

Lincoln County Profile

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Overview

Regional context

Lincoln County is a rural county at the northern edge of the Palouse wheat-growing region. The economy is dominated by wheat production. The entire northern boundary of the county is a federal Indian reservation and the county seat is in Davenport. The county is the seventh largest in the state, comprising 2,310 square miles.

Next to Whitman County, Lincoln County grows the most wheat in Washington state. Annual wheat production can be over 25 million bushels. One point two million acres of the county's 1.5 million-acre area is in farmland, and one in every three of those acres is planted in wheat. Lincoln County farmers are very efficient, and 2020 production was good. In the first half of 2020, wheat prices increased which has a large impact on county wholesale sales, retail sales and the overall level of money flowing through the economy.

Livestock production is also an important component of Lincoln County agriculture. A meat packing plant in Odessa has added diversity to agriculture income.

Tourism activities have increased over the last decade as Grand Coulee Dam and the Lake Roosevelt recreation areas have become more developed.

Local economy

Original settlers came to the area seeking gold, and those who settled in the area raised livestock. With the advent of the first railroad in 1881, overall agriculture production focused on wheat. Success in wheat farming eventually drove migration, settlement and development.

Growth in total nonfarm employment has been relatively slow over the last 12 years but had managed to minimize losses during the last recession. Employment peaked in 2008 and has declined since then.

Geographic facts

	Lincoln County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	2,310.49	7
People per square mile, 2010	4.6	37

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

Schools and government employment constitute almost half of all jobs in the county. In the short term, ongoing budgetary problems are expected to continue to limit overall expansion of government. Lincoln County retail sales improved in 2020. However, even with the increase in total retail sales, overall sales tend to be lower relative to the per capita state average. This reflects the large number of purchases occurring in neighboring Spokane County as county residents travel to shop.

Slow population growth over the last decade limits overall economic growth. This is especially true in many small communities where support for services and the replacement of existing public infrastructure are hampered by a declining population. Overall, the population for the county tends to grow much slower and is older than is typical for the state and nation.

However, population should increase in 2021. The Amazon development in Spokane County is close to the border with Lincoln County and will provide the county new jobs and revenue as Amazon employees discover the low cost of land and housing available in Lincoln County.

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.

Through the first nine months of 2020, the average civilian labor force was 4,643 which compares to 5,040 for the same period in 2019. The decrease in the labor force was mainly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic starting in March 2020. The decrease will probably be divided between temporary decreases because of COVID-19 and permanent decreases going forward in changing staffing patterns such as telework.

The county unemployment rate in the first nine months of 2020 averaged 7.3 percent, which is an increase from the first nine months of 2019 (5.2 percent). The unemployment rate fluctuates throughout the year, reflecting seasonal employment, with lows in the summer and highs in the winter.

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA

Industry employment

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

Lincoln County nonfarm employment averaged 2,530 in the first nine months of 2020 compared to 2,548 for the same period in 2019.

- Goods-producing employment averaged 280 in the first nine months of 2020. A slight decrease from 2019.
- Service-providing employment averaged 2,250 in 2020 compared to the 2019 average of 2,257 in the same months. Much of the job decrease came in government.
- Government employment averaged 1,210 in 2020, a decrease from the 2019 average employment of 1,258 in the same months.

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

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA

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.

Lincoln County highlights:

The largest job holder group by age in Lincoln County in 2019 was the 45 to 54 cohort with 22.3 percent of the workforce. This group was followed closely by the 55 to 65 cohort at 21.5 percent. In 2019, 51.1 percent of all industry jobs were held by men and 48.9 percent were held by women. Industry differences are discussed below:

- Male-dominated industries included agriculture (80.1 percent), construction (85.4 percent), transportation and warehousing (76.2 percent), administrative and waste management (72.1 percent) and wholesale trade (72.1 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included professional, scientific and technical services (83.9 percent), finance and insurance (80.1 percent), healthcare and social assistance (75.8 percent), accommodation and food services (73.0 percent) and educational services (66.2 percent).

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA, County Data Tables

Wages and income

In 2019, there were 2,718 jobs covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of \$109.3 million.

The county average annual wage was \$40,201 in 2019, which is well below the state's average annual wage of \$69,615.

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA, County Data Tables

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 2019, the per capita income was \$47,282, which was well below the state's per capita income of \$64,758 and the nation's per capita income of \$56,490.

Median household income over the period 2014 to 2018 was \$50,744, well below the state's \$70,116.

Over the period 2014 to 2018, 12.5 percent of the population was living below the poverty level in Lincoln County. This compares to 9.8 percent of the state.

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau;

Population

Lincoln County's population was 10,570 in 2010. The estimated population in 2019 of 10,939 is a slight increase. However, we do expect population to increase substantially in 2021 along with jobs because of the Amazon development.

The largest city in Lincoln County is Davenport with a population of 1,730 in 2019. Many small communities have experienced no growth or declines in the populations over the last decade.

Population facts

	Lincoln County	Washington state
Population 2019	10,939	7,614,893
Population 2010	10,570	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2019	3.5%	13.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age, gender and ethnicity

Lincoln County, as a percent, had a much older age demographic than the state or nation in 2019.

- Lincoln County's population age 65 and older was 25.9 percent in 2019 compared to the state's 15.9 percent and the nation's 16.5 percent.
- The youngest age group, under 5 years, was 5.4 percent in 2019 compared to the state's 6.0 percent.

Within Lincoln County, there is less diversity than the state. White individuals who are not of Hispanic descent made up 93.8 percent of the county's population compared to 78.5 percent of the state's population.

Demographics

	Lincoln County	Washington state
Population by age, 2019		
Under 5 years old	5.4%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	21.7%	21.8%
65 years and older	25.9%	15.9%
Females, 2019		
	49.1%	49.9%
Race/ethnicity, 2019		
White	93.8%	78.5%
Black	0.6%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	2.0%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.6%	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	3.6%	13.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Educational attainment

Over the period 2014 to 2018, 91.4 percent of individuals age 25 and older were high school graduates. This figure is higher than that of Washington state (91.1 percent) and the nation (87.7 percent).

Over the same period, fewer Lincoln County residents 25 and older have attained a bachelor's degree or higher (23.6 percent), compared to the state (35.3 percent) and the nation (31.5 percent).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Lincoln County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Lincoln County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Lincoln County History](#)
- [Lincoln County home page](#)
- [Davenport Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Lincoln County Economic Development Council](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Lake Roosevelt Recreation Area](#)
- [Washington Ports](#)
- [Workforce Development Areas and WorkSource Office Directory](#)

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.