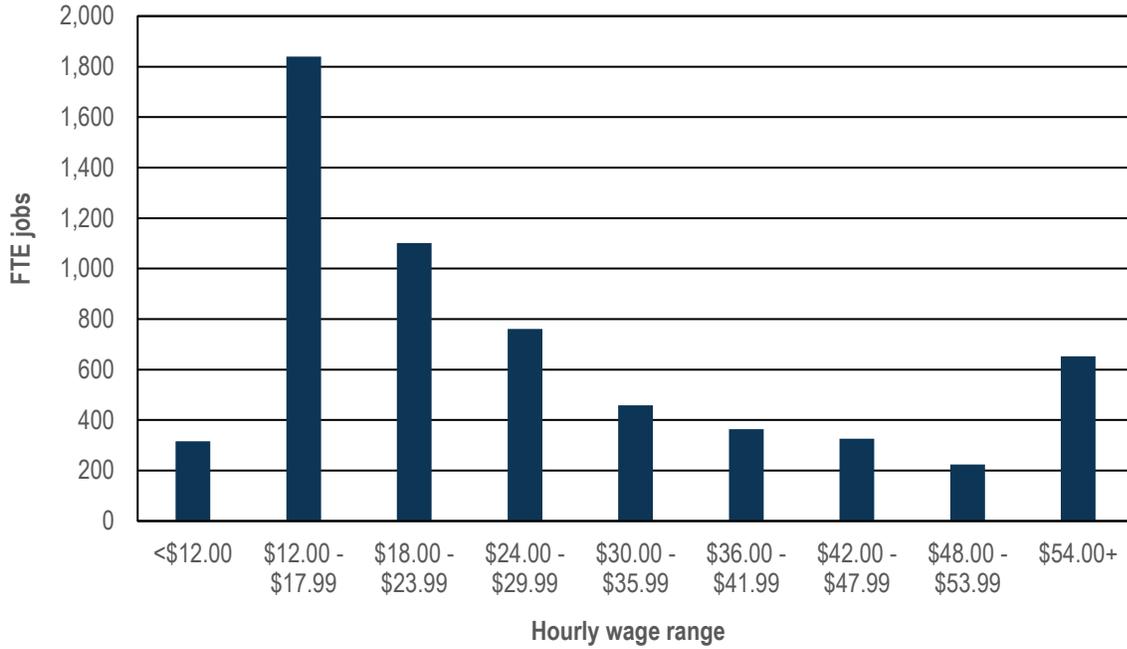
In 2018, 5 percent of the jobs in Klickitat paid below \$12 per hour vs. 7 percent statewide and 10 percent for the state when King County is excluded. On the upper end, a third of the jobs in the county paid \$30.00 per hour or more, slightly less than the 32 percent for non-King counties, and further below the 40 percent at the state level.



Covered wages in 2018

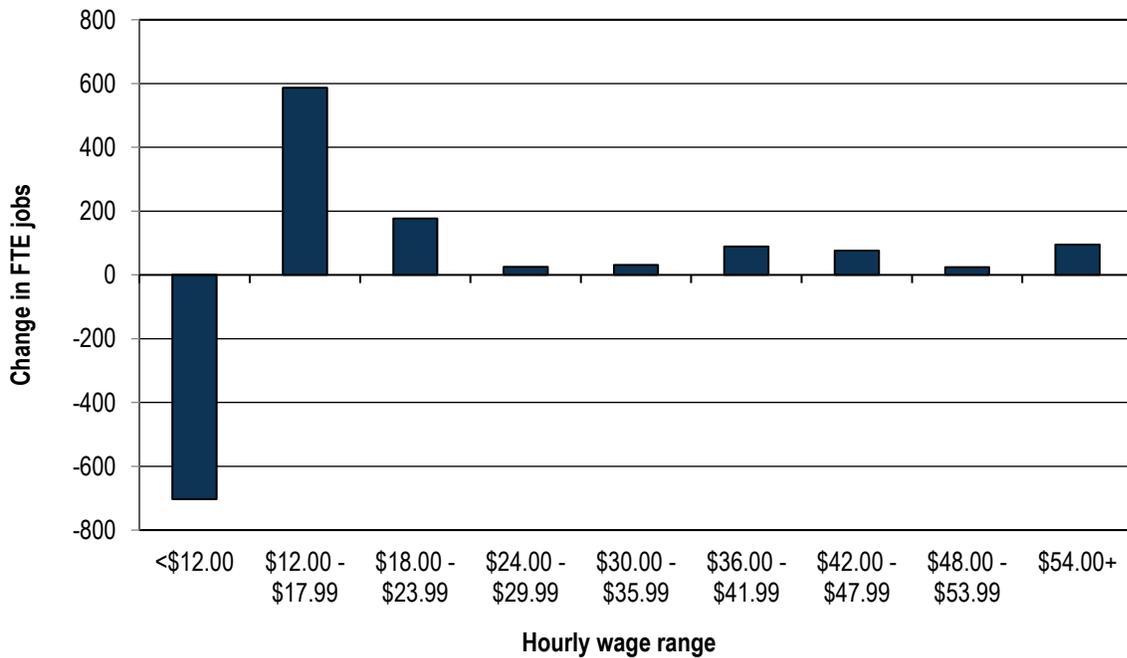


FTE jobs by hourly wage range, 2018



Since 2010, there has been a marked shift to higher-income jobs. Partly, that has been due to the increase in the minimum wage, which has pushed some lower-wage jobs above the \$12.00 per hour threshold. There has also been a net gain in the number of jobs in higher wages as well.

