

Yakima County profile

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Overview

Regional context

Yakima County is located in south central Washington state among seven neighboring counties. The geography varies from densely timbered, mountainous terrain in the west, rolling foothills, broad valleys and arid regions to the east and fertile valleys in its central and southern parts. Agriculture has been the staple of the economy over the last 100 years.

According to the Yakima County Economic Profile published by the Yakima County Development Association's New Vision office, Yakima is the second largest county in Washington state at 2.75 million acres. Three entities own 63.4 percent of this total:

- The Yakama Nation (1,074,174 acres)
- The U.S. Forest Service (503,726 acres)
- The Yakima Training Center (165,787 acres)

Yakima County was separated from Kittitas County in 1883. Yakima County's development was shaped largely by the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Yakima River. Most of the county's population is concentrated along this river, largely because irrigation was critical to the success of the communities and the farmers who settled in this area.

The Washington Legislature passed the State Fair Act in 1893 and designated North Yakima in Yakima County as the site for an annual State Agricultural Fair. Some say it was a consolation prize for Yakima, which lost its bid to Olympia to be named the state capital.

Local economy

Yakima settlers developed the land into a commercial agricultural enterprise in the 1880s. With irrigation and railroads, commercial fruit production flourished. Yakima established wine grape vineyards in 1869 and hops acreage in 1872, which remain major parts of its agricultural industry today. Forestry and livestock, dairies and the growing, storage and shipping/processing of deciduous tree fruits (apples, cherries, pears, etc.), are bedrocks of Yakima County's economy.

In terms of jobs provided, agriculture is certainly the "big kid on the block" in Yakima County. The two other local industries in second and third place in terms of employment are health services and local government. Specifically, on an average annual basis in 2018, agricultural employers provided 32,320 jobs, or 27.8 percent of total covered

employment countywide. Health services provided 16,406 jobs, or 14.1 percent; and local government averaged 13,997 jobs, or 12.0 percent of total employment. Hence, these three industries/sectors accounted for well over half (specifically 53.9 percent) of total covered employment (116,329 jobs) in the county in 2018.

Geographic facts

	Yakima County	Washington state
Land area, 2010 (square miles)	4,295.4	66,455.5
People per square mile, 2010	56.6	101.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Outlook

The Yakima County economy added approximately 1,800 nonfarm jobs between 2017 (85,000 jobs) and 2018 (86,800 jobs), an average annual increase of 2.2 percent. Year over year, the growth pace of Yakima County’s nonfarm labor market in the first four months of 2018 (January through April) surpassed the growth pace statewide during this timeframe. However, Yakima County’s monthly nonfarm job-growth rates lagged the statewide growth rates from May through December 2018. In fact, year over year, the growth pace of Yakima County’s nonfarm labor market has lagged the growth pace statewide in each of the past 17 months (May 2018 through September 2019). In September 2019, Yakima County provided 87,400 jobs versus 87,900 in September 2018, a 500-job and 0.6-percent downturn. Conversely, Washington’s nonfarm market has expanded for 108 consecutive months (October 2010 through September 2019).

This “slower than the state” trend in Yakima County’s nonfarm job growth is nothing new. In fact, it is more the rule than the exception. If we compare nonfarm job growth trends in the county and the state during the most current ten-year period of 2008 to 2018 (eleven years, inclusive), we note that the local labor market’s growth rate never equaled or surpassed average annual job growth rates in Washington’s labor market. However, to every cloud there is a silver lining. The consolation is that during the “bad” economic years of the most recent recession (i.e., 2009 and 2010), nonfarm job-loss rates in Yakima County were not as severe as those experienced statewide. For example, in 2009, Washington’s economy lost 4.4 percent of its nonfarm jobs while Yakima County’s labor economy shrank by 1.7 percent. In 2010, Washington’s nonfarm market still retrenched by 0.9 percent, while the county’s economy dipped at a more modest 0.4 percent. Why? The main reason is that the local agricultural industry exerted a moderating effect on Yakima County’s labor market.

