

Pend Oreille County Profile



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Overview

Regional context

Pend Oreille County is in the northeast corner of Washington. The county is bound by Canada to its north and Idaho to its east. Most of the county is dominated by the rugged, mountainous Colville National Forest. The southern part of the county has forested foothills as well as drier hills and valleys. The Pend Oreille River runs the length of the county, providing electric power and recreation for the area.

Land policies influence economic development in Pend Oreille County, especially changes regarding timber land management and mining. Only 36 percent of land in the county is privately owned and about 58 percent is owned by the federal government. There is also a Kalispel reservation in Usk in central Pend Oreille.

Pend Oreille County is unique in terms of population density, transportation, industries and infrastructure. It is very rural with only 9.3 people per square mile and has a rural economy, with limited transportation routes and dependence on resource extraction, specifically, lead and zinc mining followed by timber and cement manufacturing. These realities greatly affect job growth and job creation.

Local economy

Pend Oreille County was largely settled after the discovery of gold in the 1850s in the northern part of the county. This gold strike failed to become a major gold rush. The real mining riches were found in other hard-rock minerals: lead and zinc.

Timber became a major industry once railroad access was developed. A cement manufacturing industry also developed, benefiting from natural deposits of limestone and quartz in the northern part of the county. Much of this resource extraction was first made possible by using the Pend Oreille River for transportation, then by railroad and eventually by state highways.

Two major employment sectors in Pend Oreille County are manufacturing and government. Government employment accounts for more than 50 percent of all jobs and will increase slightly in 2019 to 2020. Manufacturing employment remains weak due to improved technology and efficiencies allowing manufacturers to increase production without an increase in employment.

Geographic facts

	Pend Oreille County	Rank in state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	1,399.99	25
People per square mile, 2010	9.3	33

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

The employment in Pend Oreille County was affected by the most recent recession, beginning in 2008. The recovery has been long, slow and painful. Growth over the last several years has dropped off, with small pockets of gains, but nowhere near the amount needed to replace the total employment at the peak of the business cycle.

With the 2019 announcement of layoffs in mining, employment is expected to decrease. In addition, the workforce serving Pend Oreille's major industries presents challenges because current workers have a high average age, increasing the need for replacement workers as they begin retiring.

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.

The civilian labor force increased slightly in the first 10 months of 2019 to 5,035, from the same period in 2018 of 4,783. The number of employed residents also posted an increase in 2019 to 4,620.

The average unemployment rate in the first half of 2019 was 8.4 percent, up from 7.8 percent in the first half of 2018. The county continues to have one of the highest unemployment rates in the state.

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.

Pend Oreille County is a rural labor market with 3,179 jobs located in the county in 2018. Consequently, a large number (about a third) of the employed residents work in jobs at firms located outside the county. It is likely that the suburban expansion of Spokane into Pend Oreille County explains part of this, but it also reflects a higher level of commuting by residents for jobs outside the county.

- Goods-producing employment averaged 449 jobs in 2018, decreasing slightly from 2017.
- Service-providing employment averaged 2,730 jobs in 2018, decreasing slightly from 2017. The decrease came in both goods and services areas.

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. The largest job holder age group in Pend Oreille County in 2018 was the 45 to 54 year-olds at 23.9 percent of the workforce. This percentage was closely followed by job holders aged 55 to 64 with 23.1 percent of the workforce.

In 2018, men held 52.3 percent and women held 47.7 percent of the jobs in Pend Oreille County. There were substantial differences in gender dominance by industry.

- Male-dominated industries included agriculture (77.2 percent), manufacturing (87.7 percent), construction (85.1 percent) and mining (86.3 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included healthcare and social assistance (79.8 percent), finance and insurance (74.5 percent) and educational services (71.5 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

Wages and income

In 2018, there were 3,177 jobs covered by unemployment insurance in Pend Oreille County, with a total payroll of \$155.5 million.

The 2018 average annual wage was \$48,939, well below the state's average annual wage of \$66,195. Pend Oreille was 11th in the state in 2018 in average annual wage.

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA; Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

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, the per capita personal income was \$39,247, less than the state (\$57,896) and the nation (\$51,640).

According to the U.S. Census QuickFacts, the median household income was \$49,184 in 2013 to 2017. The county's median income was less than that of the state (\$66,174).

In 2013 through 2017, 16.3 percent of the county population was living below the poverty level, much higher than the state (10.3 percent).

Population

Pend Oreille County's population was 13,602 in 2018. From 2010 to 2018, the population increased at a rate of 4.6 percent compared to the state's growth rate of 12.1 percent.

The largest city in Pend Oreille County is Newport.

Population facts

	Pend Oreille County	Washington state
Population 2018	13,602	7,535,591
Population 2010	13,001	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2018	4.6%	12.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Age, gender and ethnicity

Pend Oreille County had an older population than the state reported in 2018.

- Pend Oreille County's population of those aged 65 and older was 26.0 percent compared to the state's 15.4 percent.
- The population under 18 years old was 19.4 percent in the county, less than that of the state's 22.1 percent.

Pend Oreille County showed much less diversity in 2018 than the state in all racial/ethnic categories except American Indians and Alaskan Natives. In Pend Oreille, American Indians and Alaskan Natives made up 3.7 percent of its population compared to 1.9 percent of the state's population.

Demographics

	Pend Oreille County	Washington state
Population by age, 2018		
Under 5 years old	4.8%	6.1%
Under 18 years old	19.4%	22.1%
65 years and older	26.0%	15.4%
Females, 2018	49.1%	50.0%
Race/ethnicity, 2018		
White	91.4%	78.9%
Black	0.7%	4.3%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	3.7%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	1.5%	10.1%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	3.8%	12.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Educational attainment

Most Pend Oreille County residents age 25 and older (89.9 percent) were high school graduates, which compares with 90.8 percent of Washington state's residents.

Those with a bachelor's degree or higher made up 20.1 percent of Pend Oreille County residents age 25 and older compared to 34.5 percent of state residents.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Note: Pend Oreille is pronounced “pon-der-ay”

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Census Bureau Profile](#)
- [Pend Oreille County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Pend Oreille County History](#)
- [Pend Oreille County on ofm.wa.gov](#)
- [Pend Oreille County home page](#)
- [North Pend Oreille \(pronounced "pon-der-ay"\) Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [City of Newport](#)
- [Greater Newport Area Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [Tri County Economic Development District](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Port of Pend Oreille](#)
- [Washington Ports](#)
- [Workforce Development Areas and WorkSource Office Directory](#)
- [Northeast Washington Trends](#)

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.