

# Grays Harbor County profile



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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 2021, the majority of firms and employment are in the services sector industries. The Quinault Tribe casino and resort complex and other tourism destinations, as well as charter fishing and the ocean beaches, continue to bring in tourists. Currently, the majority of employment is in government services.

## 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 2022 is positive as the economy finds its footing after the struggles of the COVID-19 pandemic and the surrounding uncertainty of the state and local economy. The March 2020 beginning of the outbreak saw rising unemployment rates and declining nonfarm payrolls. The early 2022 numbers indicate a bounce back with lower unemployment rates and expanding nonfarm payrolls. While the economy has benefited over time, the nonfarm employment totals remain below their pre-pandemic totals.

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. The ocean beaches of the county continue to be a refuge for those looking for pleasure and recreation and this summer will certainly bring more of the same.

## **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 7.2 percent. The pandemic brought a jump to 11.7% in 2020. As 2021 ended the annual rate of unemployment fell to 7.7%

Spring 2022 will continue to see lower unemployment rates heading into summer.

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, with a modest gain in employment. The 2021 nonfarm employment averaged 22,370 jobs; an 840 job gain over 2020. 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. The leisure and hospitality sector continues to recover from the dismal numbers posted in 2020.

Nonfarm job growth in the county has been modest, as evident from the negative growth rate between 2000 and 2021. The average annual rate of nonfarm job growth has been -0.3 percent.

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 2020, the largest job holder age group in Grays Harbor County was the 55 and older age category, making up 27.2 percent of employment across all industries. The next largest share was among people aged 35 to 44 with 22.0 percent of employment.

- In 2020, the county’s workers mirrored state patterns with workers aged 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, real estate and rental and leasing, transportation and warehousing, and management of companies.

Females made up 50.1 percent of the labor force in Grays Harbor County with males making up 49.1 percent in 2020.

- Male-dominated industries included construction (82.3 percent), manufacturing (80.2 percent), wholesale trade (76.5 percent) and transportation and warehousing (80.2 percent).
- Female-dominated industries included finance and insurance (79.8 percent), health care and social assistance (78.8 percent) and educational services (72.1 percent).

Source: The Local Employment Dynamics

## Wages and income

In 2020, there were 21,688 jobs in Grays Harbor County covered by unemployment insurance, with a total payroll of over \$1 billion.

The average annual wage in 2020 was \$46,431, well below the state’s average annual wage of \$76,801. The median hourly wage in 2020 was \$22.82, below the state’s median hourly wage of \$29.28.

### 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 2020, the county’s per capita personal income was \$43,710, less than the state (\$67,126) and the nation (\$59,510).

According to the U.S. Census, median household income in 2020 was \$50,665 in Grays Harbor County.

In 2020, Grays Harbor County’s poverty rate of 15.1 percent was higher than Washington state’s rate of 9.5 percent while the national rate was 11.4 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 76,841 in 2021, up from the 2010 Census count of 72,797.

In 2021, the largest city in Grays Harbor County was Aberdeen (17,050), followed by Hoquiam (8,785) and Ocean Shores (6,965). The fourth-largest city in the county is Montesano with a population of 4,145.

## Population facts

	Grays Harbor County	Washington state
Population 2021	76,841	7,738,692
Population 2010	72,797	6,724,540
Percent change, 2010 to 2021	5.56	15.08

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

## Age, gender and ethnicity

- People under 18 years of age made up 20.3 percent of the 2021 population.
- The group 65 years and over made up 22.3 percent of the population.
- The youngest age group, those under 5 years, made up 5.2 percent of the population in 2021.
- Females made up 48.9 percent of the county's population compared to the state at 49.9 percent in 2021.
- Grays Harbor County is less diverse than the state or nation, according to the 2021 data, as nearly 87.1 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 in 2021.

## Demographics

	Grays Harbor County	Washington state
<b>Population by age, 2021</b>		
Under 5 years old	5.2%	6.0%
Under 18 years old	20.3%	21.8%
65 years and older	22.3%	15.9%
<b>Females, 2021</b>	48.9%	49.9%
<b>Race/ethnicity, 2021</b>		
White	87.1%	78.5%
Black	1.4%	4.4%
American Indian, Alaskan Native	5.6%	1.9%
Asian, Native Hawaiian, other Pacific Islander	1.8 %	10.4%
Hispanic or Latino, any race	10.3%	13.0%

## Educational attainment

In Grays Harbor County in 2016-2020, 89.9 percent of people aged 25 or older were high school graduates, compared to 91.7 percent statewide. The number holding a bachelor's degree or higher was 16.1 percent in the county compared to the state's 36.7 percent and the nation's 32.9 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](#)

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