The most current average annual average employment and unemployment data on record are for calendar year 2018, with Current Employment statistics (nonfarm employment estimates) and Local Area Unemployment Statistics (unemployment rates) running up through October 2019. An analysis of these data show that:

- Yakima County’s average annual not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for 2018 was 6.3 percent, the lowest average annual rate in Yakima County since electronic records for these data were implemented in 1990 – certainly an excellent economic indicator. However, the local unemployment rate has increased, year over year, for the past 13 months (October 2018 through October

2019). Most recently, the unemployment rate rose four-tenths of a point, from 4.9 percent in October 2018 to 5.3 percent in October 2019 – a less than encouraging indicator for the local economy.

- Between 2017 and 2018, Washington's labor market provided 82,900 new nonfarm jobs, an average annual increase of 2.5 percent, slightly more robust than Yakima County's 2.2-percent and 1,800-job advance during this timeframe. The state's economy has been posting year over year nonfarm employment increases for the past 109 consecutive months (October 2010 through October 2019). In October 2019, business and government organizations across Washington supplied 3,504,100 nonfarm jobs (not seasonally adjusted), compared to 3,436,500 jobs in October 2018, a 2.0 percent year over year employment increase. Conversely, the growth pace of Yakima County's nonfarm labor market has lagged the growth pace statewide in each of the past 18 months (May 2018 through October 2019). In October 2019, Yakima County provided 88,100 jobs versus 87,800 in October 2018, a 300-job and 0.3 percent upturn. Hence, although only ten months (January through October 2019) of nonfarm employment estimates are available for Yakima County and Washington state (incorporating benchmarked, not seasonally adjusted QCEW data for the first and second quarters of 2019); it is safe to assume that the state's nonfarm economy will grow at roughly a two-percent pace in 2019 – slightly slower than in 2018. Conversely, if current trends continue, the 2019 job-growth pace in Yakima County's nonfarm market will probably slow considerably from the 2018 average annual growth pace of 2.2 percent to an average annual nonfarm job-growth pace in Yakima County of 0.5 percent, or less, in 2019.
- Official long-term, (i.e., ten-year) industry employment projections produced by the Employment Security Department are for a 1.1 percent average annual nonfarm growth rate from 2017 to 2027 for the four-county (Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania and Yakima) South Central Workforce Development Area (WDA), and for a 1.5 percent growth rate for Washington state.

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.

Before the recent recession, in 2007 and 2008, average annual unemployment rates in Yakima County were in the 7.0 percent range. Specifically, the rate averaged 7.0 percent in 2007 and 7.3 percent in 2008. During the recession however, unemployment rates in Yakima County increased to 9.0 percent in 2009 and to 10.6 percent in 2010 before peaking at 10.7 percent in 2011. Since 2011, the average annual unemployment rate in Yakima County has decreased for seven consecutive years (from 2012 to 2018, inclusive). In fact, the 6.3 percent rate for calendar year 2018 is the lowest average annual unemployment rate since our agency began compiling data electronically in 1990 – 28 years ago. This is excellent economic news for Yakima County.

Between 2017 and 2018 in Yakima County:

- The not seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined from 6.8 to 6.3 percent, a five-tenths percentage point contraction. Washington's unemployment rate decreased by two-tenths of a point (from 4.7 percent in 2017 to 4.5 percent in 2018).
- The average number of unemployed decreased from 8,544 to 8,190 (down 4.1 percent), equating to 354 fewer residents out of work in the county during 2018. Simultaneously, the civilian labor force (CLF) in Yakima County rose by 3,804; from 125,372 to 129,176 residents, a 3.0 percent increase. This 2018 CLF growth pace was faster than CLF growth pace for the other three counties in the South Central WDA. Specifically, average annual CLF growth rates in 2018 were 1.4 percent in Kittitas County, 2.1 percent in Klickitat County, and 1.0 percent in Skamania County. Washington state's labor force expanded at a respectable 2.0 percent pace, a little less robust than the 3.0 percent CLF growth rate in Yakima County.