Change in FTE jobs by hourly wage range, 2010 to 2018



Finally, the table below shows the average quarterly wage for jobs in Klickitat County by the race or ethnicity of the job holder. The relatively high wages for jobs held by African-Americans stemmed from their concentration in the transportation manufacturing industry.

*2018 average quarterly earnings by race/ethnicity of job holder**

Race/ethnicity	Average quarterly wage	Percent of total
All workers	\$4,962	100%
White Non-Latino	\$5,148	104%
African American	\$7,256	146%
Indigenous	\$4,742	96%
Asian American	\$4,996	101%
Pacific Islander	\$3,439	69%
Two or more races	\$5,319	107%
Latino	\$3,856	78%

*Includes all non-federal “full-quarter” jobs covered by unemployment insurance. “Full-quarter” jobs are jobs held by the employee at an employer in the current quarter that existed in the previous quarter and persisted into the next quarter.

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

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 increased by 2.1 percent to \$48,654 in 2018, the highest on record. Over the past eleven years, Klickitat has moved from 78 percent of the national average to 89 percent, and from 72 percent of the state average to 78 percent. Earned income, investment income, and transfer payments have all grown faster at the county level than for the state and nation.

Beginning in 1990, an increasing share of income earned by Klickitat residents came from jobs held outside the county. The percent of earned income coming from cross-county commuters increased from 15 percent in 1990 to 29 percent in 2009 before declining and stabilizing at 21 to 22 percent over the past seven years. Meanwhile the percent of earnings from jobs within the county that was earned by non-county residents has risen sharply from 14 percent in 2006 to 23 percent over the past three years (2016 to 2018).

Transfer payments are an important source of income for county residents. On a per capita basis, payments are 43 percent higher in Klickitat than nationally, due to factors like a more elderly population, poverty, and a higher population of veterans.

Per capita transfer payments in 2018

Transfer payments	U.S.	Washington state	Klickitat
Total	\$9,082	\$8,738	\$12,971
Social Security benefits	\$2,972	\$2,940	\$4,429
Medicare benefits	\$2,234	\$1,807	\$3,048
Public assistance medical care benefits	\$1,865	\$1,712	\$2,890
Income maintenance benefits	\$794	\$809	\$1,807
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits	\$174	\$137	\$1,150
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	\$175	\$163	\$216
Unemployment insurance compensation	\$84	\$137	\$111
Veterans' benefits	\$336	\$412	\$515
All other	\$449	\$622	\$392

Household income

Recent estimates of household income from the Census Bureau showed that median household income in Klickitat County has improved considerably of late. The median for the five years spanning 2014 to 2018 was \$54,056, an increase of 22 percent from the 2009 to 2013 period. Income at the state (10 percent) and national (7 percent) levels both advanced much more slowly.

Poverty in Klickitat County dropped from the 2009 to 2013 period to 12.7 percent in 2014 to 2018, which was just above the U.S. rate of 11.8 percent. The poverty rate for children dropped even more precipitously, from 32.5 percent to 18.5 percent; nationally, the rate dropped from 21.6 percent to 19.5 percent. Klickitat remained above the state rates of 10.3 percent for the total population.

It seems reasonable to conclude that the lower median income in the county is connected with the higher level of lower-wage jobs. A challenge for the county is to facilitate the development of more middle-income jobs to help lower poverty – no easy task these days.

Population

Klickitat County's population was 22,430 in 2019. Of note:

- Over the past decade, the county has grown at an average of 0.8 percent per year, faster than the average for rural counties in the state and for the nation (0.7 percent), but slower than for the state overall (1.2 percent).
- Net immigration has accelerated over the past few years, from only 17 net new residents in 2009 to 2010 to 427 in 2018 to 2019. Most of the newcomers come from nearby counties and Puget Sound, while Wasco and Deschutes counties in Oregon were the top destinations for those who moved out of the county.
- Growth is projected to be half as much in the coming decades.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis; Office of Financial Management

Population facts

	Klickitat County	Washington state
Population 2018	22,107	7,535,591
Population 2000	19,161	5,894,121
Percent change, 2000 to 2018	17.1%	28.0%

Age, gender and ethnicity

Klickitat's population is somewhat older than the state and nation. In 2018:

- 22 percent of the county was below the age of 20, versus 25 percent statewide.
- 18 percent was aged 20 to 39, versus 27 percent statewide.
- 26 percent was aged 40 to 59, slightly above the state figure of 25 percent.
- 34 percent was aged 60 or older, far more than the state average of 22 percent.

The county is also less diverse. In 2018, 82.1 percent of the population was white and non-Hispanic, compared to 68.0 percent statewide and 60.4 percent nationally.

Source: Office of Financial Management

Demographics

	Klickitat County	Washington state
Population by age, 2018		
Under 5 years old	5.0%	6.1%
Under 18 years old	19.4%	22.1%
65 years and older	23.9%	15.4%
Females, 2018	49.5%	50.0%
Race/ethnicity, 2018		
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	82.1%	68.0%
African American	0.7%	4.3%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	2.6%	1.9%
Asian-American	0.9%	9.3%
Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.8%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	11.9%	12.9%

Educational attainment

For the 2014 to 2018 period, an average of 28.9 percent of the Klickitat population aged 25 and older had a bachelor's degree or higher education, up from 19.5 percent in 2009 to 2013. The 9 percent increase was much greater than for the state or nation, though the level still lagged the 35.3 percent statewide and 31.5 percent nationally.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Goldendale area Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Klickitat County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Klickitat County home page](#)
- [Klickitat County History](#)
- [Klickitat County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Mount Adams Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Port of Klickitat](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [South Central Workforce Council](#)
- [WorkSource Office Directory](#)

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