Yakima County's labor force has been expanding for the past 24 months (from November 2017 through October 2019). Most recently, between October 2018 and October 2019, the local CLF grew from 134,495 residents to 137,331, an increase of 2,836 residents and a 2.1 percent upturn - encouraging economic news. However, the downside in October 2019 was that the number of unemployed increased by 10.8 percent since October 2018 – discouraging economic news. The result was that the increase in the number of unemployed overshadowed the labor force expansion causing Yakima County's unemployment rate to climb four-tenths of a percentage point between October 2018 (4.9 percent) and October 2019 (5.3 percent).

When evaluating recent current labor force trends in Yakima County, it is also helpful to look at the bigger picture (i.e., what's going on in Washington state). Washington's CLF grew by 74,195 residents (a 2.0 percent upturn) from 2017 to 2018. The state's labor force has expanded, year over year, for the past 69 months (February 2014 through October 2019). In October 2019, Washington's CLF tallied 3,960,349 residents versus 3,829,284 in October 2018, equating to 131,065 more Washingtonians in the CLF (up 3.4 percent).

Source: Employment Security Department/LMEA

Industry employment

Current industry employment statistics are available on the [Labor area summaries](#) page.

The analysis in the first part of this section is derived primarily from the Current Employment Statistics (CES) survey sample and Washington Quarterly Benchmarked (WA-QB) data. Advantages of these data are that each month Employment Security Department (ESD) economists estimate job gains and losses based on the survey of employers (CES). The next month, these estimates are replaced with revised estimates. Then, at the end of each quarter, economists revise these estimates based on actual numbers from employer tax records (QCEW). The process that replaces employment estimates with the actual number of job gains or losses is called benchmarking. While ESD benchmarks our data quarterly, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) benchmarks its data once a year. However, a limitation of WA-QB estimates is that they are nonfarm related (i.e., agricultural employment figures are not included).

The analysis in the second part of this section are derived from the BLS' QCEW program, conducted by ESD. Although it takes a little longer to acquire QCEW data (than WA-QB data), the economic information provided is broader and more detailed than that provided by WA-QB. First, QCEW includes employment, wage and size of firm figures for the agricultural sector, which WA-QB does not include. Second, QCEW data provide employment, wage and size of firm figures for businesses and government organizations in Yakima County down to the 3-digit NAICS sub-sector level (i.e., more detail than WA-QB). QCEW data include agricultural and nonagricultural employment and wages for firms, organizations and individuals whose employees are covered by the Washington State Employment Security Act. Also included are data for federal government agencies covered by Title 5, U.S.C. 85. Covered employment generally exceeds 85 percent of total employment in the state of Washington.

Types of jobs not covered under the unemployment compensation system, and hence not included in QCEW data, include:

- Casual laborers not performing duties in the course of the employer's trade or business
- Railroad personnel
- Newspaper delivery people
- Insurance or real estate agents paid on a commission basis only
- Non-covered employees working for parochial schools, religious or non-profit organizations
- Employees of sheltered workshops
- Inmates working in penal institutions
- Non-covered corporate officers, etc.

Analysis using CES Washington Quarterly Benchmarked (WA-QB) data:

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) announced that the national recession occurred from December 2007 through June 2009. However, the effects of the recession hit Yakima County's nonfarm labor market heavily in 2009, 2010 and again in 2012 with the "valleys" of the local recession occurring in 2010 and in 2012 here in Yakima County, when nonfarm employment averaged just 78,400 (in both years). Please note: nonfarm employment data do not count agricultural jobs. Nonfarm figures are derived from CES sample-based estimates and from WA-QB data.

The "pre-recession" peak for nonfarm employment was in 2008 when the local economy provided 80,100 jobs. Then the recession hit. It took seven years, until 2015, for the Yakima County economy to regain (and exceed) the 80,100 job level for calendar year 2008. However, by 2015, the County's nonfarm employment averaged 81,700 jobs. This recent recession hit Yakima County's "nonfarm" market harder than the total "covered" employment job market (which includes agricultural jobs). In fact, it took only three years (from 2009 to 2011, inclusive) for total covered employment (which includes agricultural jobs) to bounce back to its pre-recession peak.

Following is a summary of average annual nonfarm job changes in the last three completed years (2016 to 2018, inclusive):

- In 2016 – The local economy netted 1,600 more nonfarm jobs in 2016 than in 2015, as total nonfarm employment rose to an average of 83,300 (up 2.0 percent). Healthcare and social assistance and retail trade each netted 400 new jobs in 2016. Four other Yakima County industries added approximately 200 jobs in 2016: mining, logging and construction (with the lion’s share of jobs in construction), professional and business services, food services, and local government. Washington’s nonfarm market expanded at a more rapid 3.1 percent clip during 2016.
- In 2017 – The Yakima County economy netted 1,700 more nonfarm jobs as employment rose to an average of 85,000 (up 2.0 percent). Three Yakima County industries accounted for well over 80 percent of total nonfarm job growth in 2017: healthcare and social assistance (up 600), food services (up 300) and local government (up 500). Washington’s nonfarm market expanded at a slightly faster 2.4 percent clip in 2017.
- In 2018 – The local economy netted 1,800 more nonfarm jobs in 2018 than in 2017, as total nonfarm employment rose to an average of 86,800 (up 2.2 percent). Yakima County’s healthcare and social assistance and food services each added 400 new jobs during 2018. Construction, retail trade, and leisure and hospitality each lengthened payrolls by 300 during this timeframe. Washington’s nonfarm market expanded at a slightly more rapid 2.5 percent clip in 2018.

A generalization about the Yakima County economy during the most recent ten-year (2008 to 2018) period is: “In good economic years, the county’s nonfarm job growth rates lag the state, but in bad years, the county leads the state.” Nonfarm employment trends substantiate this generalization. Specifically:

- Average annual job growth in Yakima County lagged nonfarm job growth statewide in 2008.
- Washington’s nonfarm economy lost jobs more rapidly than Yakima County during the recession in 2009 and 2010.
- In each of the eight years since the recession (2011 to 2018, inclusive) average annual nonfarm job growth rates in Yakima County lagged statewide growth rates.

Analysis using QCEW data:

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is an industry classification system that groups businesses/organizations into categories or sectors based on the activities in which they are primarily engaged. There are 19 private sectors and 3 government sectors (for a total of 22 sectors) at the 2-digit NAICS code level, within each county-level economy. One can observe much about the structure of a county’s economy by quantifying and comparing the number of jobs and the percentage of jobs in these sectors by using average annual QCEW data. The most recent average annual covered employment, or QCEW, data available for Yakima County are for 2018.

The top five Yakima County industry sectors in 2018 in terms of employment were:

Sector	Number of jobs	Share of employment
1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	32,320	27.8%
2. Health services	16,406	14.1%
3. Local government	13,997	12.0%
4. Retail trade	11,133	9.6%
5. Manufacturing	8,755	7.5%
All other industries	33,721	29.0%
Total covered employment	116,332	100%

Over seventy percent (71.0 percent, to be exact) of all jobs in Yakima County were in these five, two-digit NAICS industries or sectors – agriculture, health services, local government, retail trade and manufacturing. A comparison of the top five sectors that provided the most jobs in Yakima County in 2018 with the sectors that produced the highest payrolls:

- Agriculture provided 27.8 percent of all jobs countywide, but supplied only 22.1 percent of total wage income. Why? Many agricultural jobs are seasonal.
- Conversely, private health services tallied 14.1 percent of total covered employment in 2018, but accounted for 16.3 percent of total wage income – indicating it is a relatively “good paying” industry.
- Local government provided 12.0 percent of total covered employment, but accounted for 14.4 percent of total wage income – indicating, as in health services, that this is a relatively “good paying” industry. Jobs with local public school districts (primary and secondary schools) are tallied under the local government category. Jobs and wages at Native American (tribal) businesses/organizations are also tallied under the local government category, along with county and city-level public healthcare agencies/providers.
- The local retail trade sector accounted for 9.6 percent, or nearly one in ten jobs, countywide, but tallied only 7.5 percent of total wage income. The primary reason is that a relatively high percentage of jobs at retail stores are part time.
- Conversely, manufacturing supplied only 7.5 percent of total covered employment in Yakima County, but accounted for 9.3 percent of total wages/payroll. Nearly one in every ten dollars of wage income earned countywide during 2018 was earned at a manufacturing firm. (Note: the manufacturing sector includes the “food processing/manufacturing” subsector.)

If one analyzes employment changes in Yakima County over the most recent ten-year period of 2008 to 2018 (eleven years, inclusive) using ESD’s average annual QCEW data, it is noted that total covered employment increased from 101,084 in 2008 to 116,332 in 2018, a 15,248-job and 15.1 percent expansion. Of the 22 NAICS sectors (mentioned earlier), there were five sectors in 2008; agriculture, local government, health services, retail trade and manufacturing (ranked by employment from highest to lowest) which accounted for 66.6 percent of all jobs countywide. The same “top five” accounted for 71.0 percent of total covered employment countywide ten years later, in 2018. However, two sectors switched rankings during this ten-year period. Local government slipped from

“number two” (in terms of covered employment jobs) in 2008 to “number three” in 2018, while health services rose from “number three” in 2008 to “number two” in 2018.

Trends in Yakima County for the top five industry sectors from 2008 to 2018:

- In terms of industry sectors generating the greatest number of jobs in the most recent ten-year period (2008 to 2018, inclusive), agriculture (NAICS 11) ranked first. Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing (where the vast majority is in agriculture) jumped 37.0 percent and 8,731 jobs (from 23,589 jobs in 2008 to 32,320 in 2018). Total covered employment rose 15.1 percent and 15,248 jobs (from 101,084 jobs in 2008 to 116,332 in 2018). Approximately 57.4 percent of all covered jobs gained during this most recent ten-year period were in agriculture. The subsector (within the agricultural sector) in which much of this job growth has occurred was in agriculture and forestry support (NAICS 115). In 2008, agriculture and forestry support businesses tallied 6,152 jobs countywide, but by 2018, this subsector provided 10,709 jobs – a remarkable 74.1 percent and 4,557-job upturn.
- Health services registered a strong 27.9 percent expansion with a gain of 3,578 jobs (from 12,828 jobs in 2008 to 16,406 in 2018) improving its ranking from the third largest job-providing sector countywide in 2008 to the number two position by 2018.
- Local government registered an 8.0 percent and 1,036-job upturn (from 12,961 jobs in 2008 to 13,997 in 2018). However, local government slipped in the top five ranking from the second largest industry (by employment) in 2008, to the number three position by 2018, not because it did not expand, but because it did not expand at the pace of its next-closest “competitor” – health services.
- Retail trade was the fourth largest job-providing sector in Yakima County in 2018. The number of part- and full-time retail trade jobs increased by 1,593 (up 16.7 percent), from 9,540 jobs in 2008 to 11,133 in 2018. Of the twelve three-digit NAICS subsectors classified within Yakima County’s retail trade sector, three accounted for 82.7 percent of the 1,593 new retail jobs added from 2008 to 2018. They were motor vehicle and parts dealers (NAICS 441) which added 235 jobs, up 16.5 percent; building material and garden supply stores (NAICS 444) which added 276 jobs, up 35.0 percent; and general merchandise stores (NAICS 452) which added 807 jobs, up 34.2 percent.
- Manufacturing was the fifth largest, of the “top five” job-providing sectors in Yakima County in 2018. Manufacturing employment increased 3.7 percent (from 8,446 jobs in 2008 to 8,755 in 2018). Average annual QCEW employment data show that Yakima County’s manufacturers “troughed” at 7,470 jobs in 2010, following the most recent recession. However, since then, employment in this sector rose to 7,869 jobs in 2011, ebbed to 7,813 in 2012, expanded to 8,222 in 2014, virtually stalled at 8,216 jobs in 2014, increased to 8,279 in 2015, and has methodically advanced every year to 8,755 jobs in 2018. Hence, these data demonstrate a slow and steady resurgence in Yakima County’s manufacturing employment since 2010. Following are examples of some manufacturing subsectors accounting for this resurgence in recent years:

- Plastics and rubber product manufacturing (NAICS 326) has rebounded steadily from the low point of 1,102 jobs tallied in 2009 to 1,511 in 2018, a 409-job and 37.1 percent upturn. Clearly, this subsector has found a “niche” here in the Yakima Valley.
- Fabricated metal product manufacturing (NAICS 332) employment rose from 878 in 2008 to 960 jobs in 2018, an 82-job and 9.3-percent upturn. It should be noted however, that in 2009, the number of jobs in fabricated metal product manufacturing bottomed out at 674. Ever since, this subsector has generally been in a growth mode. Clearly, the fabricated metal product manufacturing subsector has been faring well in Yakima County during this recent nine-year period (2009 through 2018).
- Machinery manufacturing (NAICS 333) employment has progressed steadily, from 473 jobs in 2010 to 653 in 2018, a gain of 180 jobs and 38.1 percent during this eight-year period (2010 through 2018).
- Transportation equipment manufacturing (NAICS 336) employment rose from 489 in 2008 to 669 jobs in 2018, a 180-job and 36.7-percent upturn. The low point in Yakima County’s transportation manufacturing subsector during this most recent ten-year period was in 2010 when employment bottomed out at 380 jobs.

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.

Yakima County highlights:

In 2018, women held 48.4 percent of the jobs in Yakima County. However, there were substantial differences in gender by industry.

- Male-dominated industries included mining (85.5 percent), construction (82.5 percent) and manufacturing (72.6 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included healthcare and social assistance (77.0 percent), educational services (68.9 percent) and finance and insurance (62.9 percent).

There were differences in 2018 between Yakima County and Washington state in the percentages of workers by age group:

- Only 21.0 percent of workers in Yakima County in all industries were in the 25-34 years of age group versus 23.1 percent statewide.

- Approximately 25.3 percent of workers in Yakima County in all industries were in the 55+ years of age category versus only 22.3 percent statewide.

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

Wages and income

The total covered payroll in 2018 in Yakima County was a little over \$4.64 billion. The average annual wage was \$39,893 or 60.3 percent of the state average of \$66,195.

The top five Yakima County industries in 2018 in terms of payrolls were:

Sector	Payroll	Share of payrolls
1. Agriculture, forestry and fishing	\$1,025,330,826	22.1%
2. Health services	\$755,663,179	16.3%
3. Local government	\$665,978,766	14.4%
4. Manufacturing	\$432,790,210	9.3%
5. Retail trade	\$348,653,869	7.5%
All other industries	\$1,411,961,680	30.4%
Total covered payrolls	\$4,640,378,530	100%

As shown in the table above, QCEW data showed that Yakima County's workers earned approximately \$4.64 billion in wages in 2018. Nearly seven out of ten (69.6 percent) dollars of covered wage income was earned in five two-digit NAICS industries or sectors (i.e., agriculture, private health services, local government, manufacturing and retail trade). Agriculture was the largest provider of wages and jobs in the county in 2018, supplying 22.1 percent of total covered wage income and accounting for 27.8 percent of all jobs. The disparity in percentages between wages and employment is primarily due to a relatively high proportion of seasonal jobs in the agricultural sector. Private health services (i.e., jobs at a doctor/dentist's office, in a hospital, nursing home, vocational rehab facility, etc.) ranked second out of 22 industries in 2018 in terms of wages. This industry provided \$755.7 million in payroll and 16.3 percent of total earned wage income while accounting for 14.1 percent of total covered employment, indicating that, in aggregate, this is a relatively good-paying industry.

Average annual wages in Yakima County 2018 were highest in utilities (\$91,062), management of companies and enterprises (\$79,806), and in finance and insurance (\$60,467). Conversely, the three sectors tallying the lowest average annual wages were accommodation and food services (\$18,451), arts, entertainment and recreation (\$21,553) and other services (\$29,458).

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.

Inflation-adjusted per capita income in Yakima County in 2017 was \$41,331 compared to the state at \$57,896 and the nation at \$51,640.

Median household income from 2013 through 2017 (in 2017 dollars) was \$47,470 in Yakima County, 71.7 percent of the state’s median household income of \$66,174 and 82.3 percent of the nation’s at \$57,652, according to the Census Bureau QuickFacts.

Yakima County’s poverty rate in 2017 was higher (18.1 percent) than the state’s (10.3 percent) and the nation’s (11.8 percent) poverty rates according to 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/LMEA; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Population

During the last ten years, Yakima County had an annual average population growth rate of about 0.6 percent, which was slower than Washington’s 1.2 percent growth rate.

Yakima County’s population was estimated at 251,466 in 2018, up 3.4 percent from the 243,240 county residents in 2010. Washington’s state’s population grew 12.1 percent, to 7,535,591 residents in 2018 from 6,724,540 in 2010. Hence, the local population grew less than one-third as fast as did the state’s population during the past eight years.

During the next ten years (2016 through 2026), Yakima County’s population is estimated to grow annually by 0.9 percent, not too far behind the state’s projected yearly growth rate of 1.2 percent.

Population facts

	Yakima County	Washington state
Population 2018	251,466	7,535,591
Population 2010	243,240	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2018	3.4%	12.1%

Age, gender and ethnicity

Compared with the state, Yakima County’s 2018 population has substantially more children under 5 years old and more youth under 18 years old. Approximately 29.6 percent of the county’s residents are under 18 years old compared to 22.1 percent statewide. However, the county’s population age 65 or older totals only 13.7 percent compared to 15.4 percent in Washington state. Therefore, one may generalize that Yakima County has a younger population than the state as a whole.

As of July 1, 2018, Yakima County had a higher percentage of Latino and Hispanic residents than the state and nation. Specifically, Yakima County’s Hispanic or Latino population comprises 49.9 percent of its population, much higher than Washington state (12.9 percent). Yakima County’s American Indian/Native Alaskan population was 6.5 percent compared to 1.9 percent in the state, reflecting the presence of the Yakama Nation.

Demographics

	Yakima County	Washington state
Population by age, 2018		
Under 5 years old	8.1%	6.1%
Under 18 years old	29.6%	22.1%
65 years and older	13.7%	15.4%
Females, 2018	50.0%	50.0%
Race/ethnicity, 2018		
White, not Hispanic or Latino	42.7%	68.0%
Black	1.5%	4.3%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	6.5%	1.9%
Asian, alone	1.6%	9.3%
Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.8%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	49.9%	12.9%

Educational attainment

According to the American Community Survey, during the period 2013 to 2017, 73.2 percent of Yakima County's population 25 years and older were high school graduates or higher, considerably lower than the statewide average of 90.8 percent and the national average of 87.2 percent.

Yakima County also had a lower percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher (15.9 percent) compared to the state at 34.5 percent and the nation at 30.9 percent during the same time period.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Useful links

- [County data tables](#)
- [Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Self Sufficiency Calculator for Washington State](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts](#)
- [Port of Grandview](#)
- [Port of Sunnyside](#)
- [Washington Ports](#)
- [Workforce Development Areas and WorkSource Office Directory](#)
- [Yakima County Development Association/New Vision](#)
- [Yakima County History](#)
- [Yakima County home page](#)
- [Yakima County on ChooseWashington.com](#)
- [Yakima County on ofm.wa.gov](#)

